Ecobardic Desire: Storytelling and Storywriting as Catalysts of Transformation in People's Relationship with the More-than-Human World

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A thesis submitted to the University of Gloucestershire
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Creative Arts

December 2023

Main text of Thesis = 25,374 words

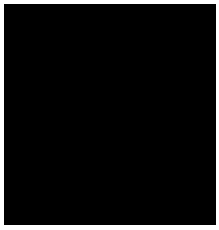
ABSTRACT

This thesis reviews a Collection of six critical and seven creative works submitted for a PhD by publication addressing how storywriting and (oral) storytelling can help facilitate transformative responses to ecological crisis. The thesis unravels the main strands of reflective practice that run through the Collection and describes the original and significant contributions the publications accomplish. The creative work comprises 84 stories and one novel (*Deep Time*), occupying a spectrum between oral storytelling and literary fiction, that extend the range and nuance of narrative engagement with ecology. Pioneering critical writings, including an award-winning academic monograph (*Storytelling and Ecology*), explain the capacity of embodied oral storytelling to facilitate caring connection among people, place, and other living beings. Further critical writings advocate for creative work that sustains utopian hope against the impetus of neoliberal capitalism and dystopian expectation towards ecocatastrophe. A model is presented whereby both oral and prose stories can facilitate transformative responsivity by providing 'structures of space' charged with 'patterns of desire'. The interplay of innovation and intertextuality in the creative works is unpacked in relation to experimenting with unusual oral genres, reconstructing Gloucestershire's fragmentary legendarium of folktales, and political concerns tending to constrain creative possibility. Field exploration of storied landscapes is shown to have channelled embodied experience of the living world into the creative works. The most developed pathway of innovative creative work in the Collection is in narratives of ecological and evolutionary history; the palaeoecology of deep time is explored encyclopedically in *Deep Time* as a frame for comprehending the scale of human ecological impact. Finally, an argument is made for the relevance of stories of 'supernatural ecology' to advancing more potent responsiveness to ecological crisis. The thesis concludes by discussing synergies of oral and written narrative that serve the education of desire necessary to the transformation the crisis requires.

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed  Date 6 December 2023

DOI: 10.46289/7RK3P8X4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors Professor Arran Stibbe and Dr Rowan Middleton for their tremendous generosity, encouragement, and perspicacity. I thank also Kirsty Hartsiotis, Laura Kinnear, Alistair McNaught, David Metcalfe, and Chantelle Smith for their comments on portions of the text; and Maya and Nick for their guidance of my spiritual explorations. I am grateful to the Culture, Continuity and Transformation Research Priority Area at the University of Gloucestershire for a studentship that funded my fees, and to the Library at Francis Close Hall for arranging interlibrary loans. I wish also to thank my collaborators on certain projects – Charlene Collison, Jon Cree, Alida Gersie, Kirsty Hartsiotis, Kevan Manwaring, David Metcalfe, Richard Selby, Edward Schieffelin – and all the editors and publishers responsible for publishing my work; and to restate my gratitude to the many people and organisations, listed in the acknowledgements in my publications, who assisted me in various ways.

CONTENTS

REFERENCES NOTATION

References to relevant pages in publications in the Collection are cited in the form '*S&E*, 15–16', using the title abbreviations given on page 7. The Appendix provides full bibliographical details of the Collection.

For other references, including publication of mine not included in the Collection, the footnotes-plus-bibliography referencing system is used. References are cited in footnotes in the form 'Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*' and listed with full bibliographical details in the Bibliography.

THE COLLECTION

Publication title	Abbreviation
Critical publications:	
Storytelling and Ecology: Empathy, Enchantment and the Emergence in the Use of Oral Narratives	*S&E*
Words of Re-enchantment: Writings on Storytelling, Myth, and Ecological Desire	*Words*
An Ecobardic Manifesto: A Vision for the Arts in a Time of Environmental Crisis	*Ecobardic*
'Jumping the Gap of Desire: Telling Stories from Ecological History about Species Extinction to Evoke an Empathetic and Questioning Response'	'Jumping'
'"The Future Has Gone Bad, We Need a New One": Neoliberal Science Fiction and the Writing of Ecotopian Possibility'	'"Future"'
'The Writer and the Reader: Edward Thomas, Edward Garnett, and the Pursuit of Literary Worth'	'Writer'
Creative publications:	
Deep Time	*DT*
Exotic Excursions	*EE*
Gloucestershire Folk Tales	*GFT*
Gloucestershire Ghost Tales (ten stories plus introduction)	*GGT*
Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children (nine stories plus introduction)	*GFTC*
'The Dead Are Not Dead'	'Dead'
'The Migrant Maid'	'Migrant'

THESIS

§1. Introduction

My PhD by publication comprises this Thesis and a Collection of selected creative and critical work published over the period 2005–21 and united by an 'ecosophy'[1] desiring the mutual flourishing of humankind and the biosphere. The research underpinning the Collection centres on my reflective practice as both storywriter and (oral) storyteller and is supported by my background in natural sciences, education, and publishing; it thereby partakes in the environmental humanities' interdisciplinary aspiration to 'simultaneous critique and action'.[2] Stories – in the sense of causally connected sequences of events in time – can help us make sense of the complexity of ecological processes and problems; and they're the best way to comprehend the motivations in play, since stories are driven by their characters' desires.[3] The creative work in the Collection consists of 84 shorter stories and one novel that extend in various ways the range and nuance of narrative exploration of human beings' relations with the more-than-human world. The critical work suggests how storytelling and storywriting can help to engender utopian hope and desire in our time of ecological crisis and, drawing on both scholarship and practical experience, theorises the particular ways that (oral) storytelling can help foster a sense of connection to and care for other organisms and the environments we share with them.

Slippage in usage of the term 'storytelling' often obscures oral storytelling in favour of other media;[4] I use 'storytelling' exclusively to refer to the activity of telling stories orally

[1] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics.*

[2] Rose et al., 'Thinking through the Environment', 3.

[3] Brayfield, *Bestseller*; Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*; McKee, *Story.*

[4] For example, Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots*; Haven, *Story Proof*; Leinaweaver, *Storytelling for*

to a live audience. Whereas there's been extensive ecocritical study of prose fiction,[5] and ethnographic study of ecologically embedded storytelling traditions among 'indigenous'[6] peoples,[7] storytelling has received little attention in ecocritical studies of contemporary culture.[8] My pioneering work applying ecocriticism to storytelling has culminated in the monograph *Storytelling and Ecology* (2021), which was a Finalist in the Association of American Publishers Prose Awards 2022 and awarded Honors in the Storytelling World Awards 2022. This book incorporates material from two peer-reviewed papers published, respectively, by the Society for Storytelling and *Green Letters*.[9] Others of my writings in this field were gathered in *Words of Re-enchantment* (2011), which was awarded Honors in the Storytelling World Awards 2013.

My involvement in Tales to Sustain, a network of storytellers engaged with sustainability, led to my co-editing (with Alida Gersie and Edward Schieffelin) *Storytelling for a Greener World* (2014), reissued in 2022 as *Storytelling for Nature Connection*. Owing to the collaborative way this book was created, only my own chapter, 'Jumping the Gap of Desire', is included in the Collection.

Sustainability; Molthan-Hill et al., *Storytelling for Sustainability in Higher Education*; Shaw, *The Short Story.*

[5] For example, Bracke, 'The Novel'; Canavan and Robinson, *Green Planets*; Deitering, 'The Postnatural Novel'; Garforth, 'Ecotopian Fiction and the Sustainable Society'; Gough, 'Playing with Wor(l)ds'; Head, 'Problems in Ecocriticism and the Novel'; Kerridge, 'Ecothrillers'; Kerridge, 'Narratives of Resignation'; Kerridge, 'Nature in the English Novel'; Norden, 'Ecological Restoration'; Otto, *Green Speculations*; Pak, *Terraforming.*

[6] Hughes, *No-Nonsense Guide to Indigenous Peoples.*

[7] For example, Berndt and Berndt, *The Speaking Land*; Bierhorst, *The Mythology of North America*; Bourret et al., *Littérature orale*; Gunther, 'Old Stories/Life Stories'; Ramsay, *Nights of Storytelling*; Silko, 'Landscape, History, and Pueblo Imagination'; Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, *The Ecology of the Spoken Word*; Van Deusen, *The Flying Tiger*; van Dooren and Rose, 'Lively Ethography'.

[8] Storytelling is omitted, for example, from Parham, *Green Media and Popular Culture.*

[9] Nanson, *Storytelling and Ecology* (2005); Nanson, 'Composting Dragons'.

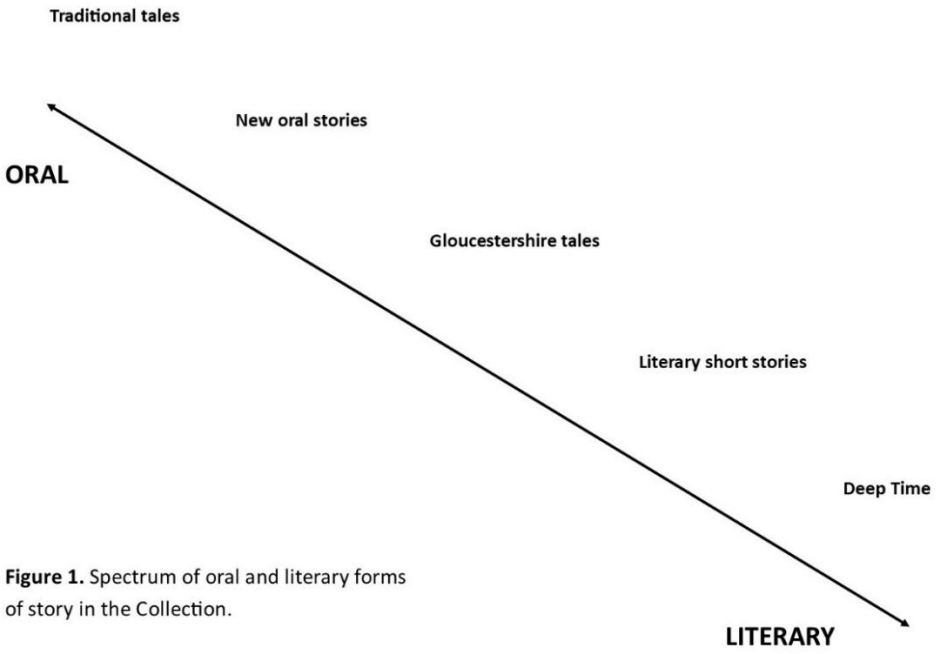


Figure 1. Spectrum of oral and literary forms of story in the Collection.

The ecological stories in the Collection occupy a spectrum between oral and literary forms (Figure 1). At the oral pole are five exemplars of my oral retellings of traditional tales, which are embedded in my critical writings as summaries or retrospective scripts. One step along the spectrum are 15 oral stories I composed from scratch or adapted from literary sources; these, too, are represented as summaries or retrospective scripts. In the middle of the spectrum are my retellings of 49 folktales set in Gloucestershire's landscapes and townscapes, crafted to be engaging both in extempore storytelling and in print:

- 30 tales in *Gloucestershire Folk Tales* (2012) (awarded Honors in the Storytelling World Awards 2013);
- ten tales in *Gloucestershire Ghost Tales* (2015) (which also contains ten other tales by my collaborator and wife Kirsty Hartsiotis and an 'Introduction' by me);
- nine tales in *Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children* (2020) (which also contains 11 other tales by Hartsiotis and 'Things You Can Do with These Stories' by me).

Further towards the literary pole are 15 prose short stories that blur boundaries between mimetic and speculative fiction, memoir, and myth (nine of which I've also told orally, either extempore or verbatim from memory):

- 13 stories collected in *Exotic Excursions* (2008);
- 'The Dead Are Not Dead' (2012), published in the magazine *Ariadne's Thread*;
- 'The Migrant Maid', published in the anthology *Ballad Tales* (2017).

At the literary end of the spectrum is *Deep Time* (2015), a 313,000-word prehistoric lost-world romance that depicts palaeoecological change over the course of 400 million years and dramatises human ecological impact.

A further set of writings in the Collection relate to a vision for 'ecobardic' art which both informs my own storywriting and storytelling and seeks to inspire other creative people. *An Ecobardic Manifesto* (2008) calls for the arts to contribute to hope and healing in our time of ecological crisis. I drafted this manifesto on the basis of a long audio-recorded conversation with my colleagues in Fire Springs, a storytelling company I co-founded, to whom the publication is collectively credited.[10] Three short essays introducing and extending the manifesto are included in *Words of Re-enchantment*. Three longer essays address the dynamic between artistic and ethical commitment in the face of neoliberal capitalism's destructive impact on culture, society, and ecology:

- 'Faith, Freedom, and the Fast-Capitalist Commodification of Story', published in the Christian journal *Articulate* and revised and republished in *Words of Re-enchantment*;

[10] My colleagues made amendments to and approved the text as well as providing input during the recorded discussion.

- ‘The Writer and the Reader: Edwards Thomas, Edward Garnett, and the Pursuit of Literary Worth’ (2014), a peer-reviewed paper published in the journal *Logos*;
- ‘“The Future Has Gone Bad, We Need a New One”: Neoliberal Science Fiction and the Writing of Ecotopian Possibility’, my peer-reviewed chapter in *Storytelling for Sustainability in Higher Education* (2020).

I take from ecocriticism and the natural sciences the premise that ecological crisis confronts any epistemology with scientific understanding of the earth and its biosphere.[11] My trust in science is based on an ontology that some aspects of ‘reality’ are not socially constructed and exist independently of language, and on a phenomenology that takes conscious experience as the starting point of what can be known. The communicating of experience between people requires it to be translated into language, into stories of what’s been experienced. These stories may be elaborated into statements about aspects of reality, and both stories and statements may convey, consciously or unconsciously, mental models – ‘beliefs’ – about the way things are.[12] We then have to evaluate how far we accept the validity of the beliefs thus conveyed. Where there’s a strong correlation of empirical observations with hypotheses about physical reality, science provides a trustworthy basis for belief and action. At the opposite pole are stories and statements we judge to be pure fabrication, whether presented as such or deceptively or delusionally presented as fact. Between these two poles lies a middle ground of degrees of uncertainty where more speculative science rubs shoulders with socially constructed structures of belief and with historical reports, individual testimony, and imaginative and symbolic narratives.

[11] Wheeler and Dunkerley, ‘Introduction’.

[12] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics.* I use ‘beliefs’ in place of Stibbe’s usage of ‘stories’ and ‘stories we live by’ so as to avoid confusion with ‘stories’ in the narrative sense I use this term.

One of the challenges of responding to ecological crisis is that some aspects of it can be known only from historical data and probabilistic models and require action to be taken despite a degree of epistemological uncertainty. Such uncertainty generally characterises complex systems, in economics, society, and psychology as well as ecology.[13] It also characterises 'spiritual' or 'transpersonal' experiences that are open to phenomenological enquiry and expressible in stories, but less amenable to science, and which I've argued have relevance to the motivation of responses to ecological crisis (*Words*, 154–6, 165–9; *S&E*, 15–16, 104, 181–4) (see §9).

The relationship here between judgements of 'true' and 'false' beliefs is one instance of a recurrence, in my writing, of treating contradictory dualities – in which Aristotle's logic would impose an 'excluded middle' between the 'true' and 'not true'[14] – as containing a dynamic space of possibilities between two poles.[15] My approach here extends to other dualities whose poles could possibly be considered mutually exclusive, such as the duality of oral and written stories (where 'oral' might be defined as 'not written'), producing the 'spectrum' of oral and literary composition described above. Depending on the context, I conceptualise such dualities as, variously, tensions that must be held, dialectics that invite synthesis, paradoxes that provoke cognition, hierarchies that need to flatten, liminality that invites transformation, dialogue between the different, or oppositions that may be reconciled. A story is a liminal space between the different situations existing at the beginning and the end. Storytelling embodies a dialogic duality in which usually one person is speaking and others are listening but a non-verbal dialogue exists between them and, depending on the situation, the roles of speaker and listener may become reversed or shared. Bakhtin's

[13] Capra, *The Web of Life*.

[14] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III:2.

[15] See Jeans, *Physics and Philosophy*; Dowman, *Masters of Enchantment*.

'dialogism' is polyphonic[16] and I recognise, equally, the importance of the complex networks of relationships in play in ecosystems and societies and amidst the multivalency of symbols, perspectives, and desires in stories and the multiplicity of participants in most storytelling situations (*Words*, 85; *S&E*, 49–50, 52, 153, 164–7, 177–8).

Another often polarised duality is the tension between explanations of ecological crisis in terms of social structures and of a problem of human nature.[17] Various developments in history have been singled out as the root of the crisis: contemporary neoliberal capitalism;[18] the Industrial Revolution;[19] the Scientific Revolution;[20] anthropocentric Christianity;[21] Aristotle's separation of matter from the divine;[22] the Greek alphabet;[23] the Neolithic agrarian transition;[24] the Palaeolithic advent of big-game hunting.[25] All these developments, I think, have contributed to the crisis, but in Jonathan Kingdon's zoological analysis *Homo sapiens* has always been a 'niche-thief', evolutionarily disposed towards ecological destruction by the ability to shift to exploiting new kinds of resources after exhausting previous ones.[26] Sociobiological game theory predicts that humans, like other animals, are genetically driven to prioritise their material self-interest,[27] but modulations of Darwinian selection in terms of symbiosis, emergence, or purpose suggest more hopeful

[16] Holquist, *Dialogism.*

[17] See Palmer, *Dancing to Armageddon*; Segerstråle, *Defenders of the Truth.*

[18] Samans, *Human-Centred Economics.*

[19] Fromm, 'From Transcendence to Obsolescence'.

[20] Wheeler, 'Natural Play'.

[21] White, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis'.

[22] Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West.*

[23] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous.*

[24] Crist, 'Animals'.

[25] Sale, *After Eden.*

[26] Kingdon, *Lowly Origin.*

[27] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*; Segerstråle, *Defenders of the Truth*; Wilson, *On Human Nature.*

possibilities.[28] The paradox, explored in both *Storytelling and Ecology* and *Deep Time*, is that human beings today need to consciously and sensuously reconnect with the ecology we inhabit *and* to transcend our biological imperatives. To break out of the loop of destructive behaviour in which we're trapped by evolutionarily and sociopsychologically determined habits of mind requires some catalyst able to open a space in which something new can emerge (*S&E*, 102–4).[29]

My awakening, through my research, to the overwhelming scale of the global ecological crisis persuaded me there's little hope that humankind can respond adequately on the basis of a purely materialist understanding of existence. The 'catalyst' needs to transcend scientific materialism (see §9).[30] My Christian faith, dualistically separating science from spirit, offered otherworldly consolation but little praxis of change. Elements of a convergence of spiritual and material concerns became evident to me through encountering neopagan Druidry in Britain;[31] the indigenous spirituality of the Kanak in New Caledonia;[32] the ecologically aware theology of Bede Griffiths, Jürgen Moltmann, Philip Sherrard, and Keith Ward;[33] and Hawaiian healing modalities.[34] However, my experiential and cognitive breakthrough, since 2017, has come through exploring tantra, a complex tradition of Hindu and Buddhist psychospiritual practices in which the integration of spiritual and material

[28] Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet*; Gould, *Wonderful Life*; Conway Morris, *Life's Solution.*

[29] See Carlsson et al., *Crisis Integration*; Gersie, *Reflections on Therapeutic Storymaking.*

[30] Berry, *Life Is a Miracle*; Ward, *God, Chance & Necessity.*

[31] See Carr-Gomm, *Elements of the Druid Tradition*; Restall Orr, *Druid Priestess.*

[32] See, for example, Godin, 'Croyances'; Leenhardt, *Do Kamo*; Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne*; Salomon, *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks*; Tjibaou, *Kanaky*; Tjibaou and Missotte, *Kanaké*

[33] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*; Moltmann, *God in Creation*; Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West*; Ward, *Pascal's Fire.*

[34] See Bodin et al., *The Book of Ho'oponopono*; Jim and Arledge, *Wise Secrets of Aloha.*

concerns is central.[35] Ontological insights from tantra informed the writing of *Storytelling and Ecology*, though the book never mentions 'tantra', owing to common misperceptions of this term.

