

“Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction” - with Rebecca Campbell

Stephanie Oliver

ssoliver@ualberta.ca

ORCID: 0000-0002-7782-9971

University of Alberta, Canada

Submitted: 14/07/2023

Accepted: 16/07/2023

1. Introduction

When Kit and I began working on this special issue on affect and environment in literatures in Canada, the idea for a conversation with Rebecca Campbell immediately came to mind. A Canadian writer of climate change fiction and other genre-bending works of science fiction, speculative fiction, body horror, and weird stories, Rebecca has developed a rich body of work over the past decade that engages deeply with questions related to affect and environment.¹

1. For full disclosure, Rebecca Campbell and I completed our PhDs in English together at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada, where she wrote a dissertation on the role of battlefields and military commemoration in the production of Canada's national literature. We also co-organized a Speculative Fiction Reading Group and have had many conversations about science fiction, speculative fiction, and weird fiction over the years. For these reasons, I will use her first name in this interview. I am grateful to Rebecca for how those conversations have informed my work, and I am especially grateful to her for introducing me to Larissa Lai's 2002 novel *Salt Fish Girl*, a work of speculative fiction that sparked my research interest in representations of smell and (un)belonging

Stephanie Oliver

Her first novel, *The Paradise Engine*, was published by NeWest Press in 2013, and her short stories include “The Fourth Trimester is the Strangest,” which won the 2020 Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic. In 2022 she published two novellas: *The Talosite* with Undertow Publications and *Arboreality* with Stelliform Press. Nominated for the 2023 Philip K. Dick Award and currently in the running for the 2023 Ursula K. Le Guin Prize for Fiction, *Arboreality* expands on Campbell’s novelette “An Important Failure,” winner of the 2020 Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award. *Arboreality* tells a near-future tale of the intertwined lives of trees and people as both try to survive the intergenerational impacts of climate change on Vancouver Island.

In works like *Arboreality*—a story that might be characterized as climate change fiction or “CliFi”—Rebecca does not approach affect as a problem to be solved, nor does she take a didactic approach that would invite ecocritics to measure the work by its ability to educate or create change (Seymour 8). Instead, the novella creates space for a range of complex emotions in response to the climate crisis, and in doing so, challenges what Nicole Seymour describes as the polarizing logic of hope and despair that marks mainstream environmental discourse (5). While Rebecca’s writing has appeared in established science fiction publications, garnered numerous awards, and been widely recognized in genre fiction circles, these venues and honours exist at the margins of the Canadian literary canon; as a result, these important contributions to climate change conversations often go unnoticed by the literary establishment. Following Seymour’s desire “to outline neglected traditions of alternative environmentalism” (7), this interview with Rebecca about climate change fiction underscores the need for a related project: elevating neglected literary forms that offer alternative representations of affect and environment in response to climate change.

2. Conversation

Stephanie Oliver: First, thank you for agreeing to an interview for this special issue “Everything is Awful? Ecology and Affect in Literatures in Canada.” *Arboreality* is a beautiful book. The publisher describes it as a novella that “pulls the echoing effects of small acts and intimate moments through [a] multi-generational and interconnected story of how a West coast community survives the ravages of climate change.” In many ways, the novella offers a creative response to the feeling that “everything is awful,” particularly as the ongoing

in literatures in Canada. This interview was conducted online over a series of email exchanges in the spring and summer of 2023.

"Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction"
- with Rebecca Campbell

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and intensifying impacts of climate change amplify structural inequalities. When you were writing the novella, did you have the sense that everything was awful or were you driven by a different set of affects? In a November 2022 *Get Lit* podcast, you said that writing *Arboreality* was therapeutic. How do you see the novella as offering a therapeutic response to these issues, for you and for your readers?

