

## CONFERENCE ROUNDTABLE

### Space, Time, and Environment: The Historical Geography of Graeme Wynn

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This roundtable emerges from a well-attended session in honor of Graeme Wynn at the International Conference of Historical Geographers held in the Ondaatje Theatre at the Royal Geographical Society, London (UK), on July 7, 2015. With Wynn's retirement in prospect, it seemed an opportune moment to gather and reflect on his scholarship and many contributions to the discipline at a conference to which he has contributed a great deal over the years.

While Wynn has played an important role in the success and growth of geography and historical research at his home institution, the University of British Columbia, this session sought to look outwards at his many national and international career engagements, connections, and interventions. Although Wynn's work has shaped the sub-discipline of historical geography for a generation, it is also widely recognized and cited in environmental history and regional geography. He has contributed foundational texts on the historical geography of New Brunswick, New Zealand, and northern North America. Best known for his monographic works on the historical geography of forests, he has also written important syntheses, studies of urban geography, and reflective essays about the discipline. As an administrator he has helped to build and sustain the humanistic tradition in geography and, in the Canadian context, to found the emerging field of environmental history. As an editor he has sustained important disciplinary journals like the *Journal of Historical Geography* and regional journals like *BC Studies*, while inaugurating and developing UBC Press's "Nature/History/Society" series, the leading outlet of environmental history and historical geography books in Canada. This roundtable gathers an international cast of geographers and historians to reflect upon the course of Wynn's scholarly career, its emphases and contributions.

We begin with Andrea Gaynor's reading of Wynn's contributions to the historiography and historical geography of the Antipodes. Although born in South Africa, raised and educated in England, and a graduate student and professor in Canada for most of his career, Wynn took his first position at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. While this post represented a relatively brief period in his career, Wynn's New Zealand experience left a deep impression, and he continues to conduct research in the Antipodes. Andrea Gaynor is a professor of history at the University of Western Australia and a leading figure in Australian environmental history whose research spans agricultural, water, and fisheries histories. In addition to monographs and edited collections on these themes, Gaynor has conceived of Australian environmental history synthetically and is the author of the chapter on "Environmental Transformations" in the latest *Cambridge History of Australia* (Vol. 1).

Jane Carruthers's essay on Wynn's contributions to the international scholarship on environment and empire follows. Although Wynn has never conceived of himself as a historian

of the British Empire and Commonwealth, his work has made important connections among the histories and geographies of settler societies, and not only within the Anglo world. In many respects, Wynn's work shuttles between an intensely local focus and a capacious comparative framing. The past President of the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations and a leading South African environmental historian, Jane Carruthers is well-placed to appreciate and analyze Wynn's international contributions to environment and empire scholarship. As an emeritus professor of history at the University of South Africa, Carruthers is a specialist in the human and environmental history of parks and conservation, and a well-known figure in the international field of environmental history.

Since Wynn's work straddles the invisible boundary between environmental history and historical geography, it is well to reflect upon how it does so, from what perspective, and with what effects. Robert Wilson, a former PhD student of Wynn's, whose own work also falls between these two sub-disciplines, and who has made important contributions assessing the historiography of both fields, reflects on how Wynn's work crosses these intellectual boundaries and why. Wilson is an associate professor of geography at Syracuse University and the author of *Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway* (University of Washington Press, 2012).

Finally, Larry McCann, an emeritus professor of geography at the University of Victoria, considers Wynn's contributions to the geography of Canada. Beyond Wynn's contributions to regional geography, he is also a distinguished authority on Canadian Studies at large, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a former McLean Chair in Canadian Studies (2012-2013) at the University of British Columbia. McCann shares interests with Wynn in the historical geography of Atlantic Canada, Canadian cities and the urban planning movement. At an earlier stage in his career McCann also edited some of Wynn's work in his magisterial collection, *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Prentice Hall 1982), still the best historically-informed introduction to the regional geography of Canada.

Separately, these essays highlight important dimensions of Wynn's scholarship; read together, they demonstrate Wynn's remarkable ability to attend carefully to place and context while at the same time thinking comparatively and synthetically across space, time and environment.