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Norman Morrissey

Dog Latin

Empangeni: Echoing Green, 2006

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29 pp. Pback

In his latest collection, *Dog Latin*, it is not surprising that the poet Norman Morrissey, a long-term resident in the Hogsback, an area of lush forest and immense natural beauty, should focus his attentions on nature. In *Dog Latin* Morrissey presents us with a multitude of thoughts on the inter-relationship between humanity and nature. This can be seen in a poem about starlings entitled "Without them". He writes: And I can take their life for my own / I'd not have their zest / without them.

In "Settlers Country" (for which Morrissey won a DALRO prize for poems published in *New Contrast*) he subtly draws a parallel between the tumultuous history of colonialism and warfare in the region and its animals' daily struggles for territory, ending with the powerful lines : No inch of land that's not a border / - settler country.

An interesting aspect of this collection is Morrissey's use of different poetic forms. This volume contains poems of various shapes and sizes, some in haiku form, others longer and more structured, but each equally thought-provoking. Morrissey's deep love of nature is evident in these finely-crafted poems.

Andrew Martin

