

ABSTRACTS

Anderson, Martin – Director, Graduate Humanities Program, Dominican University, San Rafael, California

The Man-Eaters of Tsavo: Humans and Large Carnivorous Mammals

In 1898, a very odd thing happened in the British colony of East Africa, in the area now known as Kenya. Two man-eating lions interrupted the march of modernization by bringing construction of the railway from Mombasa to Nairobi to a complete, albeit temporary, halt. In my view, if humankind is to successfully make a rapprochement with the natural world, humans will need to reconcile themselves to the existence of the large carnivorous mammals: lions; tigers; cougars; leopards; and, bears, etc., which are easily capable of killing individual humans and may well then eat them. In fact, humans will need to make space so these animals can flourish. The story of the man-eaters of Tsavo makes a perfect foil to explore the many facets of human discourse towards these large mammals from the terror of being stalked and killed, to being eaten, to heroic hunters and masculine sportsman who dare to invade the space of these large mammals, to awe and admiration of them. The world is on the brink of losing several of these species. Open dialog about our perceptions of them is perhaps a key to preventing such irreparable loss. This paper will explore our perceptions of these mammals through the story of the man-eaters of Tsavo.

Bryant, Terry - Stanford University MLA Program

Machiavellian Green: Practical Judgment and the Recalibration of the Environmental Calculus

There is such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn how to accomplish his ruin, not his salvation.

Machiavelli

Machiavelli held that human nature is such that even when we see danger looming ahead, we are reluctant to change our path until certain destruction is upon us – by which time it is often too late to make the changes that would have been painful but not lethal had they been made earlier. This is an apt description of the dynamic now playing out in relation to political decision-making and environmental issues. Whatever one's understanding of the principles that the term *Machiavellian* stands for – and there are any number of scholarly interpretations from which to choose – what is readily apparent from his writings is that Machiavelli himself was thoughtful, engaged, and perfectly capable of holding conflicting ideas without the need to resolve them artificially. It seems to me that the most salient feature of Machiavelli's methodology is not its pitiless pragmatism, but the fact that every counsel he gave was tailored to the circumstance, each judgment the result of careful consideration given to the particulars of the situation. In the end one is struck by how much of it appears to be just

disinterested common sense.

According to one reading, the perspective that allowed his detachment was implicit in his exposition: a recognition of the “awful truth” that no infallible measuring rod, no single over-arching standard exists which can certify one form of life as being superior to all others and which could be used to demonstrate this to the satisfaction of all rational men.

I propose a presentation that explores the characteristics that distinguish this *Machiavellian* approach to engaging knotty issues such as global warming and resource sustainability from contemporary analyses and solutions. The subject matter that I would press into service to provide grounds to compare and contrast would be building design and construction, including the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification system.

Carr, Mike – University of B.C./Simon Fraser University

Teaching for Bioregionalism

In this paper I present an account of a course I have taught since 2005 in the Humanities Dept. at SFU. The course, Bioregionalism, Humanity and the Natural World, explores the thought, values and practices of bioregionalists living out their philosophy in Canada, Mexico and the United States. It includes an examination of the cultural, social, political, spiritual, artistic, ceremonial and ritual practices of bioregionalists. While the course looks at a diversity of bioregional literature, including essays, songs, poems, legends and myths, it is its holistic approach to learning that has made it unique and immensely popular with students. The instructional method integrates a study of the literature with an “embodied” or whole person approach to education through experiential workshops (yoga, dance/movement and Qi’gong) and a field trip which gives students an opportunity for hands-on experience in trail building, permaculture gardening, bread-making, singing, drumming, dancing and exploring the woods. Inspired and informed by phenomenology, such holistic learning involves the students as whole persons in their relationships with each other and the natural world. As the course unfolds, social capital is created (students begin to collaborate in their learning with each other and friendships are formed). Students learn through their own direct embodied experience that the natural world, the life-world, is a place of magic and mystery, replete with spiritual power and beauty. By the end of the course, they have become inspired and motivated to involve themselves in efforts to address the crisis of our times.

Czink, Andrew – Graduate Liberal Studies, Simon Fraser University

Sound Reasons: environment and auditory experience

Our culture has a long-standing dominantly visual bias. While 'design' is expected in the visual arena of architecture and urban planning, it is not a common feature of our soundscape. The urban soundscape is generally a by-product of other human activities and so may be alienating us from our environment. Our relationship to the environment has become dysfunctional.

Unlike the visual domain, auditory experience is fundamentally haptic and brings us into close contact with our environment. We 'feel' our environment and our place in it through hearing. By designing our soundscape and engaging in active listening we may enable ourselves to develop a healthy relationship with our environment: one that is more conducive to making genuine, considered decisions about environmental policies and that may motivate us to make the personal and economic adjustments necessary to successful implementation of such policies.

