



Ornithologies of Desire: Ecocritical Essays, Avian Poetics, and Don McKay (Environmental Humanities)

Travis V. Mason

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Ornithologies of Desire develops ecocritical reading strategies that engage scientific texts, field guides, and observation. Focusing on poetry about birds and birdwatching, this book argues that attending to specific details about the physical world when reading environmentally conscious poetry invites a critical humility in the face of environmental crises and evolutionary history.

The poetry and poetics of Don McKay provide *Ornithologies of Desire* with its primary subject matter, which is predicated on attention to ornithological knowledge and avian metaphors. This focus on birds enables a consideration of more broadly ecological relations and concerns, since an awareness of birds in their habitats insists on awareness of plants, insects, mammals, rocks, and all else that constitutes place. The book's chapters are organized according to: apparatus (that is, science as ecocritical tool), flight, and song.

Reading McKay's work alongside ecology and ornithology, through flight and birdsong, both challenges assumptions regarding humans' place in the earth system and celebrates the sheer virtuosity of lyric poetry rich with associative as well as scientific details. The resulting chapters, interchapter, and concordance of birds that appear in McKay's poetry encourage amateurs and specialists, birdwatchers and poetry readers, to reconsider birds in English literature on the page and in the field.

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