

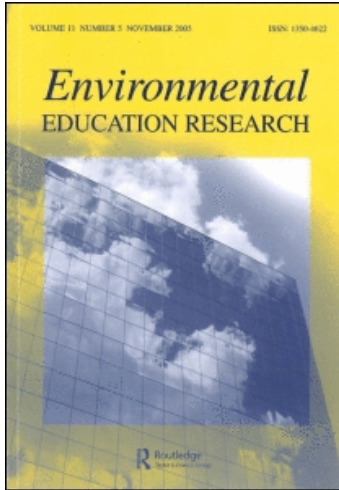
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Openings for researching environment and place in children's literature: ecologies, potentials, realities and challenges

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ENDPIECE

Openings for researching environment and place in children's literature: ecologies, potentials, realities and challenges

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This not quite 'final' ending of this special issue of *Environmental Education Research* traces a series of hopeful, if somewhat difficult and at times challenging, openings for researching experiences of environment and place through children's literature. In the first instance, we draw inspiration from the contributors who have authored, often autoethnographically, some of the art and craft of their respective ecopedagogies and research efforts. We then proceed with a reminder of the lurking presence of fear found in some of the articles published here and elsewhere, opening up the fear factor at large in broader everyday, social, political and global discourses to further scrutiny and a more optimistic quest when engaging children's literature, its risks and its hopes. Our aim here, as noted in the Editorial, is to develop the discourse and practice of environmental education research in this area. Thus, we also explore how children's literature has a pedagogical place in the positive social construction of intergenerational ethics focusing on how and what, and in what ways, textual and visual messages can be passed on to that next generation, and how and what they might take up creatively and imaginatively, in practice and conceptually. To do this, we offer thoughts on how children's literature might draw selectively from broader aspects of the eco-literature and humanities, and finally, on the basis of this collection, present a series of possible research issues and further deliberations to broadly nurture the development of research in this area.

Keywords: children's literature; hope; fear; risk; ecoliteracy; environmental rhetoric; ecocomposition; ecopoetics; ecocriticism; environmental criticism; unreal

Not quite once upon a time

I have argued that it is through narrative that we create and re-create selfhood, that self is a product of our telling and not some essence to be delved for in the recesses of subjectivity. There is now evidence that if we lacked the capacity to make stories about ourselves, there would be no such thing as selfhood.

Dysnarrativa, a severe [neurological] impairment in the ability to tell or understand stories ... is deadly for selfhood ... The construction of selfhood, it seems, cannot proceed without a capacity to narrate.

Once we are equipped with that capacity, we can produce a selfhood that joins with others, that permits us to hark back selectively to our past while shaping ourselves for

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the possibilities of an imagined future. We gain the self-told narratives that make and remake our selves from the culture in which we live. However much we may rely on a functioning brain to achieve our selfhood, we are virtually from the start expressions of the culture that nurtures us. And culture itself is a dialectic, replete with alternative narratives about what self is or might be. The stories we tell to create ourselves reflect that dialectic. (Jerome Bruner 2002, 85–7)

In this final article we revisit the themes of our Editorial and relocate the thrust of the special issue into a broader ecoculturally informed sweep about children, their experiences and literature, to open up questions about how we understand and research what (in)forms and shapes these aspects to their lives and education. In the first instance, we note that the collection raises a series of questions about our critical awareness of where stories for environmental education come from and how these stories are created, drawn on and contested, in or as an environmental education through work with children's literature. Thus, after Bruner, researchers, teachers and activists in this field might inquire as to how narratives, stories, ecologies and culture serve to enframe the discourses of environment, place and nature in educational settings, and how each are inflected therein: that is, how they provide both the *context* and *text* for a socio-ecologically grained selfhood engaged through and by the possibilities of environmental education.

Earlier work, as typified by Paul Hart (2002, 143) in relation to the narratives and lives of environmental educators, has argued that:

According to Bruner (1990) narrative sensibility involves knowing and recognizing our own stories within the myths, folklore, and histories of our culture. As frames for our identity, narrative inquiry entails finding a place within one's culture. The challenge is one of becoming conscious and critically reflective (about, for example, how environmental education fits or differs from other curriculum goals and purposes). The challenge is to recognize the beguiling nature of narrative inquiry as a window into consciousness because it may merely be a mirror to our own. Narrative is as much a way of knowing ourselves as a way of organizing and communicating the experience of others. In our environmental education inquiries we came to see value in some form of intersubjective debate as essential to communication of other people's narratives about who we are, what we believe and why we follow one course of inquiry rather than another.

Yet for Hart as for us, whilst important, auto-ethnographic and narrative inquiries remain but one option and priority, and limited at that if we do not attend more deeply to probing what constitutes an 'eco' dimension to stories and selfhood and its claims on our literatures and lives. Indeed, given the context of a special issue, existing scholarly work as represented in two earlier special issues of this journal by Barratt Hacking and Barratt (2007)¹ and Rickinson (2001) might also inform such deliberations. In this case, both special issues raise important challenges about engaging children's lives and research issues around their voice, participation and environmental learning. However, we note that neither directly considers the role of narrative, story or literature to their review of research: the 'neuro-' and 'eco-logical' and hence arguably somaesthetic importance of which is signalled by Bruner above and by Young and Saver (2001, 72) as follows:

Narrative is the inescapable frame of human experience. While we can be trained to think in geometrical shapes, patterns of sounds, poetry, movement, syllogisms, what predominates or fundamentally constitutes our consciousness is the understanding of

self and world in story. Not only our texts, but also our lives, gain meaning only through narrative-motivated words, words that acts as a story with a coherent sense of wholeness bound to a beginning, middle and end, as a series of events situated diachronically and with referential specificity, wrapped together by a governing sense of consequence or logic, enacted by agents, and structured by a discourse that defines a point of view.

Hart's work is known in this field for its exploration and examination of the import of such understandings to the field's research and practice, and particularly to epistemologies, methodologies and ontologies (e.g., Hart 2008). He notes the importance of an active, empowering and reflexive engagement with the demands of story-telling, story-making and story-reworking, alongside their dialectics and challenges in terms of experiential bases, writing (Hart 2002, 147):

To act is to theorize, says Pagano (1991). I cannot describe my day or a moment in my classroom without recourse to intentions or assumptions. We act in ways that reflect our beliefs about the way the world works. Teachers' theories are stories about the kind of world we want to live in and about what we need to do (with children) to make that world ... My stories reveal my values and attitudes, my sense of my cares and responsibilities, whether as teacher or as researcher. To know ourselves then becomes a teacher's or a researcher's primary obligation. Education is meant to change people, as is research; not through colonizing their consciousness but by bringing them to a place where they can go on to make up their own stories (Pagano 1991).

Thus, if we are to build upon notions of 'teachers as researchers' and 'children as researchers' or involving children and adults collaboratively in research (Barratt Hacking, Cutter-Mackenzie, and Barratt, forthcoming; Fielding 2004; Kellett 2005), we will need to consider not just recent stories and storyings, but theories and theorizings of environmental learning (e.g., Dillon 2003; Rickinson, Lundholm, and Hopwood 2010). These include engaging how they relate to the significance of certain childhood experiences, framings and voices in growing up and as possible pathways to environmental action (e.g., Chawla 2002), to issues of intergenerational learning (e.g., Ballantyne, Fien, and Packer 2001) and their eco-ethico-political qualities, to the recent neglect of family dynamics in understanding the possibilities and outcomes of ecopedagogies, including via children's literature and lifeworlds (e.g., Payne 2010a). Thus, while a number of contributions to this collection link the telling of and engaging with children's literature with experiencing place, we echo Barratt Hacking and Barratt's (2007) plea for a critical examination of childhood experiences of the environment and nature, and their links to significant life experiences, as well as to claims of positive learning and associated health and well-being benefits.

With such cautions in mind then, in this Endpiece we use a three-layered format to encourage the continuing of such 'conversations', where the very juxtaposition of the layers may lead to some novel, unexpected and non-linear unfoldings of this vitally important dimension of environmental education experience and its research. We also encourage wider discussion so that debate can be re-engaged (Robottom and Hart 1993) about an emerging 'body of knowledge' in environmental education research crucial to the inspirations, aspirations and fostering of an intergenerational ethic: children, meaning-making and the means and ends of that (e.g., literature), ecological types of experience and environmental learning (or eco'literacy'), and what shapes that end-in-view of a more positive sense of ecological being and becoming. As will become obvious

in the remainder of this article, this special issue somewhat distinctively incorporates an (eco)aesthetics into the various theorizations of environmental education as a curriculum and pedagogical practice, but it also deliberates on a range of ways that researchers might frame their inquiries, as eloquently and sometimes poetically envisioned and envired by many of our contributing author/researchers.

Finally, we understand environmental education and its research as having a reflexive warrant, to examine its own assumptions and progress, or lack thereof (Reid and Scott 2006). We remain intrigued by the open question of the value(s) and usefulness of research (Hart 2003), and in our drawing on Hart (2002), we note he has argued that in this context, we must learn (143):

to recognize stories for what they are – versions of reality that resonate with the community (or do not). In seeking to uncover and surface unconscious, incomplete, partially coherent, or implicit thoughts as narratives, we also learn how to help teachers do that for themselves, to accept critical appraisal, to rely on intersubjective and negotiated understandings that help us adhere to reasonable levels of trustworthiness.

