

Weaving Words into Worlds

Edited by

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OIKOS-CRESEM, University of Perpignan, France

Series in Literary Studies



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Table of Contents

	Acknowledgments	vii
	Foreword	ix
	Bénédicte Meillon	
	Introduction	xv
	Caroline Durand-Rous and Margot Lauwers <i>OIKOS-CRESEM, University of Perpignan, France</i>	
	Part I. A Postcolonial Gaze upon Nature: Storytelling and Storyweaving	1
Chapter 1	The Polynesian Dream: Biblical and Ancestral Myths Re-enchanting the Postcolonial Imaginary of the Islands	3
	Chloé Angué <i>University Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, France</i>	
Chapter 2	Toward an Island Eco-poetics: Reenchanting the Andaman Ecology and the Jarawa Tribal Reserve in Pankaj Sekhsaria's <i>The Last Wave</i>	27
	Asis De <i>Mahishadal Raj College, India</i>	
Chapter 3	Flowing with the Stream: Real and Magical Waters in Joseph Boyden's <i>Through Black Spruce</i>	45
	Caroline Durand-Rous <i>OIKOS-CRESEM, University of Perpignan, France</i>	
Chapter 4	Worlds of Stories: Narrating Native American Land in Documentary Film	65
	Maxime Petit <i>University of Toulouse 1 Capitole, France</i>	

	Part II. Wild and Reorganized Gardens: The Poesis of Nature over Mind	83
Chapter 5	The Ecological Christian Labyrinth and the Significance of Trees in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> Stephen Greenfield <i>University of Wolverhampton, UK</i>	85
Chapter 6	At Ground Level: Narratorial Ecology and Economy in Dermot Healy's <i>Long Time, No See</i> (2011) Catherine Hoffmann <i>University of Le Havre, France</i>	99
Chapter 7	Sean Penn's <i>Into the Wild</i> or Filming Nature with/and Passion David Latour <i>REMELICE - University of Orléans, France</i>	113
	Part III. Deceptive Emptiness and Lively Deserts: Reweaving our Sense of Place	129
Chapter 8	Re-enchanting the City in Graphic Novels: Walking Past and Future (Sub) Urban Spaces in Davodeau & Jacquet's <i>Jeanne de la zone</i> (2008) and Delisle's <i>Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China</i> (2006) Anne Cirella-Urrutia <i>Huston-Tillotson University, USA</i>	131
Chapter 9	"Acoustic Shadows": Civil War Spaces in Contemporary Works Peter Schulman <i>Old Dominion University, USA</i>	149
Chapter 10	Literary Vagabonds and the Lure of the Open Road Adrian Tait <i>Independent Scholar</i>	163

	Part IV. Dwellings of Enchantment: Eco-poetics of Reenchantment	183
Chapter 11	Ecopoesis and the Rewilding of the World: Kathleen Jamie, Jay Griffiths, and George Monbiot	185
	Adrian Tait <i>Independent Scholar</i>	
Chapter 12	Trauma and Ecological Re-alignment in Gretel Ehrlich's <i>A Match to the Heart</i>	203
	Wes Berry <i>Western Kentucky University, USA</i>	
Chapter 13	<i>Laudato Si'</i>, "The Mass on the World," and Flannery O'Connor's Eucharistic Ecology	223
	George Piggford <i>Stonehill College, USA</i>	
Chapter 14	<i>Haiku</i> as the Eco-poetical Threshold of "Ice Riding on Its Melting"	245
	Keiko Takioto Miller <i>Mercyhurst University, USA</i>	
	Writer's Corner	263
	Poems by David Lloyd	265
	Biographies	271
	Index	277

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Foreword

Bénédicte Meillon

This great volume comes as the third spinoff of the international ecopoetics conference organized in Perpignan in 2016. As such, it is tightly interwoven with the two preceding volumes, *Lieux d'enchantement : approches écocritiques et écopoét(h)iques des liens entre humains et non-humains*, coedited by Meillon, Bénédicte et Margot Lauwers (2018), and *Dwellings of Enchantment: Writing and Reenchanting the Earth*, edited by Bénédicte Meillon (2020). All three books have emerged from that one single event bringing together roughly a hundred scholars and ecopoets from all across the world, themselves braiding many different stories, myths, theories, and sciences that we, humans, have co-created in our constant interactions with the more-than-human world since the dawn of humanity. Reflecting upon how the many stories we tell directly influence the world we live in, each of the contributions in this international volume directs our attention to the constant, ecopoetic weaving of word to world at work via the many entanglements between mind, matter, and meaning, whether on a local or a global scale. It encapsulates how the words, stories, and concepts we humans articulate as we try and make sense of the world we inhabit give part of its shape to the web of ecological relations that we depend on for our own survival. It seeks to cast light on the disenchanting and reenchanting powers of stories and poesis in general—as stories retain the power to make us either become oblivious to and destroy, or to feel and honor the many, complex ties between the multitudinous nature cultures intertwined within the fabric of a multispecies world always in the making.

The title the co-editors and I have thought up for this book, “*Weaving Words into Worlds*,” is itself an entanglement of some of the many different strands of ecopoetic thinking that illumines the power at the heart of both the metaphor and actual craft of weaving. It presents ecoliterary creation—the poeming or wording of linguistic material into ecopoetic fabric, whether in the form of prose or poetry—as a creative craft that cannot be disentangled from the other ways in which we inhabit the world. Some of the first strands knotted together in the title for this volume originate in Leslie Marmon Silko’s dialogic novel *Ceremony* (1977), which tells a multifaceted story of healing. Interweaving many different types of textuality in the fabric of her

postcolonial, dialogic novel—from myths, poems, and chants, to prose—, Silko meanwhile foregrounds the archetypal figure of Spider Woman. Also referred to as “Thought-Woman” in Pueblo cosmogony, this creation Goddess is held to possess the power of spinning the world into a web of sacred relations out of pure thinking. As words materialize onto the pages of Silko’s novel, framed as it is by poems that read halfway between chants and myths, the overall impression is that the entire fabric of the literary work results from the spinning of Spider Woman’s web of thinking, or singing: “Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman,/ is sitting in her room/and whatever she thinks about/appears./ [...] Thought-Woman, the Spider,/ named things and/ as she named them/ they appeared./ She is sitting in her room/thinking of a story now/ I’m telling you the story/she is thinking.” (1) In the highly metatextual, eponymous poem that follows, Silko underscores the value and power of stories, stories which, as we hold on to and regenerate them via dynamic storytelling, in turn, nurture us, providing food for us to thrive on even in the midst of destruction:

I will tell you something about stories,/ [...]They aren’t just entertainment. [...] They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death./ You don’t have anything if you don’t have the stories./ [...] He rubbed his belly. I keep them here/ [he said]/ Here, put your hand on it/ See, it is moving. There is life here for the people./ And in the belly of this story/ the rituals and the ceremony is still growing. (2)

As Paula Gunn Allen explains, in Keres cosmogony, although “Spider Woman’s Keres name is translated as Thought Woman [...] it can be better understood if translated as Creating-through-Thinking Woman.” (1986 98) Thus, both Silko and Gunn Allen help unravel the material ties between thinking, story-telling, and world-mattering.

In her introduction to the stories collected in her anthology, *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters* (1989), Paula Gunn Allen insists that traditional stories “are woven of elements that illumine the ritual tradition of the storyteller’s people, make pertinent points to some listener who is about to make a mistake or who has some difficulty to resolve, and hold the listeners’ attention so that they can experience a sense of belonging to a sturdy and strong tradition.” (1) As we are now faced with global warming, accelerated biodiversity erosion, and as, according to the science on climate change, we now stand on the edge of many uncertain tipping points, many of us ecocritics and ecopoeticians, together with first peoples across the world, are still calling attention to the urgent need to reentangle the many forms of sciences and stories that have emerged across centuries, across cultures and across disciplines, so that

traditional and postmodern ecological knowledges might be braided together into meaningful stories capable of guiding us onto more reasonable paths than the ecocidal ones modern science and myths have led us onto. As we are presently dealing with again another planetary crisis in the wake of the Covid pandemic, it is more than obvious that our future hinges on the stories we will tell as we may or may not reweave the story of humanity within the vibrant textures of all of other-than-human nature—whether the latter be apprehended in the form of a virus, of the wild animals that we poach, or the forests that are the latter’s habitats and which we keep encroaching upon in so many, destructive ways. Gunn Allen’s take on the dynamic power of storytelling captures much of the eco-poetic venture that forms the collective endeavor in this book. “The aesthetic imperative,” she argues,

requires that new experiences be woven into existing traditions in order for personal experience to be transmuted into communal experience; that is, so we can understand how today’s events harmonize with communal consciousness. We use aesthetics to make our lives whole, to explain ourselves to each other, to see where we fit in the scheme of things (1989 7).