Rebecca Campbell: I definitely felt, while writing *Arboreality*, that everything was awful. The first iterations of the manuscript were like exposure-and-response-prevention therapy. I was trying to inoculate myself against panic by imagining precisely those things that most terrified me: vulnerable children, collapse, disconnection; wildfires and heat domes. But while that's where the story began, it became something a little less awful as I thought about our human capacity for improvisation. We are curious and creative, and those gifts have not abandoned us in past transformations. We are very good at making do with what we have on hand.

And, most importantly, Stelliform Press's mandate is hope. Selena Middleton has a determined faith that the stories we tell are important, especially those that celebrate transformation and resistance. I knew I had to write a story that didn't blink at the frightening possibilities of collapse. But in keeping with Stelliform's message, I didn't want to resign myself to the familiar apocalyptic narratives I learned as a child of the Cold War. I did that by writing about change rather than obliteration.

SO: One of the ways that you engage with affect and environment in your writing is by developing a strong "sense of place." Your PhD research focused on sense of place by examining commemoration and representations of military landscapes in Canadian literature; your website *WherelsHere.ca* evokes Northrop Frye's famous field-framing question for Canadian literature; your website describes Canadian landscapes as "cultural text[s] to be read" and your writing as "location work." *Arboreality* grounds readers in a strong sense of place, even if (like me) they have not visited the places described in the book. You now live in southwestern Ontario, but I know that you have deep personal ties to Vancouver Island where the novella is set. How do you understand sense of place, and how do you see *Arboreality* engaging with sense of place—affectively, environmentally, socially, politically, or otherwise? What is the importance of developing or reconnecting with a sense of place in the face of climate change?

RC: In order to understand our moment, I think we have learned to live with this strange oscillation between scales, from the intimate and personal, to the

social, the continental, the global. That is, we have to constantly reframe ourselves in different ways: the rain we need for our garden this summer beside changing global weather patterns; the gum arabic in the food we eat and political unrest in Sudan; transoceanic fibreoptic networks and the kitchen table at which we sit while we doom-scroll the day's news. This is "location work" with different definitions of "here": extending from one's home and community to the "here" of a particular ecosystem, a continent, a planet.

I think fiction—maybe the SF novel in particular—is surprisingly well-suited to this work, and can help us orient ourselves in these various scales. It lets us tell stories that are local, and explore individual lives, but it can also circle outward to take in wider, more generous definitions of "here" and "now."

And ideally, this location-work should also include species: who are we here with? What does it mean to share space with species that live for a few weeks? Or a few hundred years? Or millennia? Their "here" and "now" is so different than ours, and it is wonderful to try and imagine it. This is where speculative fiction has the advantage, since we're used to imagining the nonhuman, huge time-scales, and alien perspectives.

SO: To build on your comments about form, what do you make of Amitav Ghosh's argument in *The Great Derangement* that the novel, at the level of narrative form, struggles to incorporate climate change? Writing in 2016, he claims that climate change is virtually non-existent in contemporary literary fiction, arguing: "It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel" (7). By "literary fiction" he means the realist novel, which he suggests is defined by an irony that poses a fundamental problem for representing climate change, as "the very gestures with which it conjures up reality are actually a concealment of the real" (23). Making the case for representing climate change in realist novels, Ghosh concludes: "to treat [seemingly improbable weather events] as magical or surreal would be to rob them of precisely the quality that makes them so urgently compelling—which is that they are actually happening on this Earth, at this time" (27). While we might consider the implications of Ghosh framing "literary" (read: realist) novels as the "manor house" of "serious" fiction, and genres like science fiction that deal more directly with climate change as its "out-houses" (24), I am also wondering what you make of his framing of the challenges of the novel form. How did you approach these apparent challenges when writing *Arboreality*?

RC: I long ago fled the "preserves of serious fiction" that Ghosh discusses, and headed to the trash stratum of horror and science fiction, so *Arboreality* owes far more to the weird than it does to realist Canadian literature. I fled in

"Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction"
- with Rebecca Campbell

part because I recognized what Ghosh was saying about the limits of the realist novel, and I found that speculative fiction offered me more tools to explore what frightened me about late capitalism and climate change. He's right that the literary novel (as it is practiced) is implicated in exactly the structures that brought about climate change in the first place, so the occlusion Ghosh identifies is built into the genre, just as the social order of industrialization is embedded in the sprawling novels of the nineteenth century.

