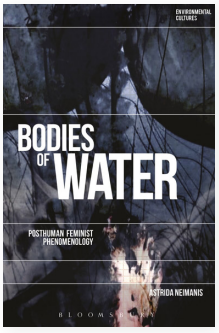
Sydney Review of Books

REVIEW: JENNIFER MAE HAMILTON ON ASTRIDA NEIMANIS

# All The World's A Drain






***Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology***
by Astrida Neimanis

Bloomsbury
240pp
Published January, 2017
ISBN 9781474275408



> As we shimmied into the square concrete opening, we learned that a drain is not simply a drain.
>
> — *Sophie Cunningham, 'Places of Shade'.*

If it is the job of a phenomenologist to describe conscious experience, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* does so in a way that collapses the distinction between one's psychic life and one's material situation. Its author, Astrida Neimanis, challenges us to reimagine *how* individual human bodies — constituted of approximately 70 per cent water — are thoroughly implicated in the planetary hydrocommons.

The book's point of departure is that waters connect us all; as such, the more difficult and vexing problem tackled therein is to think rigorously and critically about the particularities of those relations. *How* is the water in which I wade both different from and the same as yours? *How* is the water in which I was gestated similarly multivalenced? Infusing the watery world with difference offers a new way into thinking our present ecological and political situation. At the same time

as thinking about difference, however, *Bodies of Water* also challenges us to think relationally. No small task, to be sure.

The book considers such complexity in the following ways: first, we are prompted to consider the site-specificity of waters as producing an aquatic 'politics of location'. Then, intergenerational narratives are liquefied into an anti-essentialist feminist rethinking of amniotic fluid and breast milk. Trans-epochal imaginings of planetary flows are reworked in a queer rendition of the 'aquatic ape' theory of evolution. And universalist scientific understandings of water as 'H20' are reined into their Anthropocene context, to allow for thinking in greater detail about waters' plurality. In this regard, *Bodies of Water* is a convincing, lyrical and philosophically complex description of the world. But I would say this; Neimanis is my colleague and collaborator.

So instead of merely singing the praises of this book, I want to focus on the bad. Or, more particularly, *my* bad.

After reading *Bodies of Water* I find myself stalled somewhere between psychic and the material. I cannot live the majesty of this watery-world as I would dearly like to. I feel guilt for a few reasons. I feel guilty, in the first instance, because I'm not supposed to feel guilty. Two of my intellectual heroes shun guilt; Donna Haraway eschews the quest for purity because empirical senses of right and wrong thwart rigorous politically oriented scholarship, and Eve Sedgwick finds shame a less moralising and more critically generative affect. And yet, I still feel guilt. (Ironically, I think 'staying with the trouble' – Haraway's term – in this instance means worrying for at least a moment on guilt.) Secondly, I'm guilty because I'm not supposed to perpetuate a distinction between the psychic and the material. I know my brain is of my body and my guts fire with emotion. Also, I'm a female, feminine-ish, a mother and a feminist; historical separations of brain and body have never done my kind any good. And yet, I can *imagine* the ethics of this book by Neimanis much better than I can *enact* them. Thirdly, I feel guilty because I am constantly doing really environmentally damaging things. Constantly. I mean really damaging. I especially enjoy doing things that pollute the water and chew up more than my share of resources. Writing this paper, for instance, and storing the multiple drafts in the cloud.

Not only am I bad for the environment, I am deeply unjust. I fly. I drive. I throw out copious amounts of plastic. I had a baby. I have fake boobs (FTW). I take showers that drain our giant hot water tank. My polyester clothes dump microplastics in our waterways. That's not even half of it. Smart people know that individual actions don't have a significant impact—using a Keep Cup will not change the world, for instance, it will actually take careerists clinging to government and greedy corporate executives to change tack—but I still feel bad at all the resources my life uses.

All that said, though, although it is deeply moralising and problematic, guilt is perhaps a useful affect to seriously work with in a time of environmental crisis because, in Sedgwick's words, it 'attaches to what one does' (as opposed to shame, which yields 'a sense of what one is'). What I do, and the cumulative effect of what everyone does, *is* the ecological crisis. So emotions like guilt, that attach to what people do are likely important to think with at this particular historical juncture (even if they are self-defeating and annoying). And it's guilt not of some obvious crime, but rather in subscribing to the status quo. Of doing absolutely nothing in

crime, but rather in subscribing to the status quo. Of doing absolutely nothing in your active wear or driving to Woollies. Regarding guilt, then, my main point is that while my mind and my body are indeed one in the same, my guilt tells me I'd like to be doing things differently.