Thus, while considerable attention in environmental education and its research is devoted to learning and teaching, to pedagogies and ecopedagogies, including the place of children's literature as demonstrated in this special issue, we feel it is appropriate but overdue that this warrant extends to relocating such developments towards a broader framing and thus the debating of scholarly inquiry that can offer a more comprehensive engagement of the field with new imaginaries (see, for example, McKenzie et al. 2009). In this regard, it interests us that Rishma Dunlop, who contributes a Primer entitled 'Alphabet for the New Republic' to the *Fields of green* (2009) collection, previously observed (Dunlop 2002, 33) at a conference on 'Telling Our Stories' in environmental education that:

Stories are theories, I tell my students, they are theories, opening up the scars of history, geography. Stories map us. Every work of research is in some sense a narrative, a fiction. Tell me your story and I will tell my own in new ways. I read you, reread you, see myself anew, retell our stories intertwined, tangled and the hallways of our ivory towers will breathe and pulse with the beating of hearts and wings and blood and apertures of hope.

A gap, or invisible, or missing in much previous work, as made clear in the focus of this special issue, is an 'aesthetics' that might sit as an equal partner with an ethics and politics of environmental education and its research, be that comfortably or uncomfortably. Thus, while we note that the 'larger' or 'harder' ethico-political dimension appears to have waxed and waned in some quarters of the discourse of environmental education research over the past two decades, inquiries as to the place of children's literature, conceived broadly, can make a valuable and useful contribution to making visible some aspects of such an elusive aesthetics and, as we see in a number of the contributions, gestures to an ethics or/and politics. Yet, we must still ask, has such work grappled with their interconnections, contradictions and possibilities, noting Jim Cheney's (2002, 89–90) observations at the Stories conference noted above, that:

A culture is best understood as a people enacting a story relating humans, nature and the sacred ... the basic contrast [is] between stories rooted in fear and stories rooted in trust ... I ask my students to try on the these stories by Leopold et al., to wear them for a while, see how they fit, see what differences they make to their perception and sense of being-in-the-world.

They are simply asked to live with the 'world' of the story, to live on its terms. This exercise makes it possible for students to read Leopold, Snyder, Berry and House as stories as lives lived – lives lived within larger lives, stories within larger stories – rather than as arguments in competition with one another.

But some stories are destructive, not conducive to ecosystemic health. The story that Western Culture whispers in our ears ... is that the world was made for man and man was destined to conquer and rule – a tragic scenario that excludes other stories and reduces a rich and varied ecosystem in the direction of monoculture. How do we evaluate stories? How do we tell good stories with (and about) our lives? How do we learn to tell comedic stories ... of the Earth and its human and other-than-human citizens?

How should we understand stories? They seem, many of them, to be at once descriptive and evaluative. They orient us, it seems, by telling us what our world is like and how we might be good citizens within it. They may seem to point to moral norms suggested by (or derivable from) presumably true (though storied) accounts of the world. Other stories ... seem to be merely prescriptive: they are simply storied forms of telling us what we ought to do.

In the three layers of interpretation and commentary about the contributions to this special issue that follow: first, we broadly consider how the discourse of fear perpetuated by a variety of media in the lives of the younger generation often overwhelms the positive nexus of risk and hope we think has an 'ir/real place' in children's environmental and place literatures, as found in the contributions to this collection. Then we consider how children's literature, as an emerging research question for environmental education, can partially be relocated, re'placed' and re-imagined in the broader development of the 'eco' in the humanities, literature and cultural studies, for example, in ecomposition, ecopoetics, ecoart and environmental criticism. And third, we derive from the contributions to this collection a range of hopefully compelling questions, illustrations and deliberations that might further engage the development of environmental education inquiries in these and associated areas.

The ecology of fear

The transition from a mechanistic to an organismic image of the earth and the accompanying shift in attention from the geosphere to the biosphere fundamentally alters the human perception of time upon which all definitions of human security are based. The linear time frame of geospheric politics will have to be bent into the cyclical loop of the biospheric processes. The notion of an ever-accelerating rate of production and consumption rushing into an open-ended cornucopic future has led us to the present environmental and economic crisis. In the name of progress, we have mortgaged our planet's future and made our children's world far less secure. Reorienting the time frame of human culture to make it compatible with the circadian, lunar, and circannual cycles of the biosphere will mean rethinking the most essential features of our temporal values. (Jeremy Rifkin 1991, 264–5)

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story. Thomas Berry (1990; cited in David Hicks 1998, 165)

New stories

It is far riskier to reposition children's literature, broadly defined as we have encouraged in this special issue, beyond matters of ecoliteracy and into, for example, an aesthetics whose momentum in the humanities, arts and cultural studies is being taken up in the burgeoning fields of environmental rhetoric, ecomposition (e.g., Killingsworth 2005), ecopoetics (e.g., Bate 2000; Brady 2003; Peters and Irwin 2002), ecocriticism (e.g., Garrard 2004; Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) and environmental criticism (e.g., Buell 1995, 2001, 2005). A spectrum of hope, fear and criticism can be found in these theoretical and/or conceptual vantage points from which the 'work' of environmental education research in relation to 'story' and 'image' in children's literature (and indeed others) can be found and deliberated about. In listing these newer scholarly vantage points that might be 'valuable' and 'useful' in emerging genres of inquiry (Hart 2003), we note here the legacy of the genre of nature writing that has made such an important intergenerational contribution to the notion of environmentalism and literature (see, for example, the Cheney

Children's literature and the realities of environmental education

We are living at the end of a story. That is to say the end of a period of history that had great attractions to it, although it also had an underside that we are only beginning to feel. But it's the end of the industrial story. That was our own invention as humans, and it is only one way that we have been in the world. We have to remind ourselves that we have only been in that period called modern-industrialism a short time. But in that short period of time, we have had a devastating impact in terms of how we have invented ourselves.

This technozoic story that we're living in is a terminal story, although it is glossed, in terms of advertising, as the direction we have to go. What is needed in that sense is a deep discernment, to be able to actually look through, and see through, that type of story. That is not a life-giving story and it is not an inspiring story ... I think that sense of a journey is important in terms of our stories, as part of a story about the journey of our lives. And so, in that way, I appreciate the stories that are actually fighting for the sense of the differentiation of the creativity of the universe in which we live in, the ones that express the deep sense of subjectivity. That is to say, the different types of interiority, and also the expanse of stories of communion – differentiated communion is so important – to have that kind of discernment, to move away from the things that do not do that,

Twenty years ago, in the *Wall Street Journal*, Stephen Hicks (1991) claimed that 'global problems are too big for little kids' (A20). While environmental education research and policy rhetoric sometimes position children as catalysts for change (Ballantyne, Connell, and Fien 1998), they often negate that this so-called empowerment is overwhelmingly fed by fear (adult fear). Children and young people appear to feel either disempowered and therefore disenfranchised, all the while being summoned or constructed by particular interests as 'planet savers' and 'earth warriors'. What are they being asked to do? Hicks (1991, A20) alleged:

If we want our six and seven year olds to be ready to deal with acid rain when their time comes, teach them now how to care for a 30-gallon aquarium ... If we want them to be in a position to handle the Saddam Hussein's of the world ... Do not ask them now what they would do if terrorists exploded chemicals weapons above their town or what we do if the food chain irreparably were damaged by pollution ... Frightened or apathetic children are not going to grow into the adults who will be able to solve the world's problems.

quotation in layer 1, cf. note 2). But while we suggest these newer 'eco' fields of theory about literature, narrative and image are, indeed, a renewed effort to legitimize the relationship between literary studies, environmental concerns and cultural production, most recent legitimizing efforts are truly adult concerns, as any cursory glance of the contents of the 'new' journals of ecopoetics and ecocriticism will reveal. Children, their cultures and their literatures (including Dobrin's reference in this issue to Ulmer's notion of networked 'elactracy') are absent from consideration. So too, is how story, telling and sensory/perceptual immersion can occur experientially in embodied ways in nature's places, as a number of contributors to this collection have described, explained or recommended.

Yet linking children's literature to deeper understandings of, for example, ecomposition, ecodrama, ecopoetics, ecoart or environmental criticism is a risk-taking venture we feel is worth recommending for two basic and interrelated reasons. First, environmental education research must face the challenge of developing a credible literature base and, perhaps more discerningly, establishing bodies

and move toward those things that make life joyful and beautiful. (Ed O'Sullivan in Bob Jickling et al. 2002, 286–7)

Our society has become a recited society, in three senses; it is defined by *stories* (*recits*, the fables constituted by our advertising and informational media), by *citations* of stories, and by the interminable *recitation* of stories. (Michel de Certeau 1984, 186)

A key point of departure in our Editorial was to illustrate some of the everyday and possible experiences and realities of children's literature. Throughout this collection, and the different layers of this Endpiece, we have continued that work. Yet while other contributions to this special issue have hinted at it (Bigger and Webb, Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie, Dobrin, Morgan, Sloane), it is Payne who most directly highlights how the 'irreal's' entanglements with 'reality' might have significant value to our ongoing deliberations about environmental education practice, theory and research. Irreality is a notion that alerts us to the not quite reality of what we take to be real and the reality of that we take to be non- or unreal.³ It affords a reopening to questions of the (pre?)supposed realism, and hence stability and multiplicity, of environmental

How much has changed since the 1990s? We can fairly confidently state that today's children have many hopes, fears, uncertainties and, often, boundless optimism worth preserving despite the cultures and discourses of fear that dominate in the everyday. Children's environmental fears are all too often characterized by popular media as soaring with an environmental apocalypse (Garrard 2004) described elsewhere as the 'new bogeyman' [sic] of the twenty-first century (Chua 2009). Research about children's fears is inconclusive but death, illness, spiders, snakes and being invaded/bombed are included in many children's lists of most common fears (Muris et al. 1997; Ollendick and Yang 1996; Salcuni et al.

of knowledge that foster a greater degree of 'insightfulness' on a range of thematic or applied fronts (Gray-MacDonald and Selby 2008; Reid 2009). Near and dear to many of us, pedagogy – better still, ecopedagogy, for want of shifting to a more discerningly ecocentric disposition informing the learning transaction between adult teacher and child learner (and their environments and places) – is one such thematic orientation, noting the Greek term paidagogeō emphasized the art and craft of teaching, or leading of young children (boys only, sic). We might ask what is the artfulness of the craft of pedagogy? An aesthetic is, at least, implied but now perhaps forgotten as pedagogy becomes more of a technical enterprise driven by outcomes and measurable standards of rationality, literacy and numeracy, increasingly driven and mediated by the technologies of globalization and abstraction. A challenge we see coming out of the above, and the new theoretical vantage points listed earlier, is the invitation to revisit,

education and its imaginaries more broadly, and not just as confined to the special place of children's literature. In this regard, modernity with its various commitments and admonishments has been seen as a kind of victory for realism – and more often than not for naive rather than critical forms in environmental education (e.g. Hart 2005; McKenzie 2005). Put sharply, when operating in a realist genre only, educators risk proceeding with an unwitting collapsing of the senses and the sense that might be made in and through this particular version of environmental education (Reid 2003).

