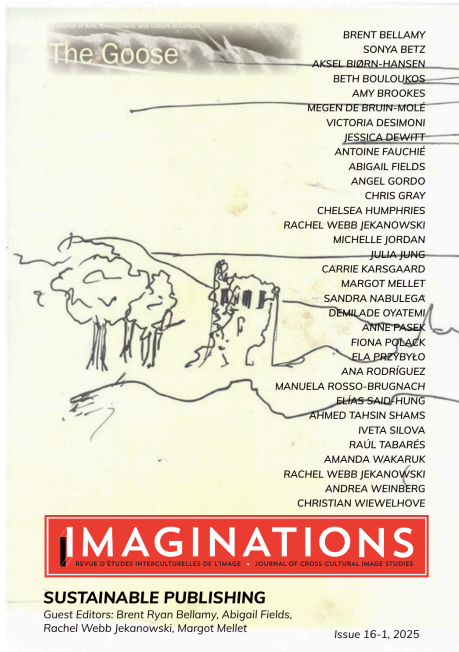


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EDITING THE ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES: THE AFFECTIVE LABOUR OF SHAPING A FIELD

RACHEL WEBB JEKANOWSKI

Feminist media and literary scholars Kate Eichhorn and Heather Milne describe editorial work as “a labour of love,” expressing the both deeply affective and rewarding nature of contributing to our scholarly communities without direct financial gain (189). Teaching their book chapter in my undergraduate research methods course, I saw myself reflected in their characterization of literary editing as “both essential to fostering and sustaining [...] communities” and “deeply undervalued” by the cultural institutions that depend on this labour (189). For the past several years, I have been engaged in a labour of love, serving as an editor at two environmental humanities journals: *The Goose: Journal of Arts, Environment, and Culture in Canada* and *Journal of Environmental Media (JEM)*.

Working as both a reviews editor at *JEM* and a co-editor at *The Goose* is certainly time-consuming; these tasks are often squeezed into lunch breaks and juggled alongside other writing commitments, cutting into my personal writing and research time. Yet, I find it deeply rewarding. It connects me with my communities of like-minded writers and scholars, people who have become my friends, collaborators, and support networks through life changes, being on the academic job market, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Like Eichhorn and Milne, my motivation for undertaking this work is entangled with my “affective attachments” to these communities and, broadly, the environmental humanities (189).

As editors, we act as both stewards and gatekeepers of scholarly conversations, helping to shape the contours of the field and cultivating its future. This work extends beyond the selection and preparation of scholarly manuscripts for publication—although this is, of course, the reason many of us got into academic editing in the first place. Editing also involves relationship-building (Johanson), with authors, peer reviewers, academic presses, funding agencies, students, and, of course, our readers themselves. I understand it as a form of reproductive labour, (re)producing bodies of knowledge as well as subsequent generations of scholars. This relational work builds academic communities—from our readerships and author networks, to professional associations with which we are entwined. *The Goose*, for instance, is the official publication of [ALECC: the Association for Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada](#). The journal exists in a symbiotic relationship with ALECC and its biannual conference, attracting readers and contributors to ALECC's orbit, while benefiting from the association's institutional support and dedicated readership.

Unfortunately, like other forms of reproductive and feminized labour, editing—and the publishing infrastructures and workflows that carry a piece of writing through to final publication—is typically invisible to the reader (Johanson 52). This invisibility can contribute to the devaluing of this relational, reproductive labour within universities' productivity-focused metrics and an academic culture that privileges monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles over the slow, collaborative work of editing and publishing. This labour has a gendered and classed component as well. The editorial boards I've worked on in the last decade have been predominantly staffed by people who are already struggling to find a place within academic workplaces not historically designed for them (particularly, women, queer folks, and precariously-employed scholars).

Visualizing editors' important contributions to field formation is particularly relevant to newer disciplines, such the environmental humanities. EH is relatively young, consolidating as an interdisciplinary field over the last two decades. Academic publishing has played a key role in this process, as evidenced by the outsized role of peer-reviewed journals such as *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature*

and Environment (the journal of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment [ASLE]) and, more recently, *JEM* and *Media + Environment*. These journals' publishing philosophies have material impacts on the field's accessibility, geographic and cultural diversity, and inclusivity.