In her previous eponymous book dedicated to the concept of the Sacred Hoop—itsself a variant on the metaphor of all life forms being interwoven and spun into a web—Gunn Allen writes of “the Old Woman Spider who weaves us together in a fabric of interconnection” (1986 11). From the standpoint of humans, the dynamic breath of life and the breath of storytelling are enmeshed. As Gunn Allen puts it,

[the] tribes seek—through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales—to embody, articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language, those truths that give humanity its greatest significance and dignity. To a large extent, ceremonial literature serves to redirect private emotion and integrate the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic framework. (1986 55; emphasis mine)

I believe the same is true for ecopoiesis, whether in prose or poetry, whether fictional or whether in the form of nonfiction nature writing. Indeed, what Paula Gunn Allen explains about traditional storytelling also provides a precious lens for ecopoetics:

The artistry of the tribes is married to the essence of language itself, for through language one can share one's singular being with that of the community and know within oneself the communal knowledge of the tribe. In this art, the greater self and all-that-is are blended into a balanced whole, and in this way the concept of being that is the fundamental and sacred spring of life is being given voice and being for all. (1986 55)

As many of the contributions in this book demonstrate, like most indigenous peoples whose oral traditions are still alive, ecopoets "do not content themselves with simple preachments of this truth, but through the sacred power of utterance, they seek to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things" (1986 55–56). In this very concrete way, then, ecopoiesis, like much indigenous storytelling, is an ongoing process of material weaving of world to word, and back to world again.

Another strand of the title for this book, itself entangled in many ways with ancient, traditional Goddess mythologies and ceremonies, comes from ecofeminism. The centrality of the metaphor of weaving, a craft often practiced by women, appears clearly in the titles of the first anthologies of pioneer ecofeminist theory, such as *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, edited by Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (1989), and *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (1990). In his essay collected in the latter, cosmologist Brian Swimme refers to Charlene Spretnak's work on weaving. One of the pioneers of ecofeminism, Spretnak has connected the scientific discoveries of cosmic expansion and phenomenal entanglements with the metaphor of weaving long honored in many traditional cultures. "In fact," says Swimme,

nothing is more obvious than Spretnak's assertion that weaving is a fundamental dynamic of this universe. Picture it: from a single fireball, the galaxies and stars were all woven. Out of a single molten planet, the hummingbirds and pterodactyls, and gray whales were all woven. What could be more obvious than this all-pervasive fact of cosmic and terrestrial weaving? Out of a single group of microorganisms, the Krebs cycle was woven, the convoluted human brain was woven, the Pali Canon was woven, all parts of the radiant tapestry of being. Show us this weaving? Well, it is impossible to point to anything that does not show it, for this creative interlacing energy envelops us entirely. Our lives, in truth, are nothing less than a further unfurling of this primordial ordering activity. (20)

According to Swimme, one of the reasons why this metaphor of weaving makes so much sense from an ecofeminist point of view may be that “[women] are beings who know from the inside out what it is like to weave the Earth into a new human being.” (21) Referring to both Spretnak’s and Gunn Allen’s seminal work, Brian Swimme hopes that in bringing together indigenous, ecofeminist and scientific worldviews, we may “teach our children at a young age the central truth of everything: that the universe has been weaving itself into a world of beauty for 15 billion years.[...] We will teach that their destinies and the destinies of the oak trees and all the peoples on Earth are wrapped together. That the same creativity suffusing the universe suffuses all of us, too.” (22)

It is in this crucial sense that the present book matters, as it examines the intricate interweaving of human creativity with other-than-human wor(l)ds. To take up the vision expressed by Cherokee thinker Dhyani Ywahoo as to how to actively renew the Sacred Hoop, the collected essays in this volume demonstrate how it is that “the knowledges of our voices, thoughts, and actions are weaving beauty around the land. There is a harmony; there is a song. All things move in a circle” (274). As the contributions collected in this volume show, eco-poetics helps us “realize the circle of life and the wheel of cause and effect. [...] In this industrial age, which has been described as paternalistic, we see how moving away from the circle and working more in components, there is a loss of continuity and a forgetfulness of how what one does affects the Earth” (276). Each of the chapters in its own way acts as a reminder that, still as Dhyani Ywahoo has put it, “[seeing] all in relationship, in the circle, is part of the planetary healing” (276). Teaching us again how to reweave creative thinking and writing, this volume and the eco-poetic works of art they examine can be imagined as one of those “[great lakes] sending forth endless ripples of compassion and care” (279). In the face of the many, interrelated, global crises we are facing, the eco-poetic studies here included provide an antidote to the current tendency where—to take up Dhyani Ywahoo’s diagnosis of how much of the Sacred Hoop has been broken—“many people abdicate self-empowerment by withdrawing their energies” (278). Like the previous two books that have emerged from the 2016 Perpignan conference dealing with an eco-poetics of “Dwellings of Enchantment,” *Weaving Words into Worlds* gives concrete evidence of how writers and scholars from all over the world can actively interweave their thinking, voices, and craft with the songs and creativity of the more-than-human world, “attuning to one another, working as a team, knowing that in the circle each person has a unique and necessary function” (278). It helps us believe in and work toward “the possibility of the Sacred Hoop being rebuilt,” as envisioned by Ywahoo in her timeless essay.

Finally, the title of this collection is also meant as a tribute to Scott Knickerbocker's enlightening study, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (2012). In his introduction, Knickerbocker recollects how his thirteen-month-old's tentative yet imperfect speech, as he was trying to name the trees around him, was the child's first engagement in "the old human habit of weaving world to word" (1). As Knickerbocker elaborates, ecopoiesis produces an essential form of "sensuous poesis," which he defines as "the process of rematerializing language specifically as a response to nonhuman nature" (2). I would say that this book, in the wake of Scott Knickerbocker's deep and subtle unraveling of the workings of ecopoiesis, also suggests a positive answer to the latter's starting question, as he wondered whether "language, despite its mediating function between the human and nonhuman [could] weave us to nature?" (2) Gathering a dazzling array of voices and perspectives across many different cultures, traditions, and literary genres, the impressive volume at hand chants back in a polyphonic and multispecies chorus: Yes, language offers a way of threading ourselves back into the sensuous fabric of the world! Yes, ecopoetics can help us reweave word to world. Yes, ecopoetics can pave the way toward rewor(l)ding.

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Introduction

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The post-humanist era we are witnessing has constantly been redefining humans in order to re-inscribe them in a history that would no longer be conceptually separate from that of nature. Indeed, for nearly forty years, scientific discoveries and fields such as ethology have only diminished what seemed to be human characteristics: the use of tools and language are among the most striking examples. It is now established that certain species of birds and large primates habitually use tools (thanks in particular to the work of Jane Goodall on this subject) and the phenomenon has been observed in certain domestic animals as well. Language is no longer a characteristic of the human species since the discovery of the use of complex communication systems in marine mammals and other large mammals such as elephants. What is there that remains distinctly human, then? Some would answer that literature and art are human production *par excellence*. Glen A. Love explains the importance that literature (and art) must have if we accept this premise as valid:

If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment, and to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of humanity, and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us. Is it an activity that adapts us better to life on Earth, or one that sometimes estranges us from life? From the unforgiving perspective of evolution and natural selection, does literature contribute more to our survival than it does to our extinction? (Love, in Murphy 15–16)

In regard to the ecological and social crises of the past decades (and, sadly, those still to come), it is easy to understand how important this question might prove. As Barbara Bennett reminds us in *Scheherazade's Daughters: The Importance of Storytelling in Ecofeminist Change*, Scheherazade's story is both the introduction and the cement of the Tales of a Thousand and One Nights. Bennett starts her book by reminding us of this story of which we all have a

rough knowledge. We thought it worthwhile to briefly recall it here because it illustrates the role that literature may play.

A sultan, deceived by his wife, decrees that no woman can be faithful in love. For this reason, he takes a new wife every day, spends the wedding night with her, and has her executed the next day. When the kingdom begins to see the number of its young daughters diminish dangerously, Scheherazade, the grand vizier's daughter, draws up a plan. She begs her father to let her marry the sultan. The sultan initially refuses, not wanting to see his daughter put to death the day after her wedding. However, Scheherazade insists and adds a condition: that her younger sister, Dinerzade, be allowed to reside in her apartments on the wedding night. This is agreed upon, and Dinerzade wakes the young couple during the night, pretexting a nightmare, and asks her sister to tell her a story. The sister does so and keeps her audience in total suspense until dawn. She interrupts her story at a key moment in the narrative to prepare to be executed. Under the spell of curiosity, the sultan postpones the execution of his young wife until the following day so that he can find out the rest of the story. During one thousand and one nights, Scheherazade will thus captivate her husband with her storytelling, so much so that he will abandon his murderous habit and remain married to the grand vizier's daughter. It is thus literally through her ability to tell stories that the young wife changes the historical course of the kingdom.

