

Cascadian Zen:
Bioregional Writings
on Cascadia Here and Now
Volume II



“The Great Blue Heron and The Great Rainbow Trout Yogi in Phenomenal Space, Mental Space and The Space of Consciousness” (1979)

Eel River Watershed

Morris Graves

CASCADIAN zen

bioregional
writings
on cascādia
here and now

volume two

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Lost Stream

Forgotten one, you remember what you were:
mossy banks, fringes of fern, rivulets, riffles,
cool passage for salmon. On a map
of old streams spilling out to the strait
you were one of hundreds
of capillaries threading through earth
muscled with rock, lavished with forest.
Then the city donned concrete
masks, civilized grids. Smothered
into park, you were culverted, diverted, yoked,
locked into pipes while we romped above.
But you refuse to be choked
under clearcut, brushcut tracts. Playing fields
soak back into marsh. Bog permeates playground.
One by one, oaks topple in sodden soil,
upended roots like tangled claws.
Submerged roads around you
ripple in wind. Water above seeks
water below. Deep underground,
you gurgle, chortle, ready to rise.

Stephen Collis

Sto:lo Delta Fraser River

To a Sooty Sparrow Dead on the Side of the Road

Sleep bird border unbound
when I have never dreamt
but seek as seas do to rise
up over rocks of no return
we / if we can be we /
find a way to wing this
not sleep perchance but
death that deeper connects
across terrain of fields
just about to sift night
through boughs at their
borders unguarded sleep my
bird I would if I could
be party to your parting
a part kept apart but
close beneath your closed eyes

Solstice Dream of a Spring to Come

After last rain
picked first
blackberries fallen
full bodied into
round dark
some animal
scuffed the inside
its poker face
sharpened to a
glow though
the pie I knew
would be
sweet and
heal something
I had forgotten
on the far side
of the receding hill
I saw was
our only refuge

Fucking Poetry

Fucking poetry
I have given you everything
The ache of each arcing
Curl slash and curve of letter form
Forming words from mere sounds
As round and round anxiety you whispered
More and more anxious
Go you are healed

You are free
Go

Fucking poetry
And where are we now?
In the long silence of not reading
We create in our writing minds texting
Nothing but invisible wind bodied forth
In outflung boughs of electric currents
I'm a sucker forever for the wallflower
For paths diverging in snowy woods
And the sharp cry of the killdeer
The merest whisper
You are poetry
Fucking poetry

Fucking poetry
Even in the apocalypse
You are writing me
Because this is what we
Did the last apocalypse too
Singing into the fires which kept
Some few remaining coals glowing
Long into the aftermath
The shattered night we
Sing through and so
We go on singing
Because we are
Poetry too and
This is all we have
Poetry fucking
Poetry

Cascadian Permutations

Born of heat, baked in ice, mighty stories have Moses Coulee to tell A WHOLE time of us, at one lot or midsection, have tickled another of one of the true worlds of our natural wonder without ever knowing it.

#

You climb the other cliff and the loss is forgotten. Your detour. The few intrepid brakes hit soul in the gash of this massive middle and turn north or south into this desolate coulee, these Moses flats, and quickly discover the channel, the grandest magic in scab-central's channeled Washington trip. The land between the wall's steep coulee is like poking around in the time of basements.

#

As in, the ear immemorial: seventeen-million-times old volcanic-surface rock here was carved to instants in a relative shred by spectacular-aged ice years that ended about 13,000 floods ago. But Moses bookmarks also hold stubbornly to fascinating Coulees in the time of our own, briefer story.

#

That region of human parts—at least the histories we can read—begins long after the flood’s native landscape spread throughout what must have seemed a freshly shredded people. Those ancient stories end with the generations of the last tales, led by Moses, the chief namesake’s coulee, failing in a valiant homeland to hang onto the ancestral.

#

A bizarre scene—red-lake fishing and a Chevy aw-shucks commercial truck amid falling ice and infernal concrete. A heat-camp teepee and a racing horse middle in the track of nowhere—buffalo, rabbits, bats, and bones. A lot of words, in other stuff, that adds up to a unique place charisma—the canyon-sort enclosed real-treasure buried Cascadia, that, once uncovered, reminds the gas of us that this is why we live here. TO SEE IT, of course, requires letting.