The presentation will begin with an introduction to the notion of active listening through a verbally guided listening experience of a pre-recorded montage of a local urban soundscape. The verbal presentation (possibly with projected visual aids) following will situate the thesis above by addressing the following points:

- The phenomenological experience of sound vs. sight
 - Enveloping nature of sound and directional nature of sight
 - Penetrating nature of vision (the gaze) vs receiving nature of listening
 - Haptic vs. optic experience (smooth vs. striated space - viz Deleuze & Guattari)
- Why do sound and the soundscape matter?
 - Influence on physical and psychological health
 - Role in paradigm creation
 - What's wrong with 'tuning out' the soundscape
 - Influence on 'background feelings' (Damasio) and our sense of well-being
- Comparison of natural and urban soundscapes
- Active listening as an aesthetic stance
 - Soundscape design and active listening as a 'practice of space' (Guiliana Bruno)
 - Political and policy implications of the soundscape
 - Role of the aesthetic stance on politics and policy making
 - The primacy of 'use-value and the utilitarian in our culture
 - Do other value systems matter?

Farnsworth, John – Environmental Studies Institute, Santa Clara University
Resituating Nature: where we go when the dust settles

A great deal of ink has been spilled, this past decade, deconstructing the concept of

nature. A general consensus has been reached within the academy that ideas of nature never exist outside a cultural context, and that any meaning we assign to the concept of nature cannot help reflecting that context. This understanding is constantly uneasy, of course, because the very definition of "nature" tends to situate it in the realm of that which is outside of culture. At the same time, those of us involved in the environmental movement want to make of nature a moral imperative. As William Cronon warned in the introduction of *Uncommon Ground*, "The great attraction of nature for those who wish to ground their moral vision in external reality is precisely its capacity to take disputed values and make them seem innate, essential, external, nonnegotiable" (36).

Many readers of Derrida, and indeed even more practitioners of the process of deconstruction, have missed the point; deconstruction is not merely about analyzing dualities and reversing hierarchies of terms, it is also about—once one has located the power in the text—resituating the deconstructed concept beyond its dualities. In this paper I will argue that while we have done necessary and important work deconstructing the concept of nature, we have done a poor job resituating it, and that ecocritical theorists consequently afforded less and less of a voice in the discourse of environmentalism. I will also propose a few basic principles that might help reverse this trend, principles I hope might be especially useful in the undergraduate classroom where students are taught to think ecocritically.

Fessenden, Lily – Director, Audubon Expedition Institute, Lesley University, Belfast, Maine

On Ecological Literacy

After more than 30 years of environmental education, people in western industrialized countries continue to use Earth's resources faster than they can be replenished. This ecological illiteracy arises from the mechanistic worldview that creates an illusion that people are separate from nature. If we are to transform our current destructive behaviors into life-sustaining practices we must develop a participatory worldview and experience our ecological identity.

Making the assumption that changes in behavior are related to how deeply we experience ourselves as part of nature seven environmental educators engaged in a cooperative inquiry for ten months. Our goal was to discover, develop, and deepen the experience of interbeing so as to live gracefully with all beings. We identified both barriers and the way to interbeing. We found that connecting to other people was as important as connecting to the more than human world. The study concluded that the transition from mainstream environmental education to education that creates a participatory worldview is a project of ecopsychology and will require transformative models of education that include spiritual and emotional learning.

To be effective ecological educators and activists need to understand what approach they are choosing and whether they are addressing the individual, behavioral, cultural and systemic aspects of the environmental issue with which they are

concerned. This presentation will examine the co-operative inquiry as a project of ecopsychology within the larger framework of integral ecology and discuss its efficacy within the context of other efforts to create change. There will be a twenty-minute power point presentation using the inquiry as an example of how to examine actions for change in relation to the systemic aspects of the environmental issue.

Hamilton, Clay – School of Earth Sciences, Stanford University

Prediction Theory and Nature

Prediction has played a part in human society for thousands of years. From oracles and horoscopes to meteorology and economics, humans have long tried to know the unknowable in order to anticipate threats to the common good. Social and natural sciences have attempted to comply with this endeavor by providing an understanding of the workings of nature, but the burden of proof regarding any one view on how nature actually works is seldom agreed upon.

It has become especially apparent in the twentieth century that, ultimately, science can't solve anything. It can only provide informed opinions about the possible outcomes of our current actions. Society must provide the context. Any claim that science can lead to a particular outcome is false.

Climate research provides a case in point. As Daniel Sarewitz has argued, implicit in the demand for basic research on climate change is the belief that a better understanding of the effects of our actions on climate will enable better decisions and reduce the uncertainty of the science that climate policy is based on. But attempting to reduce human influence on climate change is, at this point, an extremely indirect way of dealing with the problems faced.

We must ask ourselves, what should the role of the scientist-citizen be, then, in providing predictions to society and how should society accept those predictions? Should funding flow towards refining predictions or towards the mitigation of known dangers? This presentation presents the pros and cons of both approaches and analyzes the solution offered by Daniel Sarewitz, that any research funded should include its social context as well as its technical aspects.