Metaphorically, this tale is representative of the strength and consequences that a story can have. Bennett thus analyzes its foundation:

It is a story about stories and the power they hold. It is a story about how stories can change people, even change worlds. We all acknowledge the ability of storytelling to make us laugh or cry, touch us in ways we did not know we could be touched, and connect us with worlds we would never see in our relatively limited sphere of living. Less is said, however, about the power of stories to change our minds, to alter our positions, to encourage us to action. (Bennett 2)

Some famous examples and the hindsight we now have show us what can happen when works deeply touch readers and scholars¹. They also give us a glimpse of the importance that the study of literature has in our increasingly connected and abstract societies: taking the time to read, study and analyze literature allows us to nurture our imaginations. If anything, the past three years have shown how much society missed the natural world and contact with their fellow creatures, human and other-than-human alike; maybe more than ever before, has humankind then realized the urgent need for general re-enchantment. This desire to infuse life with a renewed sense of wonder has

been visible, be it in the media, in literature and art, or in a popular “back-to-nature” movement. Meanwhile, the emergency of climate change has also been put on the political agenda as numerous countries worldwide finally acknowledged the concerns voiced by grassroot movements, activities, indigenous cultures, and ecocritics for the past decade. Politics have also started acknowledging the emergency of climate change. Literature, in that it allows a very intimate relationship for readers, thus has an important role to play in that it allows for the imagination or re-enchantment of other possible futures. Looking at ourselves through the eyes of others, human and non-human creatures, or through our relationships with them gives us new perspectives. For the past sixty years, what many books, whether they focus on animals, nature in general or environmental justice, have been demonstrating is a human need to reconnect with nature and, perhaps, to find in indigenous cultures, in landscapes, or in animals an answer to our ever-growing fears about ecology in contemporary societies. The natural world has been given a renewed role in literature: it helps us expand our vision by moving away from a focus on humans to re-enchant our relationship with the world.

As the reader will understand throughout the chapters to come, this re-enchantment takes place via a re-establishment of an affective bond expressed by the author and revealed by ecocritical and eco-poetical analysis, for as Bénédicte Meillon states in the introduction to *Lieux d'Enchantements*:

As the American political scientist Jane Bennett points out in her study on the enchantment of modern life, the vision of a disenchanted world tends to hinder our emotional attachment to the world. Yet, as Bennett further demonstrates, the contemporary world, whether human or not, natural or artificial, still offers precious sources of enchantment; above all, experiencing moments of rapture remains essential to give meaning and ethical guidance to our being-in-the-world. (Meillon 4)

The images with affective resonance common to the works cited above as well as to those studied by the contributors in this book allow us to be more inclined to experience an empathic relationship with the other, human or non-human. As Moira Gatens explains in *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*, we cannot change our perception of things with a simple contradiction or rebuttal; affect is an essential ingredient of change. By first allowing themselves to feel enchanted by their personal reading and by sharing their analysis of how this re-enchantment is put to work, the contributors here « reintegrate human existence and the experience of the natural world along emotional and affective lines; humans thus become part of a community that includes their ecosystem instead of discrete entities who

presume the non-human environment has only mechanical or pragmatic value. » (Magee 66)

We hope to show that the studies presented here, in addition to analyzing artistic processes that re-enchant the world, push us to renew our perception of it, to question the position of superior beings in which human beings have locked themselves. Although they deal with varied and sometimes distant subjects, what connects the present analyses is their capacity to renew, even reinvent, the way we look at the world and the way we tell human and natural history in an attempt to make it into a single interwoven narrative from which we could, perhaps, draw the energy to create a new world because

With the Earth and its creatures in a state of desperate need, dwindling natural resources, political upheavals, and absent human and animal rights, the pertinent information a reader can glean from stories of both destruction and hope can make the difference between saving the world or choosing to let it fall further into chaos and decay. (Hogan xvii)

We, as editors, are proud to present a volume of highly diverse study subjects, ranging from graphic novels to films, from poems to Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si*. Likewise, they encompass vast territories, whether real or imaginary: from North America to the Polynesian islands, from Europe to Japan, from India to 'Middle Earth.' Despite this variety, all converge into a sense of renewed wonder and weave a global worldwide narrative of interspecies respect. As their analyses engage a conversation, they unveil the paramount imprint of the natural world upon the imaginary. Discourses and stories thus connect: they echo each other and intertwine as weft and warp to give voice to new worlds. We contend that this polyphonic fabric of words and images braided into a meaningful entanglement of sensory experiences and intellectual reflection offers the reader a rare opportunity to immerse into the subtle network of reciprocity that links humankind to the other-than-human realm.

We have divided our volume into four parts, according to the main theme upheld by the contributors, as some elect to focus on the eco-poetics of specific landscape features while others adopt a broader perspective on a renewed being-to-the-world: We will first cast a postcolonial gaze upon nature, and analyze the close link indigenous literature develops between storytelling and storyweaving; We will then direct our attention on wild and reorganized gardens: where the poiesis of nature over the mind can fully be experimented; Thirdly, we will pinpoint on deceptive emptiness and lively deserts and how these apparent hostile environments can help reweave our sense of place; And finally, we will explore dwellings of enchantment and how the studies of these wondrous territories can help infuse a profound

ecopoetics of reenchantment. Last but not least, we choose to complete the volume with a writer's corner to bridge the divide between academic scrutiny and artistic practice.

In our first section, we pay close attention to the entangled agencies of the human and the more-than-human realm on the contested territory of colonial settlements. From the many islands, rivers, and forests, Native voices rise in a surge of auto-representation and fully reinvest the richness of their cosmogonies, thus supplementing the vibrant descriptions of their land with a political subtext.

In the first chapter, Chloé Angué presents a highlighting analysis of the place of onirism in the writing of nature by Polynesian authors. Dwelling on Pierre Brunel and Véronique Gély's protocols, she fully embraces the distinctive sense of place that the Polynesian myths and literary images implement while setting the bases of a prolific post-colonial imaginary. Inspired by their love for the "mother land," Tahitian writers and thinkers subtly point out the source of their knowledge and inspiration, the island ecosystems, to underline the wide discrepancies imposed by colonialism through the notion of land ownership. Retrieving a sense of the sacred, modern Polynesian artists choose to reconcile antagonist frameworks into a telling syncretism of form and content. In this chapter, Angué engages in this revived imaginary of the island to posit an everlasting bond between nature and the people who have actively inhabited it for centuries, passing on ancestral knowledge for it to be re-dreamed by each new generation. She aptly argues that the re-enchantment of the Earth as operated by Indigenous writers is con-substantial to a political statement reclaiming congruence in a stolen territory.

In the next chapter, Asis De further explores the meanders of island ecopoetics when applied to a contrastive cultural context: the Andaman Islands in India, such as depicted by Pankaj Sekhsaria's *The Last Wave*. Staging the struggle of two conservationists for the preservation of an endemic ecosphere, this Indian Anglophone novel nevertheless questions the naive assumptions of both characters regarding the assigned place of an Indian tribe confronted with encroaching modernity. De aptly argues that an ecological consciousness infusing fiction not only re-enchants the environment but also re-enchants the reader as the access to interpolated narratives gives way to an array of meaningful connections to the world. Tapping into material ecocriticism, De raises Sekhsaria's novel to the rank of a living text where natural and cultural stories engage in a conversation aiming at decentering the locus of enunciation, meanwhile casting a new light on the moral responsibility as well as the necessity to sustain distinctive habitats.

With Caroline Durand-Rous, we follow the water-driven initiatory journey of a contemporary young woman from the Cree nation along the tricky meanders

of the rivers and lakes that shape the distinctive landscape of the Canadian Shield. Durand-Rous exposes how, in Joseph Boyden's novel *Through Black Spruce*, natural elements give essential meaning to the humans' apparently erratic wanderings by inscribing their deeds and accomplishments into the greater mythical narrative of creation. Caroline Durand-Rous thoroughly demonstrates how Annie, the protagonist, must experience a symbolic death leading to her being spiritually reborn, as she engages in a challenging quest to recover her missing sister. This relevant discussion highlights how the elemental plasticity of water reveals the magical value of the original landscape and connects tribal memories with personal memories, eventually leading the protagonists to self-reinvention. By means of a detailed analysis, drawing on literary critique and anthropology, Durand-Rous skillfully illustrates how the novel unfolds as a tale of self-empowerment since the ordeals encountered along the real and magical waters at work finally offer the characters congruence in a territory still bearing the scars of colonial history. Caroline Durand-Rous offers a detailed study of the game of correspondences lying at the core of this Native novel.

