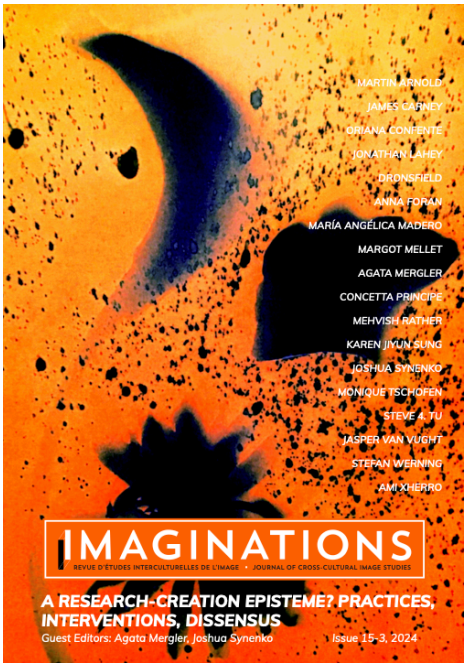
IMAGINATIONS
REVUE D'ETUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE • JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES



IMAGINATIONS:
JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |
REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE
L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy and instructions for contributors:
https://imaginationsjournal.ca

A Research-Creation Episteme? Practices, Interventions, Dissensus
Editors: Agata Mergler, Joshua Synenko

Image credit: Mergler, Agata. "Flowers no 6", wet cyanotype contact print and digital rendering. Poznań, 2022.

To cite this article:
Tu, Steve 4.. "Breathing-With Other-Than-Humans." *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies* vol. 15, no. 3, 2024,
pp. 209-241, doi: https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE29717.

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE29717

BREATHING-WITH OTHER-THAN-HUMANS

STEVE 4. TU

This paper outlines part of a research-creation project focused on human/tree communication on a specific campus green space of a Canadian university. As part of a multispecies ethnographic study of the university, I explore the reciprocal relationship between humans and trees via multispecies duoethnography, a method I am pioneering that draws on time, breathing-with, imagination, and artistic expression. I surface some nuances of interspecies communion, specifically emphasizing the role of breath in moving from acts of attentiveness to frequencies of attunement with arboreal beings.

Cet article présente un extrait d'un projet de recherche-création axé sur la communication entre les humains et les arbres dans un espace vert spécifique d'une université canadienne. Dans le cadre d'une étude ethnographique multiespèce de l'université, j'explore la relation réciproque entre les humains et les arbres à travers la duoethnographie multiespèce, une méthode que je développe, qui s'appuie sur le temps, la respiration commune, l'imagination, et l'expression artistique. Je mets en lumière certaines subtilités de la communion interspécifique, en insistant particulièrement sur le rôle de la respiration dans le passage des actes d'attention aux fréquences d'harmonisation avec les êtres arboricoles.

INTRODUCTION

After introducing myself on the first day of a small doctoral seminar on Indigenous place and research,[1] a classmate asked: *Why trees?* What had led me to focus my research on

trees rather than students or faculty? I like trees more than humans, I said, which elicited some laughter. I smiled, too. But while my answer had been made in jest, the truth is, no tree has ever called me a racial slur, spat on me, or told me to go back to China (a country I've only ever visited twice). Trees are neither Karens nor colonizers. They don't pollute rivers. They don't bring guns to schools or commit war crimes. They don't cause any of the wicked problems plaguing our shared planet. Humans do that all on our own.

Yet many of us seem to have it out for trees (see: Deforestation). We go so far as to plant them for the express purpose of chopping them down at a later date and turning them into furniture. (IKEA is a four-letter curse word in arborilanguage, didn't you know?) The man at the centre of the world's largest religion and one of the central colonizing industries in human history is purported to have cursed a fig tree because it didn't bear fruit. The kicker: it wasn't even the season for fruit-bearing. The general human disregard of, if not outright antipathy toward, trees exists despite the fact they sequester carbon; produce oxygen; reduce the severity of heat islands; have incalculable medicinal uses via their bark, leaves, sap; convey significant other mental health benefits simply by existing; provide food for animals, including human ones; function as habitat for squirrels and birds and insects; etcetera. *Why trees?*

(POST)HUMANISM AND THE UNIVERSITY

In her seminal essay, "The White Album," Joan Didion says, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live" (11). The philosophical tradition of humanism is one such story. While there are variations on the theme, and though these interpretations have shifted and continue to shift over time, Saba Mahmood's intentionally gendered telling of the story captures well the essence of them all: "Man is the author of his own actions *and* representations (not fate, God, or some other force or entity); that through the exercise of his will and reason, he establishes his own norms and laws. Furthermore, not only is man the author but he is also the ultimate *end* of his actions" (Mahmood and Rutherford 1; emphasis original).

A few sentences after her opening line, Didion continues: "We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely [...] by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images [...] Or at least we do for a while" (11). We tell ourselves a particular story, according to Didion, in order to make sense of life and go on living, until (for whatever reason) that story no longer works; until its explanatory power for all that we've experienced no longer proves believable or satisfactory, at which point, we need new stories to live (by).

The story of humanism and its corresponding premise of human exceptionalism—the belief that humans are in some way superior to, and fundamentally unique from other-than-human beings—is, I submit, a story that's past its best-by date. I have yet to come across a more eviscerating encapsulation of humanism's failure as metanarrative than these words from Dorion Sagan:

> "We learn in grade school that plants produce oxygen that we breathe, and breathe carbon dioxide that we exhale, suggesting an essential equivalence, and a nice ecological match between plants and animals. But plants not only photosynthesize, producing oxygen, they also use oxygen just like we do. They do it at night when sunlight is not available as a source of energy. They can do this because they also incorporate those former respiring bacteria, the mitochondria into their cells. Maybe aliens have detected life on Earth but, considering us parasites, have decided to communicate directly—and chemically—with plants, our metabolic superiors." (Quoted in Natasha Myers 57)

Maybe. After all, in some articulations of the humanist story, "human beings [...] do not have to care about other animals" (Setiya 452) or even other biotic life unless it has direct bearing on humanity (Hird; Stewart-Williams).

Yet despite an increasing recognition concerning the fallacy and hubris of assumptions regarding human exceptionalism, the university remains a deeply humanist project (Giannakakis). This isn't to say that human-centric perspectives in higher education (HE)

have been altogether negative. From the scientific, technological, and medical innovations discovered in the university that have contributed to improving human beings' standards of living, to the emergence of student development theories that have helped better explain the formation of young people in their postsecondary years, research centring the human has had undeniable positive effects (for humans). To say otherwise would be misleading. And surely, recognizing (and granting) human rights to all human beings and not just a subset of them is an irrefutable good. To the extent that the university has been a cornerstone of social justice movements, it has yielded plenty of positives (Harkavy).