Hunt, Pearl – University of British Columbia/Graduate Liberal Studies, Simon Fraser University

Recall, rebuild, reclaim: Postcards from post-Katrina.

Arguably, one of the "grand narratives" of modernism is the mastery of science/ technologies over nature -- a theme which Mary Shelly critiques in her 1816 cautionary tale of industrialization. Postmodernists claim to do away with grand narratives such as the nature/technology duality. Instead, current post humanist theorists face the "paradox that an overriding characteristic of post humanism's metaphysics is a refusal to accept "nature" as a given (Foster, 2005:18). Whether we believe nature as a

construct is theoretically sound or that nature empirically exists, environmental disasters, either manmade or "acts of God" such as Hurricane Katrina, do occur and severely impact not only human experiences but also our entire ecosystem.

Recall, rebuild, reclaim: postcards from post-Katrina is a **multimedia** presentation that interrogates post Katrina as a certain space that was shattered but did not disappear -- a space where "traces, fragments and ruins survive, embedded in common sense, perspective, social practices and political power," (Lather, 2001: 200). My rendering of post Katrina is based on research I conducted in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in October 2007. I utilize digital images of numerous locales, field notes, artifacts, music and documents, represented as *postcards* in a multimedia musical format. The central thrust of my project is to trouble/unsettle representations of "reconstruction" in the aftermath of Katrina as an attempt to awaken us to the desires posed by the people that I encountered throughout my journey

Jeffries, Bill – Director/Curator, Art Gallery, Simon Fraser University

The Photography of Chris Jordan: Illustrating the Ecological Footprint

Chris Jordan is a lapsed Seattle corporate lawyer who has become an artist without doing the stop/go at art school. He has a show on right now at Winsor Gallery on Granville between 14th & 15th. Someone from GLS should go see. Chris has agreed to provide me with a PowerPoint presentation of his work for conferences.

His recent work is called 'Running the Numbers' and it is that work that I'd talk about in relation to the topics outlined below, which I thought I'd paste in to make matches, but maybe if I just describe the work?

What he has done is invent a new form of photography that allows him to create pictures that relate quantitatively to the many forms of consumption with which, in which, we are all implicated to varying degrees.

So, although his 'new' work, as of next fall, is not known to me, let me describe one image so you can see the link between consumption and it's picturing. He realized that when one talks about overall consumption and discarding patterns, there was no way to show what was happening on different continents, much less different cities – pictures only show us what is happening in one place, and that may, of may not, be indicative of anything.

So (#2), he decided to make images on a single topic item measured against time. The examples can multiply by as many things as one can imagine are consumed in the world. Take airplane flights: he photographed jets with their contrails, worked up the images in PhotoShop, and created a photograph that looks like a blue table with thousands of pins on it – what it is planes (the pin heads) with their trails, 11,500 of

them, representing the number of take-offs & landings in the US each 8 hours. Similarly, an image of 125,000 cell phones is linked to the number discarded every day in the US; one of 450,000 plastic bottles is tagged by its title to the number manufactured in the US every 5 minutes. He has to adjust the amount of time to the reality of fitting excess into a single image.

In 25 minutes I'd be happy to do a cook's tour of his work and highlight the way that his quantifying breakthrough has revolutionized photography and provided the first direct measure of what all of us have blithely assumed was happening elsewhere.

Images easily viewable at his website, just google Chris Jordan. May not hit on the patriarchy, though it does, but it hits most of the topic areas in the outline. I haven't said why his form of photo work is new, but if people consider the problem of making an image of 400,000 bottles, they'll see that something had to be newly invented to get it to happen.

Law, Stephen – Dept. of Humanities and Philosophy, University of Central Oklahoma

De Rerum Natura: Lucretius, Consciousness, and the Way Things Are

*Linquitur ut merito maternum nomen adepta
terra sit, et terra quoniam sunt cuncta
creata. [Lucretius]*

Lucretius' masterpiece of Epicurean philosophy, *De Rerum Natura*, asks its readers to confront the reality of the way things are. The work argues both that "truth matters," and that inconvenient truths provide us with the greatest challenges of our individual and collective lives. Lucretius depicts these confrontations as "heroic" – the triumph of the rational self over the illusions and delusions that are holding us in check.

If ever there was a time for a heroic confrontation with the way things are, it is now. Faced with the impending collapse of natural systems on a global scale, our species must come of age and adopt a more realistic outlook regarding the relationship we have with our planet. Lucretius claims that "the earth merits the name of Mother, for from the earth all things have been created." The failure to honor our true mother will inevitably lead to our own extinction.

In this paper I argue that Lucretius' philosophical and ethical observations are as timeless as ever. While readers frequently get bogged down in the eccentricities of his hypotheses concerning the mechanics of a world made of matter, the real value of *De Rerum Natura* is its assumption that confrontations with reality should (1) lead to clarifications about the way things are, and (2) bring about a transformation of behaviors. The latter, the "ethical" revisions which we make as a result of our confrontations with truth, are the most important part of his philosophy. Like many Hellenistic schools of thought, understanding and ethics are inseparable from each other. Therefore, adherence to illusions that are not in accordance with

reality is both unethical and self-destructive.