If there was anything I wanted to accomplish with *Arboreality*, it was to centre a system, rather than an individual, and to explore a larger time-scale than that of a human life, or even a human family. Genre fiction is better suited to that kind of story, because it has always explored the limits of the human, our relationship with the technologies that define us, and the world they create. *Arboreality* is about decolonization in a practical sense, about dismantling the physical structures of empire, and trying to imagine what comes after them: after the suburb, the nation-state, the industrial farm. It makes sense then to also dismantle some of the structures of the novel and turn away from literary realism to something with more space for the nonhuman. In a strange way, weird fiction offers a truer portrait of the world because it allows for improbability (to borrow Ghosh's phrasing). We live in an improbable moment, as we struggle to really understand that human endeavour has changed the nature of our world in irreversible ways. In fact, I'm surprised that cosmic horror isn't a commoner element in climate change fiction, since cosmic horror thematizes our encounters with the ineffable and terrifying, and Donna Haraway has already theorized the Chthulucene, and the "myriad tentacles" necessary to tell its story. What better way to describe our relationship with accelerating change and an unknowable future than Lovecraftian horrors from deep time?

SO: Let me ask you then about the novella's relationship to accelerating change and the unknowable future. *Arboreality* begins in the near future at a time of compounding climate emergencies and frequent pandemics. In the opening chapter, Jude—an Engineering Communications instructor trained in 18th-century literature—helps the librarian Berenice save books from a flooded university library by distributing them to community members. The question quickly becomes: "What do we save?" Other texts, like Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel *Station Eleven*, have explored similar questions. For Jude, the obvious answer is the work of Alexander Pope; for Berenice, it is books on animal husbandry, geography, geology, teeth extraction, and running a homestead. This scene sets the stage for the rest of the novella, and later we see how future generations use these books to survive (notably, this essential information does not come from computers or smartphones, which have all died due to the lack of reliable energy sources and widespread telecommunications networks). How

do you think about this question of “what do we save”? And while Jude’s answer (“Pope, obviously”) is in some ways played for laughs, how do you think literary scholars—whose knowledge and training is often viewed as esoteric and socially irrelevant, particularly in times of emergency—should respond to this question?

RC: This is a hard one. I alternate between thinking (gloomily) that if we are to survive we must be practical, and that all other concerns are secondary to the crisis. I also sympathize with the criticism of academia and literature as exclusive, disconnected from the problems we face, and entangled with all the colonial, capitalist structures we promise to critique. But I also believe that if we are to survive this, we need to think carefully about who we are and what we want. The humanities classroom—like the novel (in all of its forms), the essay, the poem—is one of the few places we’ve got that’s suitable for the conversation. If we can save anything, maybe it should be that little space where students have the time and support to really think about what’s happening in our world, and their place in it. Even if it’s only for a semester.

Finally—and this may be a little selfish—stories are such a huge source of pleasure. They’re also cheap, take up little space, and can be carried anywhere. Maybe it’s not a bad thing to save such an economical source of joy.

SO: The novella highlights how existing social structures and dominant ways of thinking bound up in capitalism and colonialism both perpetuate climate change and are woefully unprepared to deal with it. One striking example is the scene featuring Jim, a suburbanite who obsessively waters his lawn to keep it golf-course green, “a dream fulfilled briefly” (17) amidst blistering summer temperatures. His neighbour Bernard looks on “in horror and wonder” (17); unlike Jim, Bernard is attempting to rewild his lawn despite antiquated bylaws about grass height that officers still enforce. Jim is eventually forced to abandon his home to escape the rising temperatures, while Bernard expands his rewilding efforts with the hope of creating fertile, wildfire-resistant spaces for some future generation. Bernard is an example of the ones who stay behind to form the small, increasingly isolated island communities that survive in collaboration with nature.

