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## Conservation

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## Conservation

The wish that the extinct return,  
that the nearly gone be plucked from death  
and managed, risks, in my mouth,  
becoming a man with a chainsaw  
on a plot the bank says he can do with what he wants

It's a hold around the neck of the land  
that says I am and will be  
and not the leaf on the branch  
or the sap of the being

The idea of return is folly  
without first understanding leaving,  
societies built on the hastening of it,  
every inch of territory claimed,  
pruned to grow the desired, every life  
movable, extinguishable, economic

And we visitors, we guests, we small, individual specks  
of death want the larger machines to pour their tailings, we want them  
uprooting all life with their governmental limbs,  
we want a fast commute morning and evening,  
the terms of life rejigged for us and away from Earth  
as government, balance as ethic, away from  
the hard lessons of one's place within the whole

(the fumble, the novelty  
when the wild comes into town  
and observes you as food)

It's probably too late to keep  
our trash out of landfill and ocean, to say no  
to plastic straws and pipeline expansions,  
maintaining a slender innocence, little puffs of warm relief  
rising into the atmosphere as we turn away as largely

as the large machines turn toward  
so we get on the highway another day

The tree at the foot of your parcel  
is bleeding on your truck in yoyo spring  
and you don't know why

The wasps are organizing in your eaves again  
and you can't say what kind they are

The girl is on the corner with her hat out every morning,  
the cars like a wide carpet around her,  
and you haven't learned her name or where she's from

And the songs of and for this place  
remain locked in far-away museums

What do you know out your window?  
What can you tell us  
of the managed, shorn, tuneless expanses  
that surely await us all?

**LAURIE D. GRAHAM** grew up in Treaty 6 territory (Sherwood Park, Alberta), and she currently lives in Treaty 20 territory (Peterborough, Ontario), where she is a poet, an editor, and the publisher of *Brick* magazine. She has two books of poetry, *Rove* and *Settler Education*, and she recently published a collaborative chapbook with artist Amanda Rhodenizer called *The Larger Forgetting*.