Put otherwise, our point about the elision of the ir/real is that literature and its musterings highlight how a reader can be amenable to a beyond oneself experience including to other-than-human nature. As a (public) text, children's literature might thus be understood as a fictive vehicle for communicating as well as contesting a 'true(r?) reality' beyond its material manifestations and representational capacities. This irreality necessarily invites further considerations of mediations (e.g., processes and practices of visualizing, cajoling, revealing and informing) as well as the specific attitude and status of a suspension of disbelief that is commonly supposed in our encounters with literature. In short, a mediation shouldn't go unnoticed, nor is the suspension automatic. Equally, neither should be regarded simplistically, particularly given the profound nature and enchanting possibilities that may be afforded by our experiences of reading and writing.

Furthermore, rather than perhaps assume in this field that education is a relatively transparent representation or mirror of reality itself through its various curriculum selections and the experiences and capabilities environmental education fosters (see Hardy 2006), if we acknowledge that education works as a medium too we might then ask, what of its particular role as an 'illusion of reality' in its various and specific

2009). Yet, a looming environmental crisis is not widely, let alone universally, identified. It appears that two different stories are being told. The first positions the child in an ecology (or imaginary) of fear. The second is more focused on the internal workings of the child and a fear of their ecology (biophobia). In any case, real or imagined, fear appears omnipresent in the minds of the young.

According to Greg Garrard (2004), there are clear challenges and risks of advocating some ecocritical approaches to literature in lieu of others, particularly when we trace their logics. For instance, he suggests (2004, 71–2):

carefully consider and reimagine the pedagogical (and research) art and craft of the stories we 'tell' to the next generation and each other.

Second, there exists the closely related challenge for environmental educators and researchers that by drawing from the outside in on stories about and notions of ecocomposition, ecocriticism and ecopoetics that those, potentially, 'harder-to-reach' varieties of theory, research and discourse might enrich, enliven and extend current framings of and research about ecoliteracy and its formation as an interdisciplinary 'end-in-view' focus of ecopedagogical development and scholarly inquiry. Conversely, as indicated, research already undertaken on the inside of environmental education about children's environmental voice, learning, experience and budding ecoliteracies should reciprocally inform emerging notions of ecocomposition, ecopoetics and ecocriticism so as to intervene early, qualify, resist or avoid the downloading

affordances and potentialities (Sloane 2010)? Arguably no matter what the public and private 'aspirations', 'ceremonies' and 'rituals' of authoring and reading children's ecoliterature are as 'an education', in light of this special issue they along with the texts themselves no longer need to be the primary objects or ends of inquiry. Rather we might do better to embrace questions as to how an experience of literature serves to reconfigure or even transform the wider social–ecological–cultural relations with which embodied selves do, can or might engage. Thus, not only are researches of the eco-experiences of children's literature a matter of investigating the possibilities for new knowledge and accommodation of that knowledge, but as an embodied, immersive, playful and engaged relation, opportunities to broach questions as to whether they are also about engendering new entities: reconfiguring social–ecological ontologies, transformed by and transforming the everyday (sometimes opaque) practices of both reading and producing children's books, stories and illustrations in this and related fields of practice and inquiry (Dobrin 2010).

To be clear, children's literature often supported by visual representations variously implies a *narrator and artist* (perhaps sometimes inarticulate or even painfully expressive?), *narrative and form* (perhaps compelling, novel, hackneyed ...?) as well as a *recipient of the narration and imagery* (perhaps amenable or obdurate, be they the child or adult co-reader?). Through its diegesis and mimesis, literature in general offers intrigues, descriptions, drama, discourse, ideologies, a refraction of the writer's or illustrator's lived experience, etc. But our point about the unreal is not to precipitate a rush to interpret particular children's literature in these terms alone, but to grapple further with the notion's 'eco-nomy' of mediated intimacies and presences, and of their effects. Thus, it may be to reposition the 'remarkability' of the imagination as

Deep ecology ... has conspired with some American ecocriticism to promote a poetics of authenticity for which wilderness is the touchstone. To critique this is not to argue for the abandonment of wilderness to the tender mercies of ranchers and developers, but to promote instead the poetics of responsibility that takes ecological science rather than pantheism as its guide. The choice between monolithic, ecocidal Modernism and reverential awe is a false dichotomy that ecocriticism can circumvent with a pragmatic and political orientation. The fundamental problem of responsibility is not what we humans are, nor how we can be better, more natural, primal or authentic, but what we do. Ecocriticism would not then be seeking a more truthful or enlightening discourse of nature, but a more effective rhetoric of transformation and assuagement.

of adult versions of 'environmentalism' that undoubtedly are part of the problem, as Hicks identified earlier in the Wall Street Journal.

With these hopes and risks in mind, we reiterate the call for papers for this special issue. It noted that while children's literature may afford some children their first significant contact with nature and animals, albeit vicariously and abstracted, it is still a formative influence. Thus, with a stake in enhancing the notion of ecopedagogy and ecoliteracy and their respectively undertheorized relation with (children's) literature, image and different types of networked and/or experientially embodied 'tellings' in places, some of the major ideas from these outside in vantage points merit engaging in ways that seek to advance that literature and environmental education research about and for it. There is not the space here to differentiate sharply between nature writing, environmental rhetoric, ecocomposition, ecopoetics and ecocriticism,

that of a structure that allows significations to take place (e.g., Payne and Wattchow 2009). And, when experiencing children's literature, to invite consideration as to what that might then imply about the lifeworlds of author and recipient of the text, ecocentrically viewed and otherwise: the immediate milieu of 'actors' and characters socio-ecologically, the affordances and limitations of the world of consciousness of N, as well as that of the constitution of communicative action, be that on the page, in the classroom or out in the field (see, for example, Sloane 2010).

Regarding education as an institution and setting for releasing the imagination, as Maxine Greene (2000) has observed, is but one well-known way of engaging these matters further. Another is to consider how an environmental education through the experiencing of children's literature serves to connote and express in a range of ways and evocations, through their images *and* words, because each can be 'gateways' to the imagination given their very power to (re)present. Thus, in our inquiries another potential point of departure may be to give attention to matters of the role of the unconscious and the symptomatic in constituting the lifeworld – not just our dispositions or learned habits of reading. Moreover, as Dobrin (2010) argues, an analytical hiatus to be avoided is disassociating word from image and image from word, e.g. in 'discourse analysis', particularly given the shifts in the 'technics' available to our 'green eyes'; put otherwise, the challenge is to reconcile rather than divorce an analysis of the complex jouissance of reading 'with' the (ir)real from that of the means of production of an ecoliteracy of reality, narrowly to broadly conceived.

Yet by a similar token, the irreal of environmental education might also be engaged via another route: that is, through recourse to a reckoning of our notions of the sublime. Doing so could invite consideration of whether this notion directly or

Notwithstanding the risks associated with conventional pedagogical approaches, is there then a more hopeful and imaginative prospect that education can contribute to rather than lapse into? According to David Sobel (1996), as with Hicks, much environmental education is developmentally inappropriate particularly with respect to young children. Where classrooms in a globalizing condition of education all too often focus on exotic and distant ecological environments (and their crisis-like threats) in unknown or nameless places/spaces, children become disassociated as a consequence of those environments and their ecologies' premature abstraction (Sobel 2008; cf. Payne 2010a). Like many others,

let alone how they might be reconfigured in children's cultures and environmental literatures (Dobson and Kidd 2004). Elements and characteristics of each and all can be found in the contributions to this collection but, overall, there still appears to be a lack of thematic coherence or sustained convergence on, potentially, the harder-to-reach varieties of theory such as that which can be found in, for example, the eclectic understandings of environmental criticism and environmental education that seems to stretch across the different vantage points mentioned above (see Buell 2005; Garrard 2010). Moreover, re-examining the links between children's story, literature, art, the discourses of environmental criticism and, for example, schooling, preservice teacher education, parenting or curriculum theory might add further credibility and, hence, legitimacy to different cues that can already be found in environmental education research; consequently, this commentary seeks to push some of the needed structures

should inform some of the concepts and experiences sought via the language, media and instantiations of environmental education. This is because it readily speaks to something of the realm of surprise, fascination, awe and astonishment that experiences of and 'epiphanies' via nature and its representations might, or are claimed, to afford. Thus, while an essential aspect of language theory is examining the conditions for its possibility to be intelligible and translatable, in *The critique of judgement*, Kant (1790/1987) argues against the common sense presumption that a sublime feeling comes from 'out there', as if the object (e.g., nature encountered) were prehensible without relation. Rather it is taken to suggest an index of a unique state of mind that recognizes its present incapacity to find expression adequate to the sublime feeling.