But in centring human perspectives, we have ignored and rendered silent the voices of other-than-human beings to the detriment and loss of all life on Planet Earth. The instrumental position adopted by those who take human exceptionalism for granted, that views other-than-humans as fitting for human use or consumption and reduces environmental sustainability to the impact on human well-being, has led to untold devastation, not just with respect to the negative impacts on human flourishing, but especially the eradication of untold numbers of other-than-human lives. In the words of Franco "Bifo" Berardi:

> "We might conclude that, if the human experiment was aimed at expanding the sphere of rationality and reducing chaos, the human experiment is over. The very tools that enabled the expansion of rationality and human control (science, technology, industry, and information) have subsumed life to abstraction. And living warmth can only be found outside the icy wall of the citadel of reason." (123)

It's observations like these that prompt Cary Wolfe to say we are in "a new reality" requiring a posthuman "vigilance, responsibility, and humility" (47). Thankfully, there are more than some indicators that things are changing, albeit very slowly, in the field of HE (Quinn). The turn toward other-than-human species, the awareness and consideration of their ontologies, has already been felt in many university departments, impacting feminist studies (Haraway), English

(Ryan), philosophy (Marder), cultural studies (Badmington), geography (Lawrence), anthropology (Tsing), and numerous other disciplines. In other words, and to paraphrase a line attributed to speculative fiction writer William Gibson, the other-than-human future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed within the HE sector.

We are, perhaps, in the late stages of the humanist university, and brick by brick, "the icy wall" of Berardi's "citadel of reason" may be in the process of being dismantled. For those who would like to expedite matters, there are some things that can be done. Here's one: if stories are what we live by, we can be intentional about telling ourselves new ones. And if humanist tales populated with human heroes and their exploits have come to be recognized as rubbish-adjacent, we can tell ourselves other-than-human ones. As Luce Irigaray argues, "If we continue to speak the same language to each other, we will reproduce the same story. Same arguments, same quarrels, same scenes. Same attractions and separations. Same difficulties, the impossibility of reaching each other. Same …same… Always the same" ("When Our Lips" 69). It's time for the university to tell itself and the world a different story, an other-than-human tale. Life on earth *is* more than human and it has always been, since long before our evolution.

TELLING, HEARING, AND SHARING OTHER-THAN-HUMAN STORIES IN THE UNIVERSITY

In the university, many stories, from many perspectives, hailing from many cultures, come together. In this way, the university is something of an anthology, with chapters in a number of languages. We don't just tell ourselves stories in the university, *we tell each other stories*. We share them with roommates, classmates, students, professors, colleagues, and peers. We tell them in order to live. We tell our stories to each other because we want to be heard, to be known, to not feel so alone, as a way of making meaning and dealing with the absurdity of existence (Camus) together.

We don't simply tell, however; we also *hear* each other's stories. We recognize that we have no exclusive claim to objective truth. Our sto-

ries are not superior to anyone else's. They aren't exceptional in any way. They're just ours; the ones we live by.

Stories don't end at hearing. Once we've faithfully heard each other's stories, we *share* them, if they have taken a hold of us in some way. As a site where so many stories intersect—human and other-than-human—the university has a response-ability to make time and create space for encounter and exchange: we tell ourselves stories in order to live; we tell each other stories in order to live; we hear each other's stories in order to live; we share each other's stories in order to live. In order for all of us to live.

The other-than-human turn in HE is, at its heart, about hearing the stories of other-than-humans and sharing the same. The university can facilitate this communion. In earlier iterations of this project (conceptualized in my personal journal), I framed this project as decentring the human, but I'm not sure this is possible. Anthropocentrism is, or at least appears to be, inevitable (Katz). Nor do I believe the university's goal should be to bring other-than-human beings closer to the centre, though I leave that possibility open. Instead, I wonder if the primary aim of this institutional work should be to shift the human presence to the margins where subaltern others, humans and other-than-humans, are subjugated. We might never decentre ourselves, but we can at least work at being less solipsistic.

The goal for those in the university, then, might be to broaden our ethical scope; to produce more thoughtful humans, attuned to the world, caring for it. This may or may not be a modest aim, but I think it can be foundational, and doesn't need to preclude other personal, educational, societal, or institutional goals. "Care," says María Puig de la Bellacasa, "can open new ways of thinking" (28). New ways of thinking mean new stories. She adds that "ways of studying and representing things have world-making effects. Constructivist approaches to science and nature, no matter how descriptive, are actively involved in redoing worlds" (30). Yes, humans have terraformed the planet, killing countless other-than-human lives, rendering untold number of species extinct (Dirzo et al.). The university

can participate in helping to form a new, more habitable, hospitable world.

That said, the Western university is materially implicated with our planetary situation (McGeown and Barry) and in colonial practices that contradict other-than-human approaches to research and learning. Universities, as institutions, operate from an onto-epistemology that prioritizes the accumulation of knowledge as a means of controlling and mastering the world (Connell). The very construction of university campuses is often predicated on the destruction and exploitation of ecosystems, including the clearing of trees, diversion of waterways, and extraction of local resources. This physical transformation parallels the erasure of other-than-humans from academic discourse, relegating them to passive resources, rather than vital participants in in knowledge-making processes (Coulthard; Todd). Such environmental impacts underscore the paradox of the colonial university that seeks to define and control knowledge while marginalizing the ecosystems and lifeforms that sustain it. This conflict of interest is particularly salient as universities increasingly embrace frameworks like multispecies studies and decolonial methodologies, even as their infrastructural expansion continues to negate these values in practice (Whyte). Acknowledging these material contradictions calls for an institutional self-awareness that transcends performative gestures (Hawkins and Kern), fostering genuine engagements with other-than-human communities and a reimagining of the university's role in relation to the land and its ecosystems.

TOWARD A MULTISPECIES ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY

In his 2017 American Ethnologist Society presidential address, Hugh Gusterson called for more critical anthropological studies of the university. Whether or not the then-extant literature was as scant as he perceived and suggested is a matter of debate (Thorkelson), though ongoing interventions (that Gusterson mentions positively) like the University of Illinois's Ethnography of the University Initiative (Hunter and Abelmann) and the University of Toronto's Ethnography of the University project, along with since-published

research (Carrigan and Bardini; Clark; Thomas) are at least evidence that there is work happening in this space.