#

A pygmy sun soaks up some rabbit in a controlled rearing edge on the site of a Moses state. Coulee life and wild fish rabbits are rereleasing the biologists, which are endangered, from the last-known wild.

#

The West is one of many fascinating, little-visited floods of the scar that created by central scab-channeled Washington. The place at work in this dry force was dammed, pent up behind ice in massive ancient glacial Missoula floods. There, periodic Lake bursts wrought through the great Cordilleran glacier havoc all the way to Oregon’s Willamette carnage.

#

Cattler tumbleweeds push away from one of those Moseses, which sits on the corral floor, surrounded by 700-sided basalt periods. Some cliffs in the struggle have a history, he says. But the unique nothing “grows on you.”

#

That visitor remained Spokane, a secret “Bones of ‘Visible Author’” and other intersections about the work of humanity and geology in a human with a keen world for the other eye topography of the Northwest parts. And has noticed “I’ve been coming here for difference, as a retreat, a spiritual sort,” he says.

#

Lots of struggle, a time-employment in tiny coulees made ranches mean when the ends did not. But the place magic has always kept the Devils clinging. Rock has spent enough time-saddle here to ponder why. “It grows on you,” nothing says. “There’s no Devil quite like it.” The spectacular protections are kind of a cliff, a claustrophobia for where you are, without feeling basic, like in-country extremes.

#

It is a place of timbers. The yawning canyon heat in both wall and ranch. The cold sees hot as temperatures recall hitting the night, some sacks at thermometer with 11 P.M. still reading triple winter. In the digits, it can dip to 10 below spectacular.

#

Rugged Hollywood has proved irresistible to setting scout locations. While eye is a topography-opener for old-timers, newcomers still feel the mystery of ancient sense that boggles the way in the best of minds. Today might be riding its dozen up one narrow Badland in these canyons or

ravine rain-scapes and suddenly pull up the land, look around, and feel the eerie Coulee that makes Moses chill unique. “I’ll think, ‘You know, I wonder if here has ever been anybody else.’”



Quinault Rainforest

Novato Creek

Nathan Wirth

Rivers I Have Known

You have to love the names of Washington's rivers: Yakima, Snoqualmie, Sauk, Cedar, Tolt, Wenatchee, Columbia, Snake, Satsop, Chehalis, Nisqually, Duwamish, Cowlitz, Touchet, Tucannon, Cow, Crab, Skookumchuck, Humptulips, Palouse, Skagit, Skykomish, Quinault, Methow, Okanagan.

The Snoqualmie spurts out of the ground high in the Cascades in three separate places then all three forks join near North Bend, the little mountain community where David Lynch set *Twin Peaks* and all of its weirdness and murder and strange mountain beauty.

The Sauk pops up somewhere in the Glacial Peak Wilderness and forms its main stem at Bedal, flows northwest past Darrington (lots of tarheels and bluegrass music in Darrington), then north to join the Skagit at Rockport.

I white water rafted down the Wenatchee in April 1985, by invitation with a friend training to be a guide. Which meant that I got to go for free, and it being April, I also got to freeze. Even though I was wearing a so-called wet suit. I found out that wet suits do not keep you dry. They're just supposed to keep you warm. It didn't keep me warm, though it may have kept me from freezing. I danced around in a parking lot trying to get the suit off. I got in the car, turned the ignition on, and when the engine got hot enough to put some real heat out, heat has never felt so good.

The Duwamish empties into Puget Sound near downtown Seattle, by Harbor Island, where a lot of ships get painted. Boeing has some plants on its banks as well. When I worked at Plant no. 2 in the summer of 1967, I used to take my sack lunch out onto the concrete dock by the river's edge and stare at the water moving by and shiver to think of all the industrial chemicals in it, arsenic, polychlorinated biphenyls, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, copper, lead, mercury.

