

ecopoetics workshop 2024
coffee, labor, ecology



café tío conejo
manizales, colombia

Capitalist production collects the population together in great centres, and causes the urban population to achieve an ever-growing preponderance...it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil.

Karl Marx

Brent

Continuing a project I call “non-standard ecopoetics,” this collection of texts stands obliquely to what we normally think of as environmental literature, with the intention of presenting *ecopoetics* (ecology: the idea that everything is connected) as participating not in “conventional grammars of knowledge,” but in what Sylvia Wynter calls the *New Studia*, “speech...toward a new, correlated human species, and eco-systemic, ethic,” an “unsuspected...trans-epistemic, trans natural-scientific cum trans-cosmogenic modality” that exists, per Aimé Césaire, as “only poetry.” For Wynter, this means coming to terms with the “*extra-territoriality of our self-cognition*,” i.e. shifting the locus of the human from the individual to our interrelatedness, what Édouard Glissant might call *relation* and what Kamau Brathwaite might call *the continuum*.

In Dennis Tedlock’s study of parallelism in Mayan poetry, “Toward a Poetics of Polyphony and Translatability,” we find a powerful kernel of what this might mean for poetics. If we are accustomed to using words in “isomorphic relationships with their meanings,” Tedlock assures us that for the Mayans, a world like ours that so often uses language in a way that takes for granted the link between a word and its meaning (and, as a provocation, like AI inevitably does) “would be a world before language, and certainly a world before poetry.” Tedlock sees the Mayan poem as positing poetry as *continuous translation*. Formally and semantically, Mayan poetry’s polyphonous parallel structures insist on a poem of constant invention, from the internal reflective doubling of language’s meaning-making processes, to the reader becoming a recreator of the poem’s meaning and form according to historical and technological situatedness. Erasing the primacy of individual authorship, such a poetics does not aim to “bring multiple codes into agreement.” Instead, it presents poetics as a kind of ongoing social contract, or, perhaps, as what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls, in relationship to Amerindian perspectivism, a “ratio or relation between...two moieties, the I and the other in perpetual perspectival alternatedness,” resolving dualism (say, writer/reader) “into a triangularity in which the terms...and the relation are “incommensurable.””

From this glittering world of incommensurable perspectival shifting, the powerful work of Cecilia Vicuña’s “What is Poetry To You?” takes on renewed significance. For the film, Vicuña asked folks in Bogotá to share their personal definition of poetry. What emerges is poetry as an emergent, unfinished, spooling and unspooling phenomenon weaving through the social body, through the Americas, and through the world. Indeed, it is a perspectivalism Vicuña frequently manifests in her own performances, such as “Living Quipu.” Similarly, the work of Colombian sculptor Delcy Morelos, who engages both the history of sculptural minimalism and Amerindian cosmologies, may be viewed as a powerful twisting of the Americas together in a co-creative re-creation of Land Art that takes as its basis the conceptual and spiritual living soil we all are born from. At the same time, her work speaks to the grave consequences of capitalism and Western cosmology’s desecration of the human and the non-human alike. Finally, Kamau Brathwaite’s *Shar (Hurricane Poem)*, a poem published in the wake of his library’s destruction (one of the most important in the Caribbean) by Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 (which he refers to as a missile), is presented here in various forms: as a 1990 book, as partially recorded on tape at a 1988 performance, and fragmentarily reprinted in *MR: Magical Realism* (2002), might also be seen as performing this unfinishable poetry of interminable parallel play.

The other works for browsing, each in their way, intervene in the concept of poetry fixing language into codes of meaning, and, perhaps, they participate in the “remak[ing], consciously and collectively, in the new society in which our now existential referent “we [...] in the horizon of humanity” will *all now live*” (Sylvia Wynter).

Dennis Tedlock

[Toward a Poetics of Polyphony and Translatability](#)

Sylvia Wynter

[No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to my Colleagues](#)

(optional/browse): [The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, its](#)

[Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of \(Self-\)Cognition](#)

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

[Radical Dualism](#)

Cecilia Vicuña

[What Is Poetry To You? \(excerpt, full video avail. two weeks before workshop\)](#)

browse: [Saborami](#)

browse: [PALABRARmas](#)

explore performances/talks: [Living Quipu, Poetry Project \(Carolee Shneeman Tribute\),](#)

[EPC Performance, St. Mark's Poetry Project \(1989\)](#)

Lucy Lippard

[Spinning the Common Thread](#)

Delcy Morelos

[El Abrazo y Mas \(Slideshow With Links\)](#)

Kamau Brathwaite

[Shar \(Hurricane Poem\)](#)