Concluding this section, Maxime Petit pays close attention to the way images word out the land and investigates how Western eurocentered documentaries have imposed a filmic syntax on the rendering of Native lands on screen that contemporary Native filmmakers enduringly contribute to deconstructing. As he reminds us in his introduction, nature undeniably occupies a central place in Native storytelling, whether in ethnographic documents meant to depict Native societies, or in autochthonous traditional myths and legends. However, both sources offer a highly contrasted vision of what land stands for. This cultural discrepancy is likewise incontestably present in documentary filmmaking, as Maxime Petit notices. In that regard, Petit's chapter closely examines Alanis Obomsawin's documentary about the Oka crisis entitled *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. Whereas the early Euro-American filmmakers' Bible-inspired vision of a pristine wilderness waiting to be tamed has long prevailed, Obomsawin's film firmly reinstates Native grounds as the depository space of Indigenous knowledge and "survivance," to draw on Chippewa scholar and novelist Gerald Vizenor's concept. Petit's analysis reveals the tenuous distinction between storytelling and mapmaking in Native cosmovisions. Meanwhile, it gives insight into the existing Mohawk kinship to nature as the nation's fate is assessed through the preservation of the pines in the Quebec town of Oka, in terms of a sacred and cyclical continuity of the relationship linking a specific environment and the people inhabiting it.

The essays in the next section are also concerned with a distinctive way of inhabiting nature as they tackle the issue of co-viability, in other words, the extent of an acceptable intervention of humans upon their surroundings and,

in return, the scope of nature's influence upon the formation of the human mind. By contriving gardens as spaces of entangled agencies, the novels, and the movie hereby question the assigned limits supposedly separating humans from the rest of the natural world.

In the first chapter, Stephen Greenfield examines the intertwined vegetal and narrative mazes that traverse *The Lord of the Rings*, thus performing an essential ecocritical reading of the novel. Indeed, he informs Tolkien's repeated use of the Christian symbolism of the labyrinth as a means to engage in a quest to restore balance and heal nature. Expanding on the notion of "eco-labyrinthicity," the chapter attributes the convoluted structure as the path toward the re-enchantment of a degraded landscape where the hobbits are led through three essential liminal stages by their interactions with magical trees.

Catherine Hoffmann invites the reader to delve into narratorial ecology as she studies the interaction between textual economy and ecology in Dermot Healy's *Long Time No See*. Owing to the literary tradition of the pastoral and mindfully adopting the georgic mode, this Irish novel celebrates an acute sense of the land through the motif of the *hortus conclusus*, or walled garden. Hoffman's research exposes the literary devices through which the author allows the reworking of an enclosed space to transform into a condensed version of a wider territory of interactions. Due to the accuracy of the chosen vocabulary, and while eschewing literary ornamentation and focusing on verbs of action, Healy's prose offers the lifelike rendering of a thoroughly experienced countryside. Hoffmann's masterful demonstration emphasizes Healy's articulate writing of the subtle web of non-verbal communication with the other life forms as it smoothly weaves the warp of the description of everyday chores with the weft of the description of the enchanted surrounding nature.

The next chapter focuses on a threefold artistic reconstruction of wildness as David Latour explores Sean Penn's filming of Jon Krakauer's elaborated biography of Alexander McCandless from the latter's notebooks. Following McCandless's footsteps, *Into the Wild* portrays a highly subjective relationship with nature, where the latter proves appealing inasmuch as it stands as an antagonism to a rejected urban environment. Shooting the majestic American landscapes in bigger-than-life frameworks, Penn's camera provides a commentary on a doomed-to-fail personal quest based on an initial misunderstanding of wildness. David Latour scrutinizes the various filmic techniques employed by Penn to convey an emotional involvement with the main character as well as giving clues of his flawed subjective relationship with an idealized nature. He skillfully elaborates on McCandless's longing for fulfillment into a projection of wilderness first processed through Krakauer's words and further construed by Penn's lenses. Subsequently, the movie's

climactic scene, the discovery of bus 102, and its surrounding area are shown as a clear echo to Thoreau's Walden Pond.

The third section focuses our attention on the incredible livelihood of so-called deserts. Far from complying with the assumed notion of barrenness, these environments, standing at the margins of human activities, call upon the visitor to get attuned to the profusion of beings and spirits animating the land, barely perceived but not far removed from the surface. By just willfully activating sentience, one can start acknowledging the material and spiritual vitality of these often-neglected places.

With Anne Cirella Urrutia's essay, we step into the fringes of urbanized environments where three graphic artists imagine a new being-to-the-world. Provided the reader relinquishes common assumptions such as the artificial dichotomy opposing cultural spaces to natural spaces, she will discover, even in the corners of disenchanting suburbia, bright patches of re-enchanting wildness, as Cirella Urrutia astutely demonstrates. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard's notion of "felicitous homes," standing as reinvested and re-enchanting dwellings, and quoting Virilio's principle of dromology, or the fundamental role of the logic of speed in the human apprehension of space, Cirella Urrutia's analysis of two contemporary comic books, namely *Jeanne de la Zone* by Jacquet and Davodeau, and *Shenzhen* by Delisle, contributes to re-humanize cityscapes. Besides grounding the notion of "neighborhood" within the reality of a set of relationships between neighboring species (humans, pets, farm animals, vegetables...), she stresses the importance of this lively liminal space in constructing a new social identity within the margins. Through the graphic medium, both showing and telling, cartoonists Jacquet, Davodeau, and Delisle actively participate in raising an eco-consciousness in their young readers' minds.

In the next chapter, Peter Schulman invites us to decipher the artistic markers of a painful absence in contemporary landscapes. From the land that witnessed the American Civil War, the "acoustic shadows" still resonate in the collective unconscious. The seemingly empty battlefields amount to a rich palimpsestic land holding the multi-layered memory of a nation. Schulman contends that the deceptive void of present-day vacant lots hides fertile fields for the mind where geography firmly grounds distant history. Revealing the ghosts inhabiting these spaces, Southern artists such as photographer Mann and music band Granville Automatic give voice to the invisible specters, meanwhile performing a magical re-enchantment of places. Through the entanglement of the past and present perceptions of historical sites, they portray the ambivalent relationship humankind sustains with lived spaces.

In the last chapter, Adrian Tait proposes a thorough survey of British nature writing through the prism of road vagabondage. He thus demonstrates how,

though initially endeavoring to roam empty and unpeopled dusty paths to observe a delusive static and passive natural world, the literary roamers eventually gain access to enlightenment through the immersive experience procured by stomping the ground and tuning one's corporeal rhythm to primitive natural rhythms. Tait's discerning study further underlines the steps leading the open road vagabonds from early naive wishful thinking to the actual recovery of a sense of wonder. Interestingly, although they engage in walking the British countryside to seek emptiness, thus construing nature as being to be devoid of the overwhelming amount of material objects contained by cities, the writers are soon confronted with an abundance of "animate things" to quote Jane Bennett. Looping back to the archetypal figure of the semi-god Pan, Tait addresses the underpinning sense of the sacred presiding over these personal encounters with non-human and more-than-human realms: a significant embodied experience of nature's wild and disruptive energies.

The last academic section of our volume focuses more specifically on the notion of an eco-poetics of re-enchantment through in-depth analyses of works ranging from Montbiot's *Feral*, Gretel Ehrlich to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, among others. Drawing on the interconnectedness of all things, this section further emphasizes the importance of a re-enchantment of our everyday lives and ordinary affects, essential tools in overcoming personal trauma or self-centeredness—evils our contemporary world has to face on a daily basis, and which have an impact on our ecological awareness and capacity for resilience and reactivity. Thus addressing the broad notion of an "alienation from place" and offering an analysis of how artists use an eco-poetics of re-enchantment to counter this woe, this last section offers to further rethink the human position within the whole of environmental creation, consequently dispelling "the illusion that we who speak and write are not part of nature, not part of each other" to quote Susan Griffin's article "Split Culture."²

Adrian Tait offers readings of New Nature writers Kathleen Jamie, Jay Griffiths, and George Monbiot's prose eco-poetics. He highlights how, resorting to different strategies and styles, the three writers take part in an effort "to re-wild—even re-enchanted—our perspective on the earth." Tait shows how Jamie's eco-poetics takes issue with the term "nature"—"a problematic externalization of relationships that, in fact, constitute our very existence." He then zooms in on Monbiot's work on the notion of ferality. Finally, he turns to Griffiths' writing which at times embraces the viewpoint of indigenous communities and questions the opposition between nature and culture characterizing much Western thinking.

Leaping through time and space, the next chapter by Wes Berry explores notions of trauma and healing in Gretel Ehrlich's prose eco-poetics. Berry calls

attention to the ways in which trauma can alienate one from both her body and the landscape she inhabits. Starting from memoirs that deal with the experience of trauma (Sue William Silverman, Terry Tempest Williams, or Philip Lee Williams), Berry then shifts his attention to Ehrlich's *A Match to the Heart*, sifting the text for signs of how "the body as bioregion" (Deborah Slicer) finds expression. Berry's investigation tackles generic issues, together with poetic, philosophical, and ecopsychological ones. As he demonstrates, such cross-disciplinary "works of nonfiction blend ecological science, knowledge of western medicine, and devotional language to show how particular dwellings are conducive to healing." Taking us along Ehrlich's restless journey as she suffers a serious case of post-traumatic alienation from place and body, Berry leads us in her tracks to discover the language of the landscape that co-composes a reenchanting ecopoetics of healing and belonging. As he argues, "employing some tricky poetic acrobatics in reversals of conventional landscape metaphors, Gretel Ehrlich in her ecological-medical memoir [...] explores how getting struck by lightning takes her on a journey onto the 'organscape' of her body—an enchanted dwelling intimately dependent on external landscapes for her wellbeing."