In contrast, we hear about Ontario—the distant land of “the Canadians”—where billionaires sound like would-be saviours, promising new technologies to address compounding climate emergencies while they escape to settlements on other planets. At once ridiculous, sad, ironic, and unsettlingly familiar, these moments draw attention to the unevenness that marks how climate change is, and will continue to be, experienced differently depending on who you are and where you live. Why was it important for you to highlight this unevenness in this way?

“Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction”
- with Rebecca Campbell

RC: I wanted to imagine as many different responses to climate disaster as I could, and there are a number that I had to cut as I revised. These include corporate solutions, where I tried to evoke techno-utopianism that promises to “disrupt” everything but capitalism. I also wanted to gesture toward state-sponsored, top-down solutions: centralized mobilization inspired by the idea of total war, administered by a government that deploys all available resources in pursuit of a single, collective goal. That felt deeply Canadian to me, with our love for trans-continental railways and broadcasting corporations.

There was, however, one approach that made more sense to me than the others, and it dominated most of *Aboreality*. Rather than seeking a continental solution, my characters solve immediate problems, whether individually or in small groups. This response to climate change is reactive, more local improvisation than central planning. I drew on what I know about my family’s history of homesteading during the early twentieth century, which required endurance, but also creative thinking, given how far they all were from supply chains, so a jury-rigged world made sense to me. My characters don’t fix the climate—but they adapt and survive.

SO: On the topic of adaptation and survival, children in particular are often described as resilient, and the notion of resilience tends to permeate discussions of climate change today. While reading *Arboreality*, I was struck by the descriptions of children playing, exploring, and adapting creatively to their changing environment. Some of the kids seem unphased by the world they are born into, as it is the only world they know; they embody a form of resilience unavailable to adult characters who remember the “before times.” But when we get a closer look at young characters like Kit and Meg, we gain more insight into the challenges (existential, medical, and otherwise) that children will face in the future. You have a small child and have written about the experience of becoming a parent in your award-winning short story “The Fourth Trimester is the Strangest.” How do you think about climate change and its impact on future generations, particularly children? How do you think about the concept of resilience?

RC: I panic when I think about children and climate change. How do we prepare a child for a world we cannot imagine? How can we give them the skills they need, and avoid saddling them with institutions and conventions that don’t work anymore? I don’t know the answer to that as a parent or a teacher.

In many ways, that’s been the thematic content of SF from the beginning: we’ve always written about the creative possibilities of new technologies, first contacts, and revolution. From a parent’s point of view, it’s a horror story to imagine our kids in a world that’s alien to us, but I think it must be different

Stephanie Oliver

for the kids who belong there. When I was writing, I thought about children's capacity to play anywhere and make toys out of anything. I also thought about the way teenagers will always fall in love and drink terrible booze and hang out around bonfires if they can. A lot of my story is about being a good ancestor, and leaving things of value behind—but I also like to imagine the kids who pick up what's left and make it into something new for a world I can't imagine.

SO: Speaking of future generations, I am curious about your approach to climate change literature and classroom pedagogy. Many university instructors are grappling with how to discuss climate change with students who are struggling with a profound sense of ecological grief. Meanwhile, other students may relate differently to climate change and display other affects in the classroom (I'm thinking, for example, of climate change deniers). How do you, as an author and university instructor, teach these difficult topics? How do you approach ecological grief and other affective responses to climate change in the classroom?

RC: I have talked to students who believe deeply and grimly that they are the last, or nearly last generation. Obviously, this is a familiar kind of dread—I remember feeling that way as a kid during the 1980s as I began to understand what nuclear war was. I've spoken to many people who have had the same sense of doom at different times during the past seventy years, and for different reasons.

