



ENNZ: Environment and Nature in New Zealand

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Editors' Comment

Tēnā koutou, haere mai. Welcome to *ENNZ* Issue No.4. In this issue we focus on literature and the environment. Teresa Shewry explores the possibilities of the burgeoning field of environmental literature studies and updates us on some recent work in New Zealand and the Pacific. Julian Kuzma reviews two recent environmental history publications. We outline the current schemes for giant wind factories in Otago. And we showcase five poems by Richard Reeve. Enjoy!

About Us

This Newsletter aims to provide a forum for debate on environmental topics and details of upcoming events, including conferences, books, seminars, etc. If you want to contribute articles or reviews of exhibitions or books, or want your details added to the Member's List, please contact:

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Literature and the Environment: Fictions of Nature, Culture, and Landscapes

Teresa Shewry

How do literary texts orient their readers towards conflicts over the meanings and uses of water or of butterflies and their rainforests? What might these texts say about how the planet looks from different perspectives around the world? How does literature try to make readers see struggles over scientific abilities to alter and re-alter life?

In this issue of *ENNZ*, we focus on literature and the environment, a combination that may seem unusual, given that environmental studies is more often associated with scientists, policy makers, and political movements than it is with literary critics and their texts. Yet, as environmentalism engages increasingly with various places and subjects world-wide, interest in environmental issues has grown and been institutionalized in the humanities, including in Comparative Literature and English departments. The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) was established in the early 1990s, and there are now many publications, conferences, and even entire university programmes in the field.

The worlds of the socio-cultural texts that have tried to take their readers beneath the seas, over the ice sheets, across islands and continents and beyond into space, and the aesthetic, political, and cultural contexts in which they are engaged, generate perplexing questions and problems for researchers. I will suggest just a few of the possibilities of the field by outlining some of these questions here.

Why study literature and the environment? Why not just become a scientist in order to undertake research about the environment? The answers to this question vary according to how concepts such as "literature" and "environment" are used and defined, and the contexts in which they are engaged. Recently, it has been increasingly common for environmental literary critics to justify their research as contributing to the alleviation of environmental crisis and therefore to the survival of life on earth. For example, Lawrence Buell argues that scholars in this field foreground cultural texts such as literature and film in approaching the environment because:

The success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on 'some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science' but on 'a state of mind': on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives. That the advertising budget of U.S. corporations exceeds the combined budgets of all of the nation's institutions of higher learning is crude but telling evidence that trust in the power of imagination is not a literary scholar's idiosyncrasy.¹

1. Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.1.



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A potential (although not inevitable) problem with this approach to environmental literature is that it can lead to assumptions that novels or poetry should speak about the environment as if they are scientists, politicians, or environmentalists. This expectation of literature can be seen in New Zealand at present, where socio-cultural texts are often instrumentalized in varied ways in environmental struggles. For example, poetry, novels, and films are used in education about conservation or to draw eco-tourists to socially and environmentally contested locations.

Does literature simply repeat back to us truths that are already known to science, political movements, or politicians? If literature does act as a prism for scientific or political voices, in what ways does it rework those voices in the process? I think that by analyzing the varied and often experimental struggles undertaken by socio-cultural texts in building narratives about the environment, scholars can investigate alternative perspectives on nature, culture, and landscapes, and the aesthetic, political, and socio-historical contexts in which they are engaged. As the Italian writer Italo Calvino has written, of literature in a different context:

Literature is necessary to politics above all when it gives a voice to whatever is without a voice, when it gives a name to what as yet has no name, especially to what the language of politics excludes or attempts to exclude. I mean aspects, situations, and languages both of the outer and of the inner world, the tendencies repressed both in individuals and in society. Literature is like an ear that can hear things beyond the understanding of the language of politics; it is like an eye that can see beyond the colour spectrum perceived by politics.²

Speaking of Italian writers and their influence, a second issue that researchers currently confront is the difficulty of stabilising environmental literary texts in particular contexts. Literary critics follow their texts as they move in both space and time, and these movements can be unbearably slow (with resemblances in genres unfolding over hundreds, or thousands, of years) and can radiate across vast spaces. Researchers in the field of literature and the environment have carried out experiments with appropriate temporal and spatial scales at which to imagine environmental literatures, and an ideal of "internationalization" has emerged, in a context of criticism (which is not entirely accurate) that up until now the field has been primarily based in and focused on North America. In some cases, scholars assume that because the environment is a world scale phenomenon, the approaches and methodologies of environmental literary criticism also apply world-wide, to all literatures. For instance, Greg Garrard recently wrote that "I will be dealing principally with British and North American literature and culture, although the principles of ecocriticism [environmental criticism] would of course admit of more general application."³ At the opposite pole, some critics have seen non-American environmental literatures as culturally "particular," or assumed that non-American literature is unable to speak about environmental issues beyond local or national contexts.⁴

2. Italo Calvino, "Right and Wrong Political Uses of Literature." *The Uses of Literature* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 98.

3. Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.5.

4. Rob Nixon has made this point in "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism." *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. Ania Loomba, et al, eds (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 233-251.



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In New Zealand, environmental writers and critics often manoeuvre in a context where the nation has been (and often continues to be) imagined not only as a political entity but also as an ecological or environmental entity. Nigel Clark has described the ways in which ideas of a primordial, unique, and national nature were important for settlers in imagining New Zealand as a national community, and were promoted in literary studies among other disciplines.⁵ One challenge for researchers may be to consider how socio-cultural texts experiment with ways of imagining environmental problems at scales that sometimes engage intensely with the national context but also that at least partly go beyond it, addressing issues such as various migrations to and from New Zealand, regional or planetary environmentalisms, or the movement of people, ideas, and nonhumans in ways that do not compute with established conceptual frameworks.

Finally, a point of convergence but also contention between many scholars who work on literature and the environment is their investigation of the relationships between nonhuman nature and culture. What characterises the *environmental* dimension of literature? Lawrence Buell argues that in environmental literature “the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.”⁶ Many scholars have tried to balance the ways in which nonhuman nature is always caught up in history, culture, politics and power, without simply squashing resistant, unaccountable nonhuman worlds beneath rhetorics of “culture” or “history.” An as yet unexamined issue that the field may need to confront in defining the term “environmental” has been posed recently in a different context by anthropologist Christine J. Walley:

While obviously all people have relationships with, and ideas about, the environment, since it is the medium in which we live and which sustains us as human beings, must we all possess a common view of nature that bounds our perceptions of the environment in similar ways and sees it as distinct from other phenomena? Although much academic thought particularly in its French variants has rested upon a symbolic distinction between nature and culture, is such a distinction, [...] truly universal??

The archives of literature and criticism about environmental issues in New Zealand are rich but diffuse: much criticism exists as book reviews, or in journal articles. Some recent, longer studies and articles that touch on literature and the environment in New Zealand or the Pacific have been published or are forthcoming. Further, interesting work is being done across disciplinary boundaries. Recent works include:

Charles Dawson has a paper forthcoming on rivers and bicultural issues in the journal *PAN*.

5. Nigel Clark. “Cultural Studies for Shaky Islands.” *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Space, and Place*, eds. Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 3 (16).

6. Lawrence Buell. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 7-8

7. Christine J. Walley. *Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 143.



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Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* has been published with University of Hawai'i Press (April 2007) and includes discussions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and nuclear testing.

Diane Hebley's *The Power of Place: Landscape in New Zealand Children's Fiction 1970-1989* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1998) is a detailed study of the representation of places such as beaches or islands in children's literature.

Julian Kuzma's *Landscape, Literature, and Identity: New Zealand Late Colonial Literature as Environmental Text, 1890-1921* is an intricate study of landscape in New Zealand literature and an analysis of the uses of literature in environmental history (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Dunedin: University of Otago Schools of English and History, 2003).

Teresa Shewry is undertaking doctoral research on ways that Pacific literature and film narrates and influences hope for changed ecologies in a context of urgent ecological problems and intensifying efforts to reshape people's approaches to ecology in the Pacific in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

Jocelyn Tresize is undertaking doctoral research on John Muir's writing from an ecocritical perspective.

Briar Wood has a paper forthcoming in *ISLE* (April or May 2007) called "Mana Wāhine and Ecocriticism in Some Post-80s Writing by Māori Women."

David Young published *Whio: Saving New Zealand's endangered blue duck* with Craig Potton Publishing (Nelson, 2006) and *Keeper of the Long View: the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainability* with PCE (Wellington, 2007). His previous book was a history of conservation in New Zealand (2004).