Reading *Bodies of Water*, the relation between the psychic and the physical is troubled for me by a deeply political desire to wade in the planetary hydrocommons in a way that is physically difficult to actually practice. My body cannot or does not always practice what my brain knows to be right. Which is to say, in reading *Bodies of Water*, I snag on trying to think specifically about *how* I can mobilise Neimanis's thick descriptions of water in a way that actually chimes with my own politics. Neimanis writes:

> *Concepts open for us ways of ethically and justly living with the paradoxes and knots of the problems that are the very air we breathe, and the water that buoys us.*

By not seeking a theoretical exit strategy from this mess we are in, though, Neimanis shows that 'bodies of water as an imaginary must swim into being, but the doing of this figuration can also be done "badly"'. As a feminist environmentalist concept, then, before being able to paddle in divinely cleansing waters of the great goddess Gaia, one must first pass through the foul-smelling and murky waters of late capitalism. The swamps of my guilt. Which brings me to drains. Drains are both metaphor and metonymy for this mess we're in. Drains offer a way of conceptualising the contemporary political economy of toxic and anoxic planetary flows. In the creation of surplus for the wealthy, capitalism loves externalisations; drains make such externalisations seem materially possible.

Where there's water, there's drainage or, at least, the noteworthy lack thereof due to pooling, baths, swamps, terminal lakes and tailing ponds. Drains cause water to run out of a vessel. But to drain a vessel can also deprive what's in that vessel of life or vitality. Drains can give the impression that it is possible to externalise something. Thinking with drains is thus to consider very particular kind of hydrology. Due to the multivalence of the verb form — drain as both 'causing water to run out' and 'depriving of life or vitality' — thinking water in relation to drains delivers us to water's murkier post-industrial admixtures. And so it is in the drain – or rather, three drains, stormwater, surgical and continental – that I begin thinking through my no-longer private guilt in relation to the ethical space opened by in Astrida Neimanis's *Bodies of Water*.

I live in the Cooks River catchment area. I am myself a catchment area. In light of *Bodies of Water*, everyone both is and lives in a catchment area. Everyone both lives in and is a drain. In conceptualising water as such, Neimanis hopes to create 'a more capacious aqueous imaginary for being responsive to human and non-human bodies with whom we share a planetary existence'.

*Bodies of Water* activates a new 'radical imagination', or a new material-discursive relationship with water in the present. *Bodies of Water* invites not only more aquatic thought, but also more specific thought. Stemming from Adrienne Rich's work, this is what Neimanis calls a hydrological 'posthuman politics of location'. So, in order to think through this guilt, I need to consider my aquatic location.

'We are the watery world — metonymically, temporally, partially, and particularly.

Water irrigates us, sustains us, comprises the bulk of our soupy flesh'. But how?

---

**DRAIN 1: STORMWATER**

I live near a tidal waterway on the salty-side of brackish. It is salty because it does not have a constant freshwater source to compete with the tide. It is fed only with rain-, sea-, waste- and storm- water. It's called the Cooks because of colonisation, but that isn't its real name. The lack of a spring and its proximity to the ocean

explains why attempts to dam it in the nineteenth century failed to produce a suitable drinking water supply for the colony. Since then, its bed, banks, catchment area and mouth have been thoroughly engineered. In fact, it is now so seriously polluted, it is difficult to even contemplate *imagining* it as drinking water, let alone as a site for gathering food or recreation. It is now much more plausibly figured as a giant drain for the surrounding suburbs. This reengineering is a colonial project; an attempt to physicalise control of the colony over its domain. The control works well to a point, creating new land to sell off as property, but it fails radically in other ways.

Five years ago I moved to the top of a hill above this waterway. At first I thought the concrete banks, brown water and rubbish were unsightly, but now the ugly is home. The garbage traps, the heritage listed sewage aqueduct, the redesigned tributaries, the sludge covered shopping trollies revealed only at low tide, the restored foreshores of Tempe and Marrickville, the concrete drains of Canterbury and Campsie and the glistening lights of the new Wolli Creek development reflecting off the waters constitute my own private industrial sublime. It is the wet mess in which I live.