When it comes to the standpoint of other-than-human beings, however, there is a persistent gap. While the multispecies perspective has been explored in other subject areas and disciplines, there is a dearth, if not complete absence, of multispecies ethnographies of the university. This is a shame. Multispecies ethnography "bring[s] art interventions together with empirically rich ethnography to produce unexpected ruptures in dominant thinking about nature and culture" (Kirksey et al. 4); precisely the sort of generative activity that can surface other-than-human stories. If universities exist for the public and common good (Marginson), surely, other-than-humans, who co-constitute both the "public" and the "common," should be included rather than excluded.

Richard Powers believes "only a profound shift in consciousness and *institutions* regarding the significance and standing of nonhumans will keep us viable" (quoted in Cooke 217; emphasis added). How to help generate this shift in consciousness should, in my opinion, be among the primary goals of the university, present and future. K. Wayne Yang's avatar la paperson believes this shift is always already happening. Since the university "is an assemblage of machines and not a monolithic institution," s-he says, "its machinery is always being subverted toward decolonizing purposes" (xiii). If decolonisation is defined as la paperson understands it—namely, "the rematriation of land, the regeneration of relations, and the forwarding of Indigenous and Black and queer futures" (xv)—the consideration of other-than-human lives is absolutely a decolonising project as it endeavours to restore relations with other-than-human kin (TallBear). Such reparation is necessary for human survival, but to be clear, there are other reasons universities and research about universities should consider other-than-human lives, beyond the benefit to humanity.

First, and most simply, many of these lives are lived on university campuses. Studies of HE institutions, therefore, warrant their inclusion in research. These beings not only share space and land with students, faculty, and staff, they live there. Other-than-human ani-

mals inhabit trees, for instance, not just occupying land owned by universities, but trees—living beings, themselves, *who* (rather than *that*) are (often) the property of the universities. Some of these trees are older than the campuses, themselves.

Linda Sama, Stephanie Welcomer, and Virginia Gerde (2004) ask who will speak for these other-than-human lives? An important question, pointing us toward what's at stake: the very existence of other beings on university land. We can append another question to theirs: Who will speak, not just *for*, these other-than- humans, but *with* them? They have agency (ojalehto et al.). They're intelligent (Trewavas). They "sense and make sense of their worlds" (Myers 36). They should be permitted to articulate for themselves (Abbott; Gagliano; Karban).

Just as academics in the field of HE conduct research with students and faculty, and not just *about* them, I urge scholars to conduct research *with* other-than-human beings whose lives are imbricated with the university. Research shouldn't benefit only the ones doing the research, but also the participants and the communities being studied (DeMeulenaere and Cann; McIntyre).

Second, many non-Western traditions have long recognized the agency of plants, trees, and other-than-human animals. If the university is serious about academic decolonisation and indigenisation (Dei; Knopf), one way to demonstrate this commitment is to take seriously non-Western and Indigenous knowledges about the more-than-human world. And not just the knowledges of other human traditions, but of the non-human as well. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang remind us, decolonisation is not a metaphor.

Trees, to name but one being who live on the university campus, have knowledges and ways of knowing that humans do not. The Muscogee (Creek) poet Joy Harjo says, for instance, that plants and trees should be talked to and listened to, as they "all have their tribes, their families, their histories" (quoted in Cooke 225). Humans stand to learn from these histories. Robin Wall Kimmerer notes, "A fundamental tenet of traditional plant knowledge is that the plants are understood, not as mere objects or lower life forms as the western 'pyramid of being' might suggest, but as nonhuman persons, with

their own knowledges, intentions, and spirit" (28). She wants to treat plants as the teachers they are; a fitting call for the university to heed.

Not only do other (non-Western) traditions recognize the agency of plants, trees, and other-than-human animals, many also attribute personhood to them and view them as kin (Hall). Deborah Bird Rose and her collaborators quote two Mak Mak Marranunggu women explaining the relationship they have to a particular plant: "'This tree here,' they say, 'we call "uncle" this tree. We're not just related to [...] animals. We've got relationships to trees too. That's Mum's uncle, stringybark'" (110). The notion of kinship between humans and other species is also found in the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Daoism (Miller), which I will return to later. For now, consider chapter 42 of the *Dao De Jing*, which begins: "Tao [Dao] gives life to the one / The one gives life to the two / The two give life to the three / The tree give life to ten thousand things. / All beings support *yin* and embrace *yang* / and the interplay of these two forces / fills the universe" (Tzu 55). From this teaching emerges the Daoist view that all of life "is equal before Dao, because they come from the same source" (Fan 92). In other words, there is no hierarchy with humans at the top of an ontological ladder.

Plants and trees express care for the planet, as Bill Neidjie, a Gaagudju elder in what's now called Australia, writes: "I love it tree because e love me too. / E watching me same as you / tree e working with your body, my body, e working with us" (4); they are worth the attention of the academy. Here, however, I acknowledge the tension noted by Anna Lawrence "between taking the implications of Indigenous knowledges seriously, whilst not simply mining them for our own theoretical purposes" (6).

Third, consider that, with apologies to Latour, we have never been (only) human; we have always been already more, and other-than. Our "species" (such as it were) is dependent on all manner of other-than-humans (Kirksey et al.), and multispecies ethnographers remind us that it's a mistake to think that when humans make choices, it's only the human making the choice, as if it's only the human who

is exercising agency. As Joseph Dumit says, "Never think you know all of the species involved in a decision [...] Never think you speak for all of yourself" (xii). Other-than-humans on the university campus are agentic subjects who play an underappreciated but significant role in shaping student, faculty, and staff perception of the campus and, by consequence, the world.

One implication of this fact is that studies of human beings—such as those done in HE and other fields—are already studies of the other-than-human since "human nature is an interspecies relationship" (Tsing 144). In this sense, turning toward other-than-human lives is a matter of dealing more honestly and accurately with our research subjects.

Fourth, the potential contributions of a multispecies approach to the study of HE is vast. It will surely open up new research trajectories as scholars address the topics that interest them. If academic time is accelerating (Vostal), for instance, "vegetal temporalities pose a significant challenge to the strictures of the industrial capitalist time-space regime, inviting us to question who (or what) we would like to keep time with" (Lawrence 3). The promise of "tree time" (Roy 4) looms. Sumana Roy elaborates:

> "It [is] impossible to rush plants, to tell a tree to 'hurry up'. I was tired of speed. I wanted to live to tree time. This I felt most excruciatingly during examination hall invigilation, while keeping guard over the exhausted faces of my students, their having to condense a year into a few hours, the learning acquired at different times of the day and in different places cramped into a few hours of writing time. That was how one passed examinations, got degrees and jobs, measured success. A tree did not stay up all night to become a successful examinee the next morning." (3-4).