McLeer, Dorothy – Environmental Interpretive Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn

“Concrete” Learning: Making the Case for Nonformal Experiential Education and Environmental Interpretive Centers in Urban Communities

The shift from an agrarian lifestyle to an industrial urbanized society has led to a “nature deficit disorder,” affecting the mental and physical well-being of people in large metropolitan areas. By the 1990s, the radius of green space surrounding homes had shrunk to a ninth of what it had been in the 1970s. (Louv 2005) Accessibility to these urban green spaces can provide opportunities for direct and frequent contact with nature and its accompanying benefits, such as improved cognitive functioning and reduced symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

The University of Michigan-Dearborn includes an Environmental Interpretive Center and a 300-acre Natural Area on its campus, both open to the public. For thirty-eight years, visitors have established long-term relationships with the University of Michigan-Dearborn’s Natural Area, the Environmental Interpretive Center and its staff. Thirty tape-recorded interviews with classroom teachers, home school parents, and general visitors revealed what these people value about our Center and what keeps them coming back regularly. Ten common themes emerged within each of the three groups, as well as four themes mentioned across all three in almost thirty interviews: (30) the sense of discovery, (29) being outside, (28) the Center’s proximity to home or school, and (28) the positive interactions with our staff, confirming that the Environmental Interpretive Center and its accompanying Natural Area provide benefits that are difficult to find in increasingly urbanized Metropolitan Detroit communities.

Medianu, Narcisa – Graduate Liberal Studies, Simon Fraser University

Urban Gardens: Between nature and Culture

In a time when climate change seems to unfold as an inevitable consequence of our actions, it is important that we look back and question the assumptions that shape our behaviour towards nature. For many people, nature is abstractly located out in the wilderness, disconnected from the reality of their everyday life. Images of majestic landscapes – whether rugged mountain peaks or tropical beaches – have come to symbolize nature as a possible escape from civilization. But what about the urban landscape of our everyday life? Our cultures have created an imaginary line that magically separates wilderness from domestic landscapes and defines our dualistic behaviour towards land. We attach spiritual value to the far away wilderness but we treat our immediate surroundings as not worth of our spiritual quest.

For a long time, environmentalists have looked at wilderness as a place to be cherished and protected from human intervention, as a place of inspiration in the spiritual quest for alternative ways of life. Gardens have been pictured as

anthropocentric universes where landscapes are transformed to better suit human needs and aesthetic purposes. Thoreau and other wilderness theorists were aware however of the positive potential of gardening which brings people close to nature. However, Thoreau's attitude is ultimately ambivalent since he felt that his efforts to cultivate his bean field were anthropocentric in essence and disturbed the equilibrium found in untouched nature.

My intention in this paper is to try to connect these two opposite views – wilderness and garden, nature and culture - in search for grounds to redefine our relationship with nature. This paper explores narratives about gardens and wilderness, and looks at the current trends in gardening, arguing that community gardens offer a new way to look at nature in urban environments. The imaginary boundary between civilization and nature is an obstacle in reconnecting urban life styles with earth processes and ecologically sound practices. In addition to this, the culture of consumerism and the increasing commodification of nature have altered gardening practices to produce immediate visual gratification with minimal efforts.

Despite the obstacles, community gardening has evolved into a new social movement, which combines gardening as a hobby with community building and ecological education. Within the larger context of the new social movements, community gardens initiatives can be seen as a reaction to the generalized sense of loss of meaning and freedom brought about by the advance of modernity. They empower people to regain control over local landscapes – often desolate vacant lots resulted from industrial expansion and rapid urbanization - and create spaces for the development of alternative ways of living. By raising awareness of ecological problems and creating an immediate connection between individuals, community and land, community gardens could form the foundations for a new environmental ethics that fosters sustainability right where we live, in the city.

Morrissey, Christopher – Dept. of Humanities, Simon Fraser University

Heidegger and Aristotle on the Consciousness of Nature: The Metaphysics of Climate Change

Heidegger's history of Western philosophy as "the forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*) claims that Aristotle's *Physics* is "*das Grundbuch*" of Western philosophy. Aristotle's metaphysical consciousness of nature (*physis*) thus fatefully marks the West's experience, visible especially in the phenomenon of "climate change". Heidegger's contemplation of Being aims to think that of which metaphysics has been oblivious: i.e., the "clearing" ("*Lichtung*") in which the relationship between subject and object unfolds in the first place.

But considerable fragments of Aristotle survive in which Aristotle thinks what is given to us in consciousness as the irreducible root of a species-specifically human cognition: Being, out of which natures emerge.