In that Payne's contribution argues for greater attention to how educators and learners engender an embodied and 'ecocentric sense of self' when faced with the unreal, including the role that pedagogical devices, structures, technologies and pedagogues play in this, similar interpretations and implications can be drawn from Dobrin's and Sloane's contributions (among others less directly). Revisiting this in relation to a Kantian interpretation of the sublime, such a feeling borne of a somaesthetic environmental education activity – such as journeying through and with Ingpen's (or Tolkien's) imaginative universe, as an extended case in this collection – may well serve to challenge one's existing understandings, language and competence in the need to make way for such imaginaries, since, as Payne notes, some do or may find them fundamentally unrepresentable or incomprehensible in their current terms.

How then might such a person – learner, reader, embodied self – proceed in this situation? Try, perhaps 'like a child', to find a way of making 'it' imitate what it refers to – e.g., via an onomatopoeia? Or should they, perhaps 'like an adult', try to

including Barratt Hacking and Barratt (2007), Sobel (1996, 10) argues that environmental education must allow children to ‘have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to learn to love it and feel comfortable in it, before being asked to heal its wounds’.

Although generally lacking in this collection, among those contributions where children’s voices are featured (Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie, Payne, Wason-Ellam), children tend not to be positioned as catalysts, warriors, saviours or even as ‘empowered’. Rather, they are positioned in individualized local contexts, engaging with and caring for their local places in imaginative,

identified by Lawrence Buell and by Dobrin (2010) and these are further elaborated below.

A snapshot of hope and risk! Ecomposition might pithily be described as an evolving refinement within the field of environmental rhetoric in that it shifts our attention and interest to the act of writing (or other modes, genres and styles of representation) which, in their own right, is an ecopedagogy (Bai et al. 2010) and, for example, can occur immersively in the places of its production (Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie 2010). We witnessed this in the ‘older’ genre of nature writing. Eco-poetics, too, is probably more phenomenological in nature in that it draws much of its inspiration from the (romantic) ‘lived’ experience of (sublime) nature but in doing so may also (less naively) signal critical and political concerns (for example, Bowerbank 1999), as ecocriticism more overtly tends to do (see Merchant 1995). Eco-poetics, it

domesticate ‘it’, grafting it onto another meaning, and in effect, create a hypertext? Or seek to engage ‘it’ or represent ‘it’ through arts-based or non-linguistic practices? Or, might this example actually offer another opening on to the ir/real of/in environmental education, and thus we might (once) again temporarily ‘suspend disbelief’ and see where that leads more widely (without shedding our longstanding critical and reflexive dispositions, of course). In effect, the latter option is to recognize once more that while we may not always be able to account for phenomena in and of themselves, we may still need to re-evaluate the principles and explanations that they have some bearing upon, particularly in adjudicating claims made that such and such an ‘eco-experience’ (via children’s literature) is singular or stand alone, unique or irrevocably valuable as a contribution to an environmental education worthy of the name.

Equally, we should note that positing an irreal as necessary to ways of remaining curious about the status of realism and rationality in environmental education and its research is always already but one approach to engaging the structures and mean(ing)s of the real in this area. Increasingly, wider scholarship has gone elsewhere, or further, tying these inquiries to notions of the imaginary and symbolic too. The ‘trialectic’ of real, imaginary and symbolic is quite familiar in structuralist and poststructuralist circles in their concerns with the connexions between writing, subjectivity and culture, as in the latter’s radical questioning of otherness and the subject–object relation (as befits a modernist epistemology), but also in how these are taken up and consolidated in pedagogies, such as in terms of the dispositions they seem to articulate or foreclose when engaging the ‘imaginings’ at work and play in a pedagogic field such as environmental education (e.g., Barrett 2008). And yet all this remains relatively unexplored in the Anglophone discourse of environmental education research (cf. the

awakened, critical, creative, embodied, playful and reflexive ways facilitated through children's literature. Children's literature provides an entry point, opening or address for environmental education where locally based stories and their visual and embodied accompaniments drive curriculum and pedagogy. This paints quite a different picture to that of Maslin's, as cited in Sobel (1996, 2):

The familiar old tales of ducks and bunnies may not have conveyed as many facts, but they were filled with whimsical possibilities that have no place in today's didactic children's literature. Bedtime stories of the past served the magical purpose of

must be pointed out, is not restricted to nature poetry or environmental poems. The Greek term poiesis connotes the artistic and poetic aim, as a process of 'making', and a form of 'bringing forth', 'cultivation and flowering' or 'blossoming' of the blossom. In education discourse, particularly the almost forgotten role of curriculum theory, there are distinct similarities with the notion of currere (Huebner 1999).

Within the contemporary mood of paidagogeio and currere, we are promoting ecopedagogically their aestheticized mirrors as derived from the contributions to this special issue. There are numerous mediums of the modern 'utopian' and/or postmodern 'imaginary' through which ecopoetics might bring forth a worldview different or other to those that dominate (Bai et al. 2010; Payne 2010b), noting Dobrin's (2010) double-edged play on the notion of 'greening'. Most contributions to this issue line up with ecocriticism, as both a form of analysis and critique of texts (e.g., Morgan),

Brazilian Journal of Environmental Education, volume 3, 2008, which makes strong use of these terms in exploring poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and vitalist theories for environmental education).⁴

Thus, if we proceed with this as some kind of budding 'momentum', given that such terms and their discourses have haunted Deleuze's and Guattari's work (e.g., Guattari 1989/2000), and find their way into those that Noel Gough (2006) amongst others has drawn on to inform a variety of 'post-...' studies in environmental education (less 'usual suspects' are included in Hardy 2002, 2006) – it may be timely to ask more serious questions about how reality is made necessary to our understandings and expectations of environmental education. Is it, in fact, regarded as a 'necessary fiction' in some quarters or instantiations of the field, as in when we consider a revitalized or reimagined role for children's literature and illustration in environmental education? Or, given contemporary debates such as the disputes about the social construction and mediation of climate change data, would these not suggest significant and wider warrant for re-examining our assumptions about the reality necessary to environmental education? In such cases, after or alongside Gough, Hardy and others, we might start by revisiting the logics and underpinnings that suppose environmental education must always have to represent 'Reality' – which, whose, on what terms, etc., are often deemed to be obvious starting questions (see Russell 2005; Russell and Dillon 2010, on how 'scientific' environmental education might (well/need to) be)?

To move closer to a Deleuzian project, this would require considering which figurations of *truth*, *reality*, *objectivity* and *subjectivity* are to hand in environmental education theory and practice, or for that matter, which prefigurations or configurations, if we were to (re)inflect it with strains of Ricoeur's work on narrative, in

stirring children's imagination conjuring up a world of endless possibilities and then leaving young readers pleasantly sleepy. Today's versions, sounding the alarm over our shrinking hopes and resources, may leave them exhausted.

The ecologically imaginative 'magic' and 'spell' (Abram 1996) that Sobel (1996, 2005, 2008) and Louv (2005), among others (see Bowers 1993, 1997; Gruenewald 2003), have claimed is lost in environmental education is arguably overstating the case given these and wider 'findings'. Yet, it might well serve to confirm another source of fear, or denial, in that such generalizations devalue children's everyday

assessment (e.g., Hug) and socio-cultural commentary (e.g., Wason-Ellam) for the messages they convey and, therefore, as a means of ethical and political commentary about the human sources of the environmentally problematic human condition as it is textually constructed in the literature and which might be used therefore to develop a sense of agency (e.g., Bigger and Webb). Sloane's contribution further opens up for inspection how we might aesthetically and politically consider the 'message' aimed to be conveyed by the role or place of the text and, presumably, the visual image. Ecocriticism, as it might be reimagined in children's ecoliteracy development will deal with the textual, literary and visual conceptions and constructions of, for instance, environmental racism that are indicated already in this collection and are informed by a range of critical approaches and perspectives, for example, poststructural ecofeminism, postcolonialism and feminism.

environmental education research (cf. Bigger and Webb 2010). Indeed, which analytical difference/s – fundamental to superficial – emerge, if we consider working on reality with children's literature, empirical datasets, experiential learning, etc., or some such blend of their 'material' in environmental education? Thus, we might find we can use this brief 'dérive' as a spur to a meta-question, *how has an environmental education become what it is such that people claim it and recognize it to be really so in their everyday life and practices?* Is it through the stories and realities their environmental education mobilizes, avails or contests? Through the 'materiality' it is argued to portend? Through the unconscious, abstracted or other such dimensions that are excluded? Through the reappreciations and confrontations of its totality and contexts – such as the interiors and outsides of environmental education, their dynamics and constitution? Arguably a Barthian-inspired reading of such matters in relation to Alun Morgan's interests in the *Lord of the Rings* would take this as an impetus to explore how a myth says what it says in the 'everyday' of environmental education and of its participants, including how this myth's inflexions distort and transform one's reality through its Middle-earth 'naturalizations'.⁵

Returning more directly to the thematics of the special issue, a clear implication of such possibilities and questions is to open up (once more) the matter of whether we presuppose language and experience are uniformly transparent (rather than opaque, differentiated ...) or arguably not yet fully understood or known in relation to their referents for this field (e.g., Stables 2004, 2006, 2007). Another might be to ask, whether the truth of literature as an art in environmental education should be predicated on verisimilitude rather than some other criteria (cf. Abram 1996) such as the

lived experiences. They invoke a sense of hopelessness when vision, alongside imagination and hope, are needed, mixed in with a bolder approach to risk-making and taking. As David Hicks (1998, 174) states (citing Richardson 1996), we need:

Stories – myths and folktales as well as true accounts – to help us hold the beginnings, middles and ends of our lives together. Without them we shall not have hope: yes, to lose stories is to lose hope, but conversely to construct and cherish stories is to maintain hope.

