



# WATCH YOUR HEAD

WRITERS &  
ARTISTS  
RESPOND  
TO THE  
CLIMATE  
CRISIS

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*WRITERS & ARTISTS  
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CLIMATE CRISIS*

*EDITED BY*

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*WITH*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Everyone has the responsibility to respond to this crisis.*

– Rita Wong

## BACKGROUND

The seed of this project was planted at a protest. On September 7, 2019, Kathryn Mockler organized a reading with eight writers for an environmental group hosting a protest at Simcoe Park during the Toronto International Film Festival. The day-long event included music, readings, and art performances. As the sky threatened rain and most people in the area were enjoying the festival, the event itself was small – about fifteen or so were in attendance along with a few passersby.

But that didn't matter. Once each performer took the mic, the size of the audience and the greyness of the autumn day fell away. It was just the writers, their words, and their messages, which were captured on video. The readers included Margaret Christakos, Adam Giles, Catherine Graham, Hege Jakobsen Lepri, Khashayar Mohammadi, Terese Mason Pierre, Rasiqra Revulva, and Todd Westcott.

An online platform was needed to share this moving and powerful event, and so *Watch Your Head* was born at [watchyourhead.ca](http://watchyourhead.ca). The title comes from the language of caution signs that warn those in the vicinity of known and preventable dangers in the hopes of avoiding a catastrophic event that could lead to injury or death. This seemed like a fitting title for a project about the climate emergency.

Once the site went live, several writers and artists offered to lend their support to the project, forming an editorial collective that would publish creative works focused on climate justice and the climate crisis. Alana Wilcox from Coach House Books approached us about publishing a print anthology and several editors from the *Watch Your Head* collective joined the print anthology editorial team: Madhur Anand, Stephen Collis, Jennifer Dorner, Catherine Graham, Elena

Johnson, Canisia Lubrin, Kim Mannix, Kathryn Mockler, June Pak, Sina Queyras, Shazia Hafiz Ramji, Rasiqra Revulva, Yusuf Saadi, Sanchari Sur, and Jacqueline Valencia.

At the heart of the *Watch Your Head* project in all of its manifestations – website, print anthology, readings, events – is a desire not only to draw attention to the present and future implications of the climate crisis, but also to inspire people to get involved in climate justice action and solidarity initiatives.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate justice acknowledges the fact that the radical ecological and biospheric transformation currently unfolding on our planet is predicated upon social inequalities, and embeds future inequalities. In other words, the extractive industrial practices driving global warming and all its associated depletions are an extension of a historical colonization built upon the theft of the lands and bodies of Indigenous and Black peoples, which continues today by displacing largely Indigenous peoples from their lands and will, as the climate warms, disproportionately impact racialized communities, so-called developing nations in the Global South, and other marginalized people. A climate-justice approach insists that questions of colonization and decolonization, racism, anti-Blackness, and other forms of forcibly maintained social inequalities, exclusions, and persecutions cannot be separated from the question of the climate and the planet's eroding natural environment. It is not insignificant that we write these words in the midst of a global pandemic, which has most severely impacted racialized communities, low-income communities, migrant workers, long-term-care residents, and other vulnerable people. It is not insignificant that at this moment some of the largest and most intense anti-Black-racism protests in decades, and concomitant police violence, are happening. Climate justice, and much of the work in this anthology, acknowledges these complexities, contradictions, and convergence points.

In part, this leads to a questioning of the Anthropocene – a term you will not frequently encounter in this anthology – as a lens for understanding the present. The Anthropocene proposes a universal: human activity did this; we all did this. As Kathryn Yusoff writes in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, “To be included in the “we” of the Anthropocene is to be silenced by a claim to universalism that fails to notice its subjugations.”<sup>1</sup> *Watch Your Head* strives to avoid such silencing universalism, offering instead a diverse and wide-ranging response to the experience of the current crisis.