I don't have a car and day after day I have to haul myself up a big hill, against the will of gravity. As such, I frequently encounter water cascading from the hilltop. Unable to resist the Earth's centripetal force and assisted by slick concrete and bitumen surfaces, the water slides downwards like a toddler on a slippery dip. It makes its way down the stairs, along the road, past the bus stop, chocolate shop and construction site and into the brown and soupy Cooks River below.

Take, for example, in 2016 when I was walking up some steps from the river valley to Earlwood's summit. I was drenched, somewhat euphoric and glad a warm shower and dry clothes were close by.

This experience triggered a memory from a childhood. My family would take an annual winter holiday in the Blue Mountains. One year, after a major rainstorm, my Dad drove us to the Govett's Leap lookout in Blackheath. I have a clear memory of the extraordinary view of the Grose Valley. As the fog lifted the cliffs were dramatically revealed, they had become hundreds of little temporary waterfalls. It was a real-life Dinotopian waterfall city (but, importantly, without the city). I was in love. But those cascades were never more than eye candy. They were something I took pleasure in looking at for a very short time; once the show was over I could do nothing other than long to see it again. I am convinced that my impulse to film the Earlwood steps that day drew from my memory of the Grose Valley cliffs. It was an opportunity finally to capture that earlier pleasure for posterity.

Now I need you to trust me when I tell you that I'm not a nature/culture dualism kinda gal. I think humans are animals and non-human animals have thoughts, feelings and intelligence and thus the exceptionalism of the human is massively overstated. With all that said if I had to choose between drinking from the Grose Valley's temporary cascades or Earlwood's, I know from which cup I would sup.

My own proximity is significant here. In standing at the lookout I could look, but I could not touch. The torrent that poured over my feet in Earlwood was quite different. When rain falls on non-absorbent ground, urban ecologists, hydrologists and infrastructure service providers name the substance stormwater. It is rainwater materially and rhetorically transmogrified by its encounter with impervious surfaces. And it's pretty gross. Sydney Water estimates that on average, a Sydney Harbour's load of water — about 500 billion litres — drains off the city each year into the ocean. Rainwater changes to stormwater when hitting a surface because the water's quality literally changes too. It is a mixture of water and oil, petrol, fertiliser, pest- or herbicide, chalk, food, food waste, plastic bottles, soil, sand, gravel, anything, anything at all — old shoes, tissues, unopened mail — that can be washed away.

In 1996 Chester L. Arnold Jr and C. James Gibbons wrote a scientific article inviting consideration of the ecological impacts of the water-surface relation: 'Impervious surfaces' they write, 'can be defined as any material that prevents infilteration of water into the soil. While roads and rooftops are the most prevalent and easily identifiable types of impervious surface, other types include sidewalks, patios, bedrock outcrops, and compacted soil.' Importantly, though, 'impervious surfaces are not only indicators of urbanization, but are also major contributors to the [implicitly negative] environmental impacts of urbanization.' So although the waters in the Grose Valley and the Earlwood stairwell both qualify as stormwater, they differ based on the particular qualities of the surfaces it crosses.

As an urban/e environmentalist, I regularly think about the implications of Chester and Gibbons's argument as I traverse Sydney's hard veneer. When hurtling down a bitumen road on a bus, when cycling a concrete path, I think: what would it actually take for urbanisation not to have such a significant impact? Or, for a less overwhelming version of the question, what would it take for the water from anywhere in the Cooks River catchment to be less dangerous to human health, for one to be able to swim in the shallows, eat from the shores or

human health, for one to be able to swim in the shallows, eat from the shores of, even, drink from temporary tributaries? While some are just hoping to clean it up a little. Others aim to make it swimmable by 2020. But the Cooks' is an especially complex waterway to clean up not only due to the completely sub/urbanised catchment, but also because whole other areas have been reengineered to dump water into the river/estuary too. I admire people who can remain hopeful when faced with so many impervious surfaces.

Neimanis, for instance, calls all engineering of waterways 'rechoreographies'. I like this term because it comes without the baggage of an *a priori* moral stance; it invites consideration of the aesthetics, politics, and particularities of flows. Prior to colonisation, the estuary danced as a food source and swimming hole, and it still dances now, but with very different steps. Rechoreographies can involve minor gestures or major movements. By minor I mean a narrow pathway that incidentally delivers a little bit more water to the river, such as the shared pedestrian-bike path that passes up both sides of the river. But for the more major works, one can point to the Sydenham Stormwater Pit and Drainage Pumping Station.