Not quite did they/we live happily ever after

Buell's (2005) non-closed take on the past, present and future of 'environmental criticism' and the role of literary imagination addresses a wide range of the above interests that, in sum, reflect an 'environmental turn' and opening in literary and cultural studies. Buell asserts that the notion of environmental criticism better conveys the hybridity and heterogenous foci of this turn as it has captured the diverse interests making up the interdisciplinary study of literature and environmental studies. He consistently links environmental criticism to the arts and the imagination. Buell traces the emergence of 'first wave' ecocriticism in the early 1990s and extracts or synthesizes three distinctive concerns of the turn as subsequent waves continue to the present and, undoubtedly, the future of the literary imagination. His three

irreal or even the 'sublime'? In such a vein, it might even be argued that a theory of environmental education in 'full flower' should be capable of opening up ways to changing the field's thinking and capacities and their dimensions, including their regularities of actions (and hence the field's techniques and technologies). Doing so, it appears, would require ensuring a fuller range and quality of contributions are appraised when adjudicating the contributions that experiences of environmental education might make to social-ecological life, in that inquiries would require attention to a wider range of factors, concerns and priorities that have demonstrable traction within and across the spheres of 'imagination, symbol, and real'.

Yet it would also appear that such provocations are only comprehensible and actionable if we are prepared to discuss the various strategies and tactics we use to 'sail close(r)' to reality in environmental education. To secure ontological purchase here might well require a moving on from some realities, so to speak, breaking their chains, binds, and hold ... seeking out the 'grounds' and conditions for new leases of life, for generative (and not just performative gestures at) theory and theorizing in the field. We can recognize that the goal of much work under the banner of decolonization in environmental education has been an attempt to do just that, as exemplified in a range of contributions to this collection about its possible role and place in working with children's literature. The decolonizer's aims are historically and contextually attentive: to dismantle the assumptions and apparatus that prevent an indigenous people speaking for itself. For environmental educators, it amounts to a plea to refuse and resist colonized peoples being spoken for and represented by a more powerful hegemonic Other that proceeds as if that other is more rational, reasonable and

Ecology of hope

Collectively, the articles in the special issue have featured teachers', parents', researchers' and children's voices, to varying extents. Yet, often reflected in these voices are stories of hope, their challenges, and not simply their achievement. In particular, Bai et al. have reflected on their collective experience as teachers, researchers, parents and children. They identify *biophilia* as fundamental to an environmental education and, in so doing, attempt to unravel the complex relationship between *biophilia* and *bibliophilia* through a process of indwelling. This resonates with Bigger and Webb's article which explored the

concerns are glimpsed, partially, in the various contributions to this collection. The first abiding concern of environmental criticism is its investment in the literature with issues of environmental imaging and representation. Second, its interest in the reconceiving of 'place' as a fundamental dimension of art and lived experience. Third, its strong ethical and/or political commitment.

Titled 'environmental criticism's future', Buell's (2005) final chapter provides a cue for this ends-in-view piece, noting Buell wanted to open that future up for discussion rather than close it down. In his preceding chapter on the ethics and politics of environmental criticism, Buell observed the most discernible trend in North American environmental criticism was towards environmental justice but from within a shift to a sociocentric perspective.² Elements of this trend to justice can be found in Wason-ellam (2010), Korteweg, Gonzalez, and Guillet (2010) and Morgan (2010). Any hint

enlightened than those silenced by the processes and outcomes of colonization. On the one hand, removing the 'coordinates' that allow for superiority to be presumed, and on the other, challenging the biases that are implicit in what passes as accepted wisdom and the essential truths and realities of environmental education, are all part and parcel of achieving such decolonization, as Korteweg, Gonzalez and Guillet argue in their article.⁶

Likewise, those proceeding to argue that ideas in science about nature are not somehow automatically 'objective' – in fact, the stories science tells are often those it wants to tell itself, as Donna Haraway (1994) forcefully puts it – serves to articulate the claim that story-telling about nature in a science-based environmental education may be such that it positions nature in ways that do harm: to the constituents of ecology and culture, our mental furniture as well as our experiences of embodiment, and their interrelations given our immediate context for discussion (cf. Hug 2010; Payne 2010b). Nature as (always?) the abstracted, unreal, untamed other in feminine guise; the metaphorically realist/material comforting Mother Earth; the inscrutable object that must ceaselessly be investigated to yield its secrets and essence; the text to be read in the code of mathematics and biomedicine; and so forth, have been widely critiqued in feminist and post-informed scholarship (see Garrard 2004 for an engaging survey). Certainly, the oppressions environmental educators and learners may confront in working with literature may not simply be those that relate to colonization but also extend to questions of gender, age, ableness, sexualities, ethnicity and cultural predominances (cf. Garrard 2010). As Hug illustrates, with environmental education being so often predicated on or/and subtended by Western-based notions of science

role that teachers and parents play in encouraging deep and critical discussion about environment and place with children via literature. Central to these articles and others in the special issue (Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie, Hug, Korteweg, Gonzalez, and Guillet, Payne, Wason-Ellam) is a paramount focus on 'the local'. In other words, stories of hope are *placed* ecologically, as Wason-Ellam demonstrates in her account of a Year 3 teacher engaging her prairie class with the picture book, 'If you're not from the Prairie' (Boughard and Ripplinger 1993).

Wason-Ellam has also emphasized that this apparently nostalgic text captures a prairie or rural lifestyle which is all too often characterized (and

that this trend is generalizable or transferable must be treated cautiously though, noting the various cultural and regional views about nature, the national differences in which literary histories are constructed and traditions exist, as also with children's cultures and, for the immediate critical purposes here, reconceptualized approaches in education to 'ecoliteracy', as well as the availability and accessibility in the academy of resource bases supporting, or denying, environmental criticism and environmental education research.

Buell's (2005, 128) 'futures' identify four basic challenges that are paraphrased below and partially contextualized via this special issue in opening up the possibilities for environmental education research, children's literature and environmental education. First, the challenge of organization. This collection is a first for the field in that it thematically draws our attention to children's literature but

and its stories about nature, the acts of appraising and then tackling the tropes and narratives articulated in environmental (science) learning and texts may well become points of departure for many educators, but we would argue they may also lead to other queries: concerning the symbolic and imaginative powers and projects of the field's groundings, discourses and narrativizations, including how these might be taken up and challenged by teachers and teacher educators in the experiences they frame and encourage (see Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie 2010).

For Korteweg, Gonzalez and Guillet (2010), doing such work entails a difficult but necessary process of decolonizing our narratives and the realities they speak of or to, including those associated with using and experiencing children's literature in environmental education. As Elsie Cloete (forthcoming) argues in *Environmental Education Research*, the very construction and emplacement of historic English terms like 'animal', 'bush' and 'game' in conservation institutions and practices in Southern Africa has inscribed much of the environmental education there with a set of theoretical and ideological assumptions that have profound political, pedagogical and ontological implications for the status of local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and experience in that region (see also Shava et al. forthcoming). Scholarship though is but one avenue, activism another. How (else) might these be furthered or reconceived in the research field?

If we consider the production of this collection, the first draft of Wason-Ellam's article drew on the notion of creating 'a pictorial atlas of the world'. The children in her study are from different backgrounds and work with a diverse set of expectations and articulations that frame locally based knowledge and ways of knowing; in this

thus dismissed) as simple. The book jolts such assumptions, deeply focusing on the primordial power and cycles of nature – the elementals of wind, the sky, the snow, the sun. It affirms the evocative strength and somaesthetic significance of embodied meaning-making (Shusterman 2008) of a locally based curriculum in which carefully considered and emplaced ecopedagogies might flourish, all the while governments (worldwide) (for example, UNESCO 2004) push a globalized curriculum that is largely placeless and perhaps even baseless (in as much as its ability to produce/prepare an ecoliterate population).

in so doing is partially attentive to the earlier environmental education research literature mentioned in the introduction above that has consistently but eclectically over the past decade or so focused on children, learning, significant experiences, voice, narrative, story, ways of knowing/thinking and pedagogy. This special issue may inspire further research along the lines of, or otherwise to, the limited number of contributions appearing here, but extend to reviews that bring that existing eclecticism into a more useful frame of understanding about children's ecoliteracy and its formative processes and developments through the idea of ecopedagogy.

Second, Buell (2005) identifies the challenge of professional legitimation. While children's literature has always enjoyed a reasonable status in, for example, pre-service teacher education in Australia (from where two of us usually write), research

instance, to foreground those from Indigenous, scientific, artistic, and migrant communities. While the title and focus of Wason-Ellam's paper has shifted considerably during the preparation of this collection, we might also note that in Michel Serres' stimulating work (2006) on the philosophy and history of science and on the significance of narrative to both, he too has discussed the atlas as metaphoric, arguing that the communication it embodies and facilitates may enable a 'voyaging' that renders purported or real boundaries quite permeable.