Poet Rita Wong’s public statement upon her sentencing (to four weeks in jail) for defying a court injunction and blockading the entrance to the Trans Mountain Pipeline’s Westridge Marine Terminal can serve as a paradigm for climate justice, directing us to new frames of allyship within our fraught condition. It is also a powerful inspiration to hear a writer speak so directly of the necessity of action: ‘I did this because we’re in a climate emergency.’<sup>2</sup> Her declaration of responsibilities – to ancestors, to the salmon, to the trees, the ocean, and to the life-giving waters all around us – is the basis of her redefinition of justice. Justice, Wong argues, from the unceded territories upon which she stands and lives, must at the very least acknowledge the equal validity of the rule of natural law and Coast Salish Indigenous law, alongside the sentencing court’s colonial rule of law. Wong’s climate justice is thus predicated upon a ‘reciprocal relationship with the land and water,’ and ‘is a rule of law that works primarily from a place of love and respect, not from fear of authority and punishment’:

Our ceremony that morning was an act of spiritual commitment, of prayer, of artistic expression, of freedom of expression, an act of desperation in the face of climate crisis, an act of

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1. Kathryn Yusoff. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. University of Minnesota Press. 2018.

2. Rita Wong. ‘Rita Wong’s Public Sentencing Statement.’ Talonbooks. 18 August 2019. <https://talonbooks.com/news/rita-wong-s-public-sentencing-statement>.

allegiance with the earth's natural laws, and a heartfelt attempt to prevent mass extinction of the human race.<sup>3</sup>

## SCIENCE, SOCIETY, AND LANGUAGE

The scientific basis of climate change dates back to 1896, when Svante Arrhenius proposed a connection between fossil-fuel combustion and increases in global temperature. Perhaps better known are Charles David Keeling's observations taken at Mauna Loa Observatory in the late 1950s, which gave rise to the Keeling Curve.<sup>4</sup> The impacts of climate change on the earth and its inhabitants are also very well known. Numerous reports have been issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most recent of which calls for 'rapid, unprecedented, and far-reaching' changes to all aspects of society.<sup>5</sup>

Our predictions of climate change come from global circulation models, which conceptualize the complex numerical biogeophysical underpinnings of climate, but these modes of prediction can only go so far in terms of effecting societal change. It is important to refine these models, particularly in examining how global changes can have local impacts that are easier for humanity to act upon, but, even then, human behaviour unfolds at different levels and in different dimensions from the computational logic of such models. The science of climate change has been communicated to governments and society time and time again, through all sorts of media, but the messages are not being acted upon. Predicting dire future consequences is not working, which places science at a strange standstill. This is not because science is uncertain or inadequate, but change is impeded by the power and privilege of the sectors of

---

3. Ibid.

4. Charles D. Keeling (1960). 'The concentration and isotopic abundances of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.' *Tellus*, 12 (2): 200–203. doi:10.3402/tellusa.v12i2.9366.

5. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 'Global Warming of 1.5°C.' United Nations. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>. Accessed 11 June 2020.

society that addressing climate change would disrupt.

Interventions into the making of climate data could be one way to bridge the gap, as Adam Dickinson does in his poem ‘Perspiration, a Conspiracy,’ which interrogates the physiological climate change impacts on the human body (rising temperature) using the language of poetry.

The recent move of the *Guardian* to change their style guide (‘climate change’ is now ‘climate crisis’ or ‘global heating’) highlights the importance of language to create the necessary cultural shift.<sup>6</sup> Writers and artists are needed not to correct our language of what is known, but to use it, like the complex and messy data it is, to create new forms and ideas, and to explore those spaces of unknowing, the much-needed imagining of climate futures. Ultimately, for the insights brought to humanity by artists on the issue of climate change to be fully realized, conversations between artists and scientists must continue.

## WATCH YOUR HEAD

The poems, stories, essays, and artwork collected in this anthology by necessity offer a broad range of responses to the current crisis: writers and artists give voice to widely shared fears and the enveloping sense of the uncanniness of our times; they attempt to imagine the unimaginable; they remind us what we can and must attend to, and what we are unavoidably attached to; they explore the limits and possibilities of language in the face of catastrophe, loss, and grief; and, of course, they name names and take numbers, looking for payback.

The increasing sense of the precariousness of life, the care and attention this calls for, and the admission of complicities we must face are a common topic – what Allison Cobb calls, with a deft line

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6. Damian Carrington. ‘Why the *Guardian* is changing the language it uses about the environment.’ 17 May 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/17/why-the-guardian-is-changing-the-language-it-uses-about-the-environment>

break, ‘that sense of hanging / on,’ despite ‘the blood’s toxic cargo.’ Anna Swanson’s take on the ledge-factor of the climate emergency, in her poem ‘I Am Writing a Spell for Your Nervous System,’ is to invoke the careful listening of ‘baby monitors / tuned to the evening news.’ But that listening is revelatory, giving us access to ‘geologic time ... breathing hard.’ Temporal measurements, as the poets attempt to assess the *nowness* of their now, are everywhere, from Jessica Le’s desperate mantra ‘it’s not too late. it’s not too late. it’s not too late’ to Manahil Bandukwala’s musing on the ‘precious hours / at the end / of the world’ and Kunjana Parashar’s awareness of the proximity of life, identity, and the unfolding disaster: ‘I was born ... somewhere around the confirmed end of Javan tigers.’