The word 'tantra' means 'weaving'; it's cognate with 'textile' and 'text'. Tantra has extended my awareness of the weave of connections through life and learning in a way that mirrors in my writing the weaving of incident and ideas drawn from experience, imagination, and interdisciplinary study of aspects of ecological and evolutionary science, ecocriticism, ecolinguistics, ecofeminism, psychology, ethnography, mythology, folklore, cryptozoology, performance studies, and imaginative fiction. My dialogic reflective practice includes: interrogating the beliefs and values embedded in stories;[36] delivering storytelling, 'storywork',[37] and talks responsive to clients' and audience's needs and desires; sharing ideas, skills, and criticism with peers; facilitating active learning and spaces for others' voices; and sustaining a dialogue between my reading and writing. A recurring principle is listening: to nature; to stories; to peers, students, audiences, mentors, interviewees, field contacts; to inner awareness. I've applied to my critical writing a methodology akin to that I use in creative work – of wide-ranging reading, fieldwork, and reflective journalling to spark connections between ideas from diverse fields, and then thematising the ideas to delineate a structure for the linear sequence of language by which must be woven the multidimensional texture of argument and narrative. While my fiction interweaves knowledge and principles of

[35] See, for example, Baker, *Tibetan Yoga*; Feuerstein, *Tantra*; Feuerstein, *Yoga*; Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*; Guenther, *The Tantric View of Life*; Guenther and Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra*; Mookerjee and Khanna, *The Tantric Way*; Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*; Rawson, *Tantra*; Santideva, *Therapeutic Tantra*; Simmer-Brown, *Dakini's Warm Breath*; Yeshe, *Introduction to Tantra.*

[36] See Stibbe, *Econarrative.*

[37] Storywork = creative groupwork involving stories and storytelling. Gersie et al., *Storytelling for Nature Connection.*

ecology and connectedness, my critical writing is interwoven with narrative – summaries of stories, snippets of experience, allusions to history or prehistory – and may itself be considered according to Northrop Frye's taxonomy of genres a kind of intertextual 'fiction'.[38] Much of the originality of my work arises from the fertile scope for new weavings that a dialogic breadth of approach allows. The sections of this Thesis seek to unravel from the texts in my Collection the main strands of research woven through them.

Broad need not mean shallow. Tantric meditation training has developed my awareness of the 'invisible depth'[39] of what can be experienced.[40] This has in turn confirmed to me the importance of 'depth' in much of what the narrative arts have to offer in humankind's present quandary. My critical writing alludes to facets of 'depth' – evoked, as my creative work attempts, by voice, metaphor, irony, and the space of what's unsaid or unknown – that weave deeper levels of conscious connection than the 'surface' level of connectedness allowed by poststructuralist, cybernetic, and biosemiotic models of mind and communication (*S&E*, 164–6; '"Future"', 138).[41]

The publications in the Collection vary in the degree to which they carry their own self-justifying research apparatus. *Storytelling and Ecology* is self-contained in this respect. *Deep Time*, being a novel, conceals the research and reflective practice that underpin it. The Gloucestershire books are an intermediate case: each has an introduction and bibliography, and their research process is unpacked in Chapter 4 of *Storytelling and Ecology*. This Thesis therefore interweaves the summarising and framing of research explicitly presented in some of my publications with the explication of other research processes not previously described.

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[38] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism.*

[39] Feuerstein, *Yoga*, 257.

[40] I'm most grateful to my mentors, Maya and Nick, for this training.

[41] See Allen, *Intertextuality*; Cupitt, *What Is a Story?*; Favareau, 'Why This Now?'; Foster, 'Cyberculture'; Wheeler, 'How the Earth Speaks Now'.

§2. Autoethnography as storywriter and storyteller

My Collection is the product of more than 25 years' reflective practice. I began writing *Deep Time* and telling stories in 1995–6 and I've been writing fiction since childhood. I underwent as much training as I could in both writing and storytelling. I put in long hours of unpaid and low-paid creative work, funding this vocation by employment my scientific education opened the door to – science teaching, science publishing – and then by many years of freelance editing and part-time lecturing in creative writing. The ecological themes that always pervaded my stories evolved into heartfelt commitment after my introduction to ecocriticism on an MA in creative writing in 1998–9.[42]

Many books of stories have been commissioned from storytellers, including most of the History Press 'Folk Tales' series to which the three Gloucestershire books belong. I've noticed that storytellers often write stories in much the same words they might tell them; one Folk Tales author told me she used an audio-recorder to this end. The story texts included in *Words of Re-enchantment* are of this kind. The limitation of this approach is that the storyteller's non-verbal communication is lost and the resulting prose can make flat reading. In writing, there are only words, which have to be used artfully to compensate for what's lost from storytelling. Owing to my long commitment to both storytelling and prose fiction, my work has benefited from synergies between these two arts (*Words*, 53–6).

I've always planned stories by devising a structure of key events. In light of Natalie Goldberg's method of non-stop writing,[43] I learnt to write first draft in a liberated loose way, using the structure as a guide. This mirrors the storytelling method I learnt from Hugh Lupton of using a sequence of 'bones' as a mnemonic structure around which to improvise spoken

[42] Richard Kerridge's module on 'Writing and the Environmental Crisis' at Bath Spa University.

[43] Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones.* I thank Heather Douglass for introducing me to this technique.

language.[44] The difference is that in later drafts the writer can refine the text to perfection, whereas the extempore storyteller has to trust what comes to their lips on each unique occasion they tell a story. Beneath the fabric of words and the structure is the heart connection I seek within each story I tell (*S&E,* 35, 94).[45] In quality fiction this heart connection between writer and story involves the mystery of creative inspiration and cannot be reduced to instrumental motives.

Oral composition (using bones) and extempore performance are well suited to retelling traditional tales, like my renditions of 'The Green Ladies of One Tree Hill'[46] and 'The Forest Fire',[47] or personal anecdotes, such as 'The Gloucestershire Flood' (*S&E*, 50–1, 83–4, 57). A very different approach to storytelling is verbatim 'text-telling', to which I was introduced by The Telling Place initiative for purposes of telling Bible stories (*Words*, 63–7). I've employed this technique – more engaging than reading aloud – to perform several of my literary stories, such as 'The Cobra Hissed' and 'The Last Coelacanth' (*EE,* 54–6, 107–8). When composing *original* stories specifically for oral delivery, I've sometimes found a written draft to be helpful. The choice then arising is whether to refine the text as a script and perform it verbatim, as I did with 'The Story of People on the Earth' (*Words,* 160–3), or to discard the text as an interim stage and tell the story extempore, as with 'Trouble with Turtles' (*S&E,* 79–80). The former approach may produce a more polished performance but allows less space for the responsivity I've argued is important to storytelling's ecological utility (*S&E*, 108–9). I now favour the extempore option and have performed extempore adaptations of some of my literary stories, such as 'The Things We Love' (*EE,* 7–20) and

[44] See Lupton, *The Dreaming of Place*, 38–57.

[45] I'm grateful to the late Mary Medlicott for teaching me this principle.

[46] Sources: East and Maddern, *Spirit of the Forest*; Tongue, *Forgotten Folk-Tales of the English Counties.*

[47] Sources: Charlene Collison, oral retelling; Martin, *The Hungry Tigress.*

'The Migrant Maid', as well as other writers' literary stories, such as D.H. Lawrence's 'Sun', retold as 'Sunbath' (*S&E*, 81–2).

In a reverse process, 'The Sun Cafe' (*EE*, 57–89) originated from an improvised telling of the Greek myth of 'Phaethon'[48] within a semi-fictional frame extrapolated from personal experiences in Greece; this I then expanded into a more complex literary story. I tried out extempore tellings of many Gloucestershire folktales at storytelling clubs before I wrote the texts for *Gloucestershire Folk Tales.* Because I embroidered the narration of these written versions to make them engaging to read, I subsequently found I had to *readapt* them for extempore performance, letting go of verbal detail that would make the oral telling too dense and slow. The prose texts in *Gloucestershire Ghost Tales* were closer in feel to literary stories, in part because Hartsiotis and I took inspiration from reading literary ghost stories to help us transform the often scrappy source legends into well-shaped stories.[49] The key challenge in structuring ghost tales was to work out varied permutations of the narrative relationship between the *back story*, in which the ghost is produced, and the *front story*, in which it's encountered. In *Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children*, we had a strong sense of writing for the page, partly because we had to hold the reading age at about nine (the target readership was 7–11), and also because some of the stories were invented ones, not folktales, previously commissioned (for a book never published) to convey local seasonal customs. My contributions of the latter kind were 'To Gloucester a-Mothering' and 'A New Year's Blessing' (*GFTC*, 35–42, 174–82); these too I've adapted for extempore storytelling.

If my experience as a fiction writer has helped me structure stories for storytelling, my experience as a storyteller has helped develop my prose style. When rehearsing extempore tales, I test the sound and rhythm of multiple word pathways for each potential

[48] Sources: Moncrieff, *Classic Myth and Legend*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*.

[49] For example, Haining, *Mammoth Book of Modern Ghost Stories*; Cox and Gilbert, *Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories.*

phrase in the story. This practice, supported by my long experience of professional copy-editing, has invested even the essays in *Words of Re-enchantment*, says Hamish Fyfe, 'with a storyteller's cadence and understanding of language'.[50] Having noticed, as a reader, that where prose is consistently well crafted I can enjoy an author's writing almost irrespective of its subject, I worked over *Deep Time*'s text for years to hone a pace, rhythm, and tone that would carry the reader through a narrative that I knew defied normative expectations in its genre mixing, non-heroic protagonist, narrative extremity, and ecological density. One reviewer said that *Deep Time*'s 'text flows like it is read aloud by the writer'.[51]

One innovative topic in *Storytelling and Ecology* noted by Catherine Heinemeyer is my experimentation with oral stories that 'approach the same story from the perspective of different individuals, or even sometimes organisms, or even sometimes whole species'. [52] Bakhtin's 'polyphony', in which meaning emerges from the dialogic relations between multiple speakers,[53] is characteristic of prose fiction. I've extended this to storytelling in, for example, the agonistic multiple protagonists of 'Trouble with Turtles'; the perspectives of indigenous people, named scientists, and a vanishing animal species in 'The Golden Toad' (*Words*, 141–3);[54] and the multi-storyteller ecobardic epics I've co-produced with Fire Springs (*Words*, 9–10).

My critical writing further extends this paradigm of dialogism beyond the individual story into social spaces – classroom, workshop, story circle, discussion time – in which participants may tell their own stories in turn or voice their responses to stories they've heard or read (*S&E*, 58–62; *Words*, 68–70; '"Future"', 135–9). My assessment of

[50] Hamish Fyfe, quotation on back cover of *Words of Re-enchantment*.

[51] Panos Marinos, Amazon review of *Deep Time.*

[52] Heinemeyer et al., 'Giving Voice to the Non-human'.

[53] Holquist, *Dialogism.*

[54] Sources: Flannery, *The Weather Makers*; Halliday and Adler, *New Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians.*

audience/participant response is largely dialogic too, comprising: observation during storytelling (as teller and as listener); listeners' responses both informal and in pedagogically structured conversations; and reciprocal exchange of critique and experience in various peer groups. At the end of workshops and courses I invite each participant to declare intentions of what they wish to remember and apply in light of what we've done. I also obtain feedback via evaluation forms, comments from event organisers, and published reviews. I evaluate the impact of my writing via similarly dialogic peer-group critique and then responses from readers, publishers, and reviewers.

The common scenario of storytellers 'parachuting in'[55] for single events is limiting of both impact and opportunity to evaluate impact; hence the importance of my study of Jane Flood's storytelling-based landscape projects with whole communities over lengthy timelines, which have provided anecdotal evidence of attitudinal and behavioural change (*S&E*, 154–62). Kendall Haven has marshalled extensive research on the effect of 'story' on people's learning and motivation,[56] though with a bias, in my analysis, towards stories that reinforce neoliberal assumptions (*S&E*, 55–6, 70–1). But there's a paucity of formal audience research for the activity of storytelling,[57] as in other fields of green media and popular culture.[58] Such research could improve understanding of the impact of storytelling. Its prioritisation will require proper funding, since storytellers, like other artists, will tolerate minimal remuneration only for the creative activities they enjoy.

Flood's projects illustrate the importance of funding also to creative work that has an ambitious capacity to make a difference. As well as expanding upon Michael Wilson's

[55] Jane Flood, interview, Stroud, 10 December 2010.

[56] Haven, *Story Proof.*

[57] Willis et al., 'Shifting the Narrative'.

[58] Parham, *Green Media and Popular Culture.*

emphasis on storytelling's propensity for democratic participation,[59] *Storytelling and Ecology* advances arguments for the particular contribution that *expert* storytellers can make to social and ecological agendas – as distinct from the crowd-pleasing entertainment critiqued by Jack Zipes[60] – and the need for this to be adequately remunerated (*S&E*, 42–7, 59–62, 175, 205, 210–12). However, I've also argued against bureaucratic control of professional storytelling (*Words*, 71–3). One of the challenges of promoting sustainability is that of economically sustaining those serving that cause, as I've spelled out with respect to storytellers and also exemplified in telling the true-life story of 'The Byker Incinerator'[61] (*S&E*, 4–5, 64–5).

Autoethnography by authors from historically disadvantaged demographic groups rightly draws attention to the power asymmetries these individuals have to struggle to overcome; white authors, on the other hand, are expected to acknowledge the privilege bestowed upon them by the history of European domination.[62] As a white, middle-class, Cambridge-educated man, I appear to fit the category of maximally privileged, and I have acknowledged in *Storytelling and Ecology* (14, 91) the history of my forebears and countrymen. As a young schoolteacher in Kenya, I experienced both 'white privilege' and also immersive integration within a rural African community; this informed my handling of the identity politics in play in a novel set in Kenya,[63] and then in the African settings of five stories in *Exotic Excursions*, 'The Dead Are Not Dead', and *Deep Time*. However, privilege is relative and individuals' lives are nuanced. At age 11, I suffered severe homophobic bullying that had lasting effects on my confidence and self-worth. At Cambridge, my state-school background and aspects of 'habitus' deriving from my working-class mum and my

[59] Wilson, *Storytelling and Theatre.*

[60] Zipes, 'Foreword'; Zipes, *Relentless Progress*, 141–56.

[61] Sources: Dodds and Hopwood, 'BAN Waste'; https://tyneside.sdf-eu.org/banwaste/home.htm

[62] Iosefo et al., *Wayfinding and Critical Autoethnography.*

[63] 'Kere Nyaga', unpublished.

family's limited means gave me a sense of social inferiority, and, as Bourdieu's theory of the 'field' of cultural production predicts, I've experienced publishing, literature, and storytelling in England as similarly dominated by people educated in private schools.[64]

In my fiction I've applied my experiences of being an outsider, of timidity and struggle, to chart a 'via negativa, a path of vulnerability and uncertainty' (*EE*, 5), by which to explore desires and possibilities of connection with ethnic, sexual, and also non-human 'others', mainly in environments remote from the protagonist's home. Six such stories in *Exotic Excursions* are directly rooted in autobiography. For example, 'Solitude' (*EE*, 30–2) was inspired by my experience of walking alone after dark in the Greek town of Monemvasia. The story adds a fictitious female character, absent from my experience, whom the narrator wishes he had the courage to speak to. The wording of the ending ironically suggests the narrator might have posed a threat to this woman – a deliberately edgy use of irony to convey how an innocent lone man may feel isolated by fear of how he may be perceived. Thus the narrative presents a double vulnerability: exposing a man's timid sensitivity, contra stereotypes of manly power, and trusting that the irony will actually be understood. 'The Sun Cafe' begins with a conflation of other experiences of mine travelling alone in Greece and then carries the narrator through a fictional arc, from refusing connection with people and place, to allowing some interpersonal and environmental connectedness.

Deep Time's protagonist, Brendan, reimagines me as I might have been if I'd remained a scientist and lacked any spiritual inclination: his career has been stymied by cryptozoological obsessions and he's closed in upon his own neurotic thoughts and able to engage with what's around him only through an objectifying gaze. His leadership of the ecological expedition is undermined by alpha-male Curtis Wilder – embodiment of rapacious

[64] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*. My observation about publishing and literature was confirmed by Jeff Cloves, who worked as a reader for many years in a London publishing house (interview, Stroud, 16 July 2014). See also Toynbee, *An Uneasy Inheritance*.

capitalism, domination of others, and a survival-of-the-fittest mentality born of 'poor white' underprivilege (*DT*, 260–1) – to whose line of work in the extractive industries my degree in earth sciences could have given me access. In the same novel, the young photographer Vince Peters carries the thread of my Christian faith and associated attributes of decency, reliability, and chastity. Salome Boann, object of all three men's desire, expresses and embodies a connectedness to nature I longed to experience.

In storytelling, it's not just characters in a story but your very personhood that you share with your listeners. Any negative feelings about yourself can manifest in body language and can thereby discomfort and distract the audience.[65] Early in my storytelling career I realised that to commit to this vocation would involve developing not only skills and imagination, but all aspects of my being. In ways strangely foreshadowed in my fiction, my quest for healing and connectedness led me to tantra, which is teaching me to let go of egoic reactivity and has helped me understand how egoic strivings drive human conflict and the ecological crisis.[66] This personal journey has informed the emphasis on listening, authenticity, and trust in my thinking about storytelling. If a recurring theme of my fiction concerns the desire for and barriers to connection with the 'other', a central finding of my explorations of storytelling is the capacity of this activity to elicit connection with human community and the more-than-human world (*S&E*, 23–8, 61–2, 70–2, 86–7, 92, 116, 162–71, 211–12).

[65] Lupton, *The Dreaming of Place*, 70–84.

[66] See Jeevan, *Embodied Enlightenment*; Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature*; Tolle, *A New Earth.*

§3. Embodied storytelling in the postmodern world

My research for the Society for Storytelling paper[67] that became Chapter 1 of *Storytelling and Ecology* was an open-ended investigation of the interface between contemporary storytelling and ecology. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 storytellers and nature interpreters in Britain who were applying storytelling to purposes of ecological awareness and education.[68] Where possible, I also observed them telling stories to groups in outdoor settings. Chapter 5 draws upon a lengthy interview with Flood. In general, the storytellers were freelance and the nature interpreters were employed by environmental and conservation organisations, although the Eden Project in Cornwall employed a team of theatre-skilled performers called 'storytellers'. The tenor of what I heard and saw, at that time,[69] was upbeat and I gained many insights into ways that storytelling can help renew people's connection with nature. There was a reluctance to confront the public with ecological bad news (*S&E*, 41–2). The interdisciplinary reading I simultaneously undertook added theoretical weight to these insights,[70] but also confronted me with the magnitude of the ecological crisis.[71] I framed

[67] Nanson, *Storytelling and Ecology* (2005).

[68] Permission was obtained to quote from interviews.