Sitting atop the low-lying Gumbramorra Swamp, the area occupied by the Stormwater Pit did not always dump water into the Cooks. It was a wetland, home to birds, fish and frogs. After the construction of the rail link from the City to Hurstville, the area was opened up for development and a solution was needed to deal with excess water that pooled in new light-industrial parks, roads and pathways. And so the Sydenham Pit was born, as both a Depression labour and excess stormwater problem-solving project.

But, you can't fight gravity without energy. The Sydenham Pit sits below sea level and its waters cannot harness gravity to get to the Cooks. An electric pump takes water from the expanded catchment pond up and delivers it via an elevated drainage channel to the river. This has extended the size of the Cooks River catchment area, and made the task of imagining a swimmable, edible, drinkable waterway a whole lot more complicated.

*Bodies of Water* prompts a thought experiment: to imagine this water catchment and surrounds, including my home in Earlwood and my body as it moves about the place, as interconnected drains rather than discretely as river, suburb, pathway or house. This is one way of opening up to a radical imagination capable of challenging our material-discursive relationship with water. It is not a utopian

experiment insofar as it does not imagine an Edenic restoration of the water way back into a state of ante-colonial health, but rather it shifts my attention to the particular ways in which water connects me to the ecological crisis via, literally, the same pathways I take when coming home from work.

---

**DRAIN 2: SURGICAL**

> *Claiming 'I am a body of water' as an alternative to the 'we' personalizes and individualizes the claim in a way that is … inadequate. Bodies of water puddle and pool. They seek confluence. The flow into one another in life-giving ways, but also in unwelcome, or unstoppable, incursions … We owe our own bodies of water to others in dribbles and deluges – Neimanis.*

Because of this tendency towards interaction, it is possible to think bodies of water badly when we imagine a transcendent, impervious I. There are many ways in which to think about this kind of ego, but the first thing I think of is the narrator of Nirvana's song 'Drain You'.

> *One baby to another says, 'I'm lucky to have met you'*
> *I don't care what you think unless it is about me.*
> *It is now my duty to completely drain you*
> *I travel through a tube*
> *And end up in your infection.*
> *I like you.*





It is a song from the blockbuster 1991 album *Nevermind.* Although the plot of this song is one of dangerously vampiric desire, 'drain' has both metaphoric and literal significance. Even in this first verse, it is clear that it is about the emotional excesses of desire, the paradoxes of drainage (depletion/exhaustion versus purging/cleansing) *and* two humans and their drugs (pheromones, oxytocin, dopamine, cortisol, adrenalin and, probably, heroin). The first 'I' is the performance of affection from one to another. The second 'I' indexes the opinion of a selfish person; the third 'I' represents that same subject acting on the other, but in a materially and emotionally uncontained state, as a toxic liquid. The fourth 'I' ventriloquises a caring relation: I like you (but I'm really not very good for you).

These lyrics drain me. I feel heavy and nauseous at the thought of this relationship. What keeps me listening, perhaps, is the poppy drum track that maintains the upbeat fantasy of the relationship. If this song does not affect you, try reading Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip.* Nora's repeated returns to Javo's side, even when he's outwardly horrible to her prompt the same heavy feeling; I'm sickened by her persistence in living a life where she feels as if she were 'being drained through very tiny puncture holes'. I read on, buoyed by a hope that she'll leave him or the relationship will change course.

But maybe I feel sick because I also recognise my own capacity to be draining. Neimanis invites these thoughts as well: 'consider the materiality of waters that you are.' Me? Oh damn.

> *We could refer to these as intracellular fluid (all of the waters that buoy your*

> *trillions of cells) and extracellular fluid (plasma, interstitial fluids, lymphatic fluids, transcellular fluids), or we could name them more specifically: cerumen, chyle, sebum, sputum.... In a different register we might speak of your humours ..., or simply things like spit, and joint lubrication, and pee. At one level, such lists can be Rich's 'grandiose assertions' in another guise, but if you pay attention, these waters also situate you very specifically.* Begin with the material.

Ok, let me begin again then, with my own water-filled cells.

When my surgeon and breast-care nurse told me what to expect after waking from a double-mastectomy, they kept talking about my 'drains'. They did so as if it was the most normal thing in the world. I kept picturing 'drains' as the water-damaged metal of the old plughole in the bath. I imagined the clumps of hair that get stuck and the moment when the gentle gurgling sound of the disappearing bathwater turns to a sharp edged-grunt. 'What on earth does any of this have to do with my recovery from a boob amputation?' I thought.