The inevitable complicities – and troubling and embodied proximities to the disaster – concern many of our contributors. Ellen Chang-Richardson’s speaker in ‘Meltwater Basin’ feels ‘wrapped, in polyurethane,’ and Jessica Magonet, in ‘Revolution,’ considers the ‘crude oil / on my hands’ as they contemplate their upcoming flight.

The very everydayness of these effects does not dispel their impact; in fact, it heightens it, and the poets, fiction and essay writers, and artists in this anthology excel at giving voice to the complexities that have become an ordinary part of our lives – from Nikki Reimer’s speaker declaring in ‘I Still Want Eyelid Bees’ that they are “sad” about “mass species death,” but will “still use plastic strips” / to “wax my back mole,” to the characters in Sarah Mangle’s comic ‘Weird’ who contemplate climate change during a conversation about the weather, to the speaker of Carleigh Baker’s story ‘Grey Water’ writing to a distant and perhaps wayward lover: ‘you have boulevards, I have baths. We are terrible.’ The context here of course is the problem of dwindling waters in a warming world, and their radically uneven distribution. Baker’s narrator says:

You know, I’ve seen photos of the drought situation in California. Comparison between now and ten years ago: reservoirs, riverbeds, lakes. Have you seen the photos? The situation looks

pretty grim. But last time we visited, I remember people watering their lawns, boulevards with lush green grass, the long, long shower we took together the morning before we left. All the swimming pools we passed over on our flight home, little blue tiles crammed into an uncomfortable crush of stucco and asphalt. Water is everything, and they don't have much.

When it comes to imagining the unimaginable – something we often expect to be the purview of writers and artists contemplating ecological crises – we find here instead the problem, as articulated by Anna Swanson, that ‘some futures are no longer / unimaginable.’

The postmodern adage – that it is easier to imagine the end of the world (Hollywood has flooded us with these images) than the end of capitalism – comes into play here: we know the drill when it comes to the apocalypse. We get glimpses of it in Jana Prikryl's poem ‘Snapshot,’ where ‘the needle at the top of the Chrysler Building / is visible now and then under whitecaps’ and a ‘coral garden Central Park’ lies ‘dreaming at the bottom.’ And in Aude Moreau's photographic project *La ligne bleue* (*The blue line*), which ‘proposes to draw a line of blue light across the night skyline of Lower Manhattan’ measured at sixty-five metres from the ground to ‘correspond to the projected sea level if all of the ice on the planet were to melt.’

But more often than not we find grief here in the face of the no-longer-unimaginable: Barry Pottle documenting melting ice in *De-Iced*, a photo series that attempts to bring awareness ‘to and of climate change and global warming from an urban Inuk artist's perspective’ or Jacob Wren contemplating the difficulty of writing when the idea that ‘someone might continue to read [their work] far into the future’ becomes less and less plausible.

The work collected here also suggests that conscious attention is as important as the imagining of possibilities – but it may also be the

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7. Barry Pottle. ‘*De-Iced* Artist Statement.’ *Watch Your Head*. <https://www.watchyourhead.ca/watch-your-head/photography-barry-pottle>. 10 January 2020.



case that the imagination is one of the key resources attention draws upon. Carrienne Leung, in a moving personal essay, 'Writing in a Dangerous Time,' draws these threads together beautifully:

We know that a writer needs to attend to the world, and I do. But I do so lately with an intensity that can only be described as a last gasp, as if all this will fall away like illusion at any moment, and I must remember it to record properly ... And isn't that the whole point of literature? To show us to ourselves and keep pursuing this question: what does it mean to be human?

Leung goes on to suggest that 'to be human' is to take up the work of 'fostering good relations ... Writing possible futures must necessarily lead us back to the concept of relationship, and this includes non-human life forms.' The relational may be the dominant thread in this anthology – the attention to connection that the intensity of the moment (when things begin to fall apart and drift away) demands.

