Roadkill and the Space of the Ditch: An Artist's Meditation.

[*Overlooking Saskatchewan: Minding the Gap*. Randal Rogers and Christine Ramsay, eds. University of Regina Press, 2014. 113-148.]

A hawk wheels above the ditch. The evening air is hot, the sky clear. Detecting delicate movement in the grass, its glide collapses into a sudden drop. Predator angles toward prey. Meters before impact, as it shoots across the asphalt, a van intersects its flight path. Flesh and fender, nature and culture collide. The ruined body caroms into the margin. Later, crows, flies, ants and others soon share in its reduction by particles. The day continues unconsciously.

Gliding down the highway, my eyes sweep left and right for signs of death. Eschewing disgusting indefinite wrecks but also the fresh and pathetic, I scan for disfigures in the landscape, unbeings that inspire an affective oscillation between engagement and estrangement; an animal about to pass from being to mere thing. Glimpsing a discordant shape splayed in the grassy verge, I wheel, loop back for another pass. Seeing the ruined bird, I pull over, switch on the hazard lights, grab a camera and walk into the ditch, to my prey.

A century ago, wildlife art began a gradual turn from taxidermy to naturalism. Before fast film, colour film, cars and planes, wildlife artists had to rely on sketches, memory, written descriptions, and mounted pelts. Many of the resulting collages feature stiff or stylized animals in blank, abstract or semi-fictional settings. Others were dramatic and fanciful (Delacroix) or highly stylized (Audubon). Contemporary naturalist artists take pride in fidelity. They paint from their own photographs of animals captured in their natural habitats. Because I hunt game out-of-doors, photograph then later paint their likenesses in the studio, my work belongs to the naturalist tradition. Because I paint corpses, roadkill, my practice is in the taxidermic tradition. However, as my project is uninterested in names and taxonomy, habits and habitats, only indirectly concerned with environmentalism, and not at all in romanticizing or even comprehending nature, this work does not quite belong to either tradition. It is perhaps best read as a hybrid of wildlife and still life painting. Then again, these may be landscapes as the space of the ditch is as significant to me as its temporary occupants.

Naturalistic wildlife art appears to describe the world as it is. However, like all representations, they are unnatural appearances constructed by people and informed by their ideas. They are selected, framed, edited, composed and coded to reflect a worldview—including the illusion that this is not being done. That worldview is at once personal and cultural. Styles vary from person to person, place to place and time to time. Not only do we record things differently, but we also see or rather recognize them differently. Vision is altered by perception and perception by cultural schema. Artists not only translate the appearance of things into a variety of mediums and styles, but they also compose their images, consciously or not, to serve their symbolic needs and the expectations of their audiences.

Picturing animals is a convention with various histories and habits. For example, contemporary paintings of wildlife differ from those of domestic animals both in setting and address. Under naturalism, wild animals are shown in their traditional habitats and are normally pictured as unaware that they are being seen by people. Paintings of dogs and cats, on the other hand, are more often composed as portraits[1] in which they address the viewer or are aware of and comfortable with his or her presence. The subject of a formal pet portrait is groomed, even decorated, often recorded at eye-level, posed in profile or to face the viewer and rendered to emphasize the animal's individual temperament. Settings are typically domestic or abstract. Pets are displayed according to the conventions of human portraiture in order to stress or construct their resemblance to us.

When pets are photographed in 'nature', the images are analogous to snap shots of their owners on vacation: 'This is me, elsewhere, not at home.' Some pictures, such as of a fancy toy poodle (or human counterpart) shown in a thick forest, are ironic. Though we and our pets are animals, this type of souvenir announces our enculturation, our distance from nature. Here are tamed animals and people who are attracted to but no longer fit for the raw environment. However, there is a sub-genre of domestic animal art that positions pets as looking at home in the wild. They are posed with serious faces and noble postures to emphasize a resemblance to their distant, feral cousins and to express their untamed aspects. Serious campers, hikers, tree-planters and other human adventurers have themselves similarly photographed. These images are designed to elicit future feelings of longing and loss, to even have us question the authenticity of our domesticated lives. Though they profess to reject this habit, naturalistic wildlife artists routinely engage in an only slightly subtler romanticism.[2]