'The nurses will help you with your drains' / 'Your drains will be in bags and we can show you how to use them; don't worry you will be fine' / 'The dressings are waterproof, so you can probably go home after a few days with your drains' / 'Maybe she won't want to go home with her drains because she has a toddler'. I had absolutely no idea what they were talking about. My drains? In bags?





The drains were in little bags. Little floral shoulder bags stitched by volunteers at the hospital specifically for the thousands of cancer patients each year. The nurses did show me how to use them, shower with them, care for them and I was fine (relatively speaking). I could have gone home with them after a few days, but I waited until I was confident the painkillers were working and my wounds were healed a bit more so I could withstand the wrath of the toddler. What they did not prepare me for was a drain-induced existential crisis.

Anyone who has had surgical drains or, indeed, breast cancer probably thinks I'm being strategically hyperbolic for the purposes of this essay. Surely major surgery due to cancer-in-your-thirties gives rise to the bigger crisis – not little plastic drains? And sure, cancer is scary and bad. Trying to learn how to love my nipple-less fake boobs and exploring how not to be afraid of death are my new favourite pastimes. I feel those feelings sharply and clearly. The drains, though, challenged me on a different level because their function was to contain me, my fluid, to control and limit little opening in my skin.

As well as learning to think in complex ways about watery relations, I've been trained to think in complex ways about human bodies. We're all porous or 'transcorporeal', to use Stacey Alaimo's term, we exchange skin and saliva, we absorb the world and the world absorbs us. These are not 'merely' theoretical concepts. We are kept alive by, among other things, the bacteria who share our guts. Bodies are ecologies and bodies open into ecologies. We are always already more-than-human. I relish how these ideas—these facts of nature—subvert the Enlightenment fantasy of the sovereign individual and do other important political work too.

Given my professional investments in such theories of embodiment, I need to confess that privately I find the porosity of the body terrifying and the fantasy of

individual transcendence rather appealing. In hospital I was fully able to indulge in this dreaming. My individual body was extraordinarily well supported by the system.

And my drains symbolised that.

They protected my body from infection. They guided the flow of my fluids into the world in a very particular way. I gleefully squeezed the haemoserus, a thin watery pink fluid composed of blood and serum, into the little bags and put them into the bin each night. For the sake of my health and that of others, I was sanctioned by

the hospital to protect myself; I was institutionally encouraged to treat myself as a bounded individual. I was a polyester girl. A fake plastic tree. Impervious. Individual. Immortal. Ironic, perhaps, that the time I was confronted most starkly by my mortality, when my outsides were on display for me and my friends to see was the time I also felt most comfortably contained and individuated.

My drains and me enjoying the morning sun, 4 days post-op, September 2016 (Photo by the author).

But no matter how well we try and insulate ourselves from the toxicity of the world, no matter whether we have the means to buy organic food or can afford to live a suburb away from the expressway tunnel exhaust stack or chemical plant, or not, things can get in. The skin is less barrier, more sponge. Humans have watery bodies that are open to the world.

This knowledge is destabilising for me. I imagine myself as having, both unwittingly and wittingly, absorbed a little too much of the world. I was born downwind from a coal terminal, steel works and copper smelter, two kilometres north of Port Kembla. Southerly busters coated our house in a film of fine particles uncontained by regulation. I puffed on several different kinds of tobacco in my youth, took some drugs and drank a bit of wine. And although I believe in local organic food, sometimes I don't even wash the pesticide off my born-in-the-USA supermarket sourced apples. I cycle all the time now, but in so doing I frequently inhale car, bus, truck exhaust. Not to mention everything else.

I really have no idea if it was me or if it was Them (and They don't know either), but at 33 I was diagnosed with breast cancer and opted to have my boobs removed. How to live with cells that tend towards aberrant reproduction in this mess?

Opening up to my own aqueousness requires acknowledging, firstly, that my body is probably much more like the Earlwood Cascades than the Grose Valley falls. Although I would like to be able to flow purely, cleanly; I want to be Eden, dressed in white doing a downward dog and drinking turmeric juice. I would like my own waters to be drinkable and swimmable but I'm a disgusting toxic mess. As an urbanite, I am irrefutably imbricated in late capitalist sludge; I swim in this stormwater and I drink it in. And so do you.