[Atumpun](#) (Carolina Herron's into here is included in *Shar*)

(browse) from MR (containing fragments of Shar)

Poetry & Poetics to Browse

Oscar Munoz

[Distopia](#)

[Intentos 1 y 2](#)

[Palimpsesto](#)

Ulises Carrion

[The New Art of Making Books](#)

[SONNETS \(excerpt\)](#)

Augusto de Campos

[olho de olho](#)

Johanna Drucker

[Stochastic Poetix](#)

Robert Duncan

[Towards an Open Universe](#)

N.H. Pritchard

[Isostasy \(in *The Matrix*, p. 133\)](#)

[Gyre's Galax](#) (print)

[Gyre's Galax](#) (vocal)

Brooke

This list brings together a variety of Indigenous and eco-poetic approaches to the environment (with specific attention to water) as endangered by settler-colonial ecocides. In constellating poets and scholars who write from and about different Indigenous Nations and communities, I hope not to conflate the specificities of place-based Indigenous experiences, but rather, emphasize “poetic relationality.” Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca) defines poetic relationality in her essay on “sovereign poetics” as “the generative practice that has sustained communities across decades of settler violence” by “thinking beyond representational differentiation and point[ing] toward a deeper thinking that trans-Indigenous poetic methods evoke at different scalar points” (62, 63). With a trans-Indigenous approach, we will read not only across creative and theoretical texts, interviews and news articles, but also across different localities to open a conversation about the intertwined impacts of colonialism and capitalism on Indigenous peoples and their ecologies. We might consider what connections, relations, and solidarities we can note across the texts. How is metaphor invoked by the poets across this list? How is memory? In this collection, I have selected some texts that I know and some that are new to me in hopes to include a variety of perspectives and approaches to our conversation.

Natalie Diaz (Mojave)

[The First Water Is The Body](#)
[exhibits from American Water Museum](#) (early draft of poem)
[How the Milky Way Was Made](#)
[audiobook of Postcolonial Love Poem](#) (available through spotify)

Brandy Nālani McDougall (Kānaka Maoli)

[Water Remembers](#)

Joanne Barker (Lenape)

[Confluence: Water as an Analytic of Indigenous Feminisms](#)

Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi)

[Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene](#)

Tiffany Lethabo-King

[“Introduction” from The Black Shoals](#)

Tyrone Williams

[“Etymology, Ecology, and Eco-poetics”](#)

Macarena Gómez-Barris

[from The Extractive Zone: “Introduction: Submerged Perspectives” ; “A Fish-Eye Episteme: Seeing Below the River’s Colonization” ; “The Extractive Zone: Cecilia Vicuña’s Social Ecologies by Macarena Gómez-Barris” lecture on vimeo](#) (optional)

Cecilia Vicuña and Sarah Lookofsky

[Multispecies Worldbuilding Lab Podcast Episode](#)

Articles on Colombia’s Rivers and Amazon Rainforest

[Colombian high court grants personhood to Amazon rainforest in case against country’s government](#)
[Colombia’s Indigenous Form Mini-Government to Save Amazon](#)

Simon

This reading list is focussed on three key areas of inquiry. The first is the way that capitalism seems to orient us towards consuming one another. Nancy Fraser's chapter on ecopolitics, from her book, *Cannibal Capitalism*, touches on this theme. She argues that capitalism creates an artificial separation between the natural and the economic. The collection of quotations relating to the environment from Marx and Engels also support this thesis. The second area of focus is Colombian avant-garde poetics. There are examples here from the Colombian avant-garde group, "Nadaísmo," whose two most well-known members were Gonzalo Arango and Jaime Jaramillo Escobar. Camilo Roldán gives a brief overview of the movement here, followed by a selection of Arango and Escobar's poems and the "First Nadaísta Manifesto" (1958). The earlier poet Candelario Obeso, who introduced creole language into Colombian poetics, is also included. How, I want us to ask, does avant-garde practice and anti-capitalist environmental concern go together? The third area is processual poetics, a kind of poetry making where all the work that goes toward the final poetic product is also treated as part of that final product. This attitude towards making poetry is important to our study of how poetry, labor, and the environment go together, and, indeed, to any adequate understanding of how a good cup of coffee is created. Camille Martin writes about how the Canadian poets Robert Zend and bpNichol use experimental, processual approaches in their work. She refers to Nichol's *Martyrology*, a portion of which, pertaining to work, is included here. Walter Benjamin famously argues that the process of translation must aim at conveying the meaning and spirit of the original work and not just mechanically convert the words of the original into the target language. You're invited to use Benjamin's approach to translate Obeso's poems, which are included here only in Spanish/creole. Isabelle Stengers writes about the usefulness of collecting natural processes into a name, and a Dickinson poem is included for good measure. It prompts us to think about the difference between seeing our engagement with nature as an engagement with production processes and as a direct connection that bypasses such processes.