If the classroom offers anything, it might be a place to practice sitting with that discomfort, making sense of it, perhaps learning to live in defiance of it. Maybe a glimpse of what the character Benno talks about, the possibility that we are not isolated in this anxiety, but that it is part of a larger, shared sense of dread. Is it sentimental to believe that it is valuable to talk about these feelings? It sounds utopian, but undergraduate literature classrooms offered me a space to explore the historical trauma of empire in a way that let me understand my own origins, and my own context as a settler. I'm grateful to teachers who helped me to sit with this inheritance, no matter how uncomfortable it is.

In recent panels and workshops, we've discussed climate change fiction, and I've heard from people who are looking for better ways to understand their anxiety. We all want tools with which to think about something that is, in so many ways, unthinkable. It leaves me a little more hopeful when people leave these discussions invigorated by the simple fact that they could talk about how it feels to live right now. That has value, even if it doesn't effect the change we want.

SO: Much of *Arboreality's* hopefulness stems from its beautiful meditation on the lives (and afterlives) of trees. In reflecting on this focus on trees, I could not help but notice how, in recent years, there have been a growing number

"Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction"
- with Rebecca Campbell

of bestselling novels about trees, such as Annie Proulx's *Barkskins* (2016), Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018), Karl Marlantes' *Deep River* (2019), and Michael Christie's *Greenwood* (2020). In fact, in 2020 Mark Athitakis used the phrase "Literary Tree Fatigue" to describe this growing sub-genre of ecofiction (an interesting proclamation, given that these titles—some of which might be said to constitute the "serious" realist novels about climate change that Ghosh describes—emerge at precisely the moment that he decries their absence). Do you see any possible points of connection or departure with these tree-centric stories and *Arboreality*, which also spans multiple characters and generations but is much shorter than these hefty tomes? Based on our earlier discussion of the limitations of the realist novel form, I am wondering if you see *Arboreality* as part of this sub-genre of ecofiction or if you instead see it as part of a different literary tradition of authors like Ursula Le Guin who writes extensively about trees in science fiction stories like 1972's "The Word for World is Forest"?

RC: I will never escape Ursula Le Guin's forests, not since I read *The Eye of the Heron* as a kid, or the fairy-tale woods of *The Beginning Place*. *Always Coming Home* was a pretty specific influence on *Arboreality*, because it described a far-future, sustainable, decentralized society on the Pacific coast of North America. I am always following Le Guin into the woods.

So while I think *Arboreality* begins in the familiar "Literary Tree" subgenre you mention, by the end it has reached Le Guin's sort of forest. *Arboreality* describes the slow transformation of Vancouver Island through a new species—engineered or evolved—called the *Arbutus aurum*, which is uniquely suited to survive climate change, and overtakes the hillsides razed by wildfires. I imagined it not as singular organisms, but as a clonal colony, like the huge quaking aspen in Utah called Pando, a single tree that could be mistaken for a forest. And perhaps Pando gives us a reason for the popularity of Literary Trees: it is huge, ancient, easy to miss, and may have first sprouted shortly after the last ice age. Entire civilizations have lived and died within its lifetime, which inevitably shifts our sense of time from the moment to the millennia. You could also consider Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires and More Slow" where a neurodivergent explorer encounters a singular planetary consciousness, in which trees (or tree-like organisms) function as neurons. Trees are a way to think about these larger scales of space or time, while also being commodities we cut down to build imperial fleets or sprawling suburban neighbourhoods.

SO: "I am always following Le Guin into the woods"—I love that line. I wonder what would happen if more people followed you into Le Guin's woods?

When reading *Arboreality*, I was particularly struck by how trees assert their agency long after they have been cut down and become the bearers of

memory. The twists of the genetically modified golden arbutus “return” in a wooden bowl’s “checks and splits and warps, like a memory” (59). The sound of a violin tells the story of the tree’s prior life, and the ever-changing wood continues to shape the instrument’s sound into the future. A cathedral of “living furniture” made in collaboration with humans and arbutus represents a kind of oral history; as Kit says when “the Canadians” come to the island to record his story of survival, “This is all I have to say” (106). After writing *Arboreality*, how do you think about trees? Do you see or relate to the world differently? I imagine your everyday life is full of books and other items made from trees. What is it about trees that you would like readers to take away from *Arboreality*, perhaps as they hold a print copy in their hand?