In the late 19th century, artists from Europe and the eastern United States flocked west and northward to document native species and pristine environments before they were lost to cultivation (Runguis, Feurtes, etc.). This was the period when the first National parks (and Indian reservations) were established. However, the salvage operation soon became seduced by experience and myth. The propelling scientific gaze was replaced by a metaphoric tendency. Animals in these paintings are typically arranged in anthropomorphic visions of idyllic family life or narratives of rugged individualism against a backdrop of undeveloped landscape. These artists were more interested in the Wild West than wildlife. Animals are stand-ins for Romantic ideals of 'natives', Noble Savages and frontiers men before they too faded.

While wildlife art offers a planet without people, they nevertheless reflect human desires. These pictures satisfy a longing for archetypical being and relationships in a zone free from the complexity of contemporary culture. They represent a retreat from 'the world' and an imaginative return to nature. These images are (to conflate Foucault and Freud) unreal, utopic spaces designed for people to contemplate their discontent with civilization. We are to empathize with these beings as if we were them as we wish them, and us, to be.

Another convention common to taxidermic and naturalistic paintings produced in the West in the late 19th and 20th centuries, is that they present animals seen but unseeing. That is, the animal is recorded but the recorder is erased. They do not see us seeing them. This trick was achieved using stuffed animals, and now, with telephoto lenses. The intention is to offer what looks like a glimpse into nature as it is, pure, separate from people. If the implied viewer is only meters from the creatures but does not disturb them, then perhaps they are one of them, or are present but invisible—Emerson's disembodied eye floating through the landscape, a transparent recorder at one with nature. In either scenario, we are no longer ourselves in this imaginary space. We are on vacation from human embodiment and implication.

A possible exception to this general type is the startled deer motif. An animal is shown alert and looking out as if it has just noticed us. It is a terrific device that may cause viewers to mirror the subject and instinctively freeze so as not to be seen. Our vantage point is no-longer safely outside the picture plane. We have similar uncanny sensations when we catch ourselves blushing while looking at a portrait of a person whose eyes seem to be gazing into ours. Realizing that you are reacting to a fiction in this way is one of art's delights, but it is also unsettles the subject.

Instinctively fearful of a change in ontological status, becoming food, the deer is frozen in an in-between state, waiting for a signal, confirmation of something or nothing. The artist presents the animal at the moment of being disturbed by some thing which may not be us, or anything. If this were real, the deer would eventually bolt or return to grazing. The artist captures/creates a threshold moment, a gap, a suspension of judgment before recognition, decision and action. The deer is itself as long as it remains unrecognized; and we are only privileged to witness this site, as long as we remain unseen. Observation alters being. Nature does not exist as only itself in our conscious presence; the observer changes the observed. But the conceit is, if we can keep our (aesthetic) distance in the imaginative space of pictures, viewers can have a sensation of unobserved nature, while the real thing proceeds undisturbed. If we read the deer in the picture as not seeing us, the protocol is maintained. If we think it does see us, the picture permanently suspends a moment of collision, when the two realms recognize each other. The ability to freeze frames for contemplation is the province of culture.

The moment an animal is hit by a car, it becomes a cultural object. In an instant of unnatural violence, it enters human space and consciousness, loses privacy and becomes a public body. Writing about still life painting, Norman Bryson[3] differentiates between the raw and the cooked. Arrangements of found nutrition—ripe fruit, vegetables, honey—emphasize nature's bounty. Paintings of cooked items display labour. The cooked is cultural, nature transformed by human work; the raw is natural, discovered. Such pictures may stir longings for lost infancy where all was provided without effort. As iconography, pictures of raw food are meant to remind Christians of their prelapsarian selves, paradise lost, and of the promise of another, simpler life to come. Paintings of the cooked remind of labour as punishment due to original sin. However, the manufactured bounty displays how well people have done after the expulsion. They indicate that human technology, cooking, has made lives better than when we were in a state of nature. Embedded in the

fabric of much wildlife art and still life painting is a debate as to whether we are better off in a natural or a cultural state.