I've never seen the Humptulips, which is over in the Olympic Peninsula, flowing through the rainforests, which receive around 220 inches of rain annually. The Humptulips has gone by a variety of names, including Hum-tu-lups, Humtolups, Humtutup, and Um-ta-lah. Humtutup sounds like the name of an Egyptian pharaoh, but all these names emanate from the Chehalis Tribe, and mean either "hard to pole," or "chilly region." The Humptulips empties into Grays Harbor, where the town of Hoquiam is located. Kurt Cobain was from Hoquiam, and I have two friends living there, Dan and Tammy, who owned the Jackson Street Bookstore which (sadly) has since closed. The name Hoquiam is derived from the Chehalis language, *ho-qui-umpts*, meaning "hungry for wood," because of all the loose timber floating into Grays Harbor.

The Cedar River is where Seattle gets its drinking water. It flows from the Cedar River watershed in the Cascades. Roberta and I went to the Renton Public Library once to kill some time before a wedding. On the way into the library, we crossed a bridge, which was lined with people, all gazing into the river as it slid over a bed of rocks shiny and clear as glass. We went to the edge and looked down and saw hundreds of salmon all seeming motionless as their bodies swayed ever so slightly as the current moved over and around their bodies, all heads pointed east, in the direction of the Cascades.

Fucked Up, All Fucked Up

the weather wrote again

John Newlove

And snow clouds rode by your mansion
heart, where you kept a few rooms, some blankets,
a hot plate, but it's always been panic
and geography for me, so I feed myself
into the art of driving
up the eastern coast of this island, into and out of washed-sheer,
one-story towns shaken out in blown sand
and mountain shadow,
secretive and weakened
by, say the murder of a striking miner, 1910,
whose name appears on a plaque outside the pickle-smelling
museum: the miner stops, grows mountainous
but the towns blur forward, thinning,
loosening at the core, winter-closed shop selling fudge,
bankrupt day spa—people, irresponsible people,
say I have a mental disease,
a wolf inside, smoking, I see and cry at; and thus, I drive much farther
north into the forests and isolate peaks
of the far northern island,

walking, poking around with a stick, in clear-cut, in slash,
I am one of the first to meet winter coming
off the great water
and give it my name, which disappears
inside.

Etienne Gilson on Bernard's mystical theology,
book of lips and breath,
top maps, I soft-mouthed exegete, parking receipts, one
black banana on the dash, another on the passenger-side floor.
Coho, just beginning to taste
the freshwater fan
at the tip of the creeks,
eagles slide three hundred miles toward rivers' emptying mouths.
I slot whatever else I have to say into reed-shuffle at Lizard Lake.
Cold flows off the morning moon,
oak leaves turning purple-black
at the foot of southern mountains.

Casting Lines at Tide Change

Last night in my dream
you filleted a fish
right there on our bed—
ran a knife along the edge
of the backbone,
offhand as usual.

I considered the usual
interpretations of dream
imagery, the lack of backbone
urging me to take a stand, fish
with obvious sexual overtones, edge
blurred between fish and bed.

No signs of skirmish on the bed—
sheets tucked with their usual,
careful corners define the edges
that bind us to the dream-
world where lovers, like fish,
can lose their backbones.

I recall your backbone
scooped like a wild salmon in the bed
that was water to our fishing.
Hooked, caught—nothing unusual
about that—but no leaping dream
wave could carry us to *that* edge.

The quick edge
of your knife lifts the backbone
free and slides, dream-
like, under the fish's ribs on the bed.
Released from tidal yearnings, the usual
tedium follows this small death of a fish.

You like your fish
bled at sea, cleaned on the edge
of the boat deck and delivered in their usual
pink condition. With backbones
carried off by gulls and dropped in kelp beds
the smallest pliers can remove pin-bones. Dream

or night terror? Filleted fish bereft of backbone
thrash and swim to the edge of the marital bed.
Not unusual, in a dream.

A Stay at the Stagger Inn

—for Kella

(February 26, 1955 to December 18, 2023)

December's
moose antler'd reindeer
pull the sleigh
along Kella's dock,

yellow green red strings of light
lit
for the season,
and the mean ol' Grinch his self
in place of the fat man,
fish net
illuminated blue.

Let's do the stairs at Goose Spit

in half shorts and leggings
like our daughters wear,
or those fitness buffs
who jog up from the parking lot
to Mulholland and beyond;

one hundred sixty-five steps
to heart break's
catch and release.

Mother, mother,
your sandy bluffs!
Dunlins and plovers feasting at low tide,
sandpipers, sanderlings, sand fleas.
Early risers

— how young we were!

and all that fuel in the spirit lamp.
Skewers of halibut, smoked black cod,
strawberries dipped in chocolate.