[69] This research was done during a period of Labour government when there was an expansion of opportunities for socially beneficial activities.

[70] For example, Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*; Birch and Heckler, *Who Says?*; Brody, *The Other Side of Eden*; Chatwin, *The Songlines*; essays now in Clarke, *Green Man Dreaming*; Cowan, *Elements of the Aborigine Tradition*; Cowna, *Letters from a Wild State*; Davies, 'Voices from the Earth'; Ford, *The Hero with an African Face*; Forest, 'Nature Tales'; Gersie, *Earthtales*; Glotfelty and Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader*; Green, 'Storying Nature'; Heinrich, 'The Artist as Bard'; Letcher, 'The Role of the Bard'; Letcher, 'The Scouring of the Shire'; Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*; Lopez, *Crossing Open Ground*; essays now in Lupton, *The Dreaming of Place*; Marshall, *Nature's Web*; McLuhan, *The Way of the Earth*; Murdock, *The Heroine's Journey*; Nabhan, *Cultures of Habitat*; Pellowski, *The World of Storytelling*; Richards, 'Doing the Story'; Roszak et al., *Ecopsychology*; Sawyer, *The Way of the Storyteller*; Schechner and Appel, *By Means of Performance*; Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*;

my findings about the ecological use of storytelling in terms of responding to modern society's experiential 'disconnection' from nature (*S&E*, 10–14), making clear that humans are inherently part of nature but that some such term as 'nature' is necessary to refer to 'wild organisms and the elements they inhabit' if these are not to be obscured from consideration (*S&E*, 7).

Susan Strauss and Kevin Strauss have published practical guidance on the use of storytelling in nature interpretation.[72] Wilson, Inger Lise Oelrich, Rob Parkinson, and Richard Stone have elucidated the transformative capacities of storytelling, though without applying these to ecology.[73] There are numerous collections of traditional tales with ecological themes, which include varying quantities of commentary and/or suggestions for accompanying activities.[74] Gersie's guidance, in *Earthtales*, on the use of such tales is presented from an art-therapy perspective in which storytelling is a springboard to further group activities designed to encourage pro-environmental change. This approach, which

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Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*; Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*; Sunderland, *In a Glass Darkly*; Yemoto, 'Storytelling versus Interpretation'; Zipes, *Revisiting the Storyteller.*

[71] For example, Carson, *Silent Spring*; Diamond, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee*; Flannery, *The Eternal Frontier*; Flannery, *The Future Eaters*; Godrej, *No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change*; Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*; Harvey, *The Killing of the Countryside*; Leakey and Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction*; Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men*; Mickleburgh, *Beyond the Frozen Sea*; Peterson, *The Deluge and the Ark*; Silverberg, *The Dodo, the Auk and the Oryx*; Thomas et al., 'Extinction Risk from Climate Change'; Wilson, *The Future of Life.*

[72] Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*; Strauss, *Tales with Tails.*

[73] Oelrich, *The New Story*; Parkinson, *Transforming Tales*; Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling*; Wilson, *Storytelling and Theatre.*

[74] For example, Caduto, *Earth Tales from Around the World*; Casey, *Barefoot Book of Earth Tales*; Cutanda, *The Earth Stories Collection*; East and Maddern, *Spirit of the Forest*; Galbraith and Willis, *Dancing with Trees*; Gersie, *Earthtales*; Keable, *The Natural Storyteller*; Lupton, *The Songs of Birds*; MacDonald, *Earth Care*; Schneidau, *Botanical Folk Tales*; Schneidau, *River Folk Tales*; Schneidau, *Woodland Folk Tales*; Singh, *A Forest of Stories*; Strauss, *Tales with Tails.*

Gersie calls 'storymaking',[75] underpinned *Storytelling for a Greener World*. My collaboration with Gersie and 19 other contributors on this book deepened my understanding of many aspects of the application of storytelling to environmental concerns; it also crystallised my intention in *Storytelling and Ecology* to tease out the particular qualities of storytelling, as an activity in its own right, that have the potential to promote ecological awareness, connection, and change.

Storytelling differs from writing, film, and other technological narrative media in that, like theatre, it's experienced in the embodied, collective presence of all participants, both speakers and audience. It differs from theatre in that there's no 'fourth wall' and the listeners have to imagine the scenes in their mind's eye, as when reading fiction.[76] *Storytelling and Ecology* argues that storytelling supports the 'direct sensory awareness' that, following David Abram's phenomenological argument,[77] 'is necessary for us to truly comprehend the needs of the world and respond to them' (*S&E*, 25).

In stories, unlike in exposition, 'actforms'[78] – patterns of action in time – 'are imagined as embodied through our identification with protagonists who are embodied within the story's world' (*S&E*, 1).[79] The storyteller can embody in their own body the stance, gestures, and reactions of characters; they can also evoke, through an interplay of gesture and imagination, 'a spatial sense of each scene' (*S&E*, 203). When I'm writing prose narrative, I similarly imagine in my body the focalising characters' embodied experience and spatial choreography so that the writing evokes an often intense sense of embodiment within

[75] Gersie and King, *Storymaking in Education and Therapy*; Gersie, *Storymaking in Bereavement*; Gersie, *Reflections on Therapeutic Storymaking*.

[76] Harley, 'Playing with the Wall'.

[77] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

[78] Cupitt, *What Is a Story?*

[79] See Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*, 283–8.

physical environments.[80] The autobiographical story 'Bogoria' (*EE*, 21–5), for example, evokes the bodily sensations as well as sights and sounds I experienced as I ran out of water during a solo hike across Kenya's Rift Valley. *Deep Time*'s scenario of a first-person everyman out of his depth in the wilds takes inspiration from Hammond Innes's use of that formula in his adventure novels, in which struggle with the elements usually parallels the drama among the human characters.[81] André Brink's handling of this trope in *An Instant in the Wind* is more sensuously and emotionally intense, conjoining wilderness survival with sexual tension. *Deep Time* extrapolates a comparable nexus of tensions to the extreme environmental conditions my time-travelling characters encounter in the geological past, which are conveyed through Brendan's intense narration of his own embodied experiences and his awareness of other characters' and creatures' embodied presence. His team's need for food, water, shelter, breathable air, and equable temperature, in prehistoric environments where none of these can be taken for granted, generates many pressures and turns in the plot.

Thus a premise of both my fiction and my theorisation of storytelling is that, as in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body as 'intersection between humans and the world',[82] the body is the locus where mind, culture, language, and story encounter ecology. In storytelling, the narration of characters' embodied experience is itself embodied in the direct encounter of storyteller and listeners in some physical setting. Whereas studies in ecopoetics, biosemiotics, and cultural ecology contrive complex arguments to try to connect written culture to ecological reality,[83] *Storytelling and Ecology* argues that storytelling is inherently

[80] See Nanson, 'The Brightly Lit Stage of the Inner World'.

[81] Most relevant here are those of his novels set in wild remote landscapes: Innes, *The Big Footprints*; Innes, *The Blue Ice*; Innes, *Campbell's Kingdom*; Innes, *The Doomed Oasis*; Innes, *Golden Soak*; Innes, *High Stand*; Innes, *The Land God Gave to Cain*; Innes, *The Lonely Skier*; Innes, *Solomon's Seal*; Innes, *The Strange Land.*

[82] Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 17.

[83] For example, Bate, *The Song of the Earth*; Rueckert, 'Literature and Ecology'; Wheeler, 'How the

embedded in an ecological community of living people in a shared space and can directly elicit conscious connection. Moreover, storytelling consumes few resources except any transport needed to bring the participants together. The situation becomes *more* ecological when storytelling takes place outdoors, where nature can exercise agency that co-determines what's experienced (*S&E*, 5–7, 28–9, 154, 163–4).

Whereas contemporary culture tends to emphasise self-expression, storytelling is an intrinsically relational activity and so participation in storytelling necessarily involves you in listening. My reflection on listeners' responses to stories and on my own experiences listening to other storytellers inspired my insights about, for example, hard-hitting historical stories; authenticity and stillness; and the use of high style in mythic stories ('Jumping', 141–2; *S&E*, 41–2, 68–70, 201–2, 208). Flood's landscape projects were built upon 'listening' activities undertaken by both facilitator and community participants: listening to the land, to the memories of elders, to the folkloric record, to children's responses and ideas, to stories developed and performed by Flood or other participants. Emergent from these projects was the concept of 'the listening place', referring both to specific locations in which storytelling takes place and to a receptive state of consciousness (*S&E*, 154–62). This provided a springboard, in Chapter 5 of *Storytelling and Ecology*, for examining the dynamics of listening to storytelling, drawing upon Walter J. Ong's study of orality, Chloe Goodchild's teaching of the authentic 'naked voice', and Oelrich's application of storytelling to peacework.[84]

The chapter argues that storytelling is well suited to sustaining a dialectic between internal processes of personal transformation and the social negotiation of meaning and values, since both telling and listening to stories take you inwards in your imagination and

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Earth Speaks Now'; Zapf, 'Creative Matter and Creative Mind'; Zapf, 'Cultural Ecology'.

[84] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*; Goodchild, *The Naked Voice*; Oelrich, *The New Story*.

feelings and simultaneously connect you outwards to the community of others present. A cybernetic model of self and story existing 'entirely on the surface'[85] allows a story's plot to be communicated, but no space for story's depth of metaphor, irony, and feeling to engage our capacity for heartfelt responsivity or inner transformation.[86] In the storytelling encounter, the reciprocal gaze between speaker and listener and the acoustic impact of the speaking voice throughout the listener's body mean that storyteller and listeners are reciprocally engaged as conscious beings.[87] Nuances of voice, rhythm, and pause enable a dialogic 'entrainment' of storyteller and listeners,[88] in which the storyteller is 'listening' to the listeners and from which the storyteller's choices of words, tone, and gesture emerge. This model of inward and outward listening can give access to points of stillness in which new thoughts, feelings, and motivations may arise. It has affinity to meditation, I've suggested, but storytelling is also a collective experience and each story can open particular 'structures of space' charged with particular 'patterns of desire' (*S&E,* 162–71).

Writing *Storytelling and Ecology* during the COVID-19 pandemic, when storytelling migrated to Zoom, I was curious how well the experience of story-listening could transpose into this new context. Aside from technical limits of sound and image quality, which no doubt will improve, I've suggested that Zoom flattens the 3D sensitivity of human vision and hearing, limits 'energetic' connectedness (see §9), and disallows the vulnerability of physically embodied presence (*S&E*, 172). A 'text must exist exist in some kind of (physical) medium', says Timothy Morton interpreting Derrida, and this medium conditions the

[85] Cupitt, *What Is a Story?*, 66.

[86] See Foster, 'Cyberculture'; Hughes, *Winter Pollen,* 136–53.

[87] See Buber, *I and Thou*; Kempton, 'The Magic of Shared Awareness'; Ong, *Orality and Literacy.*

[88] Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind,* 185–205.

experience of the text;[89] in storytelling, the medium is the breath, sound, and gaze passing through the space between the participants.

The internet and mobile digital devices have brought intensive connectivity at the metonymic level of conveying information, but at the price of fragmenting people's capacity for attention.[90] *Storytelling and Ecology* argues that the embodied attention that storytelling elicits is conducive to the empathy, compassion, and care – towards other people, organisms, and places – that are fundamental to any committed response to ecological crisis (*S&E*, 171–3, 192). Examples I've reported include the respectful listening, in public storytelling sessions, among people with different belief systems; the impact of individuals sharing in person their own lived experiences that challenge the narratives of the powerful; and the empowerment that individuals receive from having their voice heard by attentive listeners (*Words*, 62, 69; *S&E*, 15–17). The empathetic impact of hearing another's story is dramatically conveyed in Dan Keding's tale 'The Two Warriors', which I've retold as 'The Two Champions' (*Words*, 127–8).[91]

Having sometimes noticed in ecocritical studies an element of wishful thinking that the texts and analyses in question may, in some undefined way, help promote ecological awareness, I've sought to engage with the 'gap of desire between *talk* (including stories) about sustainability and *action* that does something about it' ('Jumping', 141).[92] Ecolinguistics shows how the ways we live reflect the beliefs woven through the discourses we're exposed to, and how the discovery of alternative thinking will suggest new ways of

[89] Morton, 'The Liminal Space between Things', 271.

[90] Foster, 'Cyberculture'; Smith, *The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is*.

[91] I received this story through oral tradition via other storytellers. Permission was obtained from Keding to include my retelling in *Words of Re-enchantment.*

[92] See Kollmuss and Agyeman, 'Mind the Gap'; Rueckert, 'Literature and Ecology'.

living;[93] yet the motivation must be found to put the new thinking into practice. In *Storytelling and Ecology*, I theorise how storytelling may contribute to changes in motivation productive of changes in behaviour. Aspects of this are reflexively informed by and applicable to my fiction-writing practice.

§4. Space, desire, and responsivity

Contrary to received dogma that conflict is crucial to a compelling story,[94] I regard conflict as but one facet of a more fundamental quality, *tension*, that imparts narrative traction. Tension engages the audience in the 'space between' – for example, in the space between thesis and antithesis where a dialectic is presented between contradictory ideas, as in 'The Things We Love' where the indigenous villagers permit only male visitors to see their shrine but a female visitor sees this as discriminatory towards women. In fiction, space exists as that which is unstated – what Hemingway calls 'omissions'.[95] When the reader is granted the agency to infer something, they're also given space to make their own interpretation, which may differ from another reader's or what the author had in mind. The author surrenders some control over what's understood to be happening in the story, or what it means.

In my fiction, I've sought to engage the reader by crafting various kinds of 'space between'. Tension arises, as *suspense*, in the space of time before we find out what's going to happen: as, for example, in 'The Royalist Ferryman' (*GGT*, 71–5) when some Parliamentarian troopers, during the Civil War, take the ferry across the Severn estuary in misty darkness and discover they've disembarked on a reef and the tide is turning. There's

[93] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics.*

[94] For example, Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots*; McKee, *Story*; Zuckerman, *Writing the Blockbuster Novel.*

[95] Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing.*

tension in the space of *mystery* about what's happening, or why: as when, in *Deep Time*, Vince exhibits a changed manner towards Curtis, which mystifies Brendan (and thus the reader) because Vince daren't tell him he saw Curtis direct the killing of the forest ranger Moyedou. There's tension in the *gap* between a character and their fulfilment of a desire, as in Brendan's suppressed desire to discover cryptids (animals unknown to science). Certainly, there's tension in the *conflict* between competing desires, as in Brendan's and Curtis's rivalry for Salome, which, because she has the ability they both lack to navigate through time, is coupled to the conflict between Curtis's desire to exploit the natural resources of prehistory and Brendan's desire to preserve and study them. There can be tension in the *relationship* between characters or between characters and setting, as in Brendan's fluctuating experience of prehistoric wilderness as threatening, challenging, fascinating, and evocative of longing. Tension may be elicited in the reader's reactions to psychological complexity, as where Curtis evinces toxic attitudes towards Africans, women, and wildlife but also an expertise and charm that deceive Brendan into giving him the benefit of the doubt. There's the Bakhtinian tension in *discrepancies* between what's thought and said by different characters[96] – as in the epistolary structure of 'Flower People of the Pamirs' (*EE*, 109–49), where the cuts between the three protagonists' diaries highlight ironic contrasts between their perspectives – and the tension of *dramatic irony*, such as the failure of the narrator of 'The Sun Cafe' to recognise the living gods the reader may perceive he has encountered. Tension arises from *hesitation* between alternative interpretations – such as the Todorovian uncertainty,[97] in 'The Land of Dreams' (*GFTC*, 60–8), as to whether a visit to the dream kingdom was just a dream or a transportation into some Platonic otherworld – or when *symbolism* competes with realism, as

[96] See Holquist, *Dialogism.*

[97] Todorov, *The Fantastic.*

in the escalating Freudian representation, in ‘The White Hoover’ (*EE*, 41–9), of the vacuum cleaner with which a sexually intimidating therapist addresses a young man’s allergies.

Tension is also elicited on the finer scale of omissions of information, explanation, or explicit emotions, where again the reader’s cognition is allowed to fill the gap. On the finest scale, tension arises in the space between words, as Ted Hughes observes of the ‘sprung rhythm’ of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s verse, which requires the reader ‘to be a partner and dance’.[98] I’ve sought to sculpt such microstructure of space into my writing through the careful editing described in §2; especially so in *Deep Time*, whose prehistoric settings and specialised subject matter demanded more detailed description than with more familiar content.

All these means of opening space thus not only sustain narrative traction but also engage the reader in co-creation of the imaginative experience and thereby elicit a responsiveness to something beyond them – in Lawrence’s words, ‘a new relationship between ourselves and the universe’.[99] However, the technique of ‘ekphrasis’, applied beyond this term’s original meaning of description of works of art, to synaesthetically describe scenes and experiences in ways evocative of altered states of consciousness,[100] together with experiences of stillness in storytelling, pointed me towards the possibility of space in which tension *relaxes*, the narrative pauses, and the reader has a deeper opportunity to discover their response (see *S&E*, 202–3).[101] This strategy goes against contemporary commercial expectations – especially of the adventure and science fiction (SF) genres in which *Deep Time* partakes – that you must keep the story moving. I was so keen to sustain traction in *Deep Time* that, even in scenes where the action pauses to allow ekphrasis and a more

[98] Hughes, *Winter Pollen*, 335.

[99] Lawrence, ‘Art and Morality’, p. 526.

[100] Alexiou, *After Antiquity*; Doody, *The True Story of the Novel.*

[101] Nanson, ‘The Brightly Lit Stage of the Inner World’.

paradisal experience of nature, I usually maintained some thread of tension, such as the erotic tension between Brendan and Salome. In consequence of the development of my thinking while writing *Storytelling and Ecology*, I've begun to experiment, in fiction as well as storytelling, with making spaces in which tension is allowed to relax.

Space for the audience's response can be built into oral tales in similar ways as in fiction. Beginning from a Stibbean analysis[102] of the beliefs apparent in 'The Green Ladies of One Tree Hill' and my adaptation of Ben Haggarty's 'Bull Hunt' (*S&E*, 74),[103] Chapter 2 of *Storytelling and Ecology* demonstrates how the multivalent symbolism in 'mythic stories'[104] can produce within the listener an internal 'dialogue' cognizing alternative interpretations. The chapter also describes the use of Gersiean 'response tasks'[105] to invite listeners to articulate their responses to the emotional space in my telling of the historical story 'The Tasmanian Genocide' (*S&E*, 65–6).[106] However, an oral tale isn't a fixed text like a prose story. Drawing upon Peirce's semiotics,[107] I've explained how nuances of a story's telling and the ways it may be interpreted are elicited by a non-verbal dialogue between storyteller and listeners. As Chapter 5 of my book elucidates, the pauses of silence between words and phrases are key to the dynamic texture of space in this dialogue. When space is then also provided for listeners to discuss the story, the internal and non-verbal dialogue extend into an *external* dialogue negotiating the story's meaning and import among the community of listeners in the physical space of the venue. Not only can such discussion help to elicit

[102] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics.*

[103] Source: Haggarty and Brockbank, *Mezolith*, 8–20.

[104] I use 'mythic stories' as 'a collective term for myths, wonder tales and legends with supernatural content' (*S&E*, 180).