> It is just man's turning away from instinct—his opposing himself to instinct—that creates consciousness. Instinct is nature and seeks to perpetuate nature, whereas consciousness can only seek culture or its denial. Even when we turn back to nature, inspired by a Rousseauesque longing, we cultivate nature.... And here we are beset by an all too human fear that consciousness—our Promethian conquest—may in the end not be able to serve us as well as nature.[4] Carl Jung.

Smashed by a vehicle, a deer is 'cooked' in the sense that it is transformed by human technology into another order of being (nature to culture). The accidental nature (or, rather, engineering) of the encounter, however, retains an aspect of the 'raw', natural and unknowable. The moment of killing an animal in this way shocks because it is unintentional; a surprise punctuation in the drive, a disruption to the Emersonian floating eye fantasy that driving supports. Hitting animals with our vehicles reminds us that we do indeed have bodies and that our passage intersects and imperils the natural. Sometimes, we do not just drive through nature but into it.

Young children are often devastated by such an event, but most adults are philosophical. Our current standard of living, here, relies on the proliferation of highways. Unfortunately, this artificial grid has been laid over a pre-existing, network of migratory and other animal routes. When the two systems meet, animals are usually the greater victims of our advancement. No moral person deliberately creates roadkill. Nevertheless, these deaths are the inevitable result of our choices. If we consider the fate of these creatures, our implicit ethical calculation is made tangible. We figure that the loss of their lives is an acceptable consequence of our lifestyle. The acceptance of this collateral damage, and our logic, hardens our hearts toward and separates us further from nature. However, if the impact of the punctuation tears the contract, and we are moved by the event, we may open to some interesting thoughts, feelings and reconsiderations.

Killing and packaging institutions insulate human omnivores from the animal-to-meat transformation. Seeing roadkill, especially having a hand in creating it, may be the only occasion some have to viscerally link their food to its violent origins. The alienation and aestheticization of animal bodies is necessary before many can consider consuming them. There are some, however, who have unlearned cultivated disgust and can consider animals freshly killed in this way as food. For others, the idea is repellent because civilization (separation from nature) has them classify such animals as abject—some thing rejected and unavailable for consumption.

My attraction to roadkill as subject matter for art begins with the complexity of their ontological status. Because they are seen as refuse, have no use, abject bodies are available for multiple meanings. They attract and reflect the shadow content of their creators and observers. While seeing roadkill usually engenders repulsion, some also feel sympathy and even a deeper empathy. We feel sorry for the animal, but we may also feel kinship, a sense that their body is a metaphor for our own. As someone who has lain

bleeding on the road several times due to motor vehicle accidents, and, as a child, saw multiple car crash victims on the highway, 'metaphor' is perhaps too weak a word for the affective connection.

I began collecting images of these animals almost unconsciously as I drove through the Prairies. I felt a need to collect and paint them and decided not to examine my motives or construct meanings for the work. Sense followed sensibility. A revelation came when a colleague, art historian Gail Chin, saw my Roadkill paintings in my studio and likened them to the *kusõzu* tradition in Japanese Buddhist art. *Kusõzu* are representations of a (female) corpse in various stages of decomposition. These scroll paintings, or now photographs, are meant to be contemplated young male monks. The corpse appears in "successive stages of decay [to show] the frailty of existence and the repulsive nature of the human body[5]." The body is to be rejected as a necessary step on the road to enlightenment.

