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Editor's Notebook: Ten Years of The Goose

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Editor's Notebook: Ten Years of *The Goose*

by

Lisa Szabo-Jones
& Paul Huebener



Photo: Lisa Szabo-Jones

So, here we are, ten years later, our twentieth issue—remarkable what a name, the consequence of a hodgepodge of SCTV, a stubby, Ken Taylor, and Northrop Frye, can excite in the imagination. *The Goose's* beginnings are modest, an email newsletter for ALECC (Association for Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada/Association pour la littérature, l'environnement et la culture au Canada) started in 2005, the idea hatched between Lisa and Ella in the cafeteria at the University of Oregon during ASLE's biennial conference. Yet, even as a newsletter it aspired to be more, and how could it not? ALECC was—is—a wealth of creative talent, spirit, and heart.

Adam Dickinson, Pamela Banting, Jennifer Bowering-Delisle, Nick Bradley, and Travis Mason agreed to be our first contributors. Our next issue we dared to up the ante: six contributors. And so we grew, evolved into a rather more ambitious journal focusing on the arts, the environment, and culture in Canada. (Honestly, we didn't really know what we were, only that we had a sense of what we wanted to do: to profile a cluster of Canadian environmental writers and writing about Canada.) We were a bit naïve, it seems, because anyone with keen senses and healthy curiosity would perceive that this country is rife with "earth critters." *The Goose* has been guilty, over these last ten years, of encouraging their population growth. The journal has become a key resource for environmental book reviews and an inspiring venue for ecological thinking.

To mark the occasion, our special anniversary issue includes a cluster of reflections on the relationship between the arts, culture, and the environment from prominent scholars, artists, writers, and educators. Their comments illuminate a wide range of opportunities, triumphs, and concerns, from the politics and practices of environmentalist writing and art, to the connections between the environment and matters of diversity and justice, to the past and future of ALECC, to the world of a single poem.

We've enjoined a selection of original *Goose* poets to share their recent work. Reviewing the back issues is a humbling experience: we have built one hell of an archive. Lisa recalls how asking three original contributors (who return in this issue)

"I tried to recall the little HTML coding I'd done in my early 20s, and realized I was in over my head! Those first two issues were made possible, in large part, by the patience of our contributors as we beta-tested the publication of their essays, and by the Herculean, unpaid efforts of Tina Goertz at U of T's Information Commons, who agreed to help us get the ungainly Goose aloft.

The font I chose for the first draft was obscure and widely spaced; the colour a muddy, goose-shit green. (Al Purdy, I felt, would have approved.) Nonetheless, our ideology was ambitious: to establish a forum for the publication of ecocritical scholarship in Canada; to raise the profile of such work, in the hopes that departments across the country would take heed, and create tenure-track jobs, research positions, and writer-in-residency posts in the field; to foster interdisciplinary connections across departments; and, to put ecocritics and environmental writers and artists into conversation with one another. Our long-term goal was to make the entire endeavour as inclusive as possible, and, ultimately, to become a fully bilingual publication.

*The Goose's 10th anniversary finds me two and a half years into my post-academic career. I'm thrilled to see the extent to which many of our ambitions have been realized—by Lisa, Mike, Paul, Mariève, Amanda, Camilla, ALECC, and the newsletter's many contributors. Much of the real work on environment, education, arts, and culture in Canada has only just begun in the wake of Harper's defeat, but *The Goose*—now a slick-looking publication with a global readership—inspires me to take heart that ecocritical dialogues and creative incursions, agents of change, now have a well-established niche."*

~ Reflection from Ella Soper

required many mental pep talks. Yet, when Adam Dickinson said yes, she became emboldened to ask Anne Simpson; her yes encouraged her to approach Nancy Holmes; and her yes ... well, read the back issues. For this issue, we are also revisiting a rawlings, Tim Lilburn, Basma Kavanagh, Don McKay, Gillian Harding-Russell, Ken Belford, Jenna Butler, Emily McGiffin, Seán Lysaght, and David Zieroth. It has been a great privilege to work with all of the generous and remarkable *Goose* poets these past ten years and unsettling to hear their effusive thanks for *our* consideration. Humbling, truly. In 2014, Camilla Nelson took over the poetry section, and with her enthusiasm and innovation, *The Goose* has expanded its range. This issue, she has initiated a "[rewriting the archive](#)" series, which invited poets to engage and respond to earlier *Goose* poetry contributions. Once again, she's brought together a stunning collection of works by Marella Hoffman, Kate Rogers, Brook Pearson, Carol Watts, Gary Barwin, Andrew Taylor, Annabel Banks, Ariel Gordon, Pearl Pirie, and Tanis MacDonald.

Book reviews have always been a core feature of *The Goose*, and as Amanda Di Battista explains in her editorial "[Honk if You Love Book Reviews!](#)," the special cluster of reviews in this issue not only features the usual new releases, but also opens the door to provocative reassessments of the larger historical canon. Amanda has shaped the reviews section into an expansive and critical component of the journal. We are ever grateful to the contributors who've provided insight into the diversity of environmental scholarship, arts, and activism within and beyond Canada. Analytics show us how these reviews are literally going global, and Amanda and our reviewers have been integral in this success.

We continue to build our Francophone profile. Gilles Mossière returns this time with "Agonie," a wonderful French translation of Jerry Auld's short story "The Agony." The story, published here in both French and English, is about a fatal climbing accident that took place in 1920 near Mount Assiniboine in the Canadian Rockies.

We also feature three long form pieces. In their article "Petrography, the Tar Sands Paradise, and the Medium of Modernity," Warren Cariou and Jon Gordon discuss an innovative photographic technique, concocted by Cariou, created from bitumen, the infamous hydrocarbon sludge of the Athabasca tar sands. With eerie and beautiful petrographs displayed throughout their article, Cariou and Gordon invite us to rethink our own complex relationship with oil. Anne Simpson's "Bee Work" and poem "Departure" are meditations on imagining the seemingly unknowable—the experiences of bees and other nonhumans, and the limitations and power of language to imagine those other-than-human worlds. Brian Bartlett shares his *plein-air* writing, excerpts from his poetic prose *Branches over Ripples: A Waterside Journal*. In these selections, Bartlett roams the Nova Scotia landscape, frequents the habitats of Fairy Shrimp and Meadowhawks. Yet, the lyric never settles comfortably, as questions of late hatches, absent species, and prospects of dried ponds make their way into his narrative.

Here's to another ten years! Thank you all, readers and contributors!

Lisa & Paul

LISA SZABO-JONES is a photographer/visual artist and writer, and she teaches literature at the University of Alberta.

PAUL HUEBENER is an assistant professor of English at Athabasca University. His book *Timing Canada: The Shifting Politics of Time in Canadian Literary Culture* is now available from McGill-Queen's University Press.