George Piggford's chapter then dwells on the evolutions of a Catholic worldview. His contribution openly espouses the theology of Teilhard de Chardin, Francis of Assisi, and, more recently, of Pope Francis—as exposed in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*—via a reading of Flannery O'Connor's short story "A View of the World." It gives a mythopoeic perspective onto the short story genre, which, in the wake of James Joyce's secular conception of art, has often been associated with secular epiphanies to be revealed by art—the fleeting moment of an existential revelation of some immanent meaning, truth, or radiance having become central to many short stories. Piggford offers here not a secular but a religious reading of the epiphany found in O'Connor's dark short story, grasped via exegesis of its mystical dimension and its potentially Christian imagery of the woods. This chapter stands out from the new materialist, ecopsychological, and sympoietic, approaches that prevail in this book on ecopoetics of reenchantment, as it dovetails with a (re)divinization of the world that some contributors to this volume may find contentious. Nevertheless, the chapter is important for presenting a view radically different from the other chapters. Piggford's reading of O'Connor's story meanwhile offers a form of reconciliation between the Christian theology it embraces and the ecofeminist spiritualities and myths it reaches out to. Moreover, it follows behind works such as John Baird Callicot's, bringing to the fore the dynamic evolution of our reading of myths, and the present potential of the Christian tradition when it comes to regenerating ecological ethics of care for the Earth. Such ethics are here derived from concepts of an "integral ecology," of divine "indwelling" and of a "eucharistic

mysticism” that Piggford finds in Flannery O’Connor’s eco-poetics. Piggford’s contribution is welcome in this section as it indicates a healing incentive from within the Catholic church to counter the pathological alienation of humans from nature that has come from literal interpretations of the Old Testament—an influential, cultural phenomenon that has most famously been exposed by ecofeminists and by the ecocritic Lynn White Junior. Piggford self-consciously strays from the anthropocentric, patriarchal values that the Catholic church has often seemed to promote. Relying on Paula Gunn Allen’s ecofeminist and indigenous theology, Piggford’s chapter touches upon syncretic mythopoeia. In many ways, Piggford’s analysis points to the avant-garde, ecofeminist strains already present in O’Connor’s story. Despite the fundamental rift that still separates secular from religious ontologies and interpretations of stories, the different attitudes to the world here colliding over ecological concerns might pave new ways for what Paula Gunn Allen calls “walking in beauty” (Allen and Anderson 2001, xi–xii). It sparks new thoughts reaching across such divides so that, beyond our adherence to secular or religious views and discourses, to indigenous or European cultures, we may at least agree on cultivating “a habit of attention,” and on treading the earth softly as we walk forward in the Anthropocene.

To conclude this section with yet another approach of the interlacing of the visible and the invisible in the flesh of the world, Keiko Takioto Miller loops back to phenomenological considerations derived from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, while focusing on the short haiku form. Haiku is here viewed as a quintessential form of eco-poetry. Like many in this volume, this last chapter carries syncretic resonances, oscillating between zen tenets and philosophy, references to Mother Earth, and indigenous worldviews. In its extreme shortness, the haiku studied here by Takioto Miller bears some resemblance to the short story genre, with its brevity and its implicit, poetic strategies of meaning. Focusing on the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Matsuo Basho, Takioto Miller contends that “truth shown in brevity is sufficient unto itself. In this sense,” she goes on, “haiku came to serve as a transient literary vehicle, which offers its beholder to ride mindfully on the felt tension between nature and culture.” Takioto Miller’s language itself is eco-poetic, as she mindfully strives for an expressiveness that uses English—at times French—to word Japanese concepts and relate them to Western ones. It also shuttles back and forth between European and Asian metaphysics, between ancient thought-systems and contemporary ones, such as Tim Ingold’s or David Abram’s. Takioto Miller’s contribution invites us to a meditative reading, as it threads scholarship with the creative writing of “an imaginative thought experiment [...] to illustrate the process of how language, as a dynamic nature-cultural phenomenon, may have emerged.” It goes for a poetic and material approach of language as a corporeal activity taking place

via our incorporation into the world—a body-mind embeddedness that remains at the heart of our humanity, despite “our ancestor’s exponential distancing, or ‘écartement,’ from having formerly been immersed in nature.” The language of haiku, she argues, emerges from a pre-reflexive experience of our dwelling within the world.

To complete the multifaceted approach developed in this book, we have made way for a “Writer’s Corner” that offers poems by David Lloyd. These invite us to a direct, unmediated experience of eco-poetry that will resonate with many of the analyses collected in the preceding chapters. They come as precious gifts from an eco-poet who took part in the June 2016 Perpignan conference, where his work was read and discussed. They remind us of the necessity to make room for the writing and reading of poetry itself within our academic practices, in the midst of the distanced attitudes toward literature that many critics simultaneously strive for. They open the door to a moment of concrete re-enchantment and offer a corporeal, sensuous dwelling to temporarily put at rest our predominantly logos-driven, academic relationship to language and to the world.

Notes

¹ To name but a few, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Black Beauty*, and *The Jungle* have had such an impact on their contemporary society that some claim; that they have changed the world.

² This and the following four paragraphs of our introduction were written by Bénédicte Meillon, as this last part and the writers’ corner were originally meant to be included in the book *Dwellings of Enchantment: Writing and Reenchanted the Earth*, which she edited for Rowman and Littlefield. The book finally being over the word limit for R&L’s ETAP series, Bénédicte Meillon had to trim down the volume she had initially put together. This last section, the corresponding chapters and the writer’s corner were thus edited by her and transferred to this book, which is the third to stem from the June 2016 conference on Dwellings of Enchantment.

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Biographies

Chloé Angué

Dr. Chloé Angué is a high-school teacher and a doctor from the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense where she taught in Licence and Master and where she recently defended her thesis in comparative literatures entitled “Biblical Myths and Polynesian Myths: The Flexibility of the Imaginary of Conquest and Dream. Literary Images of Polynesia from the 17th to the 21st Century.” Her research interests are postcolonial, area, and myth studies. She is passionate about Polynesian literatures, languages, myths, territory representations, and imaginary.

Wes Berry

Dr. Wes Berry is Professor of English at Western Kentucky University, where he teaches American literature with a specialization in environmental texts and regional writing, such as Southern literature. Inspired by various agrarian writers—and a childhood spent working on Kentucky farms—Wes and his wife Elisa grow much of their own food and tend a menagerie of creatures, including honeybees, sheep, rabbits, goats, and chickens. Home slaughtering and butchering, preserving fruits and vegetables, growing mushrooms, daily cooking—the “art of the commonplace”—draws them ever closer to their place near Kentucky’s Green and Barren Rivers. Berry’s ecocritical scholarship includes essays on Walter Inglis Anderson, Wendell Berry, Barbara Kingsolver, Anne LaBastille, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, and Annie Proulx. His recent over-indulgent gustatory research led to the publication of *The Kentucky Barbecue Book*.

Anne Cirella-Urrutia

Dr. Anne Cirella-Urrutia earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at the University of Texas in Austin in 1998 and a DEA degree in Anglophone Studies from University Paul Valéry in Montpellier, France in 1993. Her research on children’s literature and bande dessinée has appeared in international journals such as *Bookbird*, *Les Cahiers Robinson*, *Exemplaria*, *Revista Española de Estudios Norteamericanos*, *Mots Pluriels*, *ChLA Quarterly*, and *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*. An ecocritical essay on children’s author D. Mwankumi’s picture books appeared in *Aspects Ecocritiques de L’Imaginaire Africain* (2013). She published a chapter entitled “World War I in *Bande*

Dessinée: La Semaine de Suzette and the Birth of a Breton Heroine at War" in *Humor, Entertainment, and Popular Culture during World War I* (2015) and an essay entitled "Heroes and Heroines of the Great War: The Aesthetics of Horror in *Bandes Dessinées*" in *La Première Guerre mondiale dans la mémoire intellectuelle, littéraire et artistique des cultures européennes* (2013). Cirella-Urrutia wrote many book reviews for *ImageText Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *The French Review*, *Callaloo* and *L'Esprit Créateur*. An Adjunct Professor, Cirella-Urrutia has taught French at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas, since 2000.

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Dr. Caroline Durand-Rous is a *professeur agrégé*. She holds a Ph.D. in American literature entitled "Reinvented Totems: Exploring Identities and Rewriting Oneself in Contemporary Native American Fiction." Her research focuses on Native American novels and how ambivalent totemic figures offer guidance to characters in disarray on the path to the discovery of hybrid identities. She has published articles in *L'Atelier*, *Textes et Contextes*, and *Transatlantica*. She has participated in European conferences held by the AFEA, the AIW, and the EASLCE where she presented her analyses of Louise Erdrich's *The Painted Drum*, David Treuer's *The Translation of Dr. Apelles*, and Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*.