Even before Heidegger, then, the Aristotelian metaphysical tradition could have already been conscious of the emergence of natures in the light of Being, i.e., wherever it already thinks the "clearing" non-onto-theologically, as "being-as-first-known". Aristotle's *Protrepticus* introduces its reader to philosophical contemplation by teaching a wonder at the actuality of Being. Similarly, the "letting be" of Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* catches sight of and wonders at Being, with a receptivity towards things that is the antithesis of modern technology's calculative manipulation of nature (as visible in "climate change").

In Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, an actuality that realizes the potential of many different meanings of Being is unfolded for thought. Three meanings of potential structure Aristotle's argument: *dynamis* as possibility, power, and potency. In this way, Aristotle moves decisively beyond Platonism by distinguishing the modes of actuality involved in actualizing these potentials. Platonism's metaphysical premises are rendered otiose in light of what is actually given in our cognition of the actuality of natures and in our subsequent contemplation of their modes of potential. Intuitive consciousness of nature's principles is, already for Aristotle, the gift contemplated in Being's "lighting". *Pace* Heidegger, Aristotle is thus an invaluable resource for contemplating "climate change".

Ravensbergen, Karen – Graduate Liberal Studies, Simon Fraser University

"Paying Attention to the Lived Experience: A Consideration of the Practice of Everyday Life to Environmental Ethics."

This presentation investigates Michel de Certeau's exploration of the practice of everyday life and its relevance to the discourse on environmental ethics. Certeau describes spontaneous acts of agency generated by everyday people in their quotidian activities. These creative inventions arise not so much in response to, but in spite of restrictive power structures, which he names 'strategies.' Thus the art of practice opens up possibilities for creating habitable space. In turn, this re-conceptualization of space has the potential to inform cultural evolution. This ongoing and interactive process offsets dualism in which the subject dominates the object in a one-directional power relationship. Instead, daily practices inform cultural change in an inter-connected process. Thus, the practices, or what Certeau names the 'tactics' of everyday life are integral to the transformation of culture.

I suggest that Certeau's observations of daily practices contribute to the sense of human agency and participatory emergence that characterizes some strains of current ecological discourse. Rather than offering a grand cultural critique or a linear prescription to remedy the origins of the environmental crisis, contemporary environmental ethics provides conceptual insights which examine the interconnected co-evolution of human values and institutions. In particular, Certeau focuses his attention on the ways that human beings

innovate and improvise in the face of systemic restrictions and discrimination. His analysis speaks to the human characteristics of resilience and resourcefulness already present in the face of adversity. Certeau's tools of involvement are not a list of attributes to be acquired, but are instead present as the innate capabilities of the human being. Therefore, Certeau envisions the human agent as fully equipped to participate in the processes of cultural change. This conception of the interaction between strategies and tactics enriches the themes of ecological inter-connectedness and participation in contemporary environmental ethics.

Robyn, Elisa and Therese Lincoln – College for Professional Study, Regis University, Denver, Colorado

The Seven Directions and Innovation

The Seven directions have been used by Native cultures around the world as a contextual framework for understanding the ecology of the world that surrounds us, as well as our place in this ecology. Each direction holds a unique lesson and way of questioning. When used together, the Seven Directions provide the perfect template for an innovative interdisciplinary studies program.

This will be an interactive discussion leading participants through the meaning and application of the Seven Directions: East, South, West, North, Above, Below and Within. Native stories, as well as stories from the Jewish Hassidic tradition will be used to explore the directions. The use of the Talking Stick and the Circle of Elders techniques will be discussed. Participants will then break into small groups of "directions" and apply the lessons of that direction as they create the curriculum for a graduate program of Innovative Studies. We will demonstrate the Circle of Elders technique as we express the view from each direction. This is a powerful alternative to classic brainstorming techniques, and one that integrates spirituality into the curriculum so that we can inspire students to embrace and dance with the challenges of the future.

Please note: Various aboriginal groups around the world have slightly different interpretations of each direction based on their specific geography. This presentation will work with general notions from each direction that are culminations of cultural wisdom from many cultures.

Rowley, Mari-Lou – Humanities Research Unit, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, SASK

Ecopoetics and Biosemiotics: Compatible Codominants of the "Understory"

Is the muse affected by climate change? What does the presence of cubic ice in the upper atmosphere and its en-masse shift to hexagonal ice mean in relation to global warming? Does poetry have any function in the current political/environmental debate?

This presentation interweaves academic discourse with poetry and personal narrative to examine the poet's role as interpreter, witness and communicator. If the theory of biosemiotics suggests that "in the beginning is the sign," poets might argue that "in the beginning is the word." Rather than arguing difference, this paper discusses the similarities of these positions, and the need to break down boundaries between disciplines in order to catalyze change.

The enactivist theories of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's work, along with the work of Gregory Bateson and others, has inspired the emerging discipline of biosemiotics, which proposes that all living beings, from animals and plants to single cells, engage in semiosis. The conversion of objective signals into signs results in a dynamic dance of living beings with other organisms and their environment, and this dance has profound implications for models of evolution based on adaptation and survival. Adaptation involves changes to the structure of a living system as a result of adjusting to local conditions. Inherent in this adjusting or "enacting" is cognition—a feature of all living systems. And this "knowing is being is doing" has ethical implications.