RC: I have a pretty uncomplicated love for trees and all the things we make out of them. It’s rooted in childhood and my family: the heat of a wood stove on a rainy day; the smell of grand fir; the scent and texture of cedar as I caught boards off the planer while my dad fed them in at the other end. In many ways, *Arboreality* is just me evangelizing this early joy. There is a Garry oak tree I have observed since I was big enough to understand what it was, growing out of the rock along Saanich inlet. As a geeky, botany-minded eleven-year-old, I remember identifying and mapping the trees on my grandparents’ property, finding west coast crabapple and cedar and arbutus and cascara and pacific yew.

I would love it if my readers could share some of that geeky childhood joy, and maybe understand how miraculous trees are: their toughness and versatility, their variety and their long lives. And, maybe, to think about tree-time the way we might think about cathedral-time. A slower kind of time, one that can encompass more than one human life. The Garry oak I mention above has hardly changed in forty years and is likely to outlive me. There’s something satisfying about that.

SO: Your focus on tree-time allows *Arboreality* to explore the interconnected impacts of climate change, from the microscopic to the global, across multiple generations. Yet the narrative shows not only how environmental destruction in the present impacts the future, but also how the creative efforts of earlier generations help later generations survive, often in unpredictable ways. For example, characters like Bernard play an active role in rewilding suburban neighbourhoods, collaborating with nature to adapt to environmental changes. Years later, Benno explains to young Kit, “it’s a collaboration between who we used to be, before settlement, and who we’re going to become” (75).

But Benno does not end there: “But we’re always a collaboration, Benno had tried to tell him: there’s nothing we don’t touch, nothing that isn’t changed by our feet on the soil and our hands reaching into the new, soft needles of

“Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction”
- with Rebecca Campbell

Douglas fir in springtime. We have a heavy step, Benno said, not just the old settlers, but us too. The best we can do is hope that our footprints don't break anyone's heart” (75-76). This beautiful meditation on collaboration seems to articulate one of the novella's core themes, which is reflected by the book's expansive yet interconnected narrative structure. What do these lines mean to you? What does it mean to think and write about collaboration in this way?

RC: If there was one thing I wanted for *Arboreality*, it was to evoke that elusive sense of a connection and collaboration. So many of us are directed (by biology? By capitalism?) to focus on urgent threats and rewards: this water bill, that deadline, these quarterly profits, that wedding invitation. With all those immediate imperatives, it can be a struggle to think instead the way Benno does, and see ourselves as one temporary manifestation of a whole, gorgeous, disparate web of flows. Ecological, historical, personal, economic. I think the core characters in *Arboreality* are all struggling toward that understanding, as they try to extend their sense of “here” and “now” beyond their immediate lives. To become good ancestors in the tiny space we are afforded. Imagining that makes me hopeful, because there's a wonderful, profligate generosity in it: you know, planting a tree under which you will never sit, that will bear fruit you will never eat.

That sense of collaboration also extends to other kinds of connections. The place I write about—the southeast coast of Vancouver Island—is produced by so many interconnecting flows: salmon from deep ocean to high forest, highways and lumber and fishing fleets and settlers and real estate money. *Arboreality* is my attempt to locate myself and the places I love in those huge, historical flows, projecting them forward into a future where they have been changed, but not destroyed. Probably the most hopeful thing I wrote in *Arboreality* was the party that takes place in the final pages, because a salmon barbecue means that salmon are still running, despite wildfires and landslides.