*

Further interesting starting points for materials and references are the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment web pages:

ASLE Australia New Zealand: <http://www.asle-anz.asn.au/>

ASLE India: http://www.geocities.com/asle_india/index.htm

ASLE Japan: <http://asle-japan.org/>

ASLE Korea: <http://www.aslekorea.org/>

ASLE UK: <http://www.rlyeh.entadsl.com/ASLE/index.htm>

ASLE USA: <http://www.asle.umn.edu/>

European Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/esml/easlce/index.htm>



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David Young recommends, for those who want to stretch out towards the edge of sustainable thinking, a couple of websites and an article:

Alan AtKisson, "Sustainability is Dead, Long Live Sustainability", 2001,
<http://www.AtKisson.com>

Adams, W.M., "The Future of Sustainability: rethinking environment and development in the 21st century", 2006
<http://home.flash.net/~jteague/Sue/orglearn.html>

Kofman, Fred, and Peter M. Senge. "Communities of Commitment: the Heart of Learning Organizations". *Organizational Dynamics* 22.2 (Autumn 1993), p.5 (19).



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Review:

Geoff Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua*. Victoria University Press, 2006.

Julian Kuzma

Geoff Park's latest book *Theatre Country* has been long awaited in NZ environmental circles, so I was somewhat disappointed to find it was a collection of previously published material from a variety of publications collated together into a book of essays. Chapter 12, for example, "Swamps which might doubtless easily be drained," is taken unadulterated from Brooking and Pawson's *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*. However, it is good to have this material collected together in what is a beautifully presented book. The unique origins of the chapters by no means make the book incoherent – indeed overall it appears seamless and logically structured. Furthermore, *Theatre Country* is a pleasure to read.

Geoff Park's writing has a certain quality of engaging personal observation blended with a patient gravitas, together with an apparent genuine response to the landscape and appreciation of its environmental history, that reminded me of the voice of another, much earlier, New Zealand ecologist – his predecessor Herbert Guthrie Smith. Park has been working on a film about Guthrie Smith of Tutira, so maybe he has absorbed some of Guthrie Smith's mana. As all historians know, it is difficult and often irresistible to write about a period without adopting some aspects of its characteristics. Indeed, when queried 'Where do you work?' Geoff Park replies 'In the 1890s.'

Historical awareness of land and place is the unifying thread of *Theatre Country*, and the joy of this book, as in Park's previous work *Ngā Uruora: The Groves of Life* (1995), lies in the strength of its historical sources. Park has superbly selected a wide range of historical evidence and quotations, often from surprising and refreshing directions. With such a wealth of material to draw on the book cannot fail to be engaging. In honesty, I did not initially click with *Ngā Uruora* – at the time I saw too much of the ecologist in it. I do not mean this as a criticism, merely that it contravened my sensibilities of the undefined objective boundary between the fields of environmental history and nature writing (indeed to explore this was the point of the book). But in *Theatre Country* this tension is not evident. Park has truly found his voice as both a contemporary ecologist or nature writer and an environmental historian.

Across the chapters there are several recurrent themes: the almost entire loss of New Zealand's indigenous lowland forest and the fortunate chance of historical influences that preserved the remaining pockets; the transformation of the landscape and the importance of the 1890s as a crucial period of not necessarily contradictory transformation and preservation (nice to have one's own work validated!); notions of the scenic with the improving ideal; contemporary identity with landscape and place; and the need for an evolving conservation



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policy. Along the way *Theatre Country* takes in subjects as diverse as Colin McCahon, the photography of Henry Wright in the 1890s and Wayne Barrar in the 1990s, the fashion for Claude Glasses, the story of McCahon's *Urewera Mural*, swamp drainage, bird preservation and early tourism, encountering a diverse cast of personalities with environmental influence on New Zealand including landscape designer Thomas Shepherd, Charles Darwin, Walter Buller, Elsdon Best and of course Herbert Guthrie Smith. Park most interestingly advocates the influence of Wordsworth on New Zealand's scenic preservation (almost certainly a factor, not to mention the overlooked influence of the poetic efforts of New Zealand's own multitude of indigenous Wordsworthian imitators, many of whom were influential in scenic legislation, such as William Pember Reeves). *Theatre Country*, then, is a thoughtful, all-encompassing journey through "the land's ecology and its human history as they have intertwined to give us our particular landscapes."