Serres has made similar observations about the Harlequin and the angel as metaphors to speak of an ir/reality that is not universally or continuously experienced. In the particular case of an atlas though, as one creates horizontal connections between North and South, local and global, we can readily appreciate how utterly diverse spatially distributed elements might be brought together in 'non-hierarchical' structures and relations on the pages of a book. In so doing, the atlas (via our workings with its 'pictures' and 'words') can help displace a sense of isolation, marginality or absolute Otherness.⁷ Likewise, translating, telling and hearing stories from one language to another's can bring diverse cultures face to face, be that on paper or aurally: both modes offer means of travelling across or between different domains, planes and even realities (a set of terms more widely discussed in Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2004; cf. Gough 2006; Law and Mol 2008). Thus, it is with these idea(l)s and practices as priorities for narrative-informed approaches, accompanied by an eschewing of assumptions of an essentially hermetic or homogeneous field of experience (in life or inquiry), that we might be enabled to continue to explore questions not just of the 'other and otherness' of a field but of the 'inter' in our understandings and analysis of the ir/realities

Yet at the same time that Hicks (1991), among others, was stating that global problems were too big for little kids, teachers and children were also being described as ecological illiterates or ecological yahoos (Cutter-Mackenzie and Smith 2003; Orr 1992, 1994). David Orr (1992, 85–6) charged:

Not only are we failing to teach the basics about the earth and how it works, but we are in fact teaching a large amount of stuff that is simply wrong. By failing to include ecological perspectives in any number of subjects, students are taught that ecology is unimportant for history, politics, economics, society, and so forth. And

about its environmental qualities and characteristics is rare. Indeed, we were very pleased with the number of abstracts we received following the call for papers. Over half were from researchers not working exclusively in environmental education research but from other disciplinary bases such as literature and sciences but operating through an interdisciplinary approach to research. We do, therefore, feel a little more confident about the future nexus of environmental criticism and children's literature as they are developed in educational directions from both within and outwith environmental education research.

Third, the challenge of defining distinctive models of critical inquiry. Here, we encouraged an autoethnographic approach for our contributing authors so that an embodied cultural story about story/telling/children's literature could be (re)told with different emphases on the aesthetic, ethical and political. The methodological result

of experiencing children's literature about place and environment and their status in this field – be that through their 'intertextuality', 'intersubjectivity', 'interpellation' or 'interpretation'.

Moreover, mindful of Sloane's interests too, we might also note that Serres (2006) has made great play of the idea that any message (signal) is accompanied by noise (interference). The 'resistance' that the notion of noise in a system invokes can invite a moment of reflection; in this case, no matter what the 'purity' of the message, noise is transported too and does that also communicate? Is it simply static, the chaotic, non-knowledge, and thus should be excluded from our considerations? (Sloane's work would suggest this is the prevailing view in many 'modernist'-based approaches to children's literature in environmental education.) Or is noise something parasitic (its French cognate) on the system – albeit that which cannot be eliminated for if so, the system would cease to function? (Again, we might recall Sloane invites us to consider the role of 'white space' in Agamben's work, to a text, to our embodied selves and to their potentialities.) Might the notion of interference require further consideration of the deep structures, chance effects and openness of our systems of knowing, learning and being in this field (cf. Hardy 1998, on 'chaos' in environmental education – in essence, that which speaks of the 'pure multiplicity behind things')?

For Serres, the very vitality and viability of the scientific enterprise depends on the degree to which it is open to its other – not as if it were its nemesis in this case but a catalyst – spurring a 'voyaging further' into what may strike the voyager (child or adult or someone/where in between), as turbulent, unexpected or unexplained. Undeniably, given that the sciences of tomorrow don't automatically have to proceed in the

through television they learn the earth is theirs for the taking. The result is a generation of ecological yahoos ... as ecological illiterates they will have roughly the same success as one trying to balance a checkbook without knowing arithmetic.

There is an obvious tension here. On the one hand, environmental education (in schools) is labelled as being developmentally inappropriate and abstract (Hick 1991; Sobel 2008). On the other, it is described as grossly inadequate with respect to what is taught (Cutter-Mackenzie and Smith 2003; Orr 1992). So

here is mixed, although a number of these autoethnographies have been 'innovative' in both process and content. As we have done in the first layer of this Endpiece about the importance of narrative, there remains a great deal of original work to be undertaken here when we remind ourselves that the convergent notions of environmental criticism and imagination being expounded above, riskily, may or may not be aesthetically, ethically and politically appropriate or adequate to the role and place of children's literature, environmental education, ecoliteracy and, therefore, conventional approaches to environmental education research.

Fourth, the challenge of establishing the legitimacy of such critical inquiries beyond the academy. We welcome the increased presence in the popular media of the 'environmental crisis' but note how those apocalyptic adult versions of fear can diminish hope, create despair, stultify risk and increase a sense of powerlessness. From the

same ways as the sciences of the past – particularly when changes in the human and social sciences and to the nature and experience of life all stand to destabilize and outdate the understandings and practices of today and yesteryear – the possibility of literary narratives as both a comparative vehicle for comprehending the shifting horizons for experience and identities and as a means to bridging the gaps between lives lived, say, in the 'First World' as compared to those with 'Third World' conditions or continuities, has gained considerable import in some circles.⁸

In this regard, Dobrin's attention to the technologies of the First World, to the screen and its effects on our 'green eyes', and hence more broadly, to our embodied experience of information technology and the technologies of vision in a globalized world, might equally raise an important question about the 'prosthetics' and 'technics' of environmental education too (cf. Lotz-Sisitka 2010). As Payne (2003b, 2005) has previously argued, the increasing dominance of technology in mediating the realities of our experience of time and space has often gone unappreciated in our theorizing of environmental education. Outside the field, we might also note that Paul Virilio (1995) ('the chronicler of teletopia' – Conley 1999, 201) is but one of many who have attempted to theorize the effects of the emergence of communication at the 'speed of light', the increasing dominance of virtual reality alongside the 'disappearance' of materiality, of identities and of times and places as a definite space to be, and thus of perception as contact with a material reality, including that of or related to the body (see Thrift 2004; cf. Dobrin 2010).

Given all this, a postphenomenological inquiry of screen-based activities with children's literature as a means for achieving an environmental education might in fact

which is it – be it then, now, or into the future? Rather than give a categorical response, this collection suggests an ‘other’ in-between or third space for consideration; the bodily role of the visual and the head of the textual within the exchange or tension between ecological being, hope and literacy. In this kernel of in-between we find signs of an aesthetics, somaesthetics and/or ecoaesthetics that is rarely or overtly considered in the theories, evidencing or appraising of environmental education in this context, or for that matter, the framings of research more widely about children’s literature.

inside of environmental education research, we need to work hard with the public, with authors/artists/poets/musicians/dancers/software designers/ ... and so on, to provoke imaginative and constructively positive or possible responses to the otherwise debilitating crisis of fear and danger that this next generation will inherit and have the responsibility to ‘lead’ a way ecocritically and ecohopefully through and beyond.

On the basis of this special issue then, what or where next? We offer some suggestions for discussion, debate and engaged research development, noting the two broader intentions of the need for environmental education research to continue earlier conversations and build credible bodies of knowledge while, at the same time, reflexively forging a more comprehensive theorizing of an aesthetics, ethics and politics of environmental education that informs and is informed by numerous ‘ecos’ – pedagogy, literacy, learning, experiences and so on:

seek to unwrap whether priority is given to position over movement, or to reality over irreality (or vice versa in either case), alongside their relative merits and justification. Indeed, perhaps such virtualities and virtues, so to speak, occur in oscillation (flagging up the possibilities of a curriculum conceived as a non-linear course and hence *icurrere*, rather than simply an inchoate assemblage of events or activities?). Yet if we consider examples of intertextuality and its complex role in the negotiation of a series of interventions presented and mediated largely by the educator’s ‘technologies of perception’, must we not also consider their horizons, repetitions and logic: for example, to their value as an effective, short as well longer term, or life long, environmental education (cf. Cooper 2002)? Indeed, when Lyotard can observe that an experience of the world is never entirely captured by any one reading of the world (the world as represented), questions of the inter- and representation and ‘representationalness’ become crucial to understanding and critiquing our instances of experiencing and weaving of time–space and thus to their wider analysis, including pedagogically (cf. our opening quotations to each layer, including from Bruner). Might, for example, the rhythm of environmental education now be too accelerated, and is a slow pedagogy the counterpoint (e.g., Payne and Wattchow 2009)? Or should it be something other to augment the differentiation and proliferation of a multiplicity of forms and logics that are arguably working their way into or through this field (see, for example, McKenzie et al. 2009)? Moreover, when the old tyrannies of distance are seen to give way to tyrannies of real time, or when ‘convergences’ always seem to trump ‘divergences’ in our appreciation of what is valued in the field, arguably it isn’t long before either an ‘immobility’ or ‘sedentariness’ risks becoming the primary phenomenological marker of the field’s

As Dobrin points out, many children now operate in a screen and networked culture where ‘visual rhetorics are the environments in which texts for the child subject, texts about the child subject, texts about texts-for-the-child-subject, and the child subject now function’. In practice, Burke and Cutter-Mackenzie reveal possible ways in which visual literacy and ecoliteracy, as reconceived through an immersive/experiential investigation of children’s picture books, can be used as a pathway to active forms of community participation. Korteweg, Gonzalez and Guillet open up further imaginative possibilities in decolonizing environmental education through a visual immersion in indigenous children’s literature. Payne,

- (1) *How are children (which, where, all?) positioned in the possible/actual uses of children’s literature as we have aimed to open up for critical deliberation?*
- (2) *Relatedly, whose/which childhoods have been and need to be considered in deliberating about the ‘nature’ of intergenerational ethics and, therefore, the role and place of children’s literature as has been broadly opened up in relation to the undertheorized notion of ecoliteracy? Equally, whose voices thus far, and which voices of children in future? Whose experiences, which experiences? Whose environmentalism? Which environmentalisms? Which and whose framings of childhood? Indeed, in terms of ‘literatures’ – what of graphical novels, comic forms, Web 2.0, ...?*
- (3) *How do approaches to children’s literature (de/re)value children’s, teachers’ and parents’ everyday lived experiences, and particularly those that may or*

and its members’ activities, be that in ‘its’ or ‘their’ or ‘our’ habits of thought, modes of action and practice, or relation to other fields.