We see it in Kevin Adonis Browne's photo series *The Coast*, which portrays what he calls 'the aesthetics of environmental erasure – of what goes, what remains, and what is brought back to us on the tide.'

And it's what Kazim Ali finds out at the Jenpeg Generating Station and dam, at Cross Lake in northern Manitoba, where Pimicikamak Elder Jackson Osborne tells Ali how culture, language, and water interconnect across the land: disrupt one and the others are disrupted too.

Then there are the birds heard by Jónína Kirton in her poem 'for the birds,' who sing out the benediction '*all my relations*,' in 'a poem about the web of connections.' The poem draws upon its special capacities of address here too, of listening and responding to the more-than-human, as in Gary Barwin's series of 'goodbyes'; in Ching-In Chen's 'Lantern Letter,' with its desire to 'vow an impossible hello'; and in Erin Robinsong's 'Anemone,' in which the speaker attempts

‘to think / with anemones’ – and ‘without money.’ Finally, CA Conrad, listening to recordings of now extinct animals in ‘For the Feral Splendour That Remains,’ invites us to ‘fall in love with the world,’ at the very moment we appear to be lending a hand in its destruction:

in a future life  
would we like to  
fall in love with the  
world as it is with  
no recollection  
of the beauty  
we destroy  
today

The literary work, as it always does, approaches its ‘contents’ (even when they involve a dire climate emergency) through the play of its linguistic ‘forms,’ exemplified by Margaret Christakos’s anaphoric repetitions of the conditional word ‘whether’ to summon that ultimate condition, the ‘weather,’ in her poem ‘Whether the Heavens Break.’ When the poet considers the language they bring to such an emergency, the questions proliferate. Rae Armantrout, in ‘Speculative Fiction,’ offers up this quandary:

In the future we will face new problems.

How will we represent the variety of human types  
once all the large animals are gone?

As sly as a mother  
as hungry as an orphan?

Jordan Abel, in ‘Empty Spaces (3),’ a work written at the intersection of fiction and poetry, offers another method: to re-occupy the spaces emptied by colonization (in this case, via the textual body

of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*) to create new and ultimately more meaningful emptinesses – by reversing the engineering of colonization, and occupying the texts through which colonial displacements and evacuations were originally enacted.

None of the writers or artists here shy away from confrontation or the forces that have led us to the present brink. The situation can be and is named bluntly: 'it comes down to money' (Elee Kraljii Gardiner and Andrew McEwan write in 'Debating Foundations'). Eshrat Erfanian points to the pervasiveness of capitalism's reach in her series *Tres-pass*, where the addresses of Middle Eastern oil refineries are juxtaposed with landscape photos taken at sites in Ontario and Quebec, polluted by mining companies in the 1950s and now being developed into luxury retirement communities. In her photographic series *Sleeping*, Shelley Niro's 'Sleeping Warrior Dreams of Pastures and Power' while Mercedes Eng side-eyes 'the apocalypse that yt people keep making movies about,' which is not, and never has been, the apocalypse so many have had to endure for at least 500 long colonial years. Jody Chan returns us to the scene of protest, advising us 'to attend your five-hundredth rally,' if that's what it takes, and 'to allow yourself *I don't know how to fix it*,' but nevertheless, 'to allow an entire future this way, day by unimaginable day, to arrive.' Also deeply stirring is the barely suppressed rage and righteous anger of fifteen-year-old activist Ira Reinhart-Smith, part of a youth lawsuit against the federal government of Canada for its failure to act on climate change, who will not abide the 'ashen fields' produced by business as usual.

The poems, stories, essays, and artwork collected in *Watch Your Head* are warnings to be heeded, directions given, field notes from the midst of the disaster, offers of refuge, shelter in the storm, high ground marked out, refugia demarcated and carefully tended, pleas, modes, and methods of survival – when survival seems ever so much in doubt. *Field notes* is perhaps in the end the correct term for this work, in the sense in which Simone Dalton deploys the concept in 'Notes from a Small Place.' In Dalton's case, observing the 'migratory

pull’ – or perhaps push – shared by human beings and birds such as egrets, these are field notes on climate migration, displacement, and the extractive-colonial aftermath in ‘a world wrung by loss.’ So it is with much of the work gathered in this anthology.