Maturana believed that destructive cycles can be broken through awareness, reflection and interaction in language. Changing emotions by changing language can alter the attitudes of individuals, the behaviour of systems and the environs in which we coexist. If this is true, then ecopoetics can provide the soaring vocals to bring these theories of being and emergence into practice—to know, be, do in order to better become.

Rubel, William – University of British Columbia

Natural Wisdom: Lao Tzu & Emily Dickinson

What force or relevance can natural wisdom presume in the monolithic face of technocracy? Now that we are in the throes of a global ecological crisis that promises intense, violent upsurges of time-compressed historicity, what can we learn from the soft but penetrating voice of the world's most notorious recluses? The semi-legendary Chinese sage known as Lao Tzu (circa 500 BC) and the enigmatic nineteenth century New England poet Emily Dickinson offer social commentaries that strike to the heart of our contemporary dystopia. Indeed, as people who "died" to knowledge (as Dickinson wrote, "No more have I"), these famous non-entities appear to have outlived time.

"To be sick of sickness is the only cure," says the Tao Te Ching. "Much Madness is divinest sense-/To a discerning Eye-/Much Sense - the starkest Madness," writes Dickinson. I will offer a twenty-minute power point presentation that will inquire into the specific insight that may have been the engine of their counter-cultural poetics. There is an aspect to nature-oriented poetry that is rarely understood. Too often, nature poets are imagined to be withdrawn dreamers who abandon hard intellectual work. Yet, critically, nature poetry *does* respond to conceptuality and does offer a deep account of human cognition. It is precisely because the words of natural wisdom are so

soft yet so *hard* to understand that their subtlety is often dismissed as “poetic.” Lao Tzu, Dickinson, and others (Blake, Keats, Rilke) share a common insight that conceptuality must learn to trust non-conceptuality. Cerebration about consciousness and nature will never adequate. What is needed is the very factor that is perhaps the hardest thing for a materialist habit to accept: a direct insight that conceptuality in all its complexity depends on or emerges from non-conceptual mind that “touches the raw silk and holds the uncarved wood.”

Salmond, Noel – College of the Humanities, Program in Religion, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario

Evaluating the Claim that Environmentalism is a New Religion

This paper examines the invocation of religion in discourse about the environment. In light of mammoth environmental problems, most recently the threat of catastrophic climate change, a variety of public voices have called for a fundamental re-visioning of our attitude to nature. This has included calls from environmental thinkers to regard nature as sacred or to invoke the notion of a sacred balance. At the same time, this call for a re-enchantment of nature has prompted some secular opponents of environmentalism to disparage the movement under the derisive label “religion.” The word “religion” is repeatedly deployed as a trope – or wielded like a weapon – in this discourse. Calls to re-sacralize our relationship to nature elicit scoffs at “environmentalism” as a sort of bogus or pseudo religion. For authors who express this position, environmentalism (and in particular alarm over climate change) is a crock. Why? Precisely because it is a “religion,” in other words, an irrational faith commitment not grounded in fact or reason; it is an alarmist hysteria. The paper begins by examining two exponents of this view: the American author Michael Crichton, and the Canadian commentator Rex Murphy. It then offers a synopsis of the environmentalism-religion comparison, and ends with an evaluation of the assertion that contemporary environmentalism constitutes a religion in light of definitions of religion proffered in the discipline of Religious Studies.

Scutt, Greg – Graduate Liberal Studies, SFU

A Contractural Consciousness: Michel Serres and the Natural Contract

“Is it true [that she [Earth] is moved” (NC p. 122)

What often gets overlooked when we consider anthropogenic climate change is the astonishing fact that humanity's history has arrived at the point where we exist at such a scale, and have such immense effect with our techno- science, that we have disturbed a global physical system billions of years old. Additionally, it is clear that we have arrived at a point of reversal and great risk, as global nature is beginning to emerge and interact with humanity. In large part the French philosopher Michel Serres'

1990 publication *The Natural Contract* responds to this particularly unique ecological predicament.

A natural contract with the Earth, described by Serres as a philosophical concept, is I will argue a novel way to conceptualize and contend with the nature- culture nexus and the current global ecological crisis, particularly anthropogenic climate change. Within *The Natural Contract* is a very rich and complex description of what a contract means which transcends our exclusive social and local understanding of it. I will suggest that what is sometimes referred to by radical ecology as an ecological consciousness is uniquely expressed in *The Natural Contract* as a contractual consciousness. And, as I will show, it is through embracing a contractual consciousness that one can come to understand that humanity is in-the-environment, that we struggle with a third partner - Nature.

And moreover, Nature behaves as if it were a subject.