Theatre Country is well presented, with excellent black and white photographic plates separating each essay. A landscape seen through a Claude Glass on the front cover and the same view through the screen of a digital camera on the back effectively symbolise the book's preoccupation with historic and contemporary attitudes to scenery and landscape. My one criticism is that in a book with a chapter concerning an exploration of the history and symbolism behind Colin McCahon's *Urewera Mural* – a work that is referred to repetitively in several other chapters – does not contain a picture of this painting for reference, especially for the international reader. Perhaps Park was right to leave this out – reproduction would inadequately convey the power and the glory of McCahon's "liturgy" to land and identity. But one of the repeated full-colour fold out front and back inner-cover photographic plates could have been given over to the *Urewera Mural*, which at least would give us a Claude Glass portrayal of it.



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Review:

**Tony Ballantyne and Judith A. Bennett (eds),
*Landscape/Community: Perspectives from New
Zealand History*. University of Otago Press, 2005.**

Julian Kuzma

Landscape/Community: Perspectives from New Zealand History is a collection of essays arising from papers given at the third *Passions of the Past* conference, organised by postgraduate students from the Department of History, and held at the University of Otago in 2003. Academic conference publications (and there are many) commonly can be disparate, narcissistic and as enthralling as a convention of Canadian geographers, but *Landscape/Community* is a well-edited, slick production, an example of how such volumes should be done. Principally *Landscape/Community* is a showcase for the work of the Otago school of environmental history – a snapshot of some of the excellent work of the postgraduates then coming through the system under the aegis of Professor Tom Brooking.

There are nine balanced essays in this book, exploring the connections between the land and cultural identity. In 'Doomed Timber' Paul Star explores the history of Seaward Forest near Invercargill – a microcosmic study that highlights the processes of late-colonial deforestation played out across New Zealand. In the second essay of the collection, Paul Star joins forces with James Beattie to offer some important insights into the history of colonial environmental thought in an examination of state forest conservation. James Beattie's essay identifies the significant role of a group of Scottish-educated doctors in determining New Zealand's landscape direction in the late nineteenth century and the scientific and cultural thought behind their 'improvement' of the landscape. In 'Communities in Conflict' Marjan Lousberg examines cultural misunderstandings leading to warfare in colonial Tauranga and the Crown's failed attempts at mediation. Angela Wanhalla interestingly examines patterns of land and resource use in a study of Māori-Pākehā intermarriage on the Taieri Plain.

One of the volume's highlights, with great significance to New Zealand social historians, is Eleanor Cottle's systematic exploration of uncovering the 'untraceable' histories of poor, transient agricultural workers. Alison Clarke's study of harvest festivities in nineteenth-century Otago offers a fascinating view of settler culture and their adaptation to the new landscape. (Note: Alison Clarke's book *Holiday Seasons* has been recently published by Auckland University Press). Michael Bagge's essay 'Dams Dividing Democracy' examines the history, protest and the misuse of political power in the construction of the Clyde Dam. (The contest between economic needs, the interests of New Zealanders and potential massive landscape transformation are highly relevant to the current windfarm plans for Otago). Finally in 'Kiwis in Khumbu' Sue Heydon looks at the establishment of Khunde Hospital in Nepal – examining cultural links that define a New Zealand sense of place and identity in relation to particular landscapes.



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Taken together, *Landscape/Communities* offers an enriching plethora of innovative and original approaches to New Zealand history – a series of vantage points on the relationships between New Zealanders and the natural world ranging from the 1830s to the present day. Highly recommended to all New Zealand historians.



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Against the Wind

Julian Kuzma

Many New Zealanders will be aware of the debate around two proposals for windfarms in the Dunedin-Otago area, on the spectacularly beautiful, but ecologically fragile Lammermoor and Lammerlaw ranges - one by Trustpower in the Mahinerangi Area, and one by Meridian (Hayes Project) which proposes to take in a huge area of the Lammerlaws immediately south of the Old Dunstan Road and the Loganburn Dam. While wind power is seen to be an environmentally responsible energy source, the location, extreme scale, ecological and visual impact of these projects has drawn the opposition of a diverse range of groups, including farmers, conservationists and district planners, as well as high-profile advocates for the environment based in Central Otago, including All Black Anton Oliver, artists Marilyn Webb and Graeme Sydney, and poets Bryan Turner and Richard Reeve.