[105] Gersie, *Reflections on Therapeutic Storymaking.*

[106] Sources: Diamond, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee*; Flannery, *The Future Eaters*; Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo.*

[107] See Cobley, *Narrative.*

transformative 'cognition'[108] with respect to the topics in play (see §5), but the dynamics of these conversations can help to nurture the agency, responsivity, and empathy the ecological crisis demands,[109] as Gersie has witnessed in storymaking work with many individuals and groups (*S&E*, 44, 49–53, 69–77, 92, 166–7).[110]

In the course of developing *Storytelling for a Greener World*, the editorial team let go of a desire to find stories and ways of telling them that would predictably elicit pro-environmental behavioural change. My own interviews suggested an inclination among storytellers to resist pressures to convey specific messages.[111] *Storytelling and Ecology* emphasises that the relational nature of storytelling necessitates respect for listeners' agency in discovering their own response, a view supported by a key distinction in tantric practice between *intention* and *goal-seeking.*[112] Intention brings into play your desires – such as desires to protect or restore ecosystems – but leaves the outcome open, whereas goal-seeking fixates on a desired outcome, imposes your will upon others in order to bring it about, and thereby leads to power games, conflict, and the reduplication of problems (*S&E*, 19–20, 70–2).[113]

The protagonist's pursuit of their desire is a central concept of story structure.[114] Chapter 3 of *Storytelling and Ecology* unpacks the dynamics of desire in a range of stories that involve different aspects of ecology, extending the scope of 'desire' as a structural principle to whole species and even ecosystems. Each time I write a story, I identify the

[108] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction.*

[109] Gersie et al., 'Introduction'.

[110] Gersie, 'Bringing Nature Home'; Gersie, *Reflection on Therapeutic Storymaking*; Gersie, 'Wild but with Purpose'.

[111] See also MacLellan, 'Stories in Place'; Willis et al., 'Shifting the Narrative'.

[112] I thank Maya for her emphasis on this distinction.

[113] See Tolle, *A New Earth.*

[114] Brayfield, *Bestseller*; McKee, *Story.*

desires of the main characters. For each chapter in *Deep Time*, I not only kept in mind the core desire of each character in play but also identified their immediate desire within the chapter. Characters' desires erect lines of tension through the whole story. To manage *Deep Time*'s multi-stranded plot, I made a chart to track through its 116 chapters the parallel currents of tension between the major characters' desires.

My critical writing aligns the gap of desire between talk and action with the 'gap' between story characters and the fulfilment of their desire.[115] Peter Brooks theorises how characters in fiction provide traction between desires the author brings into a story and desires the reader vicariously experiences through identifying with the characters and their desires.[116] 'Jumping the Gap of Desire' and *Storytelling and Ecology* apply this principle to storytelling. For example, I've shown how an occasion of telling 'The Beech Tree' (*S&E*, 95–7) extended the chain of desire – that beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) may grow and reproduce – to encompass the commissioning client, the storyteller (me), the tree in the story, the listeners, and the living tree in whose presence I told the story. A character's desire line is punctuated by 'turning points', teaches Robert McKee, at which the story is 'turned' by either revelation or action.[117] Such turning points, I've suggested, can be epiphanies in which a space opens, for the character within the story, to make a conscious choice, just as 'each moment of meditative stillness is a "bardo", a space between', from which some new pathway can emerge in place of habit-driven reaction (*S&E*, 169).[118] The listener or reader can vicariously share in such moments in a story, hence the importance of giving space to the audience during these turning points. An example I discuss is Ernest Thompson Seton's epiphany – in the true-life story of 'The Currumpaw Wolf' (*S&E*, 109–12) – when, having

[115] See McKee, *Story*.

[116] Brooks, *Reading for the Plot.*

[117] McKee, *Story.*

[118] The use of 'bardo' in this context is from Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.*

caught the wolf, Seton looks into his eyes, perceives him as a conscious being, and chooses not to kill him.[119] The consequences of this turning point in Seton's life for American environmentalism were considerable.[120]

In tantra, desire is understood to be the engine of transformation, so long as it remains open and does not 'grasp' to achieve a goal.[121] Brooks compares narrative to psychoanalysis in its ability to open a psychological space in which there can be transformative 'dialogic transactions between the "investments of desire" of narrator and audience' (*S&E*, 116).[122] A core paradox *Storytelling and Ecology* addresses is how to use storytelling to facilitate change while refraining from imposing one's will on others. Whereas therapy or meditation invites in the subject a generalised space for whatever might emerge from their inner being, a story brings the audience's attention to particular themes and subject matter. My book advocates composing and telling stories in such a way that a 'structure of space' is unfolded in which the audience may exercise their agency of response, and that this space be charged with 'patterns of desire' through which the narrator's desires – for aspects of the world to change in positive ways – may mobilise, without attempting to control, the listeners' desires. This argument applies to prose narrative as well as storytelling, but in storytelling the process involves a community of listeners, as opposed to a solitary reader, and is more dynamic, because nuances of the play of space and desire are emergent from the in-person dialogic relations between storyteller and listeners. Nevertheless, a published story will be read by multiple readers. One way or another, therefore, stories are a vehicle by which desire may drive *collective* transformation analogous to the individual transformation of the spiritual practitioner or therapy patient (*S&E*, 46, 115–17, 162, 168–9, 192–4).

[119] Source: Seton, 'Lobo, the King of Currumpaw'.

[120] Jones, *Epiphany in the Wilderness.*

[121] Epstein, *Open to Desire*; Odier, *Desire*; Yeshe, *Introduction to Tantra.*

[122] Quoting Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 234.

The ultimate ‘gap’ in a story is an ending that withholds closure and invites the audience to resolve the story in some way through their response. The relational nature of storytelling, I’ve argued, requires the storyteller to manage the transition out of the story – especially with downbeat historical stories, which can have strong emotional impact when presented with high facticity. Means of transition include: compassionate restraint; consciously holding space and silence; music; explicit comment; follow-up discussion; and segue between different kinds of stories (‘Jumping’, 141–6, 149–50; *S&E*, 69–70, 83, 168; *Words*, 119–20). In historical stories I’ve composed about species extinctions, such as ‘The Passenger Pigeon’ (*Ectopistes migratorius*) (*Words*, 114–16)[123] and ‘The Golden Toad’ (*Bufo periglenes*), the desire the species should survive and flourish can never be fulfilled and so these stories deliver a ‘gestus’[124] back into the present world towards desire to preserve *other* endangered species (‘Jumping’, 146; *S&E*, 97–100).

§5. Utopian ecobardic mission

Open endings are characteristic of a genuinely utopian impetus in imaginative fiction.[125] The respect for people’s agency emphasised in my critical writing requires ‘utopia’ to be understood as process rather than template (*Words*, 99, 136; *S&E*, 45, 77; “Future”, 132).[126] In SF both the ‘critical utopia’ and the ‘critical dystopia’ open up possibilities and provoke cognition.[127] *Deep Time* depicts the small-scale utopian societies of a contemporary hippie

[123] Sources: Day, *The Doomsday Book of Animals*; Silverberg, *The Dodo, the Auk and the Oryx.*

[124] Zipes, *Creative Storytelling*.

[125] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*; Wegner, ‘Utopianism’.

[126] See Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, 80–100; Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, Pak, ‘“All Energy Is Borrowed”’.

[127] Baccolini and Moylan, *Dark Horizons*; Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*; Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*.

commune and two tribal communities located in deep time, as well as two dystopian tribal communities displaced deeper into time and the present-day dystopia of civil war. Threaded through the expedition team's largely agonistic experiences is Salome's perception of prehistoric wilderness as a space of communion with nature. The changes that Brendan discovers upon his return to the present include the ending of the civil war and the protection of the forest as a Biosphere Reserve, an 'ecotopian'[128] enclave where the indigenous Fênbé can sustain their traditional culture as stewards of the forest and choose what they wish to accept from global civilisation. The extent of other changes is unrevealed, as is the extent to which such changes have arisen from the time travellers' impact on the past rather than from causation within the present. *Deep Time* supports the principle of transformative possibility by conceptualising time travel as able to change the course of time, as in Ray Bradbury's 'A Sound of Thunder' – in contrast to the deterministic premise, seen in Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife,* that the course of time is unchangeable.

My post-Brexit dystopian story 'The Migrant Maid' ends with business tycoon John Corbett[129] considering whether, out of love for the woman who's opened his eyes to the destructive effects of financial derivatives, he should write off the vast amount of debt he controls and embrace the consequences of doing so. This suggestion of utopian possibility marks the story as a *critical* dystopia. In '"The Future Has Gone Bad, We Need a New One"',[130] I argue that default *uncritical* dystopian settings are 'well suited to commercial exploitation in violent, action-packed thrillers' that serve the neoliberal imperative that profits be maximised above all else. Hence a synergy between the prevalence of such SF dystopias that makes a dystopian future seem inevitable and the preclusion of utopian change in the real

[128] Callenbach, *Ecotopia.*

[129] I've renamed him John Trumpet in my oral retelling.

[130] Quoting Canavan, 'Preface', xi.

world by neoliberal dogma that there's no alternative to the 'necrocapitalism'[131] destroying ecology and society ('"Future"', 131).

A premise of *An Ecobardic Manifesto* is that there's a complicity between such free-market fundamentalism and postmodernist antipathy to artistic 'commitment' that implies compliance with some grand narrative. The manifesto accepts from ecocriticism that ecological crisis imposes a grand narrative amidst the narrative diversity that paradoxically must also be sustained.[132] How, then, do the arts respond? The 'dark ecology' perspective,[133] advocated by Paul Kingsnorth and Dougald Hine's *Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto*, accepts civilisational collapse as inevitable; *Uncivilisation* encourages writers to abandon commitment in favour of post-hope aesthetic opportunity. The disavowal of responsibility towards the scale of suffering that collapse would bring makes this outlook unconsciously complicit with uncritical dystopia and the self-serving agenda of far-right survivalists.[134]

By contrast, *An Ecobardic Manifesto*, published one year before *Uncivilisation* (in 2008), demands of artists the responsibility of hope. However bleak the world's prospects may seem, Tolkien insisted, the future can never be known and so we must not succumb to despair.[135] The manifesto advocates an emerging multi-stranded movement in the arts that's responsive to contemporary conditions of ecological crisis but has yet to coalesce into a paradigm shift that could incrementally transform culture and build momentum for change (see also 'Jumping', 150–1; *S&E*, 194; *Words*, 97). The manifesto proposes, 'as a start', five

[131] Banerjee, 'Necrocapitalism'.

[132] Clarke, 'Science, Theory, and Systems'; Glotfelty, 'Introduction'; Wheeler and Dunkerley, 'Introduction'.

[133] Morton, *The Ecological Thought.*

[134] Caminero-Santangelo, 'The Essay'; Kingsnorth and Monbiot, 'Should We Seek to Save Industrial Civilisation?'

[135] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth.*

principles pertaining to: a sense of time and place; cultural leadership; honouring the audience; well-wrought craft; and re-enchantment (*Ecobardic*, 1). This 'ecobardic' approach underpins my work discussed in this Thesis and provides a mission statement for Fire Springs and also the small press, Awen, I took over in 2015.[136]

The urgency of responding to ecological crisis can produce expectations that art be used instrumentally to engineer the required change. *An Ecobardic Manifesto* is consistent with *Storytelling and Ecology* in resisting the reduction of art to propaganda. Kim Stanley Robinson puts it this way: 'I completely believe in art as a political act. But it never works unless it works as art first.'[137] A creative tension has to be sustained between commitment and aesthetics, as I learnt in my previous involvement with Christian artists who struggled with expectations that art must communicate the gospel (*Words*, 92–5).

When researching the critic and publisher's reader Edward Garnett for 'The Writer and the Reader', about his influence on Edward Thomas, I detected an affinity between *An Ecobardic Manifesto* and Garnett's promotion of literature that was of high quality but also responsive to the world. 'Garnett had no time for "art for art's sake",' writes Helen Smith; 'the one thing he demanded was that literature should engage with life.'[138] This affinity had personal interest for me because Garnett's grandfather Richard Garnett was the brother of my great-great-great-grandfather Thomas Garnett.[139] My article reports my discovery in Edward Garnett's critical writings that he was a pioneering ecocritic,[140] and suggests that in the two generations of writers whom Garnett nurtured 'we see the formation of an ecologically rooted impetus in British literature … whose subsequent efflorescence includes' the New Nature

[136] Awen was founded in 2003 by Kevan Manwaring, who remained its publisher until 2015.

[137] Quoted in Miller, 'Interview with Kim Stanley Robinson', 4.

[138] Smith, *The Uncommon Reader*, 277.

[139] Heilbrun, *The Garnett Family*.

[140] See Garnett, 'Edward Thomas'; Garnett, *Friday Nights*; Garnett, 'Introduction'.

Writing of recent years ('Writer', 51).[141] Among *An Ecobardic Manifesto*'s list of exemplars are some of Garnett's protégés – Thomas, Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, H.E. Bates, E.M. Forster, W.H. Hudson – as well as later writers they inspired. On the basis of exhaustive study of biographies, correspondence (including the collected letters of Thomas to Garnett held by the University of Texas at Austin), and Garnett's critical writings,[142] 'The Writer and the Reader' challenges Matthew Hollis's representation of Garnett as a conservative force resisting Thomas's development into a poet[143] and shows how Garnett supported this evolution, including through encouraging him to write the lyrical 'sketches', published by Garnett's firm Duckworth, that were Thomas's staging post to writing verse.[144]

A further dialectic arises between the synthesis of commitment and artistic worth, on one hand, and the commercial demands that impede both these aims. *An Ecobardic Manifesto* draws upon Hyde's conceptualisation of art as 'gift':[145] both in the inspiration of the artist by social, environmental, and spiritual sources, and in the ways that art 'may emancipate people's spirits, nourish their lives with meaning, cultivate their intelligence and imagination, and inspire social change' (*Ecobardic*, 10). Yet, Hyde recognises, art must partake in commodity exchange out of economic necessity. The artist has to earn a livelihood and so do

[141] On 'New Nature Writing', see Cowley, 'The New Nature Writing'.

[142] Bates, *Edward Garnett*; Cooke, *Edward Thomas*; Eckert, *Edward Thomas*; Farjeon, *Edward Thomas*; Garnett, 'Edward Thomas'; Garnett, 'Introduction'; Garnett, 'Some Letters of Edward Thomas'; Garnett, 'Thomas, Philip Edward'; Heilbrun, *The Garnett Family*; Hollis, *Now All Roads Lead to France*; Jefferson, *Edward Garnett*; Kirkham, 'Edward Garnett'; Moore, *The Life and Letters of Edward Thomas*; Smith, 'Edward Garnett'; Thomas, *Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley*; Thomas, *A Selection of Letters to Edward Garnett*; collected letters from Edward Thomas to Edward Garnett, Garnett Family Collections, Harry Ranson Center, University of Texas at Austin. Smith's biography of Garnett, *The Uncommon Reader*, was published after my article; see Nanson, Review of *The Uncommon Reader*.

[143] Hollis, *Now All Roads Lead to France.*

[144] Thomas, *Rest and Unrest*; Thomas, *Light and Twilight*; Thomas, *Cloud Castle and Other Papers.*

[145] Hyde, *The Gift.*

those who disseminate artistic work. ‘The Writer and the Reader’ argues that, in the navigation of this conundrum, Garnett’s career is instructive.

Garnett was paid to discover and cultivate literary talent that would make money for the publishers who employed him. His instincts were sound and he helped them make money, yet he was loyal to his protégés and the kind of literature he believed in, even at risk of conflict with his employers; and he was troubled by the intensifying prioritisation, emanating from the United States, of books’ commercial appeal and also by the popularisation of the periodical press wrought in Britain by Alfred Harmsworth (Viscount Northcliffe).[146] Garnett was dismayed by the impact of these changes on Thomas, a freelance writer, who was forced to do more work for less money.[147] My analysis of Thomas’s correspondence, in ‘The Writer and the Reader’, assembles Garnett’s sustained but unsuccessful efforts to help Thomas find a secure income before Thomas resolved the problem by enlisting to fight in the war that killed him. Enthusiasm for that war was drummed up by Harmsworth’s newspapers, in accordance with a business model that sought to maximise profit by reflecting back people’s prejudices as well as cutting costs.[148] Thus Garnett witnessed the ancestry of the anti-utopian media capitalism of our time, in which multinational corporations seek *maximal* profit and reject the ethics of a social contract.[149] My article interprets Garnett’s business model, by contrast, as one of making *sufficient* profit so that the publishers who employed him might sustainably provide the social good of worthwhile books that cultivated readers’ cognition, sensibility, and knowledge. The same economic logic applies here as when destructive profit-maximising exploitation of natural resources is compared with sustainable use of them.

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[146] Garnett, *Friday Nights*; Jefferson, *Edward Garnett*; Smith, *The Uncommon Reader*.

[147] Francis-Williams, ‘Northcliffe’; Garnett, ‘Introduction’; Thomas, *Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley*.

[148] Francis-Williams, ‘Northcliffe’.

[149] See Samans, *Human-Centred Economics.*

In my critique of the media landscape (circa 2000) in 'Faith, Freedom, and the Fast-Capitalist Commodification of Story' (*Words*, 103–12), written for a Christian readership, I connect the hegemonic truth claims of capitalism to those of Christianity, that is, to the very principle that there is absolute, incontrovertible truth that can be known, the same principle that has carried over into dogmatic scientific materialism (see §9).[150] The article advocates, therefore, 'faith' as action in the face of uncertainty, including the production of narrative art that's 'true to its inspiration' and willing to 'challenge the present order and question our certainties and imagine creative alternatives' (*Words*, 111). This liberatory commitment coheres with the spirit of *An Ecobardic Manifesto.*

Any ecobardic art should have the potential to provoke 'cognition' so that you see the world anew in ways suggesting ecotopian change. Darko Suvin deploys this concept in discussing SF, whose characteristic ingredients of 'novum' and 'cognitive dissonance' are conducive to 'cognition', which he clarifies includes affective responses.[151] '"The Future Has Gone Bad, We Need a New One"' reports on my experience from 14 years' teaching SF, including a period when my undergraduate module on 'Writing Fantasy and Science Fiction' may have been the only one dedicated to that subject in the United Kingdom.[152] I observed that students increasingly brought to their reading of SF certain normative expectations, deriving from their exposure to narratives propagated by the mass media, that limited their ability to experience Suvinian cognition. I sought to help them develop this cognitive (and affective) capacity in their reading – and hence the potential to write their own stories productive of cognition – by assigning them provocative stories to read, prioritising dialogic

[150] Maduro, 'Globalization and Christianity'.

[151] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction.*

[152] I was told that it was by students who'd chosen to study creative writing at my university specifically because our programme offered this module.

activities during class time, giving the students space to formulate their own responses, and problematising narrative formulas that reinforce neoliberal assumptions (‘“Future”’, 134–9).

Owing to the formal evaluative processes built into this university learning context – summative and formative coursework assessment, plus anonymous evaluation forms completed by students – I was able to evaluate more thoroughly than in my storytelling work the effectiveness of my methodology and the impact of the stories used. When the advent of online evaluation forms stopped me seeing the students’ formal evaluation of my teaching, I asked them to complete paper evaluation forms as well. ‘Ghost’ students – who submitted coursework after attending no classes – provided an unsought ‘control’ by which I could compare the output of students who’d not been exposed to my teaching with that of those who had.

Dialogic classroom activities require the cultivation of ‘trust, empathy, and respect for different views’ (‘“Future”’, 135). In spite of Fredric Jameson’s observation that globalisation relentlessly closes utopian loopholes,[153] my writings affirm that ‘polders of utopia’ can occur wherever people come together for peaceful interchange (‘“Future”’, 139; *S&E*, 212).[154] A recurring theme in my writing are such enclaves of fellowship that may perhaps be as important a change agent as the stories shared in them: the classroom; peer groups; storytelling clubs and festivals (*Words*, 63–6, 68–70, 87–90, 98–102); Garnett’s and Thomas’s circles of literary friends (‘Writer’, 53–4); the transient community of tourists and gods depicted in ‘The Sun Cafe’.