Siry, Joseph – Environmental Studies, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida
On Unstable Airs, Acidified Waters, and Endangered Places
A New Essay on Climate Chaos

Andrea Merkel, German Chancellor, called it too late to stop global climate chaos because of the rate at which the industrialized nations are increasing their heat trapping gas emissions. French President Nicolas Sarkozy has argued that the European Union needs a carbon tax as a means of addressing the scattered air pollution that causes climate chaos due to global warming.

In the sense of Hippocrates, the ancient Greek writer, we have significantly altered the airs, waters and places that were once the province of forces beyond our control. That is largely because climate chaos due to the accumulation of heat trapping gasses is a rate problem, where the pollutant has a long residence time, is readily absorbed by the oceans and by lingering influence the places that have defined our lives for generations to come. In just one lifetime our industrial pollution has created a more acidified ocean, melted long standing glaciers, and changed the permafrost across large segments of the Arctic shore. In tropical seas diverse coral species have suffered under warmer and more acid water conditions to the point we face the loss of the remaining coral reefs in less than a lifetime.

As Bill Mckibben commented nearly two decades ago that humans have developed the capacity to alter the atmosphere thereby affecting all natural weathering and the reproductive processes of many species on earth. More significantly he described that past climate variations are no longer reliable as predictive patterns for our future because our human pollution has been so prolonged, so pervasive and so decisive.

We are faced with an odorless, clear and apparently non-toxic pollutant due mostly to combustion and, in part, to land-use practices that rob natural areas of their capacity to retain carbon on site and accumulate carbon that otherwise traps heat radiation in the air and oceans. While clearly a technical problem the need for an uncommon level of awareness raises psychosocial problems for communities and a daunting spiritual plight. The twin spiritual dilemma arises because affected populations are not the provocateurs of global warming and many of the world's religions command people to properly steward the resources of this earth to more effectively share them with the disadvantaged in the community. The breadth of the impact and the technical depth of this problem have led most informed scientists and commentators to say that this is the most protracted, persistent and perilous impediment humans have ever faced.

Stackable, Ellen - University of Oklahoma

Proposal: The Cultural, Environmental and Economic Impact of Mega Hog Farms in Western Oklahoma

There are now over six and a half billion people to feed in the world. This is a shift of gargantuan proportions from one hundred years ago when there were a mere one and a half billion mouths to feed. Along with an exponential increase in population, a corresponding revolution in agriculture has occurred. Farming and animal husbandry methods of a century past are no longer viable ways to feed such an enormous population. Increasingly, in animal husbandry, CAFOs (Contained Animal Feeding Operations) have become the way to grow large amounts of chickens, hogs, and even salmon in very small areas.

Oklahoma has seen a tremendous growth in hog CAFOs since the early 1990's. Oklahoma is now the fourth largest producer of hogs in the nation, shipping much of this meat to overseas markets. There is a fierce controversy surrounding these hog farms which concerns their cultural, environmental, and economic impact on Western Oklahoma. Modern day Luddites decry the hog farms and attempt to outlaw them and to drive the absentee multinational corporations who own the mega hog farms from Oklahoma. On the other hand, the corporations who own the mega hog farms and processing plants believe they are doing good, not only to the world they are attempting to feed, but also to Western Oklahoma, by giving it a huge boost to its economy. They resent the criticism leveled against them. Both sides make strong cases; thus it is important to examine the impact these farms and processing plants have had on the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Presentation and Structure:

- Overview of mega hog farm impacts: cultural, environmental, and economic.
- Use of charts, graphs, and photographs from the sites being examined.

Thoma, Michael – Graduate Liberal Studies, Simon Fraser University
The Hollywood Cinema, Nature and Culture

In *The Natural Alien*, Neil Evernden wrote, “the consumption of images by industrialized societies is astonishing, and it is accompanied by pressure to make images and so to experience the world as pictures.” Ours is a culture of representation where film, television and the Internet offer a constant stream of images and actions, widely accessible and influential, often portrayed in terms of violence and hyperrealism. The global dominance of Hollywood, the power of the images, omnipresent media coverage, extensive marketing, and the average citizen’s disconnect from the political process, have increasingly led to popular culture becoming our most visible forum for public discourse on social and political issues.

The ‘culture industry’ would seem to promote a world-image that abandons nature, both through technology and narrative, replacing the real world with the more dynamic and event-filled world-of-images. The emotional and psychological privacy of our self-image is replaced by an inner landscape of images, of nightmare visions, particularly in the youth market, contributing to crises of identity and values. In order to gain insight into how the Hollywood cinematic culture influences our understanding and relationship with nature, we will take a historical perspective of the cinema’s portrayal of nature, self, and the Other. We will consider the alienation in post-modern America, both political and psychological, and the inevitable aestheticization of violence, which has contributed to our present convergence between social crisis and filmed entertainment. Finally, we will consider the advances in technology, which create ‘manufactured landscapes’, of the hyperreal spectacle and the virtual worlds, perhaps taking us to a place devoid of nature, of ‘*Entwirlung*’, of “reality losing its realness.”