Living a time where the idea that cancer is a lifestyle disease prevails, I realise now that the fantasy of individual agency is actually a comfort food. It is scarier to think that there's not much I could have done differently to avoid it. It's my genetics and my choices, sure, but it's also my time and place on Earth and in History; in other words, my cells went AWOL for reasons beyond my control.

Given the state of the planet, this porosity is scary – but seeking a bounded self is not a real solution. Neimanis recommends that one of the best 'lifeboats we've got' involves 'turn(ing) into the rapids, and hold(ing) on'. Nipple-free me agrees.

---

**DRAIN 3: CONTINENTAL**

> *[Watery] experiences below and beyond the individual humanist scale … are also strata of our lived experience. If some scientific findings … seem too abstract, imperceptible or distant for verification through lived, embodied experience this is mostly a case of the hegemony of a human-centred, human-scaled perception.*





The Galilee Basin has been in the news over the past few years mainly thanks to the proposed Adani Coal Mine and the amazing collaborative efforts to prevent the digging. The linked Great Artesian Basin has significance as one of the largest such basins in the world. For the majority urban dwellers of Australia, these places are both distant and imperceptible, even though they occupy a large percentage of the continent and inform watery flows across an almost oceanic scale.

The hydrological and geohistorical stories of these basins are complex. Briefly: basins are important geological depressions where groundwater and coal often cohabit. Due to topography and gravity, basins are areas where waters pool, seep into the ground and flow below the surface. The Galilee Basin covers over 240,000 square kilometres of land, the Great Artesian over 1.7 million; they are directly connected to many major rivers, stretch to the Great Dividing Range in the east and to Kati Thanda (Lake Eyre) in the south. From a human perspective, bores provide retrieve groundwater for irrigation in otherwise drylands, but the flows extend far beyond the bore to tap relation. Flood waters travel thousands of kilometres across the tributaries in boom times. It is not so easy to see these flows of water as it is in the spectacular Cooks River day after day.

And so extractive projects get away with destructive, polluting behaviours by acting as if downstream doesn't exist. By pretending things can be contained. Given the scale of flows in these areas, a flood can distribute pollution from mines in such basins over hundreds of thousands of square kilometres. Polluted ground water covers a large percentage of the country.

water covers a large percentage of the country.

Anything that happens in a basin can potentially end up elsewhere: toxic tailing ponds that overflow in floods can traverse the great southern land. It is fathomable. Which is to say, with the logics of flow, it is quite easy to picture the transits – like the water flowing down the stairs, like the bodily fluids in the drains. But it is also an unfathomable scale, so vast are the potential downstream effects. These flows are not just between Tempe and Botany Bay, between my veins and the garbage bin, but between Far North Queensland and South Australia. And we're told this is essential for GDP, for lifestyles, for me and my

walking up the steps near my house and my surgical drains. Surely it can be otherwise.

---

The only true drain on the planet, where something actually escapes the Earth's system, is not for liquid but for gas. The atmosphere is a site where heat is supposed to drain into space. But this drain is becoming blocked. Increasing greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere are preventing the escape of heat thus warming the planet, like a hairball in a plughole.

In contrast, water is part of a closed system, an amazing recycling program that links us all to everything. Despite not being materially true, the claim that 'all the world is a drain' is not wrong because it describes the dominant relation; the practices that treat water *as if* there were somewhere else for it to go. What would it mean and what would it take *not* to treat one's home suburb, one's body and this island continent as a series of interlocking drains. Drains offer a technology for diluting and displacing the toxic waters of my lifestyle, my body and mines that support (for the time being) my nation's GDP. What would it take to shift from this anthropocentric relationship with watery flows to something generative and non-toxic? I don't really have an answer here.

*Bodies of Water* does not either, but it can aid this important speculative, activist thinking. It can help move beyond the drain into generative intergenerational and evolutionary imaginings. For an otherwise, Neimanis looks toward indigenous cosmologies. Presently, though, I feel stuck in the muck of the drain because this instrumentalist approach to waters governs majority thinking, and that it is this problem that I must grapple with in the first instance. And Neimanis's expansive and passionately ambivalent book is a useful companion on that stinky, swampy journey too.

---

*Thanks to Craig Michael Johnson for his knowledge of light and carbon dioxide, and for the notion of the atmosphere as a drain.*

**Published November 15, 2017**

*Non-fiction*

**Jennifer Mae Hamilton**

Jennifer Mae Hamilton is a lecturer in English Literary Studies at the University of...

Essays by Jennifer Mae Hamilton →