How to deal with accelerating timescapes as a tree might, is, I think, largely a matter of wisdom, which plants, trees, and other-than-human animals have to offer (Kimmerer). Perhaps attunement to plant life will help humans to pay closer attention; regardless, there can be little disagreement that wisdom is needed for tackling the multi-

crisis facing the planet (Litfin). The university has for too long been focused on knowledge production without concern for wisdom (Barnett and Maxwell). It might just be that a turn toward other-than-human lives can begin to address the gap.

I must stress again, however, that I am less interested in turning to other species on the university for how they might benefit humans, and more concerned with hearing their own stories on their own terms. Lawrence claims "it is the questions asked [...] which are most valuable. Importantly, the question of *who* is this research for? In considering plants more seriously as 'participants', we are pushed to consider what research 'aims' looks like from the plant's perspective" (13-14). She continues: "Plants are already central to our everyday lives and socio-economies, waiting for us to recognise them as kin and collaborators in our co-production of ecologically sustainable futures" (15). What, then, is the university waiting for?

TREES ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

While many avenues could be explored, my own research has focused to-date on individual trees. John Hartigan reminds us that trees "are fully theorized, in botanical terms, though not yet ethnographically, that is, as flattened subjects" (268); what's more, "botanists describe a species, not a particular plant" (269). It is precisely the particular that interests me. The relatively few existing studies of trees on the university campus tend to have an instrumental focus—quantitative studies of the age and health of campus trees; their energy savings (building heating/cooling); carbon sequestration benefits; aesthetic advantages; impact on rainwater runoff interception; contribution to ecosystem biodiversity; and so on. What's missing and needed is to re-imagine the university otherwise: to theorize the university from the perspective of other-than-humans. One way of doing this, of attending to other voices, is via a form of duoethnography.

Duoethnography is a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers of difference come together, juxtaposing their life histories, to offer a unique lens through which to examine

a particular issue via their multiple understandings and perspectives (Norris and Sawyer). Through the exchange of narratives and experiences, as well as reflexivity whereby researchers reflect on their own positionality and biases, meanings are both uncovered and transformed. Duoethnographic texts, being dialogic in nature, invite readers to engage actively as meaning-makers, contributing to a dynamic dialogue that extends beyond the researchers themselves.

Multispecies duoethnography extends these principles beyond the human/human dyad to "hear" the voice of other-than-human beings. It explores interspecies relationships, communication, and co-existence, acknowledging the agency and perspectives of other-than-human participants, recognizing their contributions to shaping shared environments and narratives, and promoting ethical considerations in human interactions with the broader ecological community.

With respect to human/tree duoethnography, in particular, the root problem is how a human can access the perspective of a different species. Expressed as a question: If such communication is even possible, how does one interview a tree? Each researcher has their own "rough semblance of a method" (Hartigan 253). While I value these diverse approaches, it was necessary for me to generate my own protocol. Communication with any individual, whether human or other-than-human cannot be reduced to method, nor is any approach a guarantee of fidelity in interpretation. Just as no two humans are exactly the same, neither are any two trees. In fact, no two relationships are alike either, whether human/human or human/tree. The way I relate to the Norwegian Maple across the street from my home will not be identical to the way someone else does. My knowledge of, and relationship with, this tree will not be, cannot be, the same as another's.

In that vein, I have no multispecies duoethnographic methodological procedure to offer. What I will try to do is briefly describe my practice, which involves four components, broadly construed: time, breathing-with, imagination, and artistic expression. I resist calling these *steps* because they aren't exactly sequential, though there must be some starting point.

Here, then, is how I have come to know and be in relationship with one of the four Ginkgoes presently living on what's known as Philosopher's Walk (PW), a 350-metre tree-lined cement path on the University of Toronto's St. George (downtown) campus, that runs from Bloor Street in the north to Hoskin Avenue in the south, surrounded by Trinity College, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Faculty of Music, and the Faculty of Law.

TIME

It was mid-spring, and some deciduous trees were still growing out their foliage. Wanting to learn as much about trees as I could, I'd spent the last month reading books and articles by dendrologists and botanists, eco-philosophers and humanities scholars from a variety of intellectual and cultural traditions. I never stopped reading, but there came a point when I decided it was time to exit the physical study and step foot in the field.

I started going to PW nearly every day—as many days, afternoons, and evenings as possible, whatever the weather, rain or shine, staying as long as I could each time. Karyn Recollet and Jon Johnson argue that "land-based storytelling practices require us to know how to visit a space/place. There is a need to know where we are so that we know how to visit" (181). The first week, I made several daily transect walks of PW, familiarizing myself with a space I had traversed many times before, but never with any intentionality. Those prior treks were about getting from point A to point B. Now I was walking slowly, thoughtfully, deliberatively, paying attention to my surroundings. I walked the paved path, but didn't restrict myself to cemented-over areas, opting instead to walk wherever I pleased, in the spirit of Tim Ingold's wayfarer, "negotiat[ing] or improvis[ing] a passage as [I went] along" (S126).

Taddle Creek, a sacred body of water for Indigenous people of the area, once flowed where PW now lies. The creek was later buried underground where it continues to flow. It was important to me to learn about its history. More significantly, I found it critical to be mindful of its enduring presence while I walked up and down PW.

Recollet and Johnson acknowledge that pedestrian movements can be a recuperative gesture, as old *miikaans* (footpaths) created by Indigenous people throughout Toronto represent particular forms of knowledge of, and relationship with, land, water, and place. Each of these paths, following bluffs, river valleys, shorelines, and savannas, represents Indigenous Knowledge of Toronto, as Indigenous footprints (as glyphs) have inscribed their knowledge of territory into the land over millennia. (184). Taddle Creek's presence continues to haunt the Walk. Inaudible to human ears, invisible to human eyes, its subterraneous existence nevertheless helps sustain life above ground.

Another week in, I wanted to focus my energy on meeting a particular tree. I settled on a Ginkgo near a footbridge running from the path to an entrance to the faculty of music building. Why this tree and not another? I don't know. I've always had a fondness for Ginkgoes, perhaps that's why; a photo I took of a Ginkgo in North Korea serves as my laptop's wallpaper. I'd also read Peter Crane's wonderful monograph about the tree. It's a living fossil, and while Ginkgoes likely covered most of the planet at one point in history, it's now considered (by humans) "invasive" or "non-native" to North America. A diaspora tree, in other words.