[153] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future.*

[154] See Levitas and Sargisson, ‘Utopia in Dark Times’.

§6. Theme, innovation, and evolving tradition

Stories, like other linguistic forms, are inflected by particular beliefs and values,[155] but good stories, I've argued, don't simply convey these cognitive structures; they provoke cognition via a structure of space in which the audience can respond to a pattern of desire. 'Theme' is a convenient term to refer to this particularity of what's at stake in a story beneath its superstructure of characters, plot, setting, subject matter, and style. The stories in my Collection have ecobardic themes consistent with my ecosophy. My ecocritical writings, complementarily, engage with the themes as well as techniques in play in other people's stories and my own.

6.1 Genres of oral stories

A key theme relevant to ecological crisis is 'nature's revenge' – represented in legendaria worldwide as the 'fairies' revenge', as in tales, retold in my Collection, of 'The Green Ladies of One Tree Hill', 'Erysichthon',[156] 'The Bogglewort', 'The Fairy Horn', and 'The Mermaid's Curse' (*S&E*, 50–5; *Words*, 149–54; *GFT*, 78–82, 165–70; *GFTC*, 43–8). This theme crystallises the underlying problem – of humans taking too much from and disrespecting nature – to which other stories must constructively respond. In 'The Unchristened Babe' (*GFT*, 171–4), a vision of nature's revenge is triggered by lack of compassion towards a vulnerable woman. The more direct instances of nature's revenge I've reported in David Holt's and David Metcalfe's renditions of the historical tragedies of, respectively, the *Titanic* and Sir John Franklin's Arctic expedition illustrate the significance of *genre* in the intersection of theme and technique ('Jumping', 141–2; *S&E*, 69–70).

[155] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics.*

[156] Sources: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*; Hughes, *Tales from Ovid.*

One finding from the research for what became Chapter 1 of *Storytelling and Ecology* was that the repertoire of ecological storytelling in Britain relied heavily upon traditional tales. However, it was evident from my experience as story-listener and storyteller that other genres of stories affect listeners in different ways than traditional stories. The latter contain ecological wisdom and deploy potent archetypes, but their distancing into a seemingly unreal other realm makes it easy to receive them merely as entertainment. They're also inherently conservative to some degree. I've therefore argued that today's ever-changing circumstances demand new stories, and changes to old ones, to inspire us to think, desire, and act in new ways,[157] and that the comprehensive transformation necessitated by ecological crisis requires a maximal diversity of stories able to touch people at different levels of their being. *Storytelling and Ecology* likens story diversity to biodiversity and resists pressures that constrain possibility, such as expectations that 'good stories' should comply with certain structural requirements, centred on a proactive 'hero', that unwittingly reinforce the neoliberal premise of self-serving individualism (*S&E*, 8, 31, 54–7; *Words*, 153).[158] In my storytelling practice I've experimented in composing and telling innovative ecological stories of various genres, examples of which are embedded in my critical works.

'The Gloucestershire Flood' is a *personal* story, which has a phenomenological authority within the horizon of my lived experience, and in this instance asks questions linking the phenomena of experience to land-use practices and climate change. 'Bat Milk' (*S&E*, 62) – retold from Ron Donaldson's account of real events – is a narrative of a *scientific* investigation that confirmed the benefit of particular strategies of organic farming to endangered wildlife.[159] 'The Beech Tree' conveys a species *life cycle* true to biological

[157] See Stibbe, *Econarrative.*

[158] For example, in Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots*; Brayfield, *Bestseller*, Haven, *Story Proof*; McKee, *Story*; Smith and Guillain, *The Storytelling School*; Vogler, *The Writer's Journey.*

[159] Permission was obtained from Ron Donaldson to include my retelling in *Storytelling and Ecology.*

knowledge but suggesting also the tree's subjective experience as a living being. 'The Byker Incinerator' is a story of ordinary people's *political* struggle against a menace to their environment, presented with high facticity and using only publicly available information.[160] Facticity is important also to my various stories from ecological *history* (see §4 and §8) – and to the *biographical* story 'The Currumpaw Wolf', adapted from Seton's published account.[161] Adapted *literary* stories can evoke more inward themes, such as erotic experience of the environment in 'Sunbath' – an adaptation requiring substantial preparation and mindful delivery. 'The Migrant Maid' (*S&E,* 114–15) is a story of the *future*, orally adapted from my own literary story.

Finally, 'Trouble with Turtles' is a story I *invented* in response to a real-world conflict between wildlife and human economic interests on a Greek island.[162] It's more difficult to compose a story that imaginatively ameliorates such a problem than one, like 'The Things We Love', that demonstrates the conflict. Having assisted in a workshop in which senior officers of a large conservation organisation were asked to fashion stories addressing particular conflict scenarios, and observed how the resulting 'stories' merely dramatised an exposition of information, I devised a procedure to construct oral stories from such conflict scenarios. It involves specifying the conflicting desires of two or more characters, some physical locations, and a sequence of causally connected turning points. The multiple protagonists distinguish this approach from Gersie's template, which retains the convention of a single protagonist.[163] Workshop trialling of this procedure informed my composition of 'Trouble with Turtles'. My critical writing emphasises that such narratives of conflict

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Supplementary source: Haysom et al., 'Bats'.

[160] Dodds and Hopwood, 'BAN Waste'; https://tyneside.sdf-eu.org/banwaste/home.htm

[161] Seton, 'Lobo, the King of Currumpaw'.

[162] See Theodossopoulos, *Troubles with Turtles.*

[163] Gersie, *Reflections on Therapeutic Storymaking*, 102.

amelioration mean transcending the paradigm of zero-sum gain-maximising competition, to embrace compromise, caring, and sharing. In accordance with my position that the amelioration of real conflicts requires a dialogic process among stakeholders, not an externally imposed solution, I've also emphasised that such stories should be offered as general inspiration of positive, reconciliatory thinking and *not* as intervention in the real conflicts they concern (*S&E*, 77–81; *Words*, 122–37).

Since my Society for Storytelling paper's publication in 2005,[164] I've noticed storytellers more frequently telling personal, historical, and invented stories. Yet, to my knowledge, the diversity of experimentation in oral story genres which I've presented and discussed is unmatched elsewhere. Malcolm Green has pioneered the telling of avian life cycles (*S&E*, 32)[165] and done a landscape project with Nick Hennessey whose output mixed personal, fictional, geological, and traditional stories.[166] Eric Maddern narrates the origin of the earth and life in mythic form.[167] Lupton and colleagues have used historical material pertaining to environmental politics in their performances *The Liberty Tree* and *On Common Ground* (*Words*, 59–60; 'Jumping', 142, 150; *S&E*, 68). Susan Strauss has done extensive work with stories interweaving science, myth, and personal anecdote.[168] The traditional tales in Georgiana Keable's *The Natural Storyteller* are supplemented by a few personal stories and two stories of natural processes; those in Kevin Strauss's *Tales with Tales* by two stories of natural processes plus seven tales devised to plug gaps in the traditional repertoire with respect to particular creatures. Chris Smith and Jules Pottle's *Science through Stories* includes four stories from the history of science alongside a preponderance of folktales plus

[164] Nanson, *Storytelling and Ecology* (2005).

[165] See Green, 'Kittiwakes on the Bridge'; Nanson, Review of *Shearwater*.

[166] Green and Hennessey, 'By Hidden Paths'.

[167] See Maddern, *Earth Story*; Maddern, *Life Story*.

[168] Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*.

invented stories resembling folktales. Other collections – Gersie's *Earthtales*, Grian Cutanda's *The Earth Stories Collection*, Margaret Read MacDonald's *Earth Care* – contain traditional tales only. Although these collections variously support the stories with practical activities and ecological notes, they don't offer the kind of reflective context accompanying the stories in my critical writings.

6.2 Intertextuality

Although I emphasise here the originality in my stories, also important to stories' impact are their intertextual relations with other stories.[169] *Storytelling and Ecology* invokes a 'déjà-entendu'[170] – analogous to Roland Barthes' 'déjà-lu'[171] – that 'interweaves with our telling or hearing a story', and argues that an intertextual 'cascading of influence' through listening, remembering, and (in one's turn) speaking drives the transformation of what 'communities of people believe and feel about the world' and thus how they act (*S&E*, 59). Lived experiences – including aspects of ecology – pass into memory, from which facets of them are threaded into stories (*S&E*, 85). Such input from life feeds into the ways each storyteller reweaves the form and content of stories they receive. In such weaving of experience and intertextuality, I've taken innovative approaches to ecological themes in my prose fiction also.

'The White Hoover', for example, parodies Poe's gothic style[172] and takes inspiration from a comic song I once heard.[173] Personal experience I invested in this story includes the

[169] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 19.

[170] I prefer not to italicise foreign-language terms, partly to avoid false emphasis and also because it's impossible to draw a line between naturalised and non-naturalised words.

[171] See Brooks, *Reading for the Plot.*

[172] Poe, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination.*

[173] At the Catweazle Club, Oxford, in the 1990s; author unknown.

hay fever that used to obstruct my connection with nature,[174] the Scottish Highlands as an area where in youth I most intensely experienced nature, and renting a cramped room in the ramshackle house of a glamorous older woman who offered complementary therapies. The progenitors of 'The Migrant Maid' were the ballad 'King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid', Burne-Jones's painting *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* inspired by Tennyson's poem 'The Beggar Maid' based on the same ballad, and Martin Harrison and Bill Water's interpretation of that painting.[175] The power dynamics between my business mogul and migrant woman were influenced also by *Fifty Shades of Grey*.[176] Topical inspiration came from the role of derivatives in the 2008 financial crash and from signs of a post-Brexit trajectory towards financial deregulation at all costs.[177]

The ancestry of 'The Migrant Maid', and the deviation of my oral telling of it from the literary text, illustrates the notion of 'evolving tradition' – a term that conveys the intertextuality of creative practice as a temporal process. I've emphasised that, in cultures with a long history of writing, there's been an intertwining of oral and literary traditions (*Words,* 53; *S&E,* 81, 121). We see this in the Arthurian mythos, which I studied for the purposes of the Fire Springs epic *Arthur's Dream* and my essay 'The Myth of King Arthur' (*Words,* 31–9).[178] The essay summarises how the legend of a Romano-British dux bellorum accreted (possible) memories of earlier British leaders, developed new strands of folk tradition, and inspired literary romances later in the Middle Ages and a surge of new writings beginning with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859).[179] Recent fiction and non-fiction about

[174] In 2021 my lifelong hay fever ceased after I changed to a dairy-free diet.

[175] Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*; Tennyson, *Poems and Plays,* 111; Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones.*

[176] The film adaptation (2015). I was unable to penetrate the novel by E.L. James.

[177] See Cable, *The Storm*; Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*; Hannan, *What Next.*

[178] *Arthur's Dream* is available on CD (2002).

[179] Tennyson, *Poems and Plays*, 287–442.

King Arthur have focused on 'the real Arthur' of the sixth century,[180] just as popular historians have sought to excavate the 'facts' behind other legendary figures.[181] My essay interprets this preoccupation as symptomatic of a materialist zeitgeist that desires certain knowledge and devalues the uncertain or symbolic. Stephen Lawhead's Pendragon Cycle follows the vogue of recreating the sixth-century Arthur but incorporates a back story of the arrival of refugees from Atlantis.[182] My article about these novels (*Words*, 40–8) comments on Lawhead's conservative Christian agenda, which suppresses pagan ingredients of Arthurian myth, demonises and suppresses sexuality, and indulgently narrates warfare, but also conveys the future hope that's a potent element of the myth.[183] *Arthur's Dream* required the four performers to negotiate our selection and reweaving of episodes and themes from the tradition, teasing out ecobardic themes such as the linkage between the Grail quest, wounded masculinity, respect for the feminine, and healing the Wasteland (see *S&E*, 37, 42, 162–3).[184]

A principle I gleaned from such studies is that a story tradition accrues from its intertextuality a particular 'power' of 'attitudinal momentum' and that this is good reason to hold the tension between respecting the tradition, to the extent it remains useful, and developing the stories to serve present needs (*S&E*, 125; see *Words*, 36–7).

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[180] For example, Ashe, *The Discovery of King Arthur*; Ashe, *King Arthur's Avalon*; Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*; Bradshaw, *Hawk of May*; Cornwell, *The Winter King*; Markale, *King Arthur*; Stewart, *The Crystal Cave*; Sutcliffe, *Sword at Sunset*.

[181] For example, Head, *Hereward*; Holt, *Robin Hood*; Hughes, *Helen of Troy*; Wilson, *Jesus*; Wood, *In Search of Myths & Heroes*; Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*.

[182] The first three volumes are Lawhead, *Taliesin*; Lawhead, *Merlin*; Lawhead, *Arthur*.

[183] See Ashe, *Camelot and the Vision of Albion.*

[184] See Ashe, *King Arthur*; Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain*; Matthews, *Gawain*; Matthews, *Sources of the Grail*; Matthews and Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*; Weston, *From Ritual to Romance.*

6.3 Gloucestershire folktales

This understanding of evolving tradition was central to my work on Gloucestershire folktales. My 49 retold tales, plus the 21 tales by Hartsiotis, constitute the most substantial retelling of Gloucestershire folktales yet undertaken.[185] Previous collections by Merlin Price and Betty Smith contain fewer tales and provide briefer, less fully dramatised narratives.[186] The primary source material was folklore collected by folklorists and historians. The most thorough source, Roy Palmer's *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*, is not comprehensive. With the aid of local libraries and archives, I systematically sought tales in other folklore collections,[187] gazetteers of paranormal reports,[188] local history and topography,[189] and medieval texts.[190]

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[185] 'Gloucestershire' in this work encompasses the territory of the pre-1974 county plus Bristol, which belonged to Gloucestershire until 1373 and remains associated with Gloucestershire through, for example, the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society and in such county studies as Newth, *Gloucestershire*; Ryder, *Portrait of Gloucestershire*; and Smith and Ralph, *A History of Bristol and Gloucestershire*.

[186] Price, *Folktales and Legends of Gloucestershire*; Smith, *Tales of Old Gloucestersire.*

[187] Briggs, *Dictionary of British Folk Tales*; Briggs, *The Folklore of the Cotswolds*; Eyre, 'Folk-Lore of the Wye Valley'; Hartland, *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales*; Hartland, *Gloucestershire*; Huntley, *Chavenage*; Jones, *Welsh Legends and Folktales*; Kingshill and Westwood, *The Fabled Coast*; Lewis-Jones, *Folklore of the Cotswolds*; Oman, 'The English Folklore of Gervase of Tilbury'; Shorey, *Tales of Old Bristol, Bath and Avon*; Tongue, *Forgotten Folk-Tales of the English Counties*; Westwood and Simpson, *The Lore of the Land*; Williams, *Legends of the Severn Valley*; Williams, *Round About the Upper Thames*.

[188] Brooks, *Ghosts and Witches of the Cotswolds*; Clark, *Ghosts of Gloucestershire*; Fry and Harvey, *Haunted Gloucester*; Law, *Ghosts of the Forest of Dean*; Le'Queux, *Haunted Bristol*; Macer-Wright, *The Hauntings of Littledean Hall*; Matthews, *Haunted Gloucestershire*; Meredith, *Haunted Cotswolds*; Turner, *Folklore and Mysteries of the Cotswolds*; Turner, *Mysterious Gloucestershire.*

[189] Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*; Baddeley, 'The Battle of Dyrham A.D. 577'; Blunt, *Dursley and Its Neighbourhood*; Bradshaw, 'St Arilda of Oldbury on Severn'; Doherty, *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II*; Hare, *Gloucestershire*; Hutton, *Highways and Byways in Gloucestershire*; Jewson, *By Chance I Did Rove*; Newth, *Gloucestershire*; Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire*; Ryder, *Gloucestershire through the Ages*; Ryder, *Portrait of Gloucestershire*;

Most tales existed in very sketchy form, requiring considerable work to develop them into stories pleasing to read or hear told. From a three-figure longlist, I selected 30 tales for *Gloucestershire Folk Tales* on the basis of interesting plot, ecobardic themes, geographic spread, and diversity of genre and characters. That longlist became even longer during work on *Gloucestershire Ghost Tales* and *Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children*, which repeat no stories from *Gloucestershire Folk Tales*. I was pleased to find many tales with strong female characters and many with manifest or latent social and ecological themes, including animal companions, bioengineering, community, compassion for the vulnerable, cruelty to animals, defrauding the poor, human–non-human metamorphosis, land enclosure, land husbandry, longevity, love across social barriers, natural oracles, nature's revenge, rare species, sexual predation, tree growth, wilderness refuges, human–wildlife conflict, and workhouse poverty.

Interplay between oral and literary traditions was evident in 19th-century Gloucestershire and Bristol story collections by, respectively, Adin Williams and Joseph Leech, who made very creative use of available lore.[191] For example, Leech's 'The Lady in White' – which I've retold as 'The Secret of the Gaunts' Chapel' (*GFT*, 71–7) – was 'conjectured' from some objects discovered when a burial vault collapsed;[192] when I visited the chapel in question the verger was familiar with the story, as if it had gone into oral tradition, and showed me the location of one of its scenes. 'The Unchristened Babe' retells a

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Sale, *Gloucestershire*; Smith and Ralph, *A History of Bristol and Gloucestershire*; Stoker, *Famous Imposters.*

[190] Biquet, 'The Lay of the Horn'; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*; Ford, *The Mabinogi*; Malmesbury, *The Kings before the Norman Conquest*; Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain.*

[191] Leech, *Brief Romances from Bristol History*; Williams, *Lays and Legends of Gloucestershire*; Williams, *Legends, Tales and Songs*; Williams, *Roger Plowman's Garland of Merry Tales*.

[192] Leech, *Brief Romances from Bristol History,* 133–6.

19th-century verse narrative, *The Mother and the Priest*, that, so far as I know, survives as a single copy in Gloucestershire Archives.[193] 'The Bogglewort' and 'The Wish Bottle' (*GFT*, 159–64) I received orally from storyteller Mike Rust, who heard them while growing up in Gloucester.[194] The former is a local version of a widespread tale type.[195] 'The Wish Bottle' appears to be inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Bottle Imp', which in turn likely derives from 'The Bottle-Imp' by Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, one of the 19th-century writers of 'kunstmärchen' in the space between folktales and literary short stories;[196] both these stories informed my retelling of Rust's tale.

In all three Gloucestershire books, purely historical stories were omitted in favour of stories with some imaginative or mysterious element. Most are 'local legends', stories originally regarded as factual and often interwoven with history.[197] I sought to respect known history, to the extent it's confidently known, but to allow the folk imagination – and my own – to operate in the gaps of the unknown or uncertain. For example 'The Discovery of America' (*GFT*, 54–61) involved extensive study of the historical context of John Cabot's 15th-century voyages from Bristol, and careful plotting, to construct an ambitious story that meshes history with the legends and speculations relating to his discoveries.[198]

Samuel Lysons's 19th-century antiquarian novel *Claudia and Pudens* was a source for my longest Gloucestershire story, 'The Buckstone and the Britannic Palace' (*GFT*, 115–23), which incorporates a farrago of legends connected to the Roman invasion and the

[193] Anon., *The Mother and the Priest.*

[194] Mike Rust, personal communication, 2011.

[195] See, for example, the Yorkshire tale 'Aye, We're Flitting' in Marshall, *English Folk Tales*, 26–32.