While the press-releases of the power corporations promote the projects as having minimal impact, in reality some of New Zealand's most iconic landscapes will be contaminated both visually and ecologically. Meridian wants to install up to 176 wind turbines with a generation capacity of 630MW – the world's largest windfarm. The planned turbines are 160m high and the wind farm site covers 92sq km. To quantify the size of the Hayes Project wind turbines, they would each be as tall as a 70 floor skyscraper and would comfortably be able to fit a 747 jumbo passenger jet in their turbine blade circumference. The Trustpower Mahinerangi Windfarm will similarly impact in a major way on the landscape and on approximately 1000 ha of land of ecological significance in terms of its indigenous vegetation and/or biodiversity. The envelope includes important tussock grassland and wetland landscapes abutting, or close to, Te Papanui Conservation Park and some other conservation lands. It is a landscape of stark, austere beauty and silent simplicity, of lights and shadows and horizons. The power companies like it too. It is a long way from anyone else, which, says Meridian, reduces impacts on people and has the collateral benefit of attracting fewer objections. The huge installations are intended to supply the voracious energy appetites of Rio Tinto, Comalco and Auckland – the biggest consumers of power in New Zealand. As with the 'Think Big' hydroelectric schemes of the previous decades, once again Otago finds its landscape in the frame. The Upland Landscape Protection Society is not anti-electricity, but argues that turbines should be managed closer to consumption, be smaller and be placed in significantly modified landscapes, as per a recent report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

Between the two proposals there are 326 towers proposed. In construction these require twelve-metre wide roads – freeways for pest species – to be bulldozed through some of the last remaining mammelated tussock grassland in New Zealand. TrustPower's industrial site is to be situated in Dunedin's primary water catchment, with inevitable chemical run-off, large-scale siltation of the local streams (800,000 cubic metres of spoil), and trauma inflicted on rare local species such as the New Zealand falcon and jewelled gecko. The impact of roading and tower construction and appearance on this rolling tussock landscape and its ecological systems will be major. Local vistas will never be the same again.



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At the time of writing, joint hearings for the wind farm project applications are in progress and will run through May 2007. Further proposals for wind farms in Otago wait in the wings. Meridian Energy is running what could be described as an underhand campaign, with attempts to bypass the hearing process and misrepresentation of the impact of the giant wind factories. It will be interesting to follow how the debate plays out, with both the energy corporations and applicants concerned for the impact on the Otago landscape arguing their cases on environmental grounds.

Information and updates can be found at the Upland Landscape Protection Society's website at www.uplandlandscapeprotection.org



The Lammerlaw Ranges – 'not an outstanding natural landscape' according to Meridian Energy.



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Richard Reeve - Poems

For this issue of *ENNZ*, we are proud to showcase the work of Otago poet Richard Reeve, in response to the windfarm issue, attitudes to energy consumption and the landscape. Richard Reeve is a Dunedin-based poet, reviewer, editor and spokesperson for the Upland Landscape Protection Society. He is editor of New Zealand literary journals *Landfall* and *Glottis*, the author of two books of poetry, *Dialectic of Mud* (AUP 2001) and *The Life and the Dark* (AUP 2004), and the recipient of a number of literary awards, including the 2002 Todd Foundation Writer's Bursary. His work has appeared in publications throughout the world.

El Dorado

for Marilyn and Annette

'There must have been a time', I tried to say to the crones upfront,
but the land had drawn in our attention, predictably as run-off.
The cold plains stretching towards Kyeburn (I camped there with a girl),
the Rock and

Pillar range, distant Dunedin: to imagine the consultant,
congratulated by her CEO, sniggering at these women,
arranging her motherhood with a bulldozer, even as the hills continue
their swell through eternity.

'What is the point of art?' But our car,
trembling, had stopped. One of them scarved, a hatter,
the roar penetrated her voice. And we were struck by that glare,
the view surveying itself. And then those two daughters,
tangoing the tussock, cheering up hebe, tickling pin-cushion bog.
The Planner calls it acupuncture,

though the endemic 'rash', well—
the pastoral gangrene, though the livestock won't accept that—
makes this latest gouge pretty minor.

So many profess the issue,
huge at home, warmed by the strip-mines and hydroelectric schemes,
while wind blows gold from the wheels of the skidding trucks.