When I first began photographing these animals, I was moved to tears. Those feelings were stimulated as much by a sense of responsibility as by the reminder of my own mortality. In one sense, this work can be considered within the *memento mori* painting tradition, Dutch still life paintings featuring skulls and timepieces, flowers, books, mirrors and other symbols of the vanity of life. They are reminders that our bodies will age and die. The moral is that it is better to reject the pleasures of our temporary flesh and protect our eternal soul. Ironically, *memento mori* offer mixed messages. While they decry the vanities of the world, they render those articles in seductive detail. While warning of impermanence, in paint, they preserve temporary beauties for the ages.

I find roadkill blank regarding morality or message. The dead are silent. Images of corpses evoke the idea that there is nothing beyond the material just as readily as they suggest the permanence of the soul. That such meaningless objects can attract meanings at all is my interest, but their silence is what propels me to paint them. I feel in the painting of these experienced things a sense of pre-comprehension, an understanding of death at a moment before interpretation. The slow, unthinking contemplation of this death, and my own, through painting might be a pathetic attempt to make this singular, non-relational event (Heidegger), relational.

Chin explains that the corpses in the *kusõzu* scrolls are female because they are produced by heterosexual monks who link temptations of the flesh, their flesh, with the bodies of women. While sexist, the meanings of these works are not confined by a gender interpretation: "the gender of Buddhist truth in these paintings is female, yet truth also transcends gender as it is universal and resists definitions."[6] Roadkill as a painting subject are constructed and read according to our preferences, especially autographic projection, but the contemplation of the aesthetic dead can go beyond this. I chose this subject because it is not yet exhausted by over-representation, not yet become cliché.

While cameras preserve a flash of real time, they also create distance. With a shutter, the moment is history. Time is not permitted to *pass* (verb), but becomes *past* (noun), history. I paint ruined animals in a self-consciously pathetic attempt to restore their lives. I try to

reach back, through the photographs to the source experience and reanimate it in paint, a network of marks that not only create a resemblance but are also measures of multiple times, records of the artist's body.

The Roadkill paintings and drawings rarely include the eyes or 'faces', and the bodies are usually ravaged to dissuade sympathy, easy identification and humanization. They are truly dead, not asleep. They are beyond resuscitation. The depictions hover between realism and abstraction for similar reasons. I resist knowing the names of these creatures because naming threatens to direct experience into a conventional system of understanding. Freed from titles, taxonomy and sympathy, contemplation in the ditch is available for association, fiction, metaphor, and homology. The evocative power of this experience comes from the incomprehensibility of these beings and the uncertainty of their space.

In the dominant Canadian image-in-nation, Saskatchewan is the periphery at the center. It is the gap between significant spaces. And yet, from this emptiness have emerged resources that made the nation possible. The Plains also produced battles, treaties, social programs, political and cultural figures that shape our unique character. But the Saskatchewan imaginary has its own blind spots, its informing gaps. The ditch, roads and road allowances are the unlikely but defining network of gaps that profoundly shape this place.

The ditch is a strange type of 'other' space that does not quite fit Foucault's categories.[7] Neither quite nature nor culture, the ditch is a crisis strip where the two meet. A remnant, a designed absence, the ditch engenders anxiety. As a site of contemplation, it is barely tolerable. It is no place to be. And yet, its difference from the familiar is exhilarating and offers new perspectives on being.

As left-over land, property's negative space, the ditch accommodates the remainder. It is the receptacle of refuse, a refuge for the homeless and a trauma site for disordered bodies. In addition to roadkill, garbage and, occasionally, human bodies—accident and murder victims, and their memorial markers—are momentarily found in these depressions. The ditch is a nuisance ground, our largest site of perpetual abjection and accidental display.

Beginning in 1871, the Dominion Survey of Canada laid an imaginary grid over the West, drawing the land (309,000 square miles) into one-square-mile sections. Dividing and often subdividing each section are road allowances, the provision for later or actual roads. Saskatchewan has 190,000 km of rural roads, and uncounted, undeveloped road allowances, the largest such system in Canada[8]. We must refer to *the* ditch rather than *a* ditch because there is only one. In this, perhaps the largest rationalized expanse on earth, the ditch is a network of squares linked by culverts, a huge grid of anonymous space.