Stephen Greenfield

Dr. Stephen Greenfield earned a Ph.D. at the University of Wolverhampton. His work explores the application of labyrinthine approaches to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, and how they relate to ecological readings.

Catherine Hoffmann

Prof. Catherine Hoffmann, formerly Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Le Havre (France) and a participant in the joint project "Echoes of the Pastoral" (University of Poitiers and Orléans), now retired, has published essays on Dermot Healy in *Style* (43.3, Fall 2009) and the collective volume *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, under the title "Mister Psyche's Microcosmos" (Dalkey Archive Press, 2016). Her most recent essay, "Phatic, Polemical, and Metaleptic Addresses to Readers in William Gerhardie's *The Polyglots*," appeared in *The Rhetoric of Literary Communication* (Routledge, 2022).

David Latour

Dr. David Latour has been a certified teacher for several years. Since September 2015, he has been teaching English for special purposes in the Science Department at the University of Orléans, in Bachelor's degree and Master's degree. In December 2014, he defended his Ph.D. thesis on "H.D. Thoreau's Ecological Ethics" (supervisor, Gérard Hugues, Aix-Marseille University). In June 2010, he published an article entitled "Henry David Thoreau ou les rêveries écologiques d'un promeneur solitaire" in the on-line journal *E-LLA*. His research fields include Transcendentalism, Nature writing, eco-poetics, Environmental Studies, and Animal Rights Theories.

Margot Lauwers

Dr. Margot Lauwers holds a Ph.D. in American literature and ecofeminism from the University of Perpignan where she taught business English, English language, technical and literary translation, as well as American civilization for eight years. She has been an Assistant Editor for *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* since 2016 and currently works as a literary translator: she has completed the translation to French of Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (Wildprojects, Marseille, March 2020) and is in the process of finishing the translation to French of Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature the Roaring Inside Her* (Éditions Le Pommier, Paris, March 2020).

David Lloyd

Prof. David Lloyd directs the Creative Writing Program at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, USA. He is the author of nine books, including a novel, *Over the Line*, and his latest poetry collection, *Warriors*. His other books include two poetry collections—*The Everyday Apocalypse* and *The Gospel According to Frank*—and a fiction collection, *Boys: Stories* and a Novella. In 2000, he received the Poetry Society of America's Robert H. Winner Memorial Award, judged by W. D. Snodgrass. His articles, interviews, poems, and stories have appeared in numerous journals, including *Crab Orchard Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *TriQuarterly*.

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George Piggford

Prof. George Piggford, C.S.C., is professor of English at Stonehill College in Easton, MA. He has published work on American and British literature in *Christianity & Literature*, *Cultural Critique*, *English Studies in Canada*, *The Flannery O'Connor Review*, *Modern Drama*, and *Mosaic*, as well as in volumes such as *Through a Glass Darkly: Suffering, Sacred, and the Sublime* (Wilfred Laurier P, 2010), *Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (Catholic U of America P, 2017), and *The Hermeneutics of Hell* (Palgrave, 2017). In 2014 he was an NEH Summer Scholar at the Revisiting Flannery O'Connor Institute at Georgia College. In November of that year, he reflected on O'Connor and Teilhard de Chardin at the induction of O'Connor into the American Poets Corner at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. At Stonehill, he has been a Farmhouse Fellow, a position that provides scholars with space to read, write, and reflect at an organic farm committed to extending food access to nearby communities.

Peter Schulman

Prof. Peter Schulman is a Professor of French and International Studies at Old Dominion University. He is Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques and the author of *The Sunday of Fiction: The Modern French Eccentric* (Purdue

University Press, 2003) as well as *Le Dernier Livre du Siècle* (Romillat, 2001) with Mischa Zabotin. He has edited a critical edition of Jules Verne's *The Begum's Millions* (Wesleyan University Press, 2005) and recently translated Jules Verne's last novel *The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), as well as a meditation on waves by Marie Darrieussecq, *On Waves* (VVV editions, 2014); *Suburban Beauty* by poet Jacques Reda (VVV editions, 2009) and *Adamah* by Celine Zins (Gival Press, 2010). He is currently co-editor in chief of a new journal on eco-criticism, *Green Humanities* with Josh Weinstein (Virginia Wesleyan College), and has co-edited the following books: *The Marketing of Eros: Performance, Sexuality and Consumer Culture* (Die Blaue Eule, 2003); *Chasing Esther: Jewish Expressions of Cultural Difference* (Kol Katan Press, 2007) and *Rhine Crossings: France and German in Love and War* (SUNY Press, 2004).

Adrian Tait

Dr. Adrian Tait is an independent scholar and environmental critic. A long-standing member of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE-UKI), he has regularly published in its journal, *Green Letters*. He has also contributed to a number of other scholarly journals and to essay collections such as *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives* (2015), *Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Literary Ecologies* (2017), *Victorian Ecocriticism* (2017), and *Enchanted, Stereotyped, Civilized: Garden Narratives in Literature, Art and Film* (2018). He continues to explore the way in which nineteenth-century and early modern depictions of the environment anticipate but also challenge contemporary, ecocritical concerns.

Keiko Takioto Miller

Ms. Keiko Takioto Miller is an Assistant Professor of Japanese and French and the Director of Asian Studies Program at Mercyhurst University, Pennsylvania. She has been teaching Japanese language and culture at Mercyhurst College for 23 years, as well as volunteering in the community with English as a Second Language in Head Start, Literacy and Adult Education Programs throughout her career. Miller also is an active NPCA member.

Index

A

Abbas, Akbar, 153, 157, 160
Abram, David, xxv, 252, 260
Acharya, Samir, 35, 42
acoustic shadows, xxii, 150, 156,
159
Adair, John, 76, 81
Adam, Hans Christian, 144, 145
Adams, James, 145
Adamson, Joni, 30, 42, 46, 47, 49,
60, 61, 62
Ahrens, Jörn, 138, 143, 145
Alexander, Thomas M., 260
alienation from place, xxiii, xxiv
Allen, Paula Gunn, x, xi, xiii, xiv,
xxv, 46, 49, 63, 224, 238, 242
ancestral knowledge, xix
Anderson, John R., 247, 260
Andrews, Harry, 31, 42
Andrews, Mallory, 78, 79
anthropology, xx, 80, 81, 145, 200
Armstrong, John, 78, 79
Armstrong, Karen, 87, 97
Artress, Lauren, 90, 95, 97
Aufderheide, Patricia, 79
Augé, Marc, 136, 137, 139, 145,
157, 160
Avery, Gillian, 180

B

Bachelard, Gaston, xxii, 56, 62,
132, 135, 136, 143, 146, 253, 256,
260
balance, xi, xxi, 30, 31, 55, 67, 73,
105, 208, 236, 251, 254

Barad, Karen, 168, 172, 180
Barthélémy, Lambert, 146, 147
Barthes, Roland, 154, 155, 160
Baskin, Cyndy, 78, 79
Battista, Christine M., 147
Beattie, Keith, 69, 77, 79
being-to-the-world, xxii
Benedict XVI, 232, 239, 242
Bennett, Barbara, xv, xvi, xxvi
Bennett, Jane, xvii, xxiii, 172, 180
Bennett, Michael, 133, 146
Berkes, Fikret, 192, 199
Berry, Thomas, 224, 239, 240, 241,
242
Bevis, William, 52, 62, 177
bioregion, xxiv, 206
Bischof, Jackie, 158, 160
Blanc, Nathalie, 143, 146
Blessing, Jennifer, 153, 160, 161
Blunden, Edmund, 174, 180
Boardman, John, 169, 180
Boccaro, Laurence, 144, 146
body, xxiv, xxvi, 56, 57, 78, 136,
143, 163, 170, 171, 172, 187, 194,
204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210,
211, 212, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218,
219, 224, 228, 230, 237, 246, 251,
252, 254, 255, 258, 259, 265
body-mind embeddedness, xxvi
Boff, Leonardo, 224, 241, 242
Bosco, Mark, 241, 242, 243
Boudreau, Douglas L., 146
Boyden, Joseph, xx, 45, 47, 48, 49,
50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58,
59, 60, 61, 62
Boyles, Christina, 47, 63
Brady, Emily, 181

Brandon, James, 261
 Britain, 163, 174, 179, 186, 187,
 191, 196, 198, 201
 Bruchac, Joseph, 69, 70, 74, 78, 79
 Buell, Lawrence, 233, 242
 Bunn-Marcuse, Kathryn, 77, 79
 Burke, Edmund, 71, 79
 Burke, James Lee, 156, 157, 160
 Burns, Ken, 149, 151, 160