It is in such contexts that Nigel Thrift (2007) has argued (albeit with some irony) for a place and space for a non-representational form of and approach to theory and theorizing, given that people are at risk of becoming increasingly indifferent to that which is immediately around them. Of course, Thrift’s contention about re-engaging the horizon and experience of the local is not new: embodied practices are often seen to offer alternative sites of engagement. But the charge indicated here and also in, for example, the spatial turn is for a renewed focus that helps move the human and social sciences away from and beyond a narrow preoccupation with linguistic interactions. Thrift’s work can be used to re-articulate our questions of involvement, participation and engagement, as ones that pertain to embodied actors and most pertinently, to somaesthetics, variously situated in socio-technico-materially configured spaces and places. And thus in this regard, it may well be that an ecologically oriented form of the culturally disposed autoethnographic approach offers a way of substantiating a commitment to resituating such engaged and to-be-engaged subjects in a spatially, socially, materially, technically, emotionally, ethically, politically, aesthetically ‘thicker’ world.

Thrift’s concerns can also be read as part of the ‘spatial turn’ (Pugh 2009) now informing debates about the broader politics of democracy of the globalized, extended social relations and, inevitably, abstracted stories we may tell and read about, for example, climate change, global human rights, fair trade, postcolonialism, genetically modified foods and indigenous peoples, amongst others, some of which have attracted

Morgan and Sloane make known further layers identifying an ecopedagogy of imagination, a mythopoetic imagination (of the outdoor/natural environment) and the role of human potentiality in environmental education, respectively. This third place into which children's eco-literature partially and potentially fits is not without risks and challenges though, as environmental educators work in a transdisciplinary context in the attempt to provoke hope-filled imaginations, thoughts and actions in, of, or for the environment/nature and their socio-cultural ecologies.

may not be deemed more or less 'ecological' or 'researchable', be that in their approach or the literature under consideration?

- (4) *What kinds of imagination – ecological, social, mythopoetic, moral, radical, ... – are being engaged here? To which ends, and with which more worthy, valuable and useful ends-in-view? For example, might they (pedagogy, material, interactions) be about instilling notions of hope(lessness) and risk(lessness) or fear(lessness), or something other?*
- (5) *How (else) are children themselves constructors, producers and authors/artists as distinct from recipients, consumers and spectators of children's literature?*
- (6) *Is there a balance to be struck between fostering biophilia and bibliophilia? [when, where, and what are the openings here?]*

the interest of contributors to this special issue. Pugh's concerns also relate methodologically and critically to the point made earlier in our second layer of interpretation and commentary where we employed Buell's (2005) encouragement for environmental criticism to address the pressing need to connect professional legitimation to new modes of critical inquiry and, in doing so, extend the reach of environmental criticism beyond the academy. Pugh (2009, 580) asks us to examine how the latest spatial turn in human geography positions us in rethinking our politics and accounts of democracy in ontologically abstracting globalizing conditions. Indeed, what narratives and stories might now be considered in dealing with, for example, the intergenerational stories we might tell our children about climate change, genetically modified food, indigenous rights and so on? Pugh pushes the methodological implications of the spatial turn into six sensitizing themes, all of which have considerable bearing on the way we frame, for example, the ecomposition aspects of children's literature or art. Or, for that matter, how we might think about a critical pedagogy of place whose own 'story' has become more conspicuous over recent years in environmental education discourse. For the record, Pugh's themes include: the denaturalization of space, the forging of ethical commitment, the question of representation and participation, the remaking of political identities in a geographically connected way, the rise of a new form of materialism, and the politics of claims made on space.

While much of this increasingly 'processual' focus might be interpreted in this field as making the case for a more-than- rather than non-representational form of inquiry (see also Whatmore 2002), the main point we derive from this is that such a focus and its corresponding circumstances help highlight the attention we give to understanding

Ecology of risk

Often in contrast to the rhetoric of hope, risk has become a prominent concept in public discourse about the environmental predicament that we and future generations are assumed or expected to now confront (e.g., Bauman 2006; Beck 1995). Alongside the challenges of its associated anxieties and discontents, risk underscores the vigour with which intergenerational ethics need pursuing in families, schools, and other primary socializers and cultural institutions, including in the ways in which literature and ecoliteracy can be engaged and reimaged. The contributors to this collection have been bold in searching for valuable ways to capture the imaginations of the next generation of adults and deal with such

- (7) *Are these children's literature approaches best imagined as a form of places (real, unreal, virtual and/or imagined) based education? Even in screen- and network-based cultures? Who is included and excluded as a result? Or is a global imaginary pressing hard on the locally placed? How can place exist in a globalizing or virtualizing 'community'?*
- (8) *Is the now popularized schooling notion of ecoliteracy a limiting or limited concept, noting 'out there' exists ecocriticism, ecocomposition, ecopoetics, ecodrama, ecocriticism, environmental criticism and elactracy (but often defaulting to adult voices)?*
- (9) *Might a research focus on text/image – interactions/contextualizations be too constrained, given the above?*

and appreciating our own preferences and their production, shaping and disruption. In effect, with these no longer being 'indexed' to the exposure, intimacy and unpredictability engendered by co-proximity to places and their various real (and unreal) presences, such a shift would suggest our inquiries might be better configured by questions that explore the immediacy, control and de-centring of presence and presentation (and quite often mediated by electronic technology), and thus, for environmental education and its research, whether what these are becoming increasingly caught up with (or by) is that which is present(ed) to us from or at a (considerable) distance.

As conditions for and in environmental educators' engagements with children's literature change then, we might do well to ask, has and does experience of the visible and tangible via embodied understandings too, with literature or otherwise? Whether that is in work in the outdoors, for example, as children's stories and art might be experienced there irreal; or equally, in their giving way to experiences cast as 'realist' and largely classroom based, via book or screen-based learning? And if we were to explore where such interests might lead, then perhaps we should consider quite seriously if a forsaking of fieldwork and its ilk are likely: book and screen-based experiences of the outdoors appear more available and amenable to our pedagogical ends, yet must this inevitably take the place of direct perception and experiential learning (Payne 2003a), and to what effects (cf. Fox 2008; Roberts 2008)?

These conjectures remain speculative. And of course to some, they may suggest that the field's moorings have begun to slip (once more) as has its sense of proportion and we are entering (once again?) unfamiliar disputable territories. Yet, in bringing this layer to an end, and noting her reliance on Agamben's work, we note that Sloane's contribution would appear to militate against such interpretations. Sloane deliberately

matters. Notwithstanding the limitations of any special issue, each author in their different ways – academic, teacher, parent, activist – has raised important issues and insightful questions into what, at first glance for educators, might conveniently be gathered under the concept of an ‘ecoliteracy’.

However, only locating children’s literature within the push for an extended form of ecoliteracy and an expanded imagination takes on a purposive, perhaps instrumental, perspective about the relationship of literature, education and the uncertainty and fear associated with environmental issues. So perhaps we should immediately qualify and extend this less literally and more aesthetically, even politically, into reflections on the environmental imaginary it articulates, as well

(10) *What is represented and legitimized in these assumptions and approaches to researching children’s literature? What hasn’t been conceded, acknowledged, said, recognized?*

Given our editorial license in this end piece and those hopes for the future, shared and inspired not only by those represented in this special issue but by many other scholars and practitioners, we note there is some conceptually innovative work bubbling up throughout this collection that calls for some additional teasing out and that constitutes yet another formal line of inquiry beyond the sampling of possible research directions envisaged above. One caveat. In working through the realities depicted in

encourages us to tap into currents of theorizing that focus on feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, including on some of the difficulties of speaking and writing about lived experiences which are barely translatable into symbolic form (and not simply equivalent to the sublime). In this scenario, this is never a trivial or esoteric matter; silence is not an escape from the responsibility to address issues concerning the enigmatic and intractable problems of any field of inquiry, including this one. For Agamben (2002), and thus again Kant, it has involved investigations about what is actually ‘sayable’ in and through literature given the embodied experience of the Holocaust. Agamben’s burden in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The witness and the archive* is to examine how the embodied practice of bearing witness and the notion of testimony are made possible when confronted with the ‘unspeakable’, given monstrous or horrific events. His inquiries lead him to conclude that ‘the authority of the witness consists in his capacity to speak solely in the name of an incapacity to speak – that is, in his or her being a subject’ (158).⁹

In Sloane’s contribution, and a relocation of these arguments to the sphere of nature and to ‘a body without its own voice’, it is never simply a question of investigating the words or the layout of the page (including its white spaces) so as to understand the significances and ‘subjectivities’ a children’s book is charged with conveying, or for that matter, what it witnesses to or testifies about as (part of) an environmental education. Just as a sigh or touch between lovers (a subjectivity that is equally un-universalizable) may seek to bodily convey a deep longing or even a moment of inarticulateness or an otherwise ineffable joy, etc., researching lived experiences of children’s literature invites close attention to the cycles and disruptions of contextualizations and decontextualizations or recontextualizations. Indeed, the natured and de-natured representations and responses of authors and readers with/in the texts, regarding that which it is deemed possible to include, and what it has

as pedagogically, into how that is nurtured directly with children and revealed in research. At risk, but worth restating, is that enduring reminder to ‘let children be children’ and resist, for a slow while, the temptation of adults, teachers and researchers to download fast on children their fears and anxieties, aspirations and expectations. Stories, reading, play, music, art and drama should also intrinsically cater for or promote joy, pleasure, imagination, escape and other non-worldly dimensions of childhood experience.