[196] See Reid, *The Short Story.*

[197] Briggs, *Dictionary of British Folk Tales.*

[198] Sources: Firstbrook, *The Voyage of the* Matthew; Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus*; Hudd, 'Richard Ameryk and the Name America'; Johnson, *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic*; Jones, 'Alwyn Ruddock'; Quinn, *Sebastian Cabot and Bristol Exploration*; Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*; Wilson, *The Columbus Myth*.

coming of Christianity.[199] Some of them have been exploited by the nationalist pseudoscience of British Israelism, with which Lysons sympathised. The challenge of shaping these legends into an engaging story without abusing known history or promulgating toxic British Israelite beliefs contributed to my growing awareness of a kinship between legends and the 'conspiracy theories' that lately have developed into 'powerful discourses of lies and delusion accepted as incontrovertible truth by millions of people'.[200] To reject legends as corrupting of truth would shut down a vast tranche of the story ecosystem. They require us to grapple in particular ways with the dynamic between truth and imagination which exists in all stories, mindful of the kinds of truth claims implied by stories' framing.[201]

Chapter 4 of *Storytelling and Ecology* uses the metaphor of 'composting' to analyse the evolving tradition of the 'The Dragon Slayer' tale type[202] to which the Gloucestershire legend of 'The Deerhurst Dragon' (*GFT,* 124–9) belongs. I've identified motifs in the local story's iterations that match motifs in the larger 'Dragon Slayer' tradition,[203] and explained how I drew upon that tradition to fill out the story from its sketchy 18th-century sources[204]

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[199] Other sources: Cottrell, *The Great Invasion*; Elder, *Celt, Druid and Culdee*; Gardner, 'Church Origins in Britain'; Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*; Morgan, *St Paul in Britain*; Palmer, *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*; Ryder, *Portrait of Gloucestershire*; Sale, *Gloucestershire*; Smith, 'Lucius of Britain'; Whitehead, 'Arwîrac of Glastonbury'.

[200] Nanson, Review of *Ecolinguistics*, 323.

[201] See Wilson, 'Honest Liars'; Wilson, 'Some Thoughts on Storytelling'.

[202] AT 300. Aarne and Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale.*

[203] Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*; Briggs, *Dictionary of British Folk Tales*; Byock, *The Saga of the Volsungs*; Gwilym Davies, 'The Deerhurst Dragon Song', photocopy; Hogarth, *Dragons*; Huxley, *The Dragon*; Ions, *Indian Mythology*; Johnson, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*; Starkey, *Mermaids, Moonrakers and Hobgoblins*; Thompson, *The Folktale*; Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham*; Turner, *Mysterious Gloucestershire*; Crossley-Holland, 'Beowulf'; Vizard, *In the Valley of the Gods*; Westwood and Simpson, *The Lore of the Land*; Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols.*

[204] Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*; Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire.*

and highlight the latent ecological theme of extermination of 'alpha predators'.[205] The chapter also examines the mythological association of snakes with goddesses and supernatural women that underpins 'The Well of the Snake' – Williams's 'legend of Poulton'[206] which I incorporated into 'Betty's Grave' (*GFT*, 62–6), my composite story about the alleged Poulton witch Betty Barstoe.[207] The serpent symbolism hooks into a global web of intertextuality embroidered with the particularities of local ecology (*S&E*, 121–30, 135–9).[208]

Feminist concerns arise here. As in 'St Arilda's Well' (*GFT*, 44–8), discussed in the same chapter, 'Betty's Grave' depicts the cruel destruction of a woman who doesn't comply with patriarchal expectations. Whereas Arilda is manifestly sympathetic,[209] the tales about Betty vary between misogyny and sympathy. I've combined several tales to construct a narrative showing how a traditional community turns against an unfortunate woman. Misogyny is engrained also in the legend of Gloucestershire's more famous saint, Kenelm: contrary to historical evidence,[210] it represents Kenelm's sister, Quenthryth, as a fornicating witch who commissioned his murder.[211] I reconfigured this story to present Quenthryth as an

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[205] Quammen, *Monster of God.*

[206] Williams, *Lays and Legends of Gloucestershire*, 69–72. Poulton is a village in the Upper Thames Valley area of Gloucestershire.

[207] Other sources: Briggs, *The Folklore of the Cotswolds*; Palmer, *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*; Westwood and Simpson, *The Lore of the Land*; Williams, *Round About the Upper Thames.*

[208] For example, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*; Baring-Gould, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*; Bourret et al., *Littérature orale*; Cowan, *Myths of the Dreaming*; Huxley, *The Dragon*; Koltuv, *The Book of Lilith*; Luna and Amaringo, *Ayahuasca Visions*; Parrinder, *African Mythology*; Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, *Ecology of the Spoken Word.*

[209] Bradshaw, 'St Arilda of Oldbury on Severn'; Coates, 'St Arild of Oldbury'.

[210] I'm grateful to local historian Peter Stevinson for alerting me to this misrepresentation of Quenthryth.

[211] Anon, 'Saint Kenelm'; Chambers, *The Story of St Kenelm*; Palmer, *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*; Stevinson, *The Lives of King Kenulf of Mercia and His Family*; Stevinson and Stevinson, *Qwenfryth Abbess of Winchcombe.*

innocent woman deceived by her brother's murderer. This legend illustrates the importance both of respecting reliably known facts and of tradition evolving so that old stories can serve contemporary needs and ethics (*S&E*, 132–5, 139–40).

6.4 Identity politics

The association of female characters with aspects of nature – springs in the cases of Betty and Arilda – is a contentious topic because of the ways that patriarchy has sought to essentialise women.[212] Complete rejection of such associations, as Tzeporah Berman demands, [213] would close down the symbolic power of many mythic stories, including ones inspirational to ecofeminist Goddess spirituality.[214] *Storytelling and Ecology* defends the continuing value of these associations in traditional stories by drawing upon ecofeminist theory that seeks to collapse dualities of dominance, reconfiguring the polarities 'in terms not of "binary opposition" but of "non-oppositional difference", in which feminine and masculine, like yin and yang, are "principles" rather than "definitive gender ascriptions"' (*S&E*, 131).[215] Mindful telling of traditional stories may thus help to advance the qualities traditionally aligned with the 'feminine' – such as 'feeling, relationality, receptivity, sensuality' – which my writings predicate as crucial to the paradigm shift demanded by ecological crisis (ibid.).

Among the tales in my Collection, female characters have mythic connections with trees in 'Erysichthon', 'The Green Ladies of One Tree Hill', and 'Maude's Elm' (*GFT*, 29–

[212] Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; Ruether, 'Ecofeminist Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics'.

[213] Berman, 'The Rape of Mother Earth'.

[214] See Edwards, *The Storytelling Goddess*; Getty, *Goddess*; Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain.*

[215] Quoting terms from Johnston, 'Subtle Subject and Ethics'. See Conley, 'Hélène Cixous'; Conley, *Hélène Cixous*; Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; Ruether, 'Ecofeminist Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics'.

33), and with rivers in ‘The Mermaid’s Curse’, ‘The Unchristened Babe’, and ‘Goram and Vincent’ (*GFTC*, 15–21). Some male beings, too, are associated with aspects of nature[216] – with plant and animal fertility in ‘The Bogglewort’, for example, and with earth and stone in ‘Goram and Vincent’. The Fire Springs epics contain both male and female characters with such associations: Merlin and Morgan in *Arthur’s Dream*; Orpheus and Demeter in *Return to Arcadia*. *Robin of the Wildwood* reinvents Robin Hood as ‘guardian of the woods’ and depicts an ancient yew sacred to Urswick, Lady of the Wild Things (*Words*, 9–10, 153–4).[217] A recurring motif in my fiction – in ‘Leap of Faith’ (*EE*, 90–108), ‘Flower People of the Pamirs’, and *Deep Time*, as also in ‘Sunbath’ – is the woman who invites or catalyses a man’s connection with nature. By the end of *Deep Time*, Brendan the white English scientist has become a wild man of the forest.

A concern of feminist and postcolonial criticism is the *representation* of, respectively, women and non-white people. When a Kenyan friend of mine met John Le Carré at the film premiere of his Kenya-set novel *The Constant Gardener*, she asked him why he hadn’t made the protagonists Kenyan rather than British. The dilemma for white (male) writers becomes clear if I mention that some early readers of ‘The Dead Are Not Dead’ objected to my writing it in the voice of a Kenyan woman – for the sole reason that I’m a white man. This story interprets, in fiction, the same Kenyan friend’s account of her family’s changing the tradition

[216] Matthews, *The Quest for the Green Man*; Strand, *The Flowering Wand.*

[217] This character conflates Artemis and the British goddess Andraste. Kevan Manwaring came up with the name ‘Urswick’ via the connection made between Robin Hood and Herne the Hunter in the television series *Robin of Sherwood* (1984–6): Philip Urswick is an enigmatic character in Harrison Ainsworth’s treatment of the Herne legend in his novel *Windsor Castle*; and the syllable ‘Urs-’ is evocative of ‘ursus’ and hence the association between Artemis and bears.

that only men could inherit land.[218] I simulated a Kenyan voice by 'meta-translating'[219] a provisional translation of each sentence into Swahili; for example, replacing 'feel' with 'see in my heart', from Swahili 'kuona moyoni'. This technique was inspired by the way Hemingway renders Spanish speech in English;[220] I used the same method in *Deep Time* to render dialogue supposedly spoken in French.

Any representation of indigenous people by outsiders risks being criticised as either 'romanticising' if positive, or 'racist' if critical.[221] Even carefully neutral representations may provoke critique: Raylene Ramsay's judgement of Nicolas Kurtovitch's depiction of Kanak characters in *Good Night Friend* as inauthentic is argued solely on the basis the author isn't Kanak, identifying no specific instances of inauthenticity in the text.[222] Such prospects of critical reception imply a no-win situation for white male writers of serious fiction. As I'm drawn to 'exotic'[223] settings and romantic plots, I've given much thought to and extensively discussed with peers the representation of demographic 'others'.

Deep Time is a contemporary reworking of the the 'lost-world' genre of exotic adventure stories that flourished in the late 19th- and early 20th-century context of European global empires and were permeated by the racism and sexism of that time.[224] My novel sustains an intertextual awareness of such fiction, especially that of Rider Haggard, whose muscular adventurer Sir Henry Curtis blends with Conrad's depraved ivory trader Kurtz in

[218] My Kenyan friend is happy with my story, recognising that it's a work of fiction whose details don't precisely match the real events that inspired it. I have her permission to mention the two experiences of hers included in this paragraph.

[219] Steiner, *Extraterritorial,* 3–11.

[220] For example, in Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea.*

[221] See, for example, Huggan, *Nature's Saviours*; Wilson, *Storytelling and Theatre.*

[222] Ramsay, *The Literatures of the French Pacific.*

[223] See Sund, *Exotic.*

[224] Becker, *The Lost Worlds Romance*; Clareson, 'Lost Lands, Lost Races'.

my creation of Curtis Wilder.[225] I've avoided ethnic stereotypes by ringing the changes of diversity among the cast and individualising characters who play a significant role in the story. Vince is black British, first time in Africa, and discombobulated when he's taken for African. The enigmatic Moyedou shares with his sister Salome a father belonging to a lost race scattered through deep time (see §8), but his mother, Makela, is a modern African wandering in deep time, whereas Salome's was a white American adventuress. The hippie community includes one black American, one white Australian, and Europeans from several countries. The secretive Fênbé and Moyedou's courageous team of rangers contrast with the brutality of the rebel troops – under their insane commander Pangala and self-serving supremo Bikoro – who are fighting a civil war against the government of my imagined francophone African nation. There's the officious government colonel Katoko, the nervous bureaucrat Mboula out of his depth in Pangala's camp, the idealistic French commune founder Cassandre, and the naive English journalist Portia never at ease in the forest and traumatised by the rebels' treatment of the Fênbé.

All this is seen through the perspective of Brendan's self-exposing narration. As too is the 'male gaze' upon women[226] – both Brendan's and his awareness of other men's. I was sensitised to the handling of male gaze in fiction, and its implications for the power relations between characters, by peer-group readings of the fiction of Alistair McNaught, in which the ambiguities and anxieties of male gaze and dysfunctional masculinity are central concerns.[227] Because *Deep Time*'s plot involves a progressive unravelling of inhibitions as the expedition travels back in time, I realised that the management of male gaze and concomitant thoughts and feelings wasn't merely a technical challenge of mindful writing; that I had to address these dynamics as a core theme. I had *Deep Time* in mind when, in *Exotic Excursions*'

[225] Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines*; Haggard, *Allan Quatermain*; Conrad, *Heart of Darkness.*

[226] See Berger, *Ways of Seeing.*

[227] For example, McNaught, *The Tragicall History of Campbell McCluskie.*

introduction (*EE*, 1–6), I introduced the 'via negativa' as a strategy to balance the white male gaze with the exposure of that subjectivity to the return gaze of 'others' within the text – and of the reader.

One effect of the recent intensifying of identity politics, and greater awareness of the history of sexual violence by men,[228] is what seems to me an implicit framing of male sexual desire as inherently unacceptable – by the salience of public attention to toxic expressions of male desire,[229] by continuities drawn between sexual misbehaviour by men and cultural biases towards male perspectives,[230] and by the stereotyping of men.[231] In consequence, I fear, the energy of male desire is reinvigorating the patriarchal forces of neoliberal capitalism and right-wing politics which directly oppose the compassionate cooperation demanded by ecological crisis. My fiction opens to the reader's responsivity the psychology of male desire as an aspect of reality, whose healing where needed is crucial to the healing not only of relations between people but also of humanity's relationship with nature.[232] *Storytelling and Ecology* argues there's a continuity between biological desire – to survive and procreate – and the tapestry of other desires woven through story. *Deep Time* directly expresses this continuity by hinging Curtis's and Brendan's ability to advance their competing desires with respect to the prehistoric ecosystems upon their ability to survive extreme environments and upon their sexually charged relations with Salome. Through his via negativa, Brendan learns what Curtis never can, to surrender the will to control Salome; in doing so, he discovers a

[228] Scholz, *Feminism.*

[229] Bates, *Men Who Hate Women*; Dederer, *Monsters*.

[230] Bates, *Everyday Sexism*; Criado Perez, *Invisible Women.*

[231] Harmange, *I Hate Men.*

[232] See Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman.*

reciprocity of connection with her and with nature. My evocation of this eco-erotogenic synergy is much inspired by Lawrence.[233]

Identity politics also arise in concerns about 'cultural appropriation' in storytelling. In 'Telling Other Peoples' Stories' (*Words*, 74–8), written after a Tales to Sustain gathering at which some were troubled by a Native American guest's admonition not to retell the stories from her culture she was telling, I tried to seek a Hegelian synthesis between an 'ethic against telling stories that are "not yours"' and 'an anarchic tradition of folk and artistic transmission' (*Words*, 77). The effort was inconclusive. Discussion of this subject commonly focuses on Native American stories,[234] but the implications extend to other cultures. Kevin Strauss cautiously allows the possibility of non-Natives telling Native American stories, but his *Tales with Tails* – though focused upon American natural history – includes no such stories and largely comprises tales from *non-American* countries. Susan Strauss fretted she ought to stop telling Native American stories – until she received reassurance from a Native friend.[235] Wilson, Barre Toelken, and Jack Zipes all emphasise questions of 'authenticity'.[236]

After much reflection, and mindful of my own demographic position (see §2), I've concluded that, although particular peoples' relationships with their stories need to be understood and respected, the discourse of 'cultural appropriation' is problematic. *Storytelling and Ecology* provides a carefully reasoned critique of the constraining of storytelling by this discourse, explaining the historical reality of intertextual relations between story traditions and the necessity to sustain evolving traditions in order to adapt to

[233] Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; Lawrence, 'Love Among the Haystacks'; Lawrence, *The Rainbow*; Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*; Lawrence, 'Sun'; Lawrence, *The Trespasser*.

[234] For example, Bruchac, 'The Continuing Circle'; Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*; Strauss, *Tales with Tails*; Toelken, 'The Icebergs of Folktale'.

[235] Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*.

[236] Toelken, 'The Icebergs of Folktale'; Wilson, *Storytelling and Theatre*; Zipes, *Relentless Progress*, 141–56

ever-changing circumstances. I advocate the telling of stories from other cultures, in the interests of both ecological wisdom and intercultural understanding, acknowledging that care should be taken in choosing which stories it's appropriate to tell in any given situation. My argument distinguishes cultural traditions from intellectual property rights, and the unsustainable notion of 'cultural authenticity' from the 'personal authenticity' of consistency between inner being and outer expression (*S&E*, 84–93, 146–8, 189–90). Responses to ecological crisis require compassion and cooperation – as shown in 'The Forest Fire', my reinterpretation of a Buddhist Jataka tale in which the innovation of a cooperative theme was itself developed collaboratively at a Tales to Sustain event.[237] To retreat into cultural silos and to adopt racialist thinking, such as that which affirms 'ancestry as basis for the right to tell stories from a particular tradition', will only exacerbate the divisions feeding the worrying trend towards aggressive competition for resources (*S&E*, 89).

6.5 Myth in fiction

One further intertextual dimension of my Collection is the use of mythology in my fiction. The symbolism of snakes discussed above is in play in 'The Cobra Hissed', notably in the tension between the cobra's gendering as 'she' and her phallic erectness and spasmic spitting. A suite of characters in 'The Sun Cafe' may be interpreted as Greek gods, one of whom – interpretable as Apollo – tells the narrator the story of Phaethon, Apollo's son (*EE*, 84–7). My planning of *Deep Time*'s plot incorporated three parallel mythic structures. I used Joseph Campbell's 'hero's journey'[238] to structure Brendan's journey as one of initiation and Jungian integration, in which Salome represents his 'anima', Curtis his 'shadow', Vince and

[237] The Jatakas are traditional stories about previous incarnations of the Buddha. Shaw, *The Jatakas.*

[238] Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

Moyedou his 'self', and Makela the 'trickster',[239] and including his Campbellian 'return',[240] all the way through geological time, to where/when he started. Secondly, I invested the novel's mood structure, including its landscapes, with the spiritual journey of the 'Dark Night of the Soul', [241] taking inspiration from Michael Moorcock's notion that fantasy's 'exotic landscape' externalises inner states of the psyche.[242] Thirdly, as part of the team's progressive loss of equipment and clothing as they descend into the wilds of deep time, I structured Salome's shedding of clothing according to the 'Descent of Inanna', in which the Sumerian goddess surrenders an item of regalia at each of seven gates of the underworld.[243] Salome's name references the New Testament princess connected to Inanna via Oscar Wilde's 'dance of the seven veils'.[244] A headtorch shining from Salome's forehead 'like the morning star from Aphrodite's brow' alludes to the Greek goddess's katabasis in a myth cognate with Inanna's (*DT*, 308).[245] Salome's surname, Boann, references an Irish goddess whose association with the river Boyne bespeaks Salome's ability to navigate through time along watercourses. Her enigmatic attractiveness, eliciting reactions from everyone she meets, and her treatment as a goddess by her father's tribe owe something to the eroto-mythic charge of Haggard's *She*.[246]

A core theme of my creative work is the longing for earthly paradise, where ecological desire meets spirituality and myth. 'The Waves Never Ceasing' (*EE*, 36–40)

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[239] See Chetwynd, *A Dictionary of Symbols*; Henderson, 'Ancient Myths and Modern Man'; Le Guin, *The Language of the Night*, 49–61.