Essential

Nancy Fraser

["Nature in the Maw: Why Ecopolitics Must be Trans-environmental and Anti-Capitalist,"](#)
Cannibal Capitalism (2022), 75-113.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

["Marx and Engels on Environment"](#) (1844-76)

Camilo Roldán

["Introduction to Nadaismo"](#) (2012)

Candelario Obeso (1849-1884)

[seven poems.](#)

Camille Martin

["Robert Zend—Part 7. Canadian Literary Cross-Pollination: bpNichol"](#) (2014)

Walter Benjamin

["The Task of the Translator"](#) (1923)

bpNichol

[from "Sons and Divinations" from *Martyrology* \(1972\)](#)

Isabelle Stengers

["The Intrusion of Gaia" and "Capitalism," *Catastrophic Times* \(2015\), 43-59](#)

Emily Dickinson

["I taste the liquor never brewed" \(214\)](#)

Suggested

Princeton Encyclopedia

["Environment and Poetry" \(2012\)](#)

Princeton Encyclopedia

["Poetry of Colombia" \(2012\)](#)

Poets Corner

[Suite of Colombian Poets](#)

Jodie Dean and Kai Heron

["Climate Leninism" \(podcast episode; 2024\)](#)

Malcom Ferdinand

["Prologue," *Decolonial Ecology* \(2022\), 2-22.](#)

Stephen Collis

["Review of Drew Milne's *Lichen for Marxists*" \(2017\)](#)

Ray Mark Rinaldi

["A new generation of Colombian artists embraces ecology, diversity, and heritage" \(2023\)](#)

Joshua Clover and Christopher Nealon

["The Other Minimal Demand" \(2019\)](#)

Jurgen Habermas

[on the coffeehouse, from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* \(1962\), 27-42.](#)

E.J. Hobsbawm

["The Revolutionary Situation in Colombia" \(1963\)](#)

Pablo Siles, et. al.

["Smallholder Coffee in the Global Economy – A Framework to Explore Transformation Alternatives of Traditional Agroforestry for Greater Economic, Ecological, and Livelihood Viability" \(2022\)](#)

Joan Retallack

["What is Experimental Poetry & Why Do We Need It?" \(2007\)](#)

Appendices

I. On Coffee (And Labor)

Karl Marx (& summaries)

[The Direct Production Process;](#)

[Capital Ch. 6: The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power](#)

[Chris Harman: The Labour Theory of Value](#)

[David Harvey: "Marx's Refusal of the Labor Theory of Value"](#)

[I. The process which precedes the formation of the capital relation or of original accumulation](#)

[II. Exchange of labour for labour rests on the worker's propertylessness](#)

Christopher E. London

[Class Relations and Capitalist Development: Subsumption in the Colombian Coffee Industry 1928-1992](#)

Paige West

[From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive](#)

[Chapter 2: Neoliberal Coffee](#)

Edward T. Fischer

[Making Coffee Better](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 2: Plant Biology, Capitalist Trade, and the Colonial Histories of Coffee Arabica](#)

Jonathan Morris

[Coffee: A Global History](#)

Donald A. Clellens

[Unpaid Labor As Dark Value in Global Commodity Chains](#)

Lucia Bawot

[We Belong: An Anthology of Women Coffee Farmers](#) (excerpt forthcoming)

Karl Weinhold

[On Coffee Prices](#)

II. Notes on Colombia

Mother Earth Liberation Process

[Freedom and Joy With Uma Kiwe](#)

[Weavings](#)

Sin Cesar

[Sin Cesar \(overview\)](#)

[Haptic Encounters of the Extrajudicial Kind \(on Sin Cesar\)](#)

[Entrelazando](#)

Carolina Caycedo

[Bound Ecologies](#)

<http://carolinacaycedo.com/>

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

[The Creation of Gabriel Garcia Marques](#)

Ed. Cecilia Vicuna & Ernesto Livon-Grosman

[The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry: A bilingual anthology](#)

Aurelio Arturo

[A Short History of Colombian Poetry](#)

David Bushnell

[The Making of Modern Colombia](#)

Ed. Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, Marco Palacios, & Ana Maria Gomez Lopez

[The Colombia Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)

Michael Taussig

[The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America](#)

Wade Davis

[The Magdalena: River of Dreams](#)