Ours is a ‘crisis of consciousness,’ Dalton continues: ‘We cannot care about what we do not believe; we cannot act if we are not aware.’ But the work in *Watch Your Head* also moves out beyond the matrices of consciousness-raising to inhabit the turbulent spaces, in Jónína Kirton’s words, ‘between observation and intervention,’ where we find our way to appropriate actions, or we don’t, and suffer the consequences. What is in evidence here is that as long as the writer can write, the artist can make art, the speaker can speak, and the singer can sing, the warning will be given. Watch. Your. Head.

Stephen Collis  
Madhur Anand  
Kathryn Mockler



## WE WILL TELL THEM OF OUR DOMINION

Terese Mason Pierre

First, we will tell them of our dominion.  
We will tell them of the web peeling back  
in the heavens, the sun's maw radiating  
We will tell them we can see the air  
We will tell them green turned brown and grey  
We will tell them green covered the earth  
We will tell them of plastic islands  
We will tell them of sands too hot to inhabit,  
We will tell them of where people  
cannot hold their breath forever

We will tell them of undulating obituaries  
We will tell them of backroom deals, of slow-moving cogs  
We will tell them of childhood depression  
We will tell them of corporate footprints,  
handprints, fingers in pies, stained red  
We will tell them of mass delusion  
We will tell them of moral misbehaviour  
We will tell them of fears for marble over feather and fur

We will tell them about the non-identity problem  
We will tell them of the powerful two-faced  
We will tell them why the scientists cried  
We will tell them why the philosophers cried  
We will tell them why the parents cried

We will tell them of carbon-dioxide  
shouts, of splintered protests  
We will tell them of tear gas, of turned heads  
We will tell them of laws broken

We will tell them of backs broken  
We will tell them of turning, turning

Later, we will tell them the oil barons are dead  
We will tell them guardians fought back  
We will tell them a panacea was birthed from the Amazon ash  
We will tell them blood is not translucent, but still pumping  
We will tell them the ocean is still loud  
We will tell them we relocated the sacred  
We will tell them we refined our brains  
We will tell them the sun is everything  
We will tell them we were sorry  
We will tell them we know why the sky is blue.

## EMPTY SPACES (3)

Jordan Abel

On the shore, there is a deep, narrow chasm that leads down into some other, darker place. On the shore, there are black rocks and roots and mud and tree stumps and broken bones and broken branches. On the shore, a river cuts through the trees. Sometimes there is a moment. Sometimes there are other, softer places. At this very moment, there is lightning and then there is a tumbling in the air a mile above us. At this very moment, white lightning breaks open the sky and runs straight through the open heavens into some other place. In the forest, there is a deep hollow. A gully with a dozen branching pathways to follow. There are no shapes here other than the trees. There is nothing here that breaks apart. Somewhere, deep in the gully, there is a soft, dark place. Sometimes, a hundred feet up in the air, there is just light and clouds and cold droplets of water. Sometimes right angles run parallel to the river. Sometimes right angles cut through the forest. Sometimes the water cuts through the rocks near the northern summit. Sometimes the water works through these rocks. Some hundred feet in the air there is no danger; there is only the broken and the splintered and the open, sprawling land. There is scattered driftwood and the scent of roses and mossy rocks and tree stumps and broken branches and wet leaves. There are glimpses of roses and rocks and shrubs. There is a steep, rugged ascent. Somewhere, there is a path that winds among the black rocks and trees. Somewhere out there is the scent of roses. Somewhere out there is another forest, another river, another mouth. Somewhere out there is the taste of danger. Somewhere out there is the open, sprawling land and the endless horizon. Somewhere out there is the wilderness. Somewhere out there, at some reasonable distance, are scenes of greenery and nature and glimpses of mountain ranges that disappear just as suddenly as they appear. Among the mossy rocks and the broken tree branches, there are mounds of black earth and other rocks and other driftwood. Somewhere, there is an islet and