C

Calder-Marshall, Arthur, 77, 79
 Calloway, Colin G., 69, 79
 Campbell, Liam, 92, 98
 Carson, Rachael, 29, 38, 42, 244
 Caruso, Donna Laurent, 78, 79
 Cecil, Robert, 180
 Chafe, Wallace, 78, 79
 Chandi, Manish, 31, 42
 Chartier, Denis, 143, 146
 Christ, Carol P., xii, xiv
 Christian theology, xxiv
 Cocker, Mark, 163, 175, 178, 179,
 180, 191, 192, 200
 Cohen, Jean-Louis, 144, 146
 cosmogonies, xix
 cosmovision, 30
 Coupe, Laurence, 110, 111
 Coverley, Merlin, 180
 co-viability, xx
 Cowley, Jason, 186, 187, 197, 200
 Croft, Jo, 145, 147
 Cronin, Michael, 104, 111
 Cronon, William, 127, 189, 190,
 200
 Curtis, Edward S., 66, 67, 68, 71,
 77, 79, 80
 Cutter, Holland, 158, 160

D

Dabit, Eugène, 137, 145, 146
 Dacheux, Eric, 146
 Davis, Doug, 239, 242
 Davodeau, Etienne, xxii, 131, 132,
 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 142, 143,
 144, 146
 De Certeau, Michel, 136, 137, 138,
 146
 de Lubac, Henri, 231
 Delio, Ilia, 229, 240, 242
 Delisle, Guy, xxii, 71, 131, 132, 133,
 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 146
 Dennis, Helen May, 53, 63
 Descola, Philippe, 193, 200
 deserts, xviii, xxii
 Désveaux, Emmanuel, 51, 54, 63
 Diamond, Irene, xii, xiv
 Dobrin, Sidney, 146
 Dogen, 259, 260, 261
 dromology, xxii, 132, 138
 Duffy, Kathleen, 229, 243
 dwellings, xviii, xxii, xxiv, 41, 204,
 219, 220

E

Eagleton, Terry, 104, 111
 ecocriticism, xix, 33, 132, 133, 143,
 144
 ecofeminism, xii, 273
 eco-labyrinthicity, xxi
 ecoliterary creation, ix
 ecopoetics, xiv, 27, 28, 29, 183, 200
 ecosystem, xvii, 206, 215, 216, 234
 Ehrlich, Gretel, xxiii, xxiv, 203, 204,
 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212,
 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219,
 220
 Einstein, Albert, 254, 259, 260
 Elkins, Elizabeth, 155, 159

enchantment, xiii, xvii, xviii, xxvi,
32, 38, 41, 88, 137, 164, 178, 179,
183, 197, 203, 210, 219, 256, 257
entanglement, ix, xxii, 48, 61, 164,
168, 180
environmental humanities, 29,
168
environmental literature, 29
Erdrich, Louise, 47, 50, 52, 58, 60,
61, 63, 272
Evans, Brad, 243

F

Farley, Paul, 174, 180
felicitous homes, xxii
Feman Orenstein, Gloria, xii, xiv
Fenton, William N., 73
ferality, xxiii, 186, 197
Fielding, Julien R., 71, 80
Flaherty, Robert, 66, 67, 68, 77, 79,
81
Flanagan, Christine, 233, 243
Floquet, Pierre, 127
Francis, xxiii, xxiv, 223, 224, 225,
227, 232, 234, 235, 238, 239, 240,
241, 242, 243, 244
Francis of Assisi, xxiv, 223, 224,
238, 243
Fraser, Caroline, 260
Frawley, Oona, 104, 111
Freeman, Barbara M., 78, 80
Frost, Robert, 260

G

gardens, xviii, xxi, 101, 111
Gardiner, A. G., 175, 180
Garrard, Greg, 110, 111, 179, 180,
188, 190, 192, 193, 200
Gaudin, Antoine, 127
Geiger, Jeffrey, 77, 80

Gidley, Mick., 77, 80
Gifford, Terry, 110, 111, 187, 201
Gilbert, Bob, 176, 180
Ginsburg, Faye, 77, 80
Gladstone, Rick, 145, 146
Glotfelty, Cheryll, 27, 28, 42
Gomes, Mary E., 220
Gooch, Brad, 240, 243
Gracq, Julien, 101, 102, 111
Grahame, Kenneth, 164, 165, 167,
169, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 177,
178, 180
graphic novel, 132, 134, 138, 140,
141, 142, 143
Graybill, Mark S., 227, 240, 243
Green, Peter, 178, 180
Griffiths, Jay, xxiii, 185, 186, 190,
191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198,
199, 200
Grim, John, 240, 243
Groensteen, Thierry, 140, 146
Guiho, Mickaël, 144, 146

H

Haddock, Keith, 226, 243
haiku, xxv, 246, 248, 250, 252, 253,
254, 255, 257, 259
Halbwachs, Maurice, 159, 160
Harvey, David, 132, 197, 200
Hayward, Susan, 67, 80
Hazan, Eric, 144, 146
Healy, Dermot, xxi, 99, 100, 102,
104, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112
Heaney, Seamus, 100, 102, 110,
111
Heidegger, Martin, xxv, 246, 248,
250, 254, 257, 258, 260
Heider, Karl G., 77, 80
Heise, Ursula, 197, 200
Hewitt, J. N. B., 73, 80
Hoare, Philip, 197, 200

Hoffmann, Catherine, xxi, 110, 111, 273
 Hogan, Linda, xviii, xxvi, 47, 51, 62, 63, 77, 80, 193, 200, 203, 220, 256, 257, 260
 Hopkins, Gerard Manley, 231, 241, 242, 243
 Hopper, Keith, 100, 110, 111, 112
 Houle, Robert, 70, 78, 80
 Howarth, Jane, 181
 Hudson, W. H., 173
 Huggan, Graham, 29, 42
 Huggins, William, 60, 63
 human and non-human, xvii, 101, 138, 173, 186, 189, 197
 Hume, Angela, 185, 190, 200

I

indigenous, xii, xiii, xvii, xxiii, xxv, 28, 30, 32, 33, 38, 41, 46, 47, 50, 66, 76, 186, 189, 192, 194, 195, 248, 257
 Ingold, Timothy, xxv, 248, 250, 251, 260
 Ingraffea, Anthony R., 250, 260
 interpolated narratives, xix
 Into the Wild, xxi, 113, 127
 Iovino, Serenella, 33, 42, 168, 181
 islands, xix, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 41, 52, 57, 188, 189, 196

J

Jacquet, Frédérique, xxii, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 142, 143, 144, 146
 James, Deborah, 251, 260
 Jamie, Kathleen, xxiii, 175, 176, 177, 180, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 197, 198, 199, 200

Jefferies, Richard, 167, 169, 177, 178, 180
 Joad, C. E. M., 174, 175, 180
 Jobes, Gertrude, 90, 93, 94, 98
 John Paul II, 232, 235, 239, 241, 243
 Johnston, Basil, 62, 63

K

Kalant, Amelia, 72, 78, 80
Kanehsatake, xx, 66, 67, 70, 72, 75, 78
 Kanner, Allen D., 220
 Kavanagh, Patrick, 100, 104, 110, 112
 Keane, Garry, 110, 112
 Keene, Donald, 253, 255, 260
 Kern, Hermann, 98
 Kidd, Kenneth, 144, 146
 King, Thomas M., 238, 240, 243
 Kinney, Arthur, 228, 239, 243
 Kirwan, Padraig, 53, 63
 Kitcher, Patricia, 247, 248, 260
 Knickerbocker, Scott, xiv
 Kohn, Eduardo, 193, 200
 Krakauer, Jon, xxi, 127

L

Lake, Christina Bieber, 241, 243
 Langer, Monica, 246, 247, 251, 254, 259, 260
 Laprévotte, Gilles, 77, 78, 80
 Lasó y León, Esther, 146
 Lauwers, Margot, ix, xiv, xxvii, 273
 Le Thomas, Claire, 144, 147
 Lefebvre, Henri, 133, 134, 147
 Letcher, Andy, 98
 Leuthold, Steven, 65, 66, 69, 74, 76, 80
 Levin, David Michael, 258, 260

Lewis, Randolph, 70, 72, 78, 79, 80,
81, 160
Lilley, Deborah, 197, 200
Loft, Steve, 77, 78, 80
Lord of the rings, xxi, 85, 98, 273
Lortie, André, 144, 146
Love, Glen A., xv, xxvi
Lynch, Paul, 104, 112