It took me a few days to work up the courage to approach this Ginkgo. Marisol de la Cadena says to start with "[i]dentify[ing] the presences you want to think-feel with," but what if the tree didn't want to think-feel with me? How would I know? In some of the work I read by Indigenous scholars (Craft; Hernández et al.; Kovach; Luby et al.; Styres; Watts; Wilson), I learned that a person shouldn't approach an other-than-human being without that being's permission, which, at some level, made sense to me. But how could I know whether the Ginkgo permitted my intrusion or not?

Still uncertain how to proceed, or even if I could, I did—cautiously, trying to suspend any disbelief and keeping my mind open to im/possible encounters that I used to intuit were natural once upon a time when I was a child and conversed with squirrels and trees. (This was before grown-ups told me to stop with the make-believe.)

Figure 1: Ginkgo near Sŏnbong-guyŏk, North Korea.

I sat on the stone steps overlooking the Ginkgo, notebook and pencil in hand, by turns observing, sketching. Even this felt uncomfortably voyeuristic. Replace the tree with a human . . . there are ethics boards for that type of research; not for what I was doing. I set that concern aside for the time being.

From my readings, I learned how to estimate a tree's height using a triangulation method. With the aid of a tape measure and a protractor I'd borrowed from my daughter, I made multiple calculations from different vantage points to determine how tall the Ginkgo was. Eventually, I approached the tree. Still apprehensive, I put my hand on the trunk. I found the diameter at breast height and used this number to estimate the Ginkgo's age. Thirty feet tall, thirty years old, give or take. These figures, along with insights gleaned from my botanical readings, gave me some basic information about the tree, akin to knowing a human's height and age, how the circulatory system works. Hardly the same as knowing someone personally, which is what I wanted: to know *this* tree as an individual. To develop "a

Figure 2: Ginkgo on Philosopher's Walk, Toronto.

feeling for the organism" (Keller). For that, time together was requisite, just as it is in human/human relationships. So, I spent more time with the Ginkgo, bringing as many of my senses to bear as I could in our intra-actions (Barad).

Figure 3: Acrylic on paper.

Figure 4: Wax, water colour, and Ginkgo leaf on paper.

On each of my almost-daily visits to the Ginkgo, I spent time sitting beneath the tree, with no idea what I was doing, beyond an experiment in deep listening (Bath et al.). Other knowledge systems offer holistic, body-/being-centred ways of knowing premised on flat ontologies, but as these were foreign to my own worldview, they remained inaccessible to me. Understanding these approaches at a cognitive level was one thing; it was quite another to put them into practice. Simply put, I couldn't utilize them without embodying their attendant alternative worldviews. As Deborah McGregor says, "Indigenous Knowledge cannot be separated from the people who hold and practice it" (390). In other words, treating these ways of knowing in an extractive fashion wouldn't be an option even if I was willing to do so. Nor was I ready to convert to one of those other ways of living. But in discussing my research project with my family, I rediscovered a possible resource in my own Daoist ancestry.

BREATHING-WITH

Foundational to Daoism is the notion of qi, a word with no corresponding English equivalent that is sometimes translated as "vital energy." Qi, one of "the most basic categories for the understanding of reality" (Rošker 127) going back at least 2,500 years, is imbricated with air and breath. Jing Wang notes that "*qi* was considered both the vital source breath for life and the driving force in the cosmic world" and would evolve "from a vague idea…[to] a cosmological, aesthetic, social, medical, moral concept, and eventually a philosophical system" (4). "*Qi*-philosophy," she says, "suggests an organic, holistic, and enchanted worldview that the cosmos and the myriad things (including humans) are a correlated organism that are constantly resonating, condensing, disintegrating, and forming unity with one another. It is an enchanted worldview that holds a reverence for transformations, mutations, and resonance" (5). There is no breath without qi.

To be sure, breathing is pivotal to what might be termed a Daoist ethico-onto-epistemology. Zhuangzi, one of the key figures in historical Daoism, and the attributed author of the eponymous text so foundational to Daoists, has been called by Elias Canetti "the most intimate of all the philosophers" and "*the* philosopher for breathing" (quoted in Škof and Berndtson xiii). For Zhuangzi, breathing with the heels—that is, with one's whole being—is what separates the true or authentic person (*zhenren*) from the masses, who breathe only with the throat. Nowhere, however, does Zhuangzi explain how to breathe this way; there is only the promissory claim that once this breathing is achieved, attunement with the world—which is something greater than mere awareness of and attentiveness to it—is possible. Here, we can invoke the Daoist concept of *ziran*, often translated as naturalness, spontaneity, or in the words of Brian Bruya, "effortless attention" (77). *Ziran* is to be so free from distraction that one is at syntony with the world (Aitken), or to borrow from a famous story in the *Zhuangzi*, it is like swimming without thinking about the motions. As Bruya says, "When you achieve a high level of a particular skill, you are achieving a natural level of ability, which is the highest

level of an ability" (14). This is *ziran*, the kind of ability I was seeking with respect to knowledge of the Ginkgo.

It's worth noting that breathing-with isn't only significant in Daoist traditions, but in Western ones, as well. So Irigaray reminds us that "breathing is the most crucial key component of our relation to ourselves, to the other(s) and to the world" (207), adding, "I cannot breathe if the vegetal world does not purify the air. We can observe today how the functioning, and even the subsistence, of the world is dependent on the quality of the air—without a breathable air, the living beings can no longer survive and they are necessary for the existence and even the governance of the world" (209). Breath, for Irigaray, *is* soul (*Between East and West*), an idea to which I find myself increasingly drawn. Never mind reverting to the *soul* in academic discourse; *breath* more than suffices and cultivating "[a] culture of breath" (Irigaray "Crucial Gesture" 212) becomes a possible purpose of the posthuman university.