another islet and a clear sheet of water and bald rocks just beneath the surface. There are forests and straits and islets and rocks and somewhere in the air is the scent of roses. In the forest, there are deep, soft places. In the forest, there are hollows and ravines and winding rivers. The rivers connect themselves to other rivers, other lakes, other inlets and streams and waterfalls. In between the rivers, there are sometimes mounds of earth. There are sometimes great expanses of trees and shrubs and brush. In the forest, there are fractured rivers. Rivers that break apart again and again until there is barely a stream running through the thick parts of the forest. In the deeper parts of the river, though, there is more tumbling. At this very moment, the river pours into a wide fissure where it just becomes more water between rocks. In this river – the river that splits open over and over again – there are sunken bodies and bald rocks. Above this river, there is a deep, roaring cavern and there is the scent of roses in the air. There is light and straight, naked rocks and immovable trees and the taste of danger. In this forest, the river will split again and again. In this forest, the river is ragged with rocks and broken branches and driftwood. In this forest, the river cuts silently through the ravine. In this forest, the scent from the water intersects with the scent of roses floating above somewhere up in the air. This forest is full. The upper air, where it drifts over the tops of the ragged trees, is full of sounds. Just where it breaks over the tops of trees there are slow, intermingling drifts of sounds and scents that brush over the clearing some seventy or eighty feet up in the air. Mossy rocks and logs and rivers that cut through the forest. Mounds of earth and narrow fissures. Bottom land and little ponds and inlets and a brook that shoots through the trees, spreading through the afternoon. There is a bellowing somewhere in the forest above the river. There are moments where the light stretches out across the horizon and fills up the sky. A light that turns the clouds pink and orange and yellow. There is light spreading over the soft expanse of the forest. There are precipices and adjacent lakes and headwaters and summits. There is a fierceness here in the forest. There is a fierceness that drifts along

in the rivers. These rivers are full to the brim. These waters stream down to our feet. In six hours the water from this river will reach the lake at the base of the mountain. In six hours a few bodies will wash up on the shore of that lake. Bodies swell in this water. The water in the woods and on the great lakes and in the higher parts of the sea. The stream stretches out horizontally until the current flows upward like blood at the throat. In these waters, the bodies clump together and the stench carries up into the air. In the short distance in between the lake and forest is a shore. There is a shore at the base of the mountain where swollen, broken bodies clump together. There are black rocks and deep shadows and rustling leaves in the forest. There is a mist drifting through the trees. There are shores. There is a soft mist floating just above the surface. The breath of the stream. The sharp reflections. The woods and the bodies and the taste of danger. These shores are full of throats that have been cut, limbs that have been severed. These woods are full of bodies and bones and moss and trees and broken branches and rustling leaves and soft, silvery wind. Gliding above somewhere up in the impenetrable darkness is the scent of roses. Somewhere there is the sound of rushing waters. Somewhere in the night there is a deep stillness. At some point, the moonlight touches the water and riverbed and the broken bodies. At this moment, the light hangs in the air just above the bodies. These woods are full. There are bright, moonlit bodies; there is light from some other, colder place. At another moment, there would be sweetness on this shore. At another moment, there would be an unmingled sweetness of air that sinks into the bright, moonlit waters. At this moment, there is a stillness. At this very moment, the moonlight touches the bodies on the shore and there is a deep stillness. There is a soft, silvery wind that drifts through the forest onto the shore. There are tall trees. There is mud and broken branches and mossy rocks and tree stumps and driftwood and a broken pile of bodies. There is a stillness here on the shore. There is lightning and then there is stillness. There are echoes that rush through the forest until they disappear. A mile above there is a tumbling. A mile above seems

like some other, softer place. In the water of the lake, there is the bright reflection of moonlight. A cold light from somewhere other than here. Some light touches the dead. Some light carries us to some other, softer place. Some light fills us with hope and warmth. Some light lasts forever. Somewhere up in the darkness there is the scent of roses. Somewhere in the darkness there is a soft, silvery wind. Some flames flicker out. Some waters carry bodies. Some waters are still. Somewhere in the velocity of the uproar there is a current of air. There is an unmingled sweetness that sinks in to the forest. The shore is full of bodies. The blood as natural as mud. The gully and the soft, dark places of the forest and the glassy waters and the sunken bodies and the shore and the moonlight and the pink clouds and the muddy roots and the severed limbs and the soft, silvery wind and the taste of danger and the black rocks between the mounds of earth and the glittering stars and the open air floating over the forest and the valley and the stream overflowing onto the banks and the tumbling water and the branching pathways and the wet leaves and nearly everything in between. Here, the rushing water washes bones and the waters of the river run in to the mountain lake. When the sun is directly above us, a shadow from the canopy will spread over the lake, creating a dark current with a deep hue. When the sun is directly above us, these waters become healing waters. Tomorrow, the sun will be directly above us and we will be healed by these waters. When the sun is directly above us, these currents will branch silently into the dark parts of the lake. When the sun is directly above us. When light touches all of the soft, dark places. When light spreads like a wave through the forest. When the forest starts to break open. When trees collapse. When branches break. When bodies are covered over by the earth. When there is a deep, cool wind. When there is a current of air, there will also be silent motion. The forest is pulled by the soft, silvery wind. The broken branches are swept up in that current. There is the sound from the rushing water drifting through the air. From somewhere deep in the forest, there are voices again. From somewhere deep in the forest, there are more soft bodies, more sharp