SO: Speaking of trees and collaboration, in the Acknowledgements you thank Snuneymuxw Knowledge Keeper David Bodaly, who teaches children about the importance of xpey' (red cedar) on unceded Snuneymuxw territory in and around the Vancouver Island city of Nanaimo. In a recent interview with Anna McKenzie of IndigiNews, Bodaly says: “If you give away your first gift that you make, the next one will come to you faster.” This philosophy seems to echo throughout *Arboreality*. What can you tell us about your relationship to Bodaly and his work? How did his teachings influence the novella?

RC: I was very lucky to connect with David Bodaly through a mutual friend who works in the Vancouver Island Regional Library system. Mr. Bodaly read

Stephanie Oliver

“An Important Failure”—the story that I expanded into *Arboreality*—before it was published in *Clarkesworld Magazine*. Since I was writing about the effects of settler-colonialism on local Indigenous people, it was important to me to connect with someone who belongs to that landscape and history. Maybe to recognize my own distance from it, despite the deep roots I have in that part of the world. I also admire Mr. Bodaly’s work, especially his cedar hats, which are beautiful and functional. They give you this little glimpse into a very old tradition, where ancient craft and land management techniques make something that’s both new and very old. And, to return to the idea of generosity: I love the idea of a gift as a way of both furthering your practice and defying the imperatives of capitalism.

SO: As a small independent Canadian press, Stelliform appears to be invested in supporting authors as they do this kind of relationship-building work. The press is expressly devoted to “address[ing] our world’s most pressing problems: climate change, ecological destruction, and the effect of these issues on how we relate to each other and to the other beings that live with us in the world.” Can you speak to the importance of publishing stories like *Arboreality* with presses like Stelliform? And to tie back to our earlier discussion, what is the importance of reading and writing genre (and genre-bending) fiction, which often exists at the margins of the Canadian literary canon—stories that might fall under the categories of science fiction, speculative fiction, horror fiction, CliFi, or what you often call weird fiction?

RC: Selena Middleton has undertaken something huge and ambitious with Stelliform Press, and set out very consciously to challenge the dominant narratives about climate change, which tend toward the apocalyptic. She has actively chosen to resist that fatalism, which is a struggle for everyone, and her press is part of her resistance. She’s also actively searching for BIPOC voices and highlighting Indigenous contributions to the conversation about climate change.

Speculative fiction already offers us tools to talk about our relationship with technology, about revolutionary change, and about our deeply weird moment. It also has an audience willing to accept strangeness, curious about imaginary possibilities: ghosts, spaceships, and the end of capitalism.

SO: Rebecca, thank you so much for your time and your thoughtful answers. We look forward to your future work, and I hope that those reading this conversation will follow you into the forest with a similar level of care.

"Everything Is Awe-ful: A Conversation on Climate Change Fiction"
- with Rebecca Campbell

Works Cited

- Campbell, Rebecca. *Arboreality*. Stelliform P, 2022.
- . "Camp X and Northrop Frye: Why This Blog Is Called 'Where Is Here?'" *Where Is Here?*, 17 Sept. 2012, whereishere.ca/2012/09/16/camp-x-and-northrop-frye-why-this-blog-is-called-where-is-here/#more-123.
- Duotrope. "Stelliform Press." *duotrope.com*, 4 Jan. 2023, duotrope.com/listing/27876/stelliform-press.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. U of Chicago P, 2016. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ualberta/detail.action?docID=4532285>.
- McKenzie, Anna. "Snuneymuxw Knowledge Keeper Supports Youth to Connect to Xpey' (Red Cedar)." *IndigiNews*, 16 Mar. 2023, indiginews.com/vancouver-island/david-bodaly-snuneymuxw-knowledge-keeper-connects-youth-with-cedar.
- Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism*. U of Minnesota P, 2018.
- Tennant, Jamie, host. "GET LIT E315 with REBECCA CAMPBELL." *GET LIT*, episode 315, 30 Nov. 2022, <https://getlit.libsyn.com/get-lit-e315-with-rebecca-campbell>.