Are there yet other ways in which the story of children’s literature can combine risk, critique and hope, and a way forward, as Dobrin’s contribution expects? Wason-Elam can be read as a counterpoint. To be sure, solely locating

much environmental education research, despite interest or intrigue with the imaginary, we openly concede that the undertheorized imaginary of an aesthetics in environmental education and its research might occupy a relatively limited pathway of hope and risk for the future. Indeed, children’s literature might occupy a somewhat special place, or space, within the broader ambit of environmental education. If so, perhaps our other layer in the Endpiece does well to dwell for more than a brief moment on what we think are some of the assumptions made about realities and irrealities as they emerge from this collection. We feel that the irreal as a different line of inquiry also has a special place, and that children’s literature and ecoliteracy, understood, conceived and contextualized more broadly, can heighten how the currently

become necessary to leave out, are matters that return us to questions about the technics of production and imagination and, indeed, the technics of environmental education (Payne 2003b).

The brute fact of, on the one hand, the multifarious ecologies, and on the other, (constrained) possibilities of reading that are viable, Sloane reminds us, also serve to highlight how environmental education and its research may risk be(com)ing locked into repetitive cycles of inquiry – in effect, closed loops of practice, theory and research where the premises of ‘analysis’ are such that they overly constrain and foretell the outcomes possible. We regard Sloane’s unique contribution via this collection as a plea for a catharsis of sorts and continued coming-to-terms with the problematics and ambiguities that such approaches to practice and research and understanding both exemplify. Thus, rather than practices or researches continuing as a symptom of conventional framings, with their concomitant problematics and ambiguities – a confirmation rather a possible transcending of them – Sloane lays claim to opening up the very filters and filtering of the field and its research priorities to critique and transformation.

Her resolution on this point offers a voice to ‘murmurings’ that would suggest environmental education and its research shouldn’t be regarded as irretrievably Kafkaesque, nihilistic, or without any particular end, even though no end may be specified or would appear to be forthcoming. Thus, while the (absurdist) possibility of profound failure in the field has to be entertained (perhaps its Godot imaginary?), and apparent lacks of progress on a range of fronts may well lead to despair in and anxiety about environmental education and its operations, support, barriers, etc., these ‘states’ of ‘being’ are not actually fundamentally corrosive of the underpinnings to the field’s enterprises. Yet their very likelihood and actuality in people’s experience of this field suggest that a ‘defamiliarization’ and ‘deterritorization’ might well be required, to

children's literature in the push for ecoliteracy is somewhat risky, as well might be an uncritical acceptance of the rush of the new media and easy flexibility of a postmodern environmental education. But in terms of how the field of environmental education and its research might respond in a coherent, theoretically informed and carefully considered manner, there are other 'harder to reach varieties' (Reid and Scott 2006) of theory and discourse, practice and inquiry, that might provide new vantage points from which those risky stories of expanded hope, and constructive criticisms, can be nurtured in children's literature and its 'place' in responding to environmental fear and anxiety, as suggested in our other layers.

irreal can be part of the imaginary of what might be the real, particularly in terms of the possibility of an intergenerational ethics and politics through environmental education.

change the nature of our perception of the experience of environmental education and its research significantly, if not immediately or even somewhat imperceptibly for some of its more 'avant garde' members (let alone 'acolytes'). In other words, the challenge is not to consciously regard environmental education and its research as already finally constituted and unified, but temporarily 'locked' into times and places that remain subject to change, bidden and unbidden – where the keys to their unlocking may actually be closer to hand than previously thought.

Thus, as with Agamben and company, and from Dobrin through to Sloane, we suggest that the focus in researching the experience of children's literature could well undergo a profound, risky, hopeful and structurally legitimizing shift as an important generator of human understanding, meaning-making and ways of knowing and knowledge producer in this field on inquiry. In this case, from being cocooned in relation to exploring and explicating the meanings of the stories in the first instance, towards engaging how (these) stories about nature/culture can be ecologically told in the first place, to the role of literature in narrative imagination and ethical and political questions, and thus, to matters of the potentialities that experiences of children's literature inflect and afford in and through an environmental education.¹⁰ And it is in this very engaging and articulating of this struggle for a language of inquiry – of being able to be(come) a witness to life, including one's own and its groundings and ends in relation to the socio-ecological – that has become quite the matter at stake over the course of this special issue on experiencing environment and place through children's literature, let alone in its various probings of the conditions of possibility for an effective, holistic, multitextualized environmental education.

Notes

1. For example, Barratt Hacking and Barratt (2007) note that at an international conference held in 2005 called 'Childhood', devoted to examining their role in transforming societies, only a 'limited number' of the 700 papers explored environmental perspectives. In extracting some lessons from the articles published in that special issue of *Environmental Education Research*, namely children as environmental stakeholders, researching their environmental learning, including agency and restrictions on learning, and further directions for childhood environment research, there are numerous positive and important suggestions that pertain to questions of marginalization and restorative justice, participatory approaches that give voice to children, intergenerationality of interest and power, and the existential (and phenomenological) significance of everyday, local environments. Methodological adjustments and new directions are also recommended. Children's literature is not mentioned though, and ecoliteracy, in the sense anticipated by literature, is implied only.
2. According to Buell (2005, 113) the challenge for environmental justice revisionism will be to fill the ecocriticism gap of explaining '... how nature matters for those readers, critics, teachers, and students for whom environmental concern does not mean nature preservation first and foremost and for whom nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness narrative do not seem the most compelling forms of environmental imagination, then the movement may fission and wane'.
3. Somewhat akin to the surrealist movement in Art, and exemplified by Salvador Dali's *The persistence of memory*, commonly referred to as the 'melting clocks', we bear witness to the time of the landscape being partially deconstructed via Dali's paranoia-critical method. Ants and flies feed on the disintegration of the rotting carcass of 'modern time', measured by and symbolized through numerically quantified clocks.
4. Indeed, while it may surprise some readers that advocates of poststructural analysis in environmental education haven't (quite? yet?) taken the increasingly familiar route to this troika in such work – to explications of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory perhaps via Slavoj Žižek's post-Marxist commentaries or Julia Kristeva's inquiries about language, the subject and semiotics, is perhaps putting it (too) crudely – it does appear to have been on the horizon for some time (cf. early work by Conley 1997).
5. This is rather than to privilege a direct focus on what it might hide in the classroom, as in an ideologically driven critique. Interestingly perhaps, Alain Badiou (2003, 4) has defined a fable as 'that part of a narrative that, so far as we are concerned, fails to touch on any Real, unless it be by virtue of that invisible and indirectly accessible residue sticking to every obvious imaginary'.
6. There is a considerable hill to climb here. What counts and is experienced as restrictive forms of thought and action imposed on people by the social conditions, of say, capitalist globalized societies, can be easily contested and thus derailed in disputes about notions of false consciousness, the credibility of Marxist and Marxian analysis, etc.; while an identity (colonized or not to different degrees and hybridities), being a fundamental attachment for the subject, cannot simply be thrown off at will. Indeed, identifying it is not reducible to claims of an identity, as if the claim were identical and identifiable with what is labelled or assumed as the identity, or if simply speaking otherwise in the face of irreducibility can erase difference. As noted in the Editorial, MacIntyre, Ricoeur and Gare, each lay claim to identity requiring narrative competence – accounts of ourselves are intersubjective and interlocutory, and thus never fully or solely subject to the control of an individual alone.
7. Cf. Aleksandra Mir's 'Switzerland and Other Islands', exhibited at Kunsthaus Zurich, August–September 2006. This series of political, geographical and mythological drawings on the subject of islands includes *Insula Svizzera*, which reimagines Switzerland's landlocked borders as a coastline, while the *Unexplored Islands* series uses a range of frames and objects to resituate family political boundaries as those yet to be explored or integrated with existing atlases. <http://www.aleksandramir.info/projects/switzerland/switzerland.html>.
8. The Harlequin, lest we forget, stands in the place of the chaos of life and has been a commonplace in historic European children's literature. According to Lechte (2008, 347), this 'hybrid, hermaphrodite, mongrel figure, a mixture of diverse elements' and 'a challenge to homogeneity', with the Harlequin, when one costume is removed, another is underneath to take the former's place. Equally, the Harlequin's presence and story-telling can be used to

- bear witness to the tragedy and absurdities of our stories and times, revealing, challenging and redistributing knowledges that might otherwise escape attention or reflection.
9. This is a markedly different conclusion to that of Theodor Adorno. Given this, and following Sloane's lead, an 'eco'-informed engagement with John Boyne's 2006 children's novel, *The boy in the striped pajamas*, presents a potentially rich and compelling scenario to explore the intersections of its aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions, responsibilities and limitations, given the im/possible and forbidden childhood friendship Boyne portrays on either side of a camp fence.
 10. If it is said, 'every tool is a weapon – if you hold it right' (Ani DiFranco), is a stone or stick a weapon if you throw it (right)? More pointedly and abstractly, it is said, representations remain objectifications because they articulate an external position. So, in one view, children's storybooks, mythic tales, etc., as objects, are, by their very nature, quite literally a 'frozen' relation that immobilizes and condenses meanings, concepts and possibilities. Equally, in themselves they do not avail the interiority to a meaning or self in time engaging with 'the ways things are' or one's or another's life as lived. But in throwing a stone, or in 'teaching a stone to talk', as Annie Dillard would have it, they can present openings to many things: they may afford transformative interdictions, even when – perhaps, better when – their genre isn't intentionally transgressive but rather 'conservative'. To understand how this may be so, autoethnographic approaches are arguably well suited to the exploration and examination of these claims, in that these approaches foreground inquiries as to whether the reader is awake to possibility, regards a text as provisional and not closed or incontestable, or, as Burke and Mackenzie (2010) have suggested, can demonstrate they are ecoliterally competent to make good use of all that in, as and through an environmental education worthy of the name.

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