As Achille Mbembe says, "We must start afresh. To survive, we must return to all living things—including the biosphere—the space and energy they need." (S60). We begin to do this, he suggests, by attending to the breath we share. "All […] wars on life begin by taking [it] away" (S61), and this is true whether the war is human v. human or human v. other-than-human life. There is an illogical logic at play. In Mbembe's words, "Humankind and biosphere are one. Alone, humanity has no future. Are we capable of rediscovering that each of us belongs to the same species, that we have an indivisible bond with all life?" (S62). For Tomaž Grušovnik, "[b]reathing with the natural world […] amounts to saying that we should cultivate our breath, prepare ourselves for the encounter, for the achieving of our humanity, for reinvention of ourselves, by listening to the ways the natural world exchanges with us" (127). On the other hand, Eve Mayes draws on the work of Tim Choy, and advances the notion of *conspiring*: "Conspiring (breathing-with) is a more-than-human endeavour; it exceeds human organs: plants and trees make human breath possible, and other species have other ways of breathing" (178). Breathing together, for Mayes, is "to speak together, to be in dialogue with one another" (197). Breath *is* and *as* communication.

So, I sat beneath the Ginkgo, slowly inhaling and exhaling, listening to myself breathe and also to the tree; breathing can be a form of listening, too (Alarcón-Díaz). As we breathed together, we communicated bio-semiotically.

IMAGINATION

Spending time with the Ginkgo, and breathing-with it, brought us into a kind of communion. But this was insufficient for duoethnography. It was necessary to use my imagination. In his seminal essay, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" Thomas Nagel is pessimistic about the prospect of a human perceiving *as* a bat—"to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat" (439)—or any other species. In an important aside, relegated to a footnote, however, he offers an important concession:

> "It may be easier than I suppose to transcend inter-species barriers with the aid of the imagination. For example, blind people are able to detect objects near them by a form of sonar, using vocal clicks or taps of a cane. Perhaps if one knew what that was like, one could by extension imagine roughly what it was like to possess the much more refined sonar of a bat. The distance between oneself and other persons and other species can fall anywhere on a continuum. Even for other persons the understanding of what it is like to be them is only partial, and when one moves to species very different from oneself, a lesser degree of partial understanding may still be available. The imagination is remarkably flexible." (442)

Nagel's rumination on the power of the imagination is a reminder that, in fact, the only way one human can have an approximation of another human's experience is via the imagination. Perfect knowledge of someone else's perspective is impossible. I let my imagination do its eductive thing, drawing out what was latent, this latency being informed by all the research I had done. To draw on my imagination wasn't to let it run amok. My research, along with my own storied worldview, functioned together as a self-imposed ethico-poetical boundary (Kearney).

Because knowledge must be disseminated in the university, and because other stories need to be shared to bring about change, there must be some output, a product, itself born of the imagination. Traditional duoethnographies read like a back-and-forth between two researchers. Certainly, this is one way of proceeding with a tree or any other other-than-human being. It's not the only way, though. Many art forms may be appropriately marshalled in service of translating the other-than-human's communication *as if* it were translatable.

To use art to articulate a tree's breath-as-response is to gladly admit to the lack of scientific objectivity in multispecies duoethnography. As Ki'en Debicki observes, scientific objectivity in human/tree communication may not be "altogether desirable" (44). Recollet and Johnson concur, reminding us that "the temporal-spatial and more-than-human relations that permeate well-storied places are sometimes too complex to be rendered legible" (181). "In every possible sense," says Gayatri Spivak, "translation is necessary but impossible" (13).

To be sure, there is a sense in which an alternative university requires "alternative political and decolonial modes of telling ecological stories" (Myers et al. 267). In my own work, I have, thus far, gravitated toward short fiction, in the manner of Ursula K. Le Guin (who, for what it's worth, was also deeply influenced by Daoism); but other art forms, from photography (Myers) to poetry (Burk) are just as valid. Rendering human/tree communication via duoethnography does not necessitate words. There are other ways of translating. Art can transfigure.

Once again, the purpose isn't to get the communication exactly right. We don't have that kind of exactitude even in human/human correspondence. The purpose, rather, is to do something like decentre the human, which, to reiterate, doesn't necessarily mean bringing subaltern species (i.e., all other-than-human life) into the centre, but moving consciously to the margins.

CONCLUSION

In a letter to his brother Theo, Vincent van Gogh described his struggle creating *Girl in a Wood*, and his desire to create breathing space among the Beech trees in the painting:

> "The other study in the wood is of some large green beech trunks on a stretch of ground covered with dry sticks, and the little figure of a girl in white. There was the great difficulty of keeping it clear, and of getting space between the trunks standing at different distances—and the place and relative bulk of those trunks change with the perspective—to make it so that one can breathe and walk around in it, and to make you smell the fragrance of the wood." (138)

This is what the university can do: intentionally create spaces and opportunities "so that one can breathe"—breathe with the other-than-humans that surround us, and in so doing, perhaps help to cultivate "[a] culture of breath" (Irigaray "Crucial Gesture" 212) that, if not quite fully attuned to other-than-human life, is at least more attentive of, and concerned for it.

In her response to Mahmood's essay, referenced earlier, Danilyn Rutherford notes how "pay[ing] heed to the other others is to pay heed to the animals, plants, rocks, roads, microbes, chemicals, and all those other things that cry out to us" (Mahmood and Rutherford 5). There persists an absence of "all those other things that cry out to us" in both theorizing of the university and research on the university. Addressing this absence holds great promise.

I recognize, of course, that what I'm proposing is a story. Ultimately, we have to choose what stories we live by, shaped by our never-static political and ethical commitments. Here's one metanarrative I accept:

> "We are here because we evolved, and evolution occurred for no particular reason. Thus, on a Darwinian view, not only is our species not as special as we had once thought, but our lives are ultimately without purpose or meaning. Life just winds on aimlessly, a pointless, meandering sequence of

> events. Sometimes it's pleasant, sometimes not, but it lacks any overall purpose or goal or destination." (Steve Stewart-Williams 197)

Within the narrative topography laid out by this story, then, the university must ask and re-ask what politics of knowledge and wisdom we want to be engaging in. While the university certainly doesn't need to embrace the story I've told here—one with other-than-humans in the principal cast, not just as supporting characters—there is and always will be some governing narrative or another moving students through its halls toward matriculation, guiding professors in the classroom, lab, and studio. We've seen what assumptions of human exceptionalism have produced. It's time for the university to turn toward other-than-humans and meet them halfway. Such a shift can influence the university's capacity for imagining and enacting a generation of possibilities.

WORKS CITED

Abbott, Sarah. "Approaching Nonhuman Ontologies: Trees, Communication, and Qualitative Inquiry." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 27, no. 8-9, 2021, pp. 1059-71, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800421994954.

Aitken, Hugh G. J. *Syntony and Spark: The Origins of Radio*. John Wiley, 1976.