M

Macfarlane, Robert, 171, 175, 176,
177, 179, 180, 187, 196, 200
Magee, Richard M., xviii, xxvii
magical realism, 46, 62, 63
Mai, Lin, 254, 260
Mann, Sally, xxii, 150, 151, 152,
153, 154, 155, 157, 159, 160, 161
margins, xxii
Marshall, Todd E., 252, 260
Martin, Jeff, 150, 155, 158, 159, 161
Marx, Leo, 241
Matamala, Anna, 260
material ecocriticism, xix, 33
Matthews, W.H., 91, 98
McCaffery, Steve, 98
McCandless, Christopher, xxi, 114
McCarthy, Dermot, 105, 106, 110,
112, 271
McElwain, Thomas, 73, 80
McKibben, Bill, 189, 200
Meillon, Bénédicte, vii, ix, xiv, xvii,
xxvi, xxvii, 62, 63, 199
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, xxv, 171,
246, 248, 260
Merriman, John, 144, 147
Messina, Debbie, 160, 161
metaphysics, xxv
Meteling, Arno, 138, 143, 145
Miller, Jennifer, 57, 63
Mohawk, xx, 71, 72, 74, 75, 78
Momaday, Scott, 53, 62, 63

Monani, Salma, 30, 42
Monbiot, George, xxiii, 185, 186,
195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200
Moran, Joe, 181
Morgan, Alun, 98
Morton, Timothy, 186, 197, 200
Mukherjee, Madhusree, 31, 32, 42
multi-layered memory, xxii
Murphy, Michael P., 240, 243
music, xxii, 92, 94, 153, 159, 169,
208
mythopoeic, xxiv

N

Nabokov, Peter, 70, 81
Naess, Arne, 172, 173, 181, 240
Nagle, P.G., 160, 161
Naht Hanh, Thich, 261
narratorial ecology, 99
Nash, Roderick Frazier, 77, 81
Native film, xx, 65, 66, 71
natural world, xvii, xxi, xxiii, 66,
67, 71, 74, 101, 164, 166, 187,
215, 224, 225, 230, 231, 233, 234,
235, 237, 238, 241
nature, xi, xiv, xv, xvii, xviii, xix, xx,
xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxv, 28, 29, 30, 31,
37, 40, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 58, 60,
66, 68, 69, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77,
88, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 101, 104,
110, 111, 122, 136, 142, 144, 155,
163, 165, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171,
172, 175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 186,
187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193,
194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200,
201, 204, 205, 209, 215, 216, 217,
218, 223, 224, 225, 227, 228, 230,
232, 233, 235, 236, 238, 239, 240,
241, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250,
251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 258,
259

nature writing, xi, xxii, 163, 171,
175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 186, 187,
188, 191, 196, 197, 198, 201, 209,
216, 236, 273
new nature writing, 164, 175, 176,
177, 178, 179
Newman, Andrew, 144, 147
Nodelman, Perry, 98
non-verbal communication, xxi
Nora, Pierre, 150, 159, 161

O

O'Connell, Gerard, 241, 243
O'Connor, Flannery, xxiv, xxv, 223,
224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230,
231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237,
238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244,
274
O'Hagan, Sean, 106, 107, 112
Obomsawin, Alanis, xx, 66, 70, 71,
72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81
Olivarez, Vanessa, 159
onirism, xix
Opperman, Serpil, 181
Osborne, Gillian, 185, 200
Owen, Louis, 63

P

palimpsestic land, xxii
Pan, xxiii, 167, 169, 170, 177, 181,
231, 241
Pandya, Vishvajit, 34, 35, 42
Papieau, Isabelle, 143, 147
Paquot, Thierry, 147
Parker, Andrew, 78, 81
Parker, Arthur C., 73, 81
pastoral, xxi, 100, 101, 104, 108,
110, 154, 164, 166, 169, 179, 196
Paterson, Matthew, 181
Paul VI, 240, 244

Pearsall, Ronald, 175, 181
Perrot, Jean, 144, 147
Persels, Jeff, 147
Pertile, Lino, 239, 244
phenomenology, 251
photography, 151, 154, 155, 160
Piggford, George, xxiv, xxv, 223,
239, 241, 244, 274
Plaskow, Judith, xii, xiv
Pleven, Bertrand, 127
Plumwood, Val, 172, 176, 181
poiesis, ix, xviii
Polynesian myths, xix
Posthumus, Stéphanie, 147
Powys, John Cowper, 165, 175, 181
Pratt, Vernon, 181
Prince, Nathalie, 144, 147
prose ecopoetics, xxiii
Pughe, Thomas, 146

R

Raguet-Bouvard, Christine, 64
Raheja, Michelle H., 73, 76, 79, 81
Rancière, Jacques, 106, 112
Rash, Ron, 203, 220
Redhead, Robin, 78, 81
Reed Doob, Penelope, 98
re-enchantment, xix, xxiv, 28, 29,
30, 34, 60, 136, 224
Rhys, Ernest, 168, 181
Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette, 50, 53,
60, 63
road vagabondage, xxii
Roche, Thierry, 78, 80
Rony, Fatimah Tobing, 68, 81
Roszak, Theodore, 220
Rotha, Paul, 77, 81

S

Sadowski, Ryszard, 238, 244

Saltzman, Lisa, 154, 161
 Sartre, J., 254, 261
 Scheid, Daniel P., 228, 229, 240, 244
 Schneider, Greice, 147
 Searle, G. R., 170, 181
 Sekhsaria, Pankaj, xix, 27, 28, 30,
 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39,
 40, 41, 42, 43
 sense of place, xviii, xix, 53, 102,
 110, 133, 142, 143
 Shaner, David. E, 261
 Shirane, Haruo, 246, 255, 256, 257,
 261
 Shklovsky, Victor, 188, 191, 200
 short story, xxiv, xxv, 110, 225
 Sidgwick, A. H., 170, 171, 177, 181
 Silko, Leslie Marmon, ix, x, xiv, 53,
 60, 62, 63, 76, 77, 81
 Silverman, Sue William, xxiv, 204,
 220
 Singer, Beverly R., 69, 77, 81
 Skinner, Jonathan, 28, 41, 43
 Slicer, Deborah, xxiv, 204, 205, 206,
 221
 Slouka, Mark, 149, 161
 Slovic, Scott, 127, 221, 234, 244
 Smith, Gerry, 145, 147
 Solnit, Rebecca, 181
 Soper, Kate, 101, 112
 Spirn, Anne Whiston, 215, 221
 Srigley, Susan, 239, 244
 St. John, Donald P., 239, 244
 Stenning, Anna, 187, 201
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 164, 166,
 167, 168, 169, 170, 173, 175, 178,
 181
 Stibbe, Arran, 93, 98
 storytelling, x, xi, xvi, xviii, xx, 49,
 53, 69, 70, 78
 storyweaving, xviii
 Sturluson, Snorri, 94, 98
 Sullivan, Marnie L., 146

survivance, xx, 61
 Swimme, Brian, xii, xiii, xiv
 Symmons Roberts, Michael, 174,
 180

T

Tally, Robert T. Jr., 132, 143, 147
 Teague, David W., 133, 146
 Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, xxiv,
 224, 227, 232, 240, 242, 243, 244,
 274
 Thieme, John, 30, 43
 Thiltges, Sébastian, 144, 147
 Thoreau, Henry David, xxii, 114,
 118, 120, 127, 177, 209, 216, 221,
 234, 242, 273
 Tiffin, Helen, 29, 42
 time and space, xxiii, 29, 100, 133,
 142
 Tolkien, J.R.R., xxi, 87, 88, 91, 92,
 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 273
 Tooker, Elizabeth, 78, 81
 trauma and healing, xxiii
 Treuer, David, 52, 53, 57, 58, 63,
 272
 Trevelyan, George Macaulay, 164,
 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 177, 181
 Trotman, Nat, 153, 160, 161
 Turner, Victor, 57, 58, 63

V

Valaskakis, Gail Guthrie, 78, 81
 Vande Brake, Timothy R., 230, 244
 Virilio, Paul, xxii, 132, 138, 139,
 144, 147, 174
 Vizenor, Gerald, xx, 61, 64, 76, 81

W

Waal, Frans de, 193, 201

- Warren, William Whipple, 62, 64
water, xix, 37, 40, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52,
53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61,
62, 72, 94, 102, 109, 127, 187,
192, 207, 208, 209, 212, 214, 216,
235, 236, 237, 246, 250, 256, 268
Watkins, Steven R., 240, 244
Westling, Louise, 225, 244
Westphall, Bertrand, 132, 143, 147
Whiteside, Kerry, 143, 147
wildness, xxi, xxii, 176, 186, 190,
191, 192, 195, 197, 198, 199
Williams, Florence, 195, 201
Williams, Philip Lee, xxiv, 204, 205,
221
Williams, Robert A., 73, 81
Williams, Terry Tempest, xxiv, 204,
205, 208, 221
Winter, Deborah DuNann, 221
Wohlleben, Peter, 193, 201
Wood, Houston, 75, 81
Woodward, C. Vann, 233, 244
Worth, Sol, 76, 81
Wright, Craig, 91, 92, 98
Wurst, Gayle, 50, 64
Wynne, Hilary, 93, 98
Wyss, Hilary E., 47, 63
- Y**
- Younes, Chris, 143, 147, 148
Ywahoo, Dhyani, xiii, xiv