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Love among the Turbines

'Loved by them all, by my wife Marg foremost,
By Wagner from the caff, and by that old cat
Whose kiss I prime with a bribe of roast',
Said the corpse to itself, as though it could talk.
'I have Fifties friends, and fair ones at that,

I managed my bank loan, I done my debt,
Made toasts to the boys, constructed my house
To escape the outfall of private regret',
Said the corpse to itself, as though it could think.
'There once was a woman, tough as a mouse,

Lived in the shack in the grass by the site,
Throwing her dishwater at the entrance shed—
This crazy young bitch, goodlooking not bright.'
Said the corpse to itself, as though it could talk,
'At the pub we talked, and then was in bed,

I heard on a grape-vine she brought up a boy,
But the blades went up, and we shot through.
Them hands of the winds are lost to our joy',
Said the corpse to itself, as though it could think,
'But the hands of a man can rape on cue.'

'Until a third lump came, it was a sick joke;
But the straight-faced surgeon suggested that day
Make peace with a stone, or take up a book',
Said the corpse to itself, as though it could talk.
'Jesus! what some big men like me will gay.'



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Lyrics for Global Warming

*

It is fraught here alone,
one more among trapped
multitudes that moan
the cry to adapt.

Armageddon mapped out:
antediluvian drought
(not some outback fort
that prophets report)

sucking out the seas
before the ancient oceans rise.
And all that refuse,
and every man's eyes

seeking subtle conquest
of country such as this,
the snows of your breast,
the plains of your kiss.

*

The wind in your hair
made a small boy stare.
Yet presuming it thus
that nothing shows

the loveliness implicit,
you mock-sowl, ignore
that small man's ardour
(lunging to kiss it).

There will be times yet
to observe in beauty
straightforward duty.
Unsequestered the void

runs through your hair
smiles in your frown.
Yet this haze draws near,
a grey in your crown.

Was it always this grey?
Too hot overhead sun
makes meat of a fin's fun.
And, one had to agree,

it was not much to be.
Sun through double-glazing
sent Goldfish crazing.
There was little to say,

it was hardly new to me.
A star through smog
or the girl out on her jog;
nothing is new to me.

And where Fishy landed
some mad old fucker
ran round with a pucker.
Answers, he demanded.

*

To begin, the coarseness:
venereal hoarseness
of the municipal gods,
seizing sand as goods,

hunting the whole half
with a Roman splutter.
'The world', we mutter,
autogeny of the self,

'let this happen to us.'
(And factories putter;
the wastes are a clutter).
'The planet', we grizz,

'made happen this pain',
perpetual pinch of life.
'Life lives to make strife'
our councillors explain.



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*

Myself, they called me,
in the roar of the market
never gyped history.
We fizz then cark it

(those mystics suck shit)
but the bulge in my pocket
weighs down the sky
with the bling I buy.

I pulled hard for a heart
that wouldn't be sold;
I bought out that tart
but her eyes were old.

I chopped her head off
to teach her her lesson.
In war, sales and love
gotta 'keep em guessin.'

*

What she would call me
before I slipped through
the lock of her body
and came to be true,

was something like 'you'
which implied then that I,
conceived with a sigh,
might know what to do

(whom to visit when older
to blame for my fate),
trapped in this cavity
force-fed depravity.

And if I could hold her
It might all come right.
But I am God's soldier
And it is now too late.

*

'Live life', exult your time
in the sun's solar rhyme.
What poetry we have left
must feed the bereft.

Not your miserly selves
scraping in the dark,
nor these opulent elves
asleep in the park.

All the rivers are dead
though we cast lines in,
and that rain on the shed
is a cloud of benzene.

My love, we are wasted
by the whims of others.
Let us claim we tasted
Springs of our mothers.

*

Because I will love you
from Autumn to Spring,
do not say what you do
I shall sing I shall sing

in each fresh false start
the cringing of my heart.
That is, I sing of you
without a thing of you,

being insecure, crowded
with a shoal of ought
that haunts the unclouded
and submarine thought.

Each of us alone as life
sucks at the one breath:
exoneration by a wife,
forgiveness before death.



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*

They lied when they said
there is nothing dead.
There is something dead
in a hold of the head.

Not plant or animal,
fungus or heath or reef,
embalmed in enamel,
wave-wiped growth,

no, and yet specimen
of those long voyages
that brought this interim
of merchant languages.

Let into this life love,
draw outside the smell;
let what we retrieve
be a dried-out shell.