Alarcón-Díaz, Ximena. "Breathing (As Listening): An Emotional Bridge for Telepresence." *The Body in Sound, Music and Performance: Studies in Audio and Sonic Arts*, edited by Linda O'Keefe and Isabel Nogueira, Routledge, 2023, pp. 243-63.

Badmington, Neil. "Cultural Studies and the Posthumanities." *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*, edited by Gary Hall and Clare Birchall, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 260-72.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007.

Barnett, Ronald, and Nicholas Maxwell. *Wisdom in the University*. Routledge, 2008.

Bath, Paula, et al. "Reflecting on Bodily Listening in Place: An Intercultural and Intersensory Research-Creation Project." *Performance Matters*, vol. 9, no. 1-2, 2023, pp. 139-54, https://doi.org/10.7202/1102390ar.

Berardi, Franco "Bifo." *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry*. Semiotext(e), 2018.

Bruya, Brian. *Ziran: The Philosophy of Spontaneous Self-Causation*. State University of New York Press, 2022.

Burk, Wendy. *Tree Talks: Southern Arizona*. Delete Press, 2016.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage International, 2018.

Carrigan, Coleen, and Michelle Bardini. "Majorism: Neoliberalism in Student Culture." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2021, pp. 42-62, https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12361.

Clark, Langston. "Standing in The Gap: A Social Justice Ethnography of a Historically Black PETE Program." *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 89, no. 3, 2020, pp. 214-32.

Connell, Raewyn. "Southern Theory and World Universities." *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2017, pp. 4-15, https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1252311.

Cooke, Stuart. "Talking (With) Trees: Arboreal Articulation and Poetics." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2021, pp. 214-31, https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2021.2023606.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Craft, Aimée. "Giving and Receiving Life from *Anishinaabe Nibi Inaakonigewin* (Our Water Law) Research." *Methodological Challenges in Nature-Culture and Environmental History Research*, edited by Jocelyn Thorpe et al., Routledge, 2017, pp. 105-19.

de la Cadena, Marisol. "Not Knowing: In the Presence Of… *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis*, edited by Andrea Ballestero and Brit Ross Winthereik, Duke University Press, 2021, pp. 246-56.

Debicki, Kaitlin Sandra June. *Okwire'shon:'a, the First Storytellers: Recovering Landed Consciousness in Readings of Trees & Texts*. 2017. McMaster University, PhD.

Dei, George J. Sefa. "Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2000, pp. 111-32, https://doi.org/10.1080/136031100284849.

DeMeulenaere, Eric J., and Colette N. Cann. "Activist Educational Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 19, no. 8, 2013, pp. 552-65, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413494343.

Didion, Joan. "The White Album." *The White Album*, Simon & Schuster, 1979, pp. 11-48.

Dirzo, Rodolfo, et al. "Defaunation in the Anthropocene." *Science*, vol. 345, no. 6195, 2014, pp. 401-06, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1126/science.1251817.

Dumit, Joseph. "Foreword: Biological Feedback." *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*, edited by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip, The MIT Press, 2008, pp. xi-xiv.

Fan, Meijun. "Chinese Classical View of Plants and Its Relevance." *Beyond the Bifurcation of Nature: A Common World for Animals and the Environment*, edited by Brianne Donaldson, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, pp. 83-99.

Gagliano, Monica. "Breaking the Silence: Green Mudras and the Faculty of Language in Plants." *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*, edited by Monica Gagliano et al., University of Minnesota Press, 2017, pp. 84-100.

Giannakakis, Vangelis. "Neoliberalism and Culture in Higher Education: On the Loss of the Humanistic Character of the University and the Possibility of Its Reconstitution." *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2020, pp. 365-82, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-019-09682-z.

Grušovnik, Tomaž. "Breathing with the Natural World: Irigaray, Environmental Philosophy, and the Alterity of Nature." *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, edited by Lenart Škof and Emily A. Holmes, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. 113-29.

Gusterson, Hugh. "Homework: Toward a Critical Ethnography of the University." *American Ethnologist*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2017, pp. 435-50, https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12520.

Hall, Matthew. *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*. State University of New York Press, 2011.

Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Prickly Paradigm, 2003.

Harkavy, Ira. "The Role of Universities in Advancing Citizenship and Social Justice in the 21st Century." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 5-37, https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197906060711.

Hartigan, Jr., John. *Care of the Species: Races of Corn and the Science of Plant Biodiversity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Hawkins, Roberta, and Leslie Kern. *Higher Expectations: How to Survive Academia, Make It Better for Others, and Transform the University*. Between the Lines, 2024.

Hernández, KJ, et al. "The Creatures Collective: Manifestings." *EPE: Nature and Space*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2021, pp. 838-63, https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848620938316.

Hird, Myra J. *The Origins of Sociable Life: Evolution After Science Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Hunter, Gina, and Nancy Abelmann. "The Ethnography of the University Initiative: A Decade of Student Research on the University." *Learning and Teaching*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2013, pp. 1-8, https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2013.060301.

Ingold, Tim. "Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 16, 2010, pp. S121-39.

Irigaray, Luce. "The Most Crucial Gesture for a Living Being." *SubStance*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2023, pp. 207-12, https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2023.a900555.

—. *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*. Translated by Stephen Pluháček, Columbia University Press, 2002.

—. "When Our Lips Speak Together." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, translated by Carolyn Burke, vol. 6, no. 1, 1980, pp. 69-79.

Karban, Richard. *Plant Sensing and Communication*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Katz, Eric. "Against the Inevitability of Anthropocentrism." *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, edited by Eric Katz et al., The MIT Press, 2000, pp. 17-42.

Keller, Evelyn Fox. *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock*. W. H. Freeman, 1983.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. "*Mishkos Kenomagwen*, the Lessons of Grass: Restoring Reciprocity with the Good Green Earth." *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability*, edited by Melissa K. Nelson and Dan Shilling, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 27-56.

Kirksey, Eben, et al. "Introduction: Tactics of Multispecies Ethnography." *The Multispecies Salon*, edited by Eben Kirksey, Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 1-24.

Knopf, Kerstin. "The Turn Toward the Indigenous: Knowledge Systems and Practices in the Academy." *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 60, no. 2-3, 2015, pp. 179-200.

Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. University of Toronto Press, 2009.

La paperson. *A Third University Is Possible*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Lawrence, Anna M. "Listening to Plants: Conversations between Critical Plant Studies and Vegetal Geography." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2022, pp. 629-51, https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325211062167.

Le Guin, Ursula K. "Direction of the Road." *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, Harper & Row, 1975, pp. 218-23.