The ditch is an intentional gap, the interval between properties that makes them possible. As the buffer separating the public highway from private property, the ditch is the supplement that completes conventional spaces, defines them as objects, as real things, as *real* estate. The ditch is property's frame. Unlike survey stakes and even barbed wire

fences that are nearly imaginary divisions, the Prairie ditch occupies substantial space, tens of thousands of acres. Even so, this land is unentitled to title. It is unreal estate, a communal no-man's land, owned by no one in particular and everyone in general.

To the traveler, the ditch is a parallel realm, land at once passing, passed the passenger and yet continuously, contiguously present. Everywhere and nowhere in particular, static and moving, it is a strange mobius ribbon of time/space. Because they are narrow and long, roads and their ditches are not so much places as passages. We usually experience the road not as a space but as time; the location is at once singular and continuous. Being in a moving car, or a train on a track, is to be at once in a specific chamber and to be extended in time and space. In time-space capsules one feels less than two dimensional. Only able to be drawn forward or backward, the experience is linear, durational, being-in-transit, transitory. Like the longing expressed in 'raw' paintings, it is as if our real 'being' is left behind or waits for us at the end of the journey. In motion, the passenger is static, contained as a moving point along a line. The phenomenological state is one of being-in-waiting and the world beyond the chamber is an impenetrable moving picture.

How long and narrow does a rectangle have to be before becoming a line? When passing at great speed, the perceived space of the ditch is attenuated. It is experienced as a line, a conduit rather than a place. For the passenger, it has a visual rather than a tactile presence: it is image/imaginary space. To interrupt your progress, leave the car and wander into the ditch, is to penetrate the picture plane and create an interval in transit-space. The rushing horizontal band becomes a shape, and then, when you step into it, a form. Time slows.

Snow mobilers and horse-back riders use the ditch as a trail from one real place to another. A few others may walk short stretches to clean up garbage, harvest berries or bottles, but to occupy the ditch for any length of time for any other reason is a disturbance. In the ditch, you are a spectacle, an anomalous five second drama for passengers. Other than those temporarily using the ditch as a road, cleaning it or filling it with waste, no one has any good business there. A body in the ditch is compelled to move with the current. Not moving creates existential anxiety in the spectator, a spectacle, a sense of being out-of-place. The ditch is uncanny space, unhome-like. The anxiety produced by transit-space is such that signs must be posted letting motorists know where they are in relation to the next *real* place. To stand still in a transit space is to signal crisis, or to shortly face one.

We are driving home from the lake. The evening air is hot, the sky clear. The car is full of sweating, dreaming children. My brother, sister and I are in the middle row. My youngest brothers and friends are lying in the back of the station wagon. It is 1973, no seat belts. My sticky forehead presses against the window. The opening and closing of my eyes slow as the passing scene enters my mind and takes on a new life. During one of the near-sightless intervals, a car cuts in front of ours from the right. My father curses through his clenched teeth and cigarette and slams the brake. We collide. They carom into the ditch, and we stop in the middle of the road. I have a brief black out. Upon returning, my forehead feels numb. I am carried out of the car and settled on a coat on the side of the

road. My body rhymes with the dead I saw from our car lying on the same road years earlier. They had no names and were beyond understanding. Stunned and uncertain, the newness of the sensation affords a strange, fearful pleasure. Linger in the painful pleasure of this nowhere, no longer having a name.