[240] Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

[241] St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*; Underhill, *Mysticism.*

[242] Moorcock, *Wizardry and Wild Romance.*

[243] Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*; Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness.*

[244] Wilde, 'Salomé'.

[245] This image reached me via Kirsty Harstiotis and David Metcalfe's retelling of the story of 'Venus and Adonis'.

[246] See Clareson, 'Lost Lands, Lost Races'; Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism.*

conflates several legends of the flooding of an idealised land in the west.[247] My study of 'Wonder Voyages' (*Words*, 24–30) in search of paradise across the sea considers the relation between actual voyages of discovery and spiritual interpretations of wonder-voyage stories. In *Deep Time*, Brendan's name recalls the Irish navigator-saint whose voyage to the Land of Promise sustains both geographical and spiritual interpretations.[248] The utopian interludes in *Deep Time* take inspiration from Richard Heinberg's perhaps romantic suggestion that paradise myths may have arisen from collective memory of a hunting-gathering Golden Age of ease and abundance.[249] Although Heinberg overlooks human responsibility for Palaeolithic megafauna extinctions (see §8.1), various hunting-gathering societies do appear to have achieved a content and stable coexistence with environments they've long inhabited.[250] Brendan and Salome both desire the beauty of nature to endure; Curtis doesn't care. The climactic showdown in *Deep Time*, like that of C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*, is like a replay of Eden's drama between Adam, Eve, and Satan. They've become like gods in that, so deep in time, their ecological impact could have enormous consequences downtime (*DT*, 583–644).

In storytelling, you may deliberately seek to tell stories whose themes speak to the intersection of ecological circumstances with clients' and audiences' needs and desires. The motivation of prose fiction is rooted deeper in the mystery of artistic creation. The themes of a massive novel like *Deep Time* are emergent from its author's deepest desires – and fears –

[247] Sources: Ashe, *Altantis*; Curran, *The Creatures of Celtic Myth*; Holdstock and Edwards, *Lost Realms*; Spence, *Legends and Romances of Brittany.*

[248] Webb, 'The Voyage of St Brendan'; Ashe, *Land in the West*; Johnson, *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic*; Wooding, 'Monastic Voyaging and the *Navigatio*'.

[249] Heinberg, *Memories and Visions of Paradise.*.

[250] Brody, *The Other Side of Eden*; Matthiessen, *The Tree Where Man Was Born*; Nabhan, *Cultures of Habitat.*

and an ambiguity, as Merleau-Ponty suggests about Cézanne's painting, between freedom of choice and the compulsion to do what's given to you to do.[251]

§7. Exploring the storied landscape

Embodied sensory experience of physical environments has long been woven into my prose narratives. 'Bogoria' and 'The Cobra Hissed' narrate experiences from a three-day hike across Kenya's Rift Valley. 'Touching Bedrock' blends memories from two separate occasions on the Pembrokeshire coast. Some scenes in 'The Sun Cafe' draw upon specific experiences, such as glimpsing Olympus from the bus and encountering the 'Patronne' in a rocky hollow (*EE*, 57, 59); others are more generally informed by living and travelling in Greece.

Nature study has improved my ability to identify organisms and thereby enhanced my receptivity to the ecological intricacy of outdoor scenery. An interest in painting – cultivated through evening classes, exhibitions, and reading – has complementarily sensitised my vision to tones, colours, light, and shapes. As well as enhancing my visualisation of scenes in storytelling, these refinements of visual awareness supported the narration of *Deep Time*, which applies to prehistoric fiction the scientifically and sensuously detailed techniques of literary nature writing[252] and also the visual intensity of cinema. In this way I've sought to bring palaeoecosystems to life as lucidly as if the narrator really experienced them.

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[251] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense*, 9–25.

[252] For example, Brown, *Encounters with Nature*; Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*; Jefferies, *At Home on the Earth*; Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*; Lopez, *About This Life*; Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*; Lopez, *Crossing Open Ground*; Matthiessen, *African Silences*; Matthiessen, *The Cloud Forest*; Matthiessen, *Sand Rivers*; Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard*; Matthiessen, *The Tree Where Man Was Born*; Mitchell, *A Fragile Paradise*; Peterson, *The Deluge and the Ark.*

Even before I became a storyteller, I began to take knowledge of stories to my observation of places. Researching a novel involving Irish mythology,[253] on a visit to Ireland in 1991, I toured locations of episodes from saints' legends and ancient epics. I superimposed upon my sensory observation of the landscape my imagining of the scene in the distant times of the events in the stories. Lupton has noted the inspiring 'inner excitement' of such experiences in which actual and imagined coincide.[254] My memories of Brandon Mountain and Brandon Creek, for example, inform my telling of the 'The Voyage of St Brendan' and, together with a dusk glimpse of the Aran Islands through the mist, inspired the interest in the western paradise explored in 'Wonder Voyages' and 'The Waves Never Ceasing'.

Similar exploration of locations of Arthurian stories in Brittany as well as Britain helped me appreciate the complex evolving tradition discussed in 'The Myth of King Arthur'. A year in Greece allowed Hartsiotis and me to thoroughly explore the Greek 'mythscape', as described in my essay 'Mythscapes of Arcadia' (*Words,* 6–10). Combining this activity with nature studies brought ecological detail into our observation of the stories' settings. The remains of ancient religious sanctuaries also instigated in me an ecospiritual awareness of sacred landscape and the impact upon it of modern development. As my essay explains, all this informed the Fire Springs epic *Return to Arcadia*, which interweaves anecdotes of experience in the landscape with selected mythic stories.

My subsequent Gloucestershire research involved a systematic programme of field visits to story locations.[255] Chapter 4 of *Storytelling and Ecology* illustrates the research process, which involved in-situ observation, nature study, and note-taking, in order both to evoke the setting in the story and to seek inspiration from the environment for how to retell

[253] 'Candlefire Island', unpublished.

[254] Lupton, *The Dreaming of Place*, 137.

[255] Following Hartsiotis's example when researching *Wiltshire Folk Tales.* Hartsiotis and I commonly went into the field together to explore story locations for our various Folk Tales books.

the story. I often used a technique of verse-like 'short lines' notation to facilitate interplay between sensory observation, folkloric knowledge, and my feelings and imagination.[256] Field research worked in conjunction with historical research. For example, the farmed, slightly derelict landscape around Deerhurst Walton, setting of 'The Deerhurst Dragon', together with the 'beast heads' sculpted in the Saxon church at Deerhurst,[257] and the meaning of 'Deerhurst' in Old English – 'a wooded hillock … frequented by wild animals'[258] – inspired me to place this story about predator extermination in a context of Anglo-Saxon conversion of wildwood into farmland (*S&E*, 126–30, 132–7).[259] I also consulted old maps and pictures in libraries to comprehend the lie of the land in instances where it had changed since the time of the story – for example in 'The White Lady of Over Court' and 'The Shadow of the Workhouse' (*GGT*, 15–20, 120–6), whose settings are much changed by modern development.

Given the fragmentary state of the Gloucestershire legendarium, I approached my reworking of Gloucestershire tales as 'folklore restoration' – which may be considered an aspect of ecological restoration if local folklore be part of human ecology,[260] damaged by similar processes as have damaged local ecology (*S&E*, 119–20).[261] Local dialect has been lost from use too.[262] I studied the grammar of Gloucestershire dialect and gathered various collections of Gloucestershire vocabulary.[263] Mindful I be'ant Gloucestershire born, I

[256] I'm grateful to Kevan Manwaring for teaching me this technique.

[257] Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture.*

[258] Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape of North Gloucestershire*, 2.

[259] Using information from Härke, 'Anglo-Saxon Immigration and Ethnogenesis'; Heighway, *Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire*; Pilbeam, *The Landscape of Gloucestershire.*

[260] Kennedy, 'Folklore and Human Ecology'.

[261] Nabhan, *Cultures of Habitat.*

[262] Sutton, *Cotswold Tales*; Sutton, *The Dialect & Folk Phrases of the Cotswolds.*

[263] Hunt, 'Zurree!'; Lewis-Jones, *Folklore of the Cotswolds*; Robertson, *Glossary of Dialect and Archaic Words*; Sutton, *The Dialect & Folk Phrases of the Cotswolds*; Williams, *Legends, Tales, and*

included slivers of dialect in my restoration of local tales, mainly in dialogue but also slipping into the narration some local terms such as 'boy-chap' and 'butty' (*GFTC*, 43, 51). For *Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children*, we also researched local seasonal customs.[264]

Although our Gloucestershire fieldwork didn't involve formal ethnographic research, I was receptive to useful input from impromptu encounters. For example, visiting Pauntley while investigating midwinter customs, I met Peter Wells, who'd revived the Twelfth Eve ceremony of the Apostles' Fires; in 'A New Year's Blessing' I used the locations he indicated and the ceremony instructions he provided. Lorraine Endersby, a local historian whom we met by the Wye at Brockweir, setting of 'The Mermaid's Curse', told us of a time the river flooded a nearby house and its inhabitant was rescued by boat from his bedroom window; this suggested a denouement of the mermaid's curse – 'Very few of your descendants will die in their beds!' – in which the rescued 'descendant' insists he be carried from the window on his mattress: 'I knew as I'd be all roight as long as I stayed in my bed, acoz of what that mermaid zed to awld Dick' (*GFTC*, 48).

While the landscape helped me retell these tales, I wanted the retellings to 're-enchant' the places where they're set. The term 'enchantment' is sometimes used to refer to vague feelings of 'wonder' or positive regard.[265] I favour using it in Tolkien's stronger sense 'to refer to the art by which may be wrought "imagined wonder" that is productive of … imaginative experience of a "secondary world" in which things are different from what is empirically observed in the "primary world" we inhabit' (*S&E*, 130).[266] My paper 'How Can Storytelling Re-enchant the Natural World in an Electronic Age?' (*Words*, 138–59) suggests

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Songs.

[264] Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*; Lewis-Jones, *Folklore of the Cotswolds*; Palmer, *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*; Roud, *The English Year.*

[265] For example, by Curry, 'The Experience of Enchantment'; Curry, *Enchantment*; Gibson, *A Reenchanted World.*

[266] The quoted terms are from Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories'.

that stories' enchantment of places and organisms can evoke empathy, connection, and a sense of significance and ultimately sacredness.

Storytelling and Ecology discusses how inspirational to contemporary storytellers has been indigenous peoples' understanding of their land as a repository of stories that inform and inspire them, and reciprocally as enchanted by the stories so the people treat it with respect.[267] Flood's landscape projects in Somerset are intensely eco-ethnographic, involving listening to both land and community, and accessing recorded folklore, and then involving community members as co-creators in re-enchanting their local landscape with stories (*S&E*, 11–12, 33–6, 155–60). My Gloucestershire work reconstructs a mythscape for Gloucestershire from fragmentary folklore largely lost from local people's knowledge. Maps included in the three books pinpoint the stories' locations (*GFT*, 8; *GGT*, 9; *GFTC*, 14). The work's impact continues, beyond the books, through invitations to give performances and talks about Gloucestershire tales, which commonly elicit a dialogue in which listeners share further nuggets of folklore or unusual personal experiences; and through other people retelling stories from the books. Since 2019, Hartsiotis and I have also authored a monthly article in *Cotswold Life* which offers a walking route linked to local folklore.[268] Readers who

[267] See Lupton, *The Dreaming of Place*, 130–66; Strauss, *The Passionate Fact*.

[268] Articles that I've authored or co-authored: Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Blacksmith's Curse'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Bladud, King of Bath'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Campden Wonder'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'A Dream of Bad Women and Holy Wells' ; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Fair Rosamund's Bower'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Fiery Chariots and Golden Dragons'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'A Great Wonder in the Sky'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Here Be Monsters'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'High Hills with a Headless Saint'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'A Lost King's Last Stand'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Midsummer, Megaliths and the Devil'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Most Haunted Village'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'A Nordic Myth and a Prehistoric Tomb'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Pyramids of Paul Nash'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Sally in the Wood'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Shadows of the Past beside the Thames'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Spanish Ship and the Christmas Ghost' ; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Speed the Plough'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'A Strange Cure'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The Student and the Landlord'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Tales of Three

do the walks thus experience the storied landscape as they navigate through it. These articles have prompted us to extend our explorations into other Cotswold counties and to revive additional Gloucestershire tales omitted from the books.

For indigenous peoples, enchantment of the land is more than a feeling. It reflects an understanding of reality for which I've reclaimed the term 'animist', acknowledging the great diversity of perceptions thus encompassed (see *S&E*, 177–9). Chapters 4 and 6 of *Storytelling and Ecology* are informed by my ethnographic research in New Caledonia, in 2016, in which I encountered first-hand the Kanak's enduring relationship with the spirits. I used a mountain bike and tent to visit Kanak 'tribes'[269] and become acquainted with the people for the purposes of a novel-in-progress set in this country. Whenever I arrived in a new tribe, I sought the chief and performed 'la coutoume': made a material offering and spoke words of respect for the spirits of the land and ancestors and received in return the chief's permission to be there and invocation of the spirits' protection. I'd previously studied Kanak culture and folklore, including by translating from the French some published Kanak tales and retelling them in informal storytelling sessions.[270] I had large-sale maps of selected areas and an intention of exploring the storied landscape as I'd done elsewhere. As Chapter 4 explains, I discovered that, though I could visit the general area of a story, it was usually difficult to

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Monks – and a Tiger'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Village Secrets'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'The White Lady of Dover's Hill' ; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Windows through Time'; Hartsiotis and Nanson, 'Witchcraft and Necromancy'; Nanson, 'In the Days of King Arthur'; Nanson, 'The Flight of Charles II'; Nanson, 'Nature Never Stops'; Nanson, 'The Valley of the Nightingale'; Nanson, 'The Virtuous Well'; Nanson, 'The Wild Hunt'.

[269] In New Caledonia the French word 'tribu' is used to refer to both the people and common land of each local community of Kanak. It does not refer to the larger ethnolinguistic units comprising all the tribes speaking one of the 28 Kanak languages.

[270] Tales from Bensa and Rivierre, *Les filles du rocher Até*; Bensa and Rivierre, *Histoires canaques*; Bourret et al., *Littérature orale*; Guiart, *Contes et légendes de la Grande-Terre*; Leenhardt, *Documents néo-calédoniens*; Rivierre et al., *Mythes et contes de la Grande-Terre et des Iles Loyauté.*

access the locations of story events, which were likely to be out of bounds. For this reason, as well as the limitations of my cultural knowledge, I'm unable to retell Kanak tales in the same manner I tell Gloucestershire ones (*S&E*, 144–8, 177–8).

I had long, informative conversations in New Caledonia with a number of Kanak (including, among others, five storytellers and two writers) as well as three French anthropologists who'd studied Kanak culture. I disclosed to them I was researching a novel and also shared my interest in storytelling. These conversations, usually in French but sometimes in English, were unstructured and not audio-recorded; instead I made copious notes afterwards from memory. I sought a genuine dialogue in which to get to know my interlocutors, and learn from them, through allowing them to get to know me.

The most striking insight from New Caledonia was that the Kanak perception of a spirit world interwoven through the manifest world of community and ecology remains a living experience in spite of French colonisation. Kanak storyteller Sonia Kondolo's comments to me about the relationship between stories and spirits (*S&E*, 190)[271] informed the nuances of *Storytelling and Ecology*'s discussion of telling stories from other cultures (see §6.4). As well as serving my novel-in-progress, my studies of Kanak culture and my fieldwork in New Caledonia enabled me to compare Gloucestershire's and New Caledonia's storied landscapes and conceptualise how stories can impart to the land varied nuances of enchantment conducive to ecological conservation (*S&E*, 142–51).

The novel-in-progress was inspired during a previous visit to New Caledonia in 2007 when I was researching *Deep Time.* To bring to life the range of palaeoecosystems depicted in *Deep Time* I made the most of any analogous ecosystems in my embodied experience: memories of savannah, desert, tropical forest, lakes, and high mountains in East Africa; the

[271] I had the paragraph in *Storytelling and Ecology* which drew upon my conversation with Kondolo professionally translated into French so she could approve what I'd written as accurately representing her views.

biomes of the Eden Project and Kew Gardens; the Tabernas Desert in Spain and Dune du Pyla in France; in Greece a montane forest whose combination of Grecian fir (*Abies cephalonica*) and ferns approximated a Jurassic forest, and a steppe of Syrian juniper (*Juniperus drupacea*) evocative of Cretaceous savannah. I also watched television documentaries presenting different habitats.[272] I went to New Caledonia to see its extraordinary flora, which includes many archaic taxa characteristic of Gondwana, the supercontinent that included Africa and Australia; New Caledonia broke away tectonically from Australia about 100 million years ago and has remained in tropical latitudes ever since.[273] Botanising in habitats of humid forest, dry forest, and maquis, I observed diverse flora – such as tree ferns, cycads, palms, *Araucaria*, *Agathis*, *Nothofagus* – evocative of prehistoric Gondwana.[274] In all such field studies, I've recorded in notebooks the organisms observed, my sensory impressions, arising thoughts and feelings, and any interactions with people. The notebooks thus transmute embodied ecological experience into text, whence facets of it become interwoven into my stories.

Parts of *Deep Time* are set in the present-day rainforest of a fictitious Central African country (*DT*, 1–66, 213–94, 685–99). I learnt as much as I could about the African rainforest from reading ecological studies,[275] travelogues,[276] anthropology,[277] and also fiction set

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[272] *Jungle* (2003); *The Lion's Kingdom* (1995); *The Living Planet* (1984); *Planet Earth* (2006); *The Private Life of Plants* (1995).

[273] Cornuet et al., *Écologie en Nouvelle-Calédonie*; Flannery, *The Future Eaters*; Mueller-Dombois and Fosberg, *Vegetation of the Tropical Pacific Islands.* However, Grandcolas et al., in 'New Caledonia', challenge the view that New Caledonia is biologically a continental island, arguing that it has experienced long submersions since it separated from Australia.

[274] Botanical sources: Barrault, *Plantes des forêts sèches de Nouvelle-Calédonie*; Birnbaum et al., *Les forêts humides de la province Nord*; Pantz et al., *Nouvelle-Calédonie chlorophylle*; Schmid, *Fleurs et plantes de Nouvelle-Calédonie*; Suprin, *Mille et une plantes en Nouvelle-Calédonie*.

[275] Ayensu, *Jungles*; Brown, *Africa*; Carr, *The Land and Wild-Life of Africa*; Collins, *The Perpetual Forest*; Fa and Brown, 'Impacts of Hunting on Mammals'; Kingdon, *Island Africa*; Silcock, *The*

there.[278] In 2008 I visited Gabon as a volunteer field assistant to Olivia Scholtz, an entomologist from the Natural History Museum, who was surveying termites in Ivindo National Park. Owing to unexpected and extraordinary circumstances, I was taken to Ivindo by helicopter and thus could observe the intact forest canopy covering most of Gabon. In the clearing containing the World Conservation Society (WCS) field station, and later in habitats near Libreville, I botanised and birdwatched.[279] In visits to Langoué Bai, an extensive marshy clearing in Ivindo, I also observed large mammals.[280] While counting termites at Scholtz's study site and walking along elephant paths, I absorbed the atmosphere of this pristine forest. I also learnt about forest ecology from conversations with Scholtz and the WCS biologists.