objects, more breath in the air. As the air flows up from the deep, soft places of the forest, the sound of rushing water can be heard again. Distant sounds that come from the branching river. The broken river with the clear, upstream water runs through the forest beneath some low bushes. Branches wave in the current of this river. Some call this river by a name. For many moments, the branches bend in the eddies, and the arm of the river turns toward itself. For many moments, the name of the river hangs in the air. Every few yards, bubbles appear on the surface, are filled with light, and disappear. At the shore, there is a dead silence, and then there are low voices. Somewhere under the ragged treetops is the growing sound of voices but the voices are obscured. Somewhere on the river, bark can be seen floating along with the current. The down stream current. The far down current, sinking again beneath the air. There is a current that swells and sinks and crashes against the rocks, echoing through the vaults of forest and the sweetness of nature. Above the canopy, bodies can be seen drifting through the trees. There is quiet motion; there is breath. In the caverns below, there is air that rises up to meet those bodies. The bodies are just flesh drifting through the air, crushing the broken branches that have already fallen to the forest floor. The air. The sparks. The flames. The smoke. The cool evening breeze sweeps around the bodies. Any breath. Any fire. Any thunder rumbling beyond the distant hills. Any surface. Any signal. Any water. Any alarm far down the current of the river. Which bodies can be trusted? Which breath sounds the sweetest? Which connections can be formed from these soft groupings of flesh? Which company will find their way out of this forest? Which pathways will stretch on without ending? Which pathways will be hazardous? The air sinks into the caverns below and the voices sink too. Which current glides toward fortune and which current turns treacherous? The river plunges into the ravine and the mist rises like smoke. For a few moments, the mist is the smoke before it falls back into the river. For a few moments, there is a plume of water crested by the light that cuts through the forest. Somewhere in the trees, there are leaves falling onto a path. A

path that winds through the trees and around the river. Behind the curvature of the path is a dark, wooded outline and a soft, silvery wind. The open heavens and the drifting vapours and the broken treetops and the sullen sounds and the evening atmosphere and the blazing fire and the deep laughter and the broken rocks and the roaring cavern and the rushing water and the impenetrable darkness and the water glimmering in the moonlight and the hills and the gloom and the moving surfaces and the quiet uneasiness and the wooded outlines and the silvery wind and the broken branches and soft, dark places in the forest. In this gully, there is a darkness that can only be tasted. Another tree. Another body. Another knot. Another notch. But which tree? Which body? Which knot? Which notch? Which soft expanse of trees? Which position of the sun? Which direction of the water? Which hesitation before speech? Which flesh enters into the river? Some say that all the knots of pine can be counted. Some say there will always be another mouth. When the spirits rustle the leaves of other forests. When the dead listen. When there are no more noises. When the blood is hot. When black smoke drifts through the camp like a fog. When the vapours are inhaled. When the clouds settle onto the trees. When white lightning breaks open the sky above us. When the forest bursts into flames. Somewhere in the gully, there are naked voices and a wall of heat. Breath and silence and breath again. In the deepest hollow of the gully there is fire. At the edge of the lake there is a narrow, deep cavern in the rock. Some day bodies will spread over either side of the great lakes. In the west, there will be as many bodies as there are leaves on the trees. In the fields, bodies bloom like fire. On the broad side of the trail, the air tastes like copper and the holy lake is full of bodies. Bodies and air and flesh and moonlight and breath and fire in the fields. Numberless bodies and songs and voices. Tonight, the stars will shine. Tonight, the evergreens will grow. Bodies will spread out across the soft expanse of forest and beyond the western horizon as seen through the branches of trees and the west will arrive. Above the pines, the sky is bright and pink and delicate. Where are the deep shadows?