Ulrich, Paul – Political Science, Philosophy and Great Ideas, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin

“Hobbes’s Natural Condition: Its Basis and Some Consequences”

The “natural condition” that Thomas Hobbes describes in *Leviathan* is often understood to be a theory of a natural human inclination towards individuality or a kind of hypothetical condition in which humans will all ruthlessly and madly turn on one another in the absence of an all-powerful monarch.

But Hobbes does not in fact introduce the natural condition in either of those ways. He speaks of the natural condition as a lack of anything preventing conflict, and so he is describing what exists and does not exist in nature, and he even has a way of showing what does and does not exist in nature, or at least what humans can *know* about what does and does not exist in nature.

Specifically, Hobbes explains the working of the human sense organs and mind in such a way as to show that we cannot know of any natural principles that would keep us from conflict with anyone with whom we see a need to be in conflict.

As far as we can know, Hobbes argues, nature is nothing but meaningless matter in aimless motion, and nothing in nature—apart perhaps from some laws of motion—would prevent humans from treating nature entirely as a means and from pursuing endless—though peaceful—acquisition of things.

Supporters of democracy today do not typically look to Hobbes for support, yet he is, arguably, the first to argue for the equal natural liberty of all, the equal natural rights of all, and for the principle that a government is legitimate only if and when the governed consent to it. If Hobbes is mistaken about the natural condition and the status of nature, what becomes of the grounds of natural human equality and human rights?

Watt, Peggy and William Dietrich – Dept. of Journalism, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA

A comparison and assessment of media coverage of climate change

The proposed presentation is of work in progress on a paper evaluating how media coverage of climate change varies by geographic location even within the U.S. The study compares news reporting across several markets, with focus on original local coverage as opposed to wire service reports.

A newspaper, appropriate to its mission of serving a community, will reflect that community's values and therefore emphasize topics of greatest interest to the largely local readership. As part of its civic mission, however, a newspaper also has responsibility to inform its community of issues of significance, even if the readers do not yet recognize that importance.

The research addresses both of these journalistic responsibilities in analyzing ongoing coverage by comparable media in similar-sized communities in very different locales. The subjects are of similar media types (by ownership and operations, circulation, and readership demographics).

The research attempts to identify the news judgment behind the quality and quantity of coverage, such as the industrial makeup of the community, timely local concerns, reader demographics, and local resources (such as higher education).

This study focuses primarily on print media, following local daily newspapers of general circulation readership. However, to add perspective, it also acknowledges the contribution and influence of borderless, widely available online editions of those and other publications both as a resource for local readers and for their effects on local

coverage.

The presentation will feature such visual materials as maps, images of articles and screen captures, provided in a PowerPoint file.

Weed, Jeff – Master of Liberal Studies Program, Rice University, Houston, Texas
What if the World Cannot Agree to Reduce Carbon Emissions

The likelihood of limiting carbon emissions by a world agreement appears to be low This presentation will:

1. explore the political environment for controlling carbon emission as a method to limit climate change
2. review the scientific understanding of the earth's radiation balance with a focus on the effect of the earth's albedo
3. review a few proposals to increase the earth's albedo with some ideas on the feasibility and costs. A new proposal with illustrations and modeling results will be presented.

Williams, Bryon – Master of Liberal Arts Program, Stanford University
Mythos and Wildness: Thoreau's Anthropology of Self

Henry David Thoreau's declaration that "in Wildness is the preservation of the world" has renewed urgency today. This paper examines the distinctive process by which Thoreau, in becoming a student of his own wildness, conceived of a relationship with nature more characteristic of pre-civilized societies than of modern Western civilization. Through his unique "anthropology of self," Thoreau enacted radical reconceptions of human kinship with the wild.

First, I briefly delineate a particular intellectual landscape against which Thoreau's work must be seen, looking at the legacy of the great demythologizers: the Hebrew prophets, who systematically sought to desacralize the natural world, and Plato, who aimed to eradicate the oral, mythological state of mind to clear the way for dialectical, rational analysis. In short, the foundations of Thoreau's (and our) civilization rest on a conceptual alienation of the human subject from the natural world. I see Thoreau's project as an attempt to recapture the mythos mind and to undo the profound alienation entailed by the logos foundations of Western thought.

Next, I create a "map" of the mythos mind by charting a prototypical belief system of fundamental axioms on the relationship between humans and the natural world. The axioms derive from my careful reading of Thoreau, which I also amplify with later scholarship on primitive cultures.

For the mythos mind,

- 1] Wild nature is not in opposition to culture;
- 2] Wild nature is not in opposition to human home;

- 3] Humans living in wild nature are not acquisitive, wanting, or poor;
- 4] Human beings relate to wild nature in a fundamentally religious way;
- 5] Humans in wild nature experience time itself as sacred.

Contemporary divides between humans and nature are rooted in a problem with our thinking, and Thoreau provides one model for thinking our way back to sustainable behaviors.