Litfin, Karen T. "Person/Planet Politics: Contemplative Pedagogies for a New Earth." *New Earth Politics: Essays from the Anthropocene*, edited by Simon Nicholson and Sikina Jinnah, The MIT Press, 2016, pp. 115-34.

Luby, Brittany, et al. "Beyond Institutional Ethics: Anishinaabe Worldviews and the Development of a Culturally Sensitive Field Protocol for Aquatic Plant Research." *Water*, vol. 13, 2021, p. 709, https://doi.org/10.3390/w13050709.

Mahmood, Saba, and Danilyn Rutherford. "Humanism." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 8, no. 1/2, 2018, pp. 1-5, https://doi.org/10.1086/698355.

Marder, Michael. *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

Marginson, Simon. *Higher Education and Public and Common Good*. Centre for Global Higher Education, 2024.

Mayes, Eve. "Conspiring with the Trees." *The Politics of Voice in Education: Reforming Schools after Deleuze and Guattari*, by Eve Mayes, Edinburgh University Press, 2023, pp. 174-203.

Mbembe, Achille. "The Universal Right to Breathe." *Critical Inquiry*, translated by Carolyn Shread, vol. 47, 2021, pp. S58-62.

McGeown, Calum, and John Barry. "Agents of (Un)Sustainability: Democratising Universities for the Planetary Crisis." *Frontiers in Sustainability*, vol. 4, 2023, 1166642, https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2023.1166642.

McGregor, Deborah. "Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Our Future." *The American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 3 & 4, 2004, pp. 385-410, https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2004.0101.

McIntyre, Alice. *Participatory Action Research*. Sage, 2008.

Miller, James. *China's Green Religion: Daoism and the Quest for a Sustainable Future*. Columbia University Press, 2017.

Myers, Natasha. "Conversations on Plant Sensing: Notes from the Field." *NatureCulture*, vol. 3, 2015, pp. 35-66.

Myers, Natasha, et al. "Stories Are Seeds. We Need to Learn How to Sow Other Stories about Plants." *Narrative Culture*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2023, pp. 266-76, https://doi.org/10.1353/ncu.2023.a903848.

Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, 1974, pp. 435-50.

Neidjie, Bill. *Story about feeling*. Magbala Books, 1998.

Norris, Joe, and Richard D. Sawyer. "Toward a Dialogic Methodology." *Duoethnography: Dialogic Methods for Social, Health, and Educational Research*, edited by Joe Norris et al., Left Coast Press, 2012.

ojalehto, bethany l., et al. "Conceptualizing Agency: Folkpsychological and Folkcommunicative Perspectives on Plants." *Cognition*, vol. 162, 2017, pp. 103-23, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2017.01.023.

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Quinn, Jocey. "A Humanist University in a Posthuman World: Relations, Responsibilities, and Rights." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 42, no. 5-6, 2021, pp. 686-700, https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.1922268.

Recollet, Karyn, and Jon Johnson. "'Why Do You Need to Know That?' Slipstream Movements and Mapping 'Otherwise' in Tkaronto." *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, vol. 4, 2019, pp. 177-90.

Rose, Deborah Bird, et al. *Country of the Heart: An Indigenous Australian Homeland*. Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002.

Rošker, Jana S. "The Concept of *Qi* in Chinese Philosophy: A Vital Force of Cosmic and Human Breath." *Atmospheres of Breathing*, edited by Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson, State University of New York Press, 2018, pp. 127-40.

Roy, Sumana. *How I Became a Tree*. Yale University Press, 2021.

Ryan, John Charles. "Writing the Lives of Plants: Phytography and the Botanical Imagination." *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2020, pp. 97-122, https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2020.1720181.

Sama, Linda M., et al. "Who Speaks for the Trees? Invoking an Ethic of Care to Give Voice to the Silent Stakeholder." *Stakeholders, the Environment and Society*, edited by Sanjay Sharma and Mark Starik, Edward Elgar, 2004, pp. 140-65.

Setiya, Kieran. "Humanism." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2018, pp. 452-70, https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2018.38.

Škof, Lenart, and Petri Berndtson. "Introduction." *Atmospheres of Breathing*, edited by Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson, SUNY Press, 2018, pp. ix-xxvii.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Translation as Culture." *Parallax*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2000, pp. 13-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/135346400249252.

Stewart-Williams, Steve. *Darwin, God, and the Meaning of Life: How Evolutionary Theory Undermines Everything You Thought You Knew*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Styres, Sandra D. *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education: Philosophies of Iethi'nihsténha Ohwentsia'kékha (Land)*. University of Toronto Press, 2017.

TallBear, Kim. "Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming." *Kalfou*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019, pp. 24-41.

Thomas, James M. *Diversity Regimes: Why Talk Is Not Enough to Fix Racial Inequality at Universities*. Rutgers University Press, 2020.

Thorkelson, Eli. "Conclusion: Reading the Work That Is Already There." *Academography: Critical Ethnography & Higher Education*, 9 Jan. 2019, https://academography.decasia.org/2019/01/09/conclusion-for-an-intersectional-and-transdisciplinary-ethnography-of-the-university/index.html.

Todd, Zoe. "An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism." *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2016, pp. 4-22, https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12124.

Trewavas, Anthony. *Plant Behaviour and Intelligence*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species." *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 1, 2012, pp. 141-54, https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3610012.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "R-Words: Refusing Research." *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, edited by Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn, SAGE, 2014, pp. 223-47.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Translated by Jonathan Star. Tarcher/Putnam, 2001.

van Gogh, Vincent. *The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*. Edited by Leo Jansen et al., translated by Lynne Richards et al., vol. 1, Thames & Hudson, 2009.

Vostal, Filip. *Accelerating Academia: The Changing Structure of Academic Time*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Wang, Jing. *Half Sound, Half Philosophy: Aesthetics, Politics, and History of China's Sound Art*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.

Watts, Vanessa. "Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2013, pp. 20-34.

Whyte, Kyle Powys. "The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism." *Red Ink: An International Journal of Indigenous Literature, Arts, & Humanities*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2017, pp. 154-69.

Wilson, Shawn. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Fernwood, 2008.

Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1: Ginkgo near Sŏnbong-guyŏk, North Korea.

Figure 2: Ginkgo on Philosopher's Walk, Toronto.

Figure 3: Acrylic on paper.

Figure 4: Wax, water colour, and Ginkgo leaf on paper.

NOTES

This work is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

1. On the troubling notion of "research," and how it might be ethically reframed, see Tuck and Yang, "R-Words."↩