

Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, *Restless Energy. A Biography of William Rowan 1891-1957*. Montreal, Véhicule Press, 1993.

Paul Lawrence Farber

Volume 18, Number 1 (46), 1994

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/800376ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/800376ar>

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Publisher(s)

CSTHA/AHSTC

ISSN

0829-2507 (print)

1918-7750 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Farber, P. L. (1994). Review of [Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, *Restless Energy. A Biography of William Rowan 1891-1957*. Montreal, Véhicule Press, 1993.] *Scientia Canadensis*, 18(1), 91–91. <https://doi.org/10.7202/800376ar>

Marianne Gosztonyi AINLEY

Restless Energy. A Biography of William Rowan 1891-1957.

Montreal, Véhicule Press, 1993.

William Rowan (1891-1957) was among the best known Canadian scientists during the first half of this century. Although born in Europe and educated in England, he spent his professional life at the University of Alberta where he did pioneering experiments on the causes of bird migration, promoted conservation, popularized science through radio programs, and established a reputation as a nature artist. Rowan's career has an interest that transcends national biography, for he was working at a time when ornithology underwent a shift from traditional natural history to avian biology.

Marianne Ainley has done a yeoman's job of collecting a detailed record of Rowan's life. She has read with great care hundreds of letters, diaries, and printed works and has conducted interviews with those who knew Rowan. The result, *Restless Energy*, is an engaging biography. It is not likely, however, to be scripted for a mass-market film. Rowan's life as it emerges from the story is too melancholy a tale: an overworked, underpaid university professor with an unhappy marriage, unappreciative administrative superiors, and a lack of adequate research funds. Nonetheless, Ainley weaves an interesting and detailed narrative that stays close to the evidence. She demonstrates the difficulties of academic life for naturalists in the early twentieth-century, and provides a useful picture of the world of biology in North America at the time.

Rowan was a complex man. *Restless Energy* provides an interesting description of his life, and catches many of the internal contradictions that make individuals so amazing. Ainley has given a balanced view of a man who could design clever experiments that illuminated animal behavior, but who lectured to his students that men were intellectually superior to women.

PAUL LAWRENCE FARBER, Department of History, Oregon State University