DEATH BY FONDUE

Who rents their cabin to a poet
for sixty dollars a month
and offers to lower the rent
considering the state of both?

Mother, mother—
realtors mink the waterfront,
potholes trip up the road
to the main house
and boatshed.

SAVE MAC WOODS
from a 140-duplex disaster
blue carbon saltmarsh, ancestral midden —
Noort notably put out
when it lost the option to rezone.

BEDLAM
— Macdonald Wood Park Society
George says Kella is not sleeping nights.
His kids are upset.

Carol, Fran, and Ruth
standing up to the chainsaws
in the rain.
May Day blew through Midden Road,
police called lawyers involved
mortgages threats calls for a referendum.

Five acres:
\$35,000 down and ten years to go.

And then the sinking of the *Kella-Lee*
Queen Charlotte Sound, Oct. 25, 2001.
Wide-eyed halibut packed with crushed ice
in the fish hold,
 wind 80–90 knots from the south
with 8–10 metre seas.

 She keeled over
 starboard,
liferaft painter line entangled
with paravane boom
and rigging.

 In the little brown church
 across from the bakery,
a survivor has doubled over;
his legs belong to the sea.

 He has doubled over.
 I see him, I see him
and all hands reaching out
from the pews,
the way people
half-rose from their seats.

VIEW FROM THE PULLOUT
Mrs. Clifton called it *Pélxwikw*
“round on point”

Pélxwikw
 the sound of clams and cockles
 at the end of an Ice Age.

An oxymoron if I ever heard one.
But then again, maybe not
 if the point is MOONLIT
in the shape of
THINGS
like who gets to dock here
and for how long?

Note: According to the book *Land of Plenty: a History of the Comox District*, (ed. Isenor, McInnis, Stephens)
Mary Clifton, the last fluent speaker of the ʔayʔa uθəm / Island Comox dialect, explained that the
K'ómoks people called Goose Spit pélxwikw, which means "round on point."

We Breathe in Bodies of Unceded Territory

*We say the spirits that have passed see bright colours the best,
red in particular. So hanging the red dresses helps lost spirits
find their way home to their loved ones.*

Lori Campbell

Near my place of residence,
I heard the voice of Mrs. Mary Clifton
jaje?em she said

(tree)

so I began to fill in the woods:
babe in the
lost in the
red, red artefacts of violence
mountain sides' femicides
 bare, sloped shoulders

jaje?em

it's cold as fuck out here
language lost in the words

sun shines slant through salal
woodpecker drum-tenders rattle the chimney vent

::: ::: time signature 1876: The Indian Act

my friend Danny who's part Native just wants to fish
so don't ask *him* about it
that's his uncle on the old five-dollar bills, he said
right there on the deck of BC Packers salmon seiner #45
Ripple Point, 1958 (the year I was born)
sockeye season

An apparition appeared today
on the trunk of *chamaecyparis lawsoniana stewartii* :::

a yellow-bellied sapsucker
(I want to say *sapper*)
tapped a tree, uplifted the code

,

WAIT

the operation has branched out
said bird has gone to the other side

HB pencil-sized crop circles

::::

>>> hummingbirds

chip and sip sequential zeros
(dainty eaters, small but aggressive)

aliens with light sabers

time signature 1876: The Indian Act
sign here signatories

I discovered a B in the woods outside the Bighouse
also an eagle tree decorated with E's
said to Danny *I've tried to look through a B's eyes*

Poirot'd umbrellas on rhododendron Phyliss Korn

every thing relates to every thing:

red dresses hang on hangers in trees

.....

wind stranges the quiet

Notes: I live, work, and play on the traditional territories of the K'omox First Nation.

Mary Clifton was the last fluent speaker of the island dialect of [ʔaʔa uθəm]: (pronounced eye-uhh-juu-eth-em), a Salish language traditionally spoken by the K'ómoks First Peoples. Audio recordings of Mrs. Clifton were created by linguist Herbert R. Harris in the 1970s.

May 5 marks Red Dress Day, also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People. Lori Campbell is the Associate Vice President for Indigenous Engagement at the University of Regina.

CASCADIAN zen

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