The ditch and road allowance have a personal and cultural meaning for me. The Roadkill paintings emerge from my research of the Carlton Trail. I took most of the photographs while cruising the Yellow Head Highway and other roads that parallel the original Trail. The Carlton Trail is the Settler name for the thoroughfare between the Red River Settlement (Winnipeg) and (Fort) Edmonton. It was originally part of an extensive First Nations pathway system. In the 19th century, the "Great Highway" was the primary land trading route on the Prairies. In the 20th century, the Yellow Head highway, part of which roughly follows the original trail, was paved. It was named for an Iroquois/Métis guide, Pierre Bostinas, nick-named Tète Jaune by French voyagers[9]. The Trail has historical significance for the Métis. Not only was it an important carting route, but it was also the exodus road for many who fled Red River after the failed resistance (1869-70). There are numerous historic and continuing Métis settlements along the way. My ancestors were among those who left Red River at that time. My great, great grandfather, Laurent Garneau, re-settled on the banks of the South Saskatchewan, across from Fort Edmonton–now called the Garneau district. I retrace his path, though in a speeding car, several times a year.

The ditch and road allowances are the defining, remnant spaces of Prairie colonization. As land was partitioned, cleared and cultivated, indigenous plants, animals and people that could not be assimilated were pushed to the margins. The ditch and road allowances were refuge for numerous indigenous plants and some people. The two Northwest Resistances (Red River/Winnipeg, 1869-70; Batoche, 1885) were sparked by the Dominion Survey's imposition of a grid of roads and properties that obliterated existing land claims and uses.[10] Disenfranchised in the aftermath of the battles and subsequent mass European immigration and land rush, many Métis families took refuge in the only unclaimed lands, marginal territories that lent these inconvenient people their name, the "Road Allowance People."

In their inception, road allowances were utopic spaces—room set aside for the future. They were imaginary spaces birthed on drafting boards. To planners and politicians, they were empty spaces, nowhere. The Métis were similarly figured. To binary imaginations, hybrid identities were impossible and the impossible were rendered invisible, and these transparent people moved into invisible space, road allowances. The homeless literally made homes in these unhome-like margins drawn into Settler's maps. For a time, they were tolerated by their neighbours because they were a source of cheap labour. By the 1930s, however, their settlements were seen as blockages in the arteries, and many were run off (though some endured into the 1970s).

In "A Fair Country," John Raulston Saul argues that the Canadian difference from both Americans and the British is due to the influence of Aboriginal people. Proto-Canadians did not simply adopt Aboriginal ways but were gradually assimilated by them. He calls

this cultural hybridization our Métis civilization[11]. Of course, he distinguishes the historical Métis people acknowledged by the Canadian constitution and this cultural métissage. It is a wonderful and persuasive idea, but perhaps we should also attend to the actual Métis, the embodiment, the exemplars of his argument.

I am not drawing a metaphoric relationship between roadkill and the Métis. However, there is a cultural resonance with the space of the ditch and the road allowance. Perhaps my obsessive hunting and photographing of dead animals is the occasion, the excuse to go into these places, pay homage.

Many representational artists working in traditional media (painting, drawing, sculpture) feel poorly served by critical theory. The enterprise of much art theory of the last thirty years concerned deconstructive rather than constructive readings of traditional media. When critical writers offered productive leadership, their positive examples were usually alternative rather than reformist. That is, when they suggested direction for artists, photography, video, installation, relational aesthetic and other new media practices were championed: revolution rather than renovation. Painting, for example—whose obituary was recited bi-annually—was a lost cause. Over-burdened by history and devastated by deconstruction, painting and its genres seemed beyond redemption. Critical writers showed little interest in coaching painters as to how they might reform and refresh their fields. Of course, many painters employ critical theory, but in the absence of medium and genre specific intellectual assistance, much of this work is unconvincing and the disenfranchised routinely turn to the market and retreat to modernist ideas of art and practice.

