



Introduction

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For a number of years, one of my distinguished colleagues, under whom I once studied myself, has been teaching a course on “the nature of nature.” Fluent in many languages and knowledgeable in the formative (scientific and philosophical) texts of several traditions, he was, decades ago, probably one of the first in North America to introduce university courses in ecology and ethics, today’s “ecocriticism,” which were immensely popular and challenging interdisciplinary, cross-cultural offerings from which many a student learned to give up on pre-given meanings and to approach “nature,” too, as having a history. As vast and varied as this history is, one instance of it—that belonging to Euro-American modernity—remains the dominant target of eco-critical discourse. This is the history that Shelley Saguaro finds characterized in Murray Bail’s 1998 novel *Eucalyptus*, where a “scientific, rational, straightforward, and written” mode of narration is set apart from the “intuitive, natural, circuitous, and oral.” Reading Virginia Woolf’s 1940-41 essay “Anon” alongside *Eucalyptus*, Saguaro connects the oral mode to “landscape and open air, before Caxton’s printing press and the predominance of the printed word changed a communal ‘audience’ into indoor, individual readers and writers of texts.” This much-debated point of departure for the development of a “new” ecopoetics is explored by Saguaro with particular reference to human/arboreal relations. Trees: a fascinating and provocative way to re-imagine representations of nature and culture, and of land and aboriginality, as Anne Collett and Dorothy Jones show in their study of gendered “tree-scapes” in the art of Emily Carr and Judith Wright. Matt Low moves the ecocritical starting point back to Anglo-Saxon poetry written in Old English, arguing that the elegy, in particular, belongs to the growing genre of English and American ecopoetry—the genre much under discussion in this *Mosaic* issue. Not far removed from this genre is Bradley Smith’s study of the “virtual” and the “real” (the realm to which “nature” ostensibly belongs) in Richard Powers’s novel *Plowing the Dark*.



For V. S. Naipaul in *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*, “gender refers to men,” suggest Steph Ceraso and Patricia Connolly in their study of the emasculating effects of colonialism on the male protagonists in these two novels, where “gender, specifically masculinity, is intimately connected to questions of cultural survival and of identity formation as interwoven with issues of race, class, ethnicity, and nation.” In another essay that broaches colonialism, Ziad Bentahar, while recognizing the immediate ties of Frantz Fanon’s writings to colonial Algeria, approaches Fanon as nonetheless an outsider to North Africa and, partly for that reason, as someone whose reflections on colonialism have wide-ranging international significance. John Lutz examines Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* as a depiction of the impulses of domination and control that stem from commodity fetishism under capitalism, even while the novel, through its victimized characters, probes the power of human resistance.

Two essays in this issue deal very differently with different wars. Focusing on Pat Barker’s unacknowledged use in *Regeneration* of First World War poet Wilfred Owen’s work, Kaley Joyes considers Barker’s challenge to the definitive status of “eyewitness” accounts in favour of a reliance on history’s textuality—and intertextuality. Todd F. Tietchen turns to the aesthetic practices of the Waldport Fine Arts Project, an interned collective of conscientious objectors to World War II whose interest in “*estranged forms of being*” gave impetus to many New Left post-war concerns and causes. Drawing from the philosophical tradition that runs from Husserl and Heidegger to Agamben and Nancy, Birger Vanwesenbeeck theorizes the link between art and community in the fiction of American author William Gaddis, suggesting that, for Gaddis, the link “is neither holistic nor marginal, neither inherited nor entirely foreign, but constitutive of that very small audience that is formed every time a work of art is played and recognized, no matter how seldom that may be.” Finally, the issue includes an essay that correlates, through rhetoric, the speech given by Lyndon B. Johnson at Gettysburg in 1963 with Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Gettysburg Address.

Look for the next *Mosaic*, an issue featuring Peggy Kamuf.