JEM, for instance, published its first issue in 2020 with a commitment to steward socially-just environmental research that is methodologically complex and invested in conceptualizing "more equal resource access and potential spaces for digital resistance and community-building" (Shriver-Rice and Vaughan 10). Folding a commitment to social and environmental justice into peer-reviewed environmental media scholarship prompts, on the editorial side, questions of readership access, who we publish, and how this reflects intersectional and diverse knowledges. As reviews editor alongside Lisa Han, I approach this role as cultivating conversations within our field. We ask authors to extend their reviews beyond evaluating the text to situate it within the relevant subfields and to refrain from critical "take-downs." We also try to seek reviewers and review titles from diverse disciplinary and global perspectives, reflecting the expansiveness of environmental media studies. In this way, the reviews section helps map the discipline's changing landscape, while highlighting approaches or topics that we, as editors, consider particularly salient. However, *JEM* still has a way to go in terms of expanding reader access and challenging the privatization of knowledge. Published through Intellect, *JEM* offers the option of Open Access publication but most articles remain behind a paywall.

The Goose, in contrast, is an open-access journal, publishing both scholarly and creative work "at the fringe of the critical/creative nexus," including scholarly articles, poetry, creative nonfiction, book reviews, photo essays, and other forms of research creation ("Aims & Scope"). As one of three managing co-editors, my role is fundamentally collaborative. We manage day-to-day editorial operations while also working closely with members of our editorial team of section editors, copy editors, and translators. As a volunteer-run publication, *The Goose* doesn't receive much institutional support outside of ALECC. While this gives us a great deal of editorial flexibil-

ity compared to peer-reviewed journals like *JEM*, it also means that we're constantly seeking funding. We've also been developing internal mentorship networks between in-coming and senior editors to support each other as we learn on the job.

Together, my co-editors and I are helping shape scholarly and creative publishing in the environmental humanities in Canada. We strive to keep an eye to the historical strengths of *The Goose* as an outlet for Canadian environmental poetry and amplifier for Canadian scholarly publishing through its book reviews, while also looking forward to the publishing futures we wish to help build. Since 2020, the editorial team has been steadily working to educate ourselves and integrate equity-informed approaches into the journal's editorial practices and philosophy. This has included facilitating anti-racist training for the editorial team; hosting a series of equity-based copy-editing workshops; and participating in this sustainable publishing project as one of the hosting journals. We've also worked to reconceptualize whom the journal serves in order to move away from nationalist discourses and commit to publishing "Indigenous writers, writers of colour, and those working on the margins" ("Aims & Scope"). Editing, as Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm reminds us, needs to be culturally appropriate and informed, particularly when working with Indigenous authors and others from intersectional positionalities (30). We are learning how to meaningfully integrate lived experience, embodied knowledge, and culturally appropriate editing into our publishing workflows. An important starting place has been the equity-informed best practices that already exist, such as Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style* (2018).

One challenge that I'm still working through—as both an editor and scholar—is *slowing down*. As my collaborator Brent Ryan Bellamy joyously affirms in his entry in this forum: "we are doing enough" (see Bellamy, this issue). Saying no and slowing down are practices of resistance in late capitalist academic culture. I'm inspired by the idea of doing *slow publishing* as part of an equity-informed, sustainable practice of slow scholarship (Mountz et al. 2015).¹ One way we've been trying to practice this at *The Goose* is by participating in the

slow work of developing a meaningful land and labour acknowledgement. We've also tried to slow down our publishing timelines to become more personally sustainable; spacing issues out and tailoring the workflow around people's capacities and life rhythms has helped us to reduce burnout (or at least, feel more validated when we vocalize it and "tag out" accordingly) and remain passionate and engaged in our work. We have expanded our editorial team to distribute the work more widely as well, publishing on average one issue per year rather than two.

This work is not easy, nor is it smooth. It cannot single-handedly solve academia's culture of overwork and resource scarcity, nor have I resolved my own internalized ideas of productivity. The affective nature of this work also makes slowness more difficult to square when the motivation to say "yes" comes from a place of obligation (which is, of course, also highly gendered). Recognizing the power we do have as editors to shape the practices and publishing norms remains an important step towards creating more sustainable and just scholarly communities.

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NOTES

1. For further analysis of the intersections of slow scholarship and decarbonizing academia, see Carrie Karsgaard et al.'s article "The Pedagogy of Manifesto Making: Countering the Oily Entanglements of Academic Publishing" in this issue.↔