I have been arguing that there is nothing natural about nature art. Wildlife painting has been ‘scientific’, then ‘romantic’ and anthropomorphic. It is a supplement to our cultivated lives, or a display of our shadow selves, our suppressed human natures. If we are to renovate the genre, perhaps artists should push this tendency further, make it less repressed. This is done in the gopher museum in Trochu, Alberta, but the scenes are strictly conventional: gopher schools, weddings and other nostalgic scenarios. Where is the gopher treaty signing, gopher water-boarding interrogation scene…? If we must make animals stand-ins for people, the repertoire of human experience expressed through these proxies should be increased. There are of course less kitschy options. Imagine if artists took the animal art genre seriously and did not simply deconstruct the economy of the representations and markets, etc., but commandeered the form for radical ends. Why should popular genres be abandoned to conservative imaginaries? What would postcolonial wildlife art look like?

My Roadkill paintings are an attempt to increases the available subjects for wildlife art. While these paintings try to deflect easy anthro-projection, if one is to see oneself in these works, the self seen is unconventional, a disturbance. The power of *memento mori* paintings is that ideas and feeling about mortality can be expressed and received within an aesthetic shell. This is very difficult to do in more literal pictures of human death. The problem is that the Dutch *memento mori* genre has been well absorbed by viewers and is now mostly decorative or cliché. Like wildlife art, it needs renovating if it is to regain the

ability to move. Roadkill as a still life subject is half way between *vanitas* and necro-portraiture. As aestheticized images of death they are close enough to upset but distant enough to attract. Freed from cant—conventional moral messages—they open discourse rather than display a code.

My second complaint is that wildlife art positions the viewer as if they were invisible presences peering into an unaware, 'natural' nature. This panoptic vantage point offers an illusion of omniscience that rhymes with the colonial-capitalist gaze in which everything is accessible, can be seen, surveyed and controlled. The position is a fantasy, but as Edward Said explains, vision precedes invasion[12]. Visual reconnaissance and surveys come before the take over. Is it possible to see nature without the desire to acquire, or even possess by naming and knowing?

A refreshed wildlife art would trouble the disembodied eye construction, show nature disturbed by human presence. Roadkill paintings are stilled lives; they directly confront the artificiality of taxidermic and telephotographic paintings. The viewer knows from the evidence of the image that the artist was close to the dead animal. It is not stuffed or shot from a distance. The putrefying carcass stank, was infested by insects, and was likely found in a dangerous, unnatural setting (the ditch). The differences from the traditional animal art are clear but where these paintings belong and what they could mean requires mental, intuitive and emotional labour—they are unscripted. Such paintings may not entirely escape our projections, but their contemplation may lead to a sense of a difference—in nature and death—an otherness that is not autobiographical: nature itself, rather than property, the fact of death, rather than one's personal extinction. The hope is for an embodied but differentiated sense of being.

Works Cited

[1] I am indebted to wildlife and domestic animal artist, Jack Cowin, for this insight.
[2] There are, of course, unsubtle examples of anthropomorphic taxidermy displays—where small, stuffed animals are presented in human clothes and situation, including the gopher museum in Torrington, Alberta, and Hermann Ploucquet's animal tableaux exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 (cited in Henning, Michelle. 2007. "Anthropomorphic Taxidermy and the Death of Nature: the Curious Art of Hermann Ploucquet, Walter Potter and Charles Waterton. *Victorian Literature and Culture.* Cambridge University Press: 663–678).
[3] Bryon, Norman. 1990. *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
[4] Jung, Carl. (1930) 1960. "The Stages of Life", *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, the Collected Works of CG. Jung,* vol. 8, Routledge, London: 750.

[5] Chin, Gail. 1998. "The Gender of Buddhist Truth." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 25, 3/4: 277-317.
[6] _____. 311.
[7] Foucault, Michel. (1967) 1986. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16; Spring: 22-27.
[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roads_in_Saskatchewan, accessed May 10, 2011.
[9] http://www.transcanadayellowhead.com/files/pdf/SagaBrief.pdf, accessed Feb.2, 2011.
[10] Beal Bob and Rod Macleod. 1994. *Prairie Fire: the North-West Rebellion*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers: 46-8.
[11] Saul, John Ralston. 2008. *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada*. Toronto: Viking Canada: 1-97.
[12] Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Toronto: Vintage Books: 240.