My direct experience of the rainforest differed significantly from what I'd imagined: the soundscape, especially at night, was extremely intense and complex; the air in the shade was pleasantly cool; there were sweat bees but no mosquitoes; birds and mammals were rarely visible except in clearings; the ground was perpetually covered with dead leaves; vigilance was demanded by the presence of elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*). I rewrote passages of *Deep Time* in the light of all this. The experience of being protected by my

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Rainforests; Vande weghe, *Ivindo et Mwagna*; Weber et al., *African Rain Forest Ecology and Conservation.*

[276] Brokken, *The Rainbird*; Durrell, *The Overloaded Ark*; Kingsley, 'West African Rivers'; Matthiessen, *African Silences*; O'Hanlon, *Congo Journey*; Quammen, 'End of the Line'; Quammen, 'The Green Abyss'; Quammen, 'Megatransect'; Stanley, 'The Primeval Forest'; Tayler, *Facing the Congo*; Uhlenbroek, *Jungle*; Winternitz, *East along the Equator*; Zwilling, *Jungle Fever*.

[277] Duffy, *Children of the Forest*; Peterson, *Conversations in the Rainforest*; Turnbull, *The Forest People*; Turnbull, 'Liminality'.

[278] Boyd, *Brazzaville Beach*; Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*; Crichton, *Congo*; Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible.*

[279] Field guides: Sinclair and Ryan, *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara*; White and Abernethy, *A Guide to the Vegetation of the Lopé Reserve.*

[280] Field guide: Kingdon, *Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals.*

unarmed escort's[281] 'ability to read the forest and be patient' inspired me to emphasise the contrast between Curtis's inclination to dominate wildlife with his gun and Salome's reliance 'on sensitivity and empathy to peacefully manage such encounters'.[282] Scholtz's explanation that certain kinds of termites essential to the forest's ecology cannot survive in open ground, preventing the forest from fully regenerating where large areas are cleared, informed my emphasis upon deforestation as a human impact in *Deep Time*'s present-day sequences.[283]

In nature-study fieldwork, the 'storied landscape' offers up stories not so much about human protagonists as about ecological processes – of the diverse kinds, unfolding on various timescales, that *Storytelling and Ecology* highlights have the potential to be shaped into stories (*S&E*, 22, 30–3, 93–107). On the scale of deep time, the creative relationship between ecological experience and narrative encompasses also an 'intertextual' dynamic with the stories of the earth which can be 'read' in geological strata.

§8. Ecological and evolutionary history

My interest in ecological and evolutionary history began in childhood – with visits to the Natural History Museum; films like *King Kong* (1933), *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1959), *The Lost World* (1960), *One Million Years B.C.* (1966), *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970), and *The Land that Time Forgot* (1974); and books that brought prehistory to life with illustrations situating creatures in their habitats and text that mimetically narrated their experiences.[284] At ages eight and ten I scribed my own versions of *The Lost World* and at 14 a novel about a time traveller to the Palaeolithic. Meanwhile other books alerted me to

[281] He had only a machete for clearing vegetation from the path.

[282] Nanson, 'Helicopter over the Rain Forest'.

[283] See Scholtz, 'Inter-continental Patterns'.

[284] Milani and Colombi, *Man Emerges*; Watson and Zallinger, *Dinosaurs.*

anthropogenic extinctions and endangered species.[285] I ran a jumble sale to raise money for WWF and began to write a 'mammal encyclopedia' that foregrounded conservation concerns.

Emergent in these fascinations was a longing – perhaps linked to my comprehension of mortality when I was five – for creatures not to be lost for ever. When, as an undergraduate, I was told geological stories of deep time, often beside outcrops preserving evidence of palaeoenvironments, I felt sad that evidence of later environments in overlying strata had been obliterated (*S&E*, 101). My desires for existing creatures and habitats not to be lost and for those which are lost to be imaginatively resurrected have motivated me to tell stories about extinct organisms and lost worlds.

8.1 Telling stories from ecological history

Hence my composition and telling of historical stories of species extinction (see §4) and the conservation of nearly extinguished species – such as 'Père David's Deer' (*Elaphurus davidianus*) (*Words*, 130–2)[286] – and the reintroduction of extirpated species such as the beaver (*Castor fiber*) (*S&E*, 90). The harrowing similarities of 'The Tasmanian Genocide' to my animal extinction stories highlight the links between political conflict and ecological competition (*S&E*, 65–8). My critical writings describe the practicalities of composing and performing such stories – of shaping an emotional arc while sustaining facticity and respecting known facts, and managing the impact on listeners with compassionate restraint (*Words*, 113–21, 'Jumping', 142–6; *S&E*, 65–8, 72–3, 97–100). My literary story 'The Last Coelacanth' applies the poignant situation arising in 'The Passenger Pigeon' and 'The Golden Toad' – a species reduced to its last individual – to the extrapolated case of an extant species

[285] Fisher et al., *The Red Book*; Silverberg, *The Dodo, the Auk and the Oryx.*

[286] Sources: Fisher et al., *The Red Book*; Silverberg, *The Dodo, the Auk and the Oryx.*

(*Latimeria chalumnae*) that, discovered in 1938 after being thought extinct for millions of years, is now endangered by human activities.[287]

Looking further back in time, four oral stories embedded in my critical writings experiment in different ways with the tricky relationship between mythology and palaeontological and archaeological science. 'The Coming of the Wildwood' ('Jumping', 147–8) narrates the ecological history of British woodland from the end of the Ice Age to the rise of cities; its content is based on scientific and historical knowledge,[288] but its tone is mythic. I composed it as a prologue to *Robin of the Wildwood,* in which a long-lived yew plays an important part. 'The Story of People on the Earth' brings a similar mythic tone to a 15-minute condensed history of human interaction with the global ecosystem from the end of the Ice Age to two alternative futures: civilisational collapse if business-as-usual continues; or cooperative downsizing into 'future primitive'[289] ecotopia. 'The Bull Hunt' follows its graphic-novel source[290] in combining realistic depiction of Mesolithic people and ecology with mythological symbolism and imagined metaphysical beliefs. *Storytelling and Ecology* discusses how aspects of empathy for the slain bull were reflected in storywork using this story (*S&E*, 74–7).

The fourth story, 'The Coming of the Kadimakara' (*S&E*, 105–6), audaciously combines Aboriginal mythology inspired by the remains of prehistoric megafauna with scientific understanding of the latter's extinction. Explanations of the global mass extinction of Pleistocene megafauna remain contentious. My story is premised on the overwhelming evidence that most of these extinctions were driven by human migration into new territories, and on my wish for this early phase of human ecological impact to be better known because it

[287] See Weinberg, *A Fish Caught in Time.*

[288] Milner, *The Tree Book*; Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*; Roberts, *The Holocene*.

[289] Robinson, *Future Primitive.*

[290] Haggarty and Brockbank, *Mezolith*, 8–20.

exposes how the problems of humankind's relationship with the rest of nature run deeper than the destructive impacts of contemporary capitalism.[291] I suspect that, as has been acknowledged in New Zealand's case,[292] the underlying reason some continue to doubt anthropogenic causation is to avoid seeming to disparage the indigenous peoples of Australasia and the Americas whose ancestors evidently caused many of these extinctions. Moreover, in some accounts I notice a lack of discrimination between natural climate change and aspects of human ecological impact other than hunting.[293] Drawing on Tim Flannery's analysis of the science and James Cowan's of the mythology,[294] 'The Coming of the Kadimakara' emphasises a synergy between hunting and ecosystemic change and that the first humans in Australia should not be equated with 'Aborigines', since they'd migrated from elsewhere and tens of millennia separate them from today's Aborigines (*S&E*, 106–7).

8.2 Cryptozoology

Scientific awareness of extinct creatures has precipitated investigations of folklore and physical habitats in search of surviving specimens and also of new species unknown to science; these efforts in turn propagate new folklore.[295] However, cryptozoology is

[291] Cassells, 'The Role of Prehistoric Man in the Faunal Extinctions'; Diamond, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee*; Fisher et al., *The Red Book*; Flannery, *The Eternal Frontier*; Flannery, *The Future Eaters*; Leakey and Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction*; Martin, 'Prehistoric Overkill'; Martin, *Twilight of the Mammoths*; Moody, *Prehistoric World*; Roberts, *The Holocene*; Sale, *After Eden*; Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*.

[292] Trotter and McCulloch, 'Moas, Men, and Middens'.

[293] For example, Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*; MacPhee, *End of the Megafauna*; Stanley, *Extinction*; Wroe, 'Killer Kangaroos'.

[294] Cowan, *Elements of the Aborigine Tradition*; Cowan, *Letters from a Wild State*; Flannery, *The Future Eaters.*

[295] Jylkka, 'Speculating Science'.

underexploited in contemporary fiction, occurring more commonly in in films[296] and young-adult fiction.[297] Julia Leigh's notable novel *The Hunter* focuses on Tasmania's thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*).[298] Bernard L. Ross's *Amok, King of Legend* rewrites *King Kong* in an African cryptozoological frame; it inspired some of the tensions in Brendan's team in *Deep Time* and also the civil war subplot that engages them with present-day ecopolitical concerns before and between their two excursions into deep time.

My story 'Flower People of the Pamirs' was inspired by reports of the almas, a legendary hominid of Central Asia which cryptozoologists have interpreted as a surviving population of *Homo neanderthalensis.*[299] Much anthropological interest in Neanderthals has concerned the extent of their difference from *Homo sapiens* and whether there was interbreeding.[300] In my story the almaty are indeed Neanderthals but so integrated in their modern yet remote setting that my investigators initially perceive them just to be the local people. I used these beings' rustic ordinariness together with the narrative's polyphonic structure (see §4) to invite cognition about ethnography, prejudice, and the permeable boundaries of our species. The question about interbreeding is resolved at the end when the almas in whose hairy arms the youngest of the investigators has overcome his racism reveals she is pregnant.[301]

Two further cryptozoological stories in my Collection are microcosms of *Deep Time.* 'The Beast of Dean' (*GFT*, 183–90) was built from a smorgasbord of 'beast' sightings in the

[296] For example, *The Abominable Snowman* (1957); *Baby* (1985); *Loch Ness* (1996); *Letters from the Big Man* (2011); *The Dinosaur Project* (2012); *Extinction* (2014).

[297] For example, Allende, *City of the Beasts*; Gross, *The Lastling*; Smith, *Cryptid Hunters.*

[298] Filmed as *The Hunter* (2011).

[299] Coleman and Clark, *Cryptozoology A to Z*; Hitching, *The World Atlas of Mysteries.*

[300] Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*; Shreeve, *The Neandertal Enigma*; Wong, 'Who Were the Neandertals?'

[301] Since I wrote this story, Neanderthal genes have been found in modern human DNA. Lohse and Frantz, 'Neandertal Admixture in Eurasia Confirmed'.

Forest of Dean: the moose-pig, big cats, an apelike creature, and the escaped wild boar that really have repopulated the Forest.[302] My story attributes the diversity of 'beasts' to the existence, in a wild wooded valley I explored, of a refugium of various Pleistocene species, which can be interpreted as merely ecological or as temporally displaced. When rehearsing this story to trial it orally, I found that it came to life when told in the voice of its cryptozoologist protagonist. In crossing the line into a form of acting, I applied techniques from an experimental Fire Springs show, *Voices from the Past*, in which I impersonated the Arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen and the seaborne naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller.[303] The storytelling remains extempore, but one's voice, somatics, and costume are altered to suit the character telling the story. I published the written story in first person also, since much of its energy was carried in the protagonist's voice.

'The Things We Love' transposes to East Africa the legendary mokélé-mbembé, a living sauropod reported from Congo,[304] which inspired the film *Baby* (1985). My story's ironic premise is that when the protagonists find the cryptid they seek they realise that their own work on an irrigation project is destroying its habitat; meanwhile the indigenous forest people, who worship this species as a god, have been killing it to furnish their shrine with its body parts. The theme that the ecological destructiveness of modern economic development can't be separated from more fundamental inclinations of human nature is explored further in *Deep Time*, whose Central African setting was prompted by the mokélé-mbembé.

[302] Matthews, *Haunted Gloucestershire*; Minter, *Big Cats*; Newton, *Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology*; Sellers, 'Schoolgirl Comes Face to Face with "Black Panther"'.

[303] Sources: Nansen, *Farthest North*; Reynolds, *Nansen*; Steller, *Journal of a Voyage with Bering*.

[304] Mackal, *A Living Dinosaur?*; O'Hanlon, *Congo Journey*; Shuker, *In Search of Prehistoric Survivors*.

8.3 Stories of deep time

I have experimented in telling stories from deep time – that is, from geological epochs millions of years ago, as distinct from archaeology's thousands of years. 'The Rare Event' (*S&E*, 100–1) narrates the asteroid impact that precipitated the Cretaceous mass extinction 66 million years ago (see Figure 2). My delineation of the sequence of events and consequences draws from my research for *Deep Time*, in which the events,[305] as locally experienced in Central Africa, are presented in reverse order as my protagonists travel back in time through them (*DT*, 301–13).

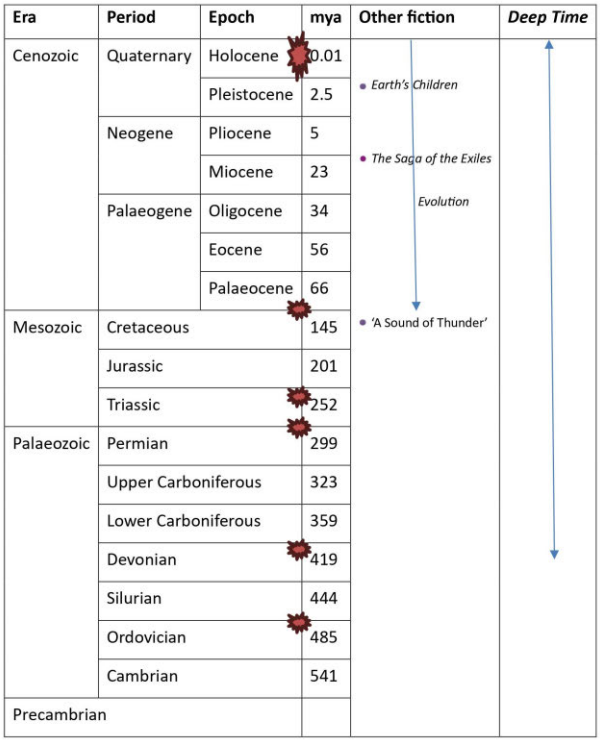

Figure 2. Geological time chart showing the temporal span of *Deep Time* and other works of fiction involving deep time.

mya = million years ago (since the *start* of the interval in question).

= mass extinction.

[305] Sources: Alvarez and Asaro, 'An Extraterrestrial Impact'; Archibald, 'Myths, Theories, and Facts'; Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*, Benton, 'Dinosaur Summer'; Benton, *Penguin Historical Atlas of the Dinosaurs*; Courtillot, 'A Volcanic Eruption'; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; Fortey, *Life*; Lamb and Sington, *Earth Story*; Paul, *Dinosaurs of the Air*; Paul, 'The Yucatan Impact'; Russell, 'The Mass Extinctions of the Late Mesozoic'; Russell, *An Odyssey in Time*.

It was while studying earth sciences as an undergraduate, in 1985, that I conceived the idea of a novel in which geological time manifests as a spatial dimension that can be traversed on foot. I initially envisaged this dimension as rectilinear, enabling warring tribes to do battle across a landscape extending through geological time. Two factors reconfigured this concept. Firstly, the idea converged with one for a novel about a cryptozoologist whose access to undiscovered animals is mediated by a woman attuned to the local habitat. Secondly, influenced by Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*, I adopted a concentric temporal structure, or 'time abyss',[306] in which 'the further in you go, the bigger (or older) it gets'.[307] *Mythago Wood* and its sequel *Lavondsyss* take the action only as far back as the Ice Age (circa 12,000 years ago), and the archetypal contents of the wood's 'vortex' are conceptualised as psychically generated. *Deep Time*'s protagonists travel through successive geological periods, experiencing ever-changing ecology, all the way to the Devonian period 400 million years ago. The story is predicated on a spacetime anomaly vaguely analogous to a two-dimensional black hole; the route backwards through time takes a spiral form that echoes the contracting orbit of an object descending a gravitational well. This novum allowed me to revive a lost-world setting, such as had largely faded from fiction as the last unknown regions of the world were explored.[308] It also brought the enormous scale of geological time within the ambit of an individual human protagonist's experience.

Nicholas Ruddick describes an evolving tradition of 'prehistoric fiction', commenting that the best works in this genre, such as William Golding's *The Inheritors*, evince 'close intertextual relationships with earlier writings in a similar vein'.[309] Ruddick's coverage of prehistoric fiction is limited to stories about prehistoric humans, though there is overlap

[306] Clute, 'Time Abyss'.

[307] Manwaring, 'Ways through the Wood'.

[308] Becker, *The Lost Worlds Romance.*

[309] Ruddick, *The Fire in the Stone*, 47.

between this corpus and fiction involving deep time. The films that inspired me as a child, and the novels they're based on, are referenced in *Deep Time* in my contriving the coexistence of human tribes with the fauna of epochs long pre-dating human evolution. The premise that my explorers are not the first people to navigate the spacetime anomaly also usefully complicated the plot dynamics between the explorers and the palaeoecology. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land that Time Forgot* planted in my young mind the motif of progressively more primitive prehistoric creatures in a simply conceived time abyss. Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* presents encounters with increasingly primitive biota as the protagonists descend through the earth's strata. The notion of a 'butterfly effect' of consequence forwards through deep time – from 'A Sound of Thunder'[310] – haunts Brendan's fears once he knows he's travelling back in time and possibly in a location containing the entire lineage of human ancestry since the lobe-finned fish. Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* is the prototype cryptozoological expedition to a prehistoric lost world. The psychological time slip in Burroughs' *The Eternal Savage* by which 20th-century Victoria Custer becomes Palaeolithic tribeswoman Nat-ul inspired my protagonists' descent into primal instincts as they descend deeper into time.

To my knowledge, *Deep Time* is by far the most ambitious novel about deep time ever published. It is exceeded in *size* by Jean Auel's multivolume Earth's Children series and Julian May's Saga of the Exiles.[311] However, the former is set entirely within the Palaeolithic (only 30,000 years ago) and has the psychological simplicity of popular romance, while May's Pliocene setting is but the backdrop to a plot involving time travellers from the future and aliens inspired by Irish mythology. Steve Baxter's novel *Evolution* comprises discreet

[310] Bradbury, 'A Sound of Thunder'.

[311] Auel, *The Clan of the Cave Bear*; Auel, *The Valley of Horses*; Auel, *The Mammoth Hunters*; Auel, *The Plains of Passage*; Auel, *The Shelters of Stone*; Auel, *The Land of Painted Caves*; May, *The Many-Coloured Land*; May, *The Golden Torc*; May, *The Nonborn King*; May, *The Adversary*.

episodes stepping progressively forwards in time from the Cretaceous extinction to the far future, each with its own characters representing the corresponding stage in human evolution. Neither *Evolution* nor Earth's Children enjoys strong literary style. The Saga of the Exiles is complex and well written but reveals its loyalty to the expectations of popular fiction in its jaunty handling of warfare. One aspect of *Deep Time*'s transgressive originality is its sophisticated literary treatment of subject matter usually associated with popular entertainment.

Brian Aldiss's *Cryptozoic*, in which tourists travel into deep time, shares with *Deep Time* speculations about the reversibility of time and the disconnection of people from nature. J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*, like *Deep Time*, aligns psychological regression with ecological regression into deep time. His *The Day of Creation* touches upon cryptozoology and atavism in an imaginary francophone African country. The intentions of these short novels are essentially postmodernist ones of juxtaposing familiar and strange images and experiences to convey an indeterminacy of meaning, feeling, or purpose; they lack *Deep Time*'s engagement with the material specificity of ecology emphasised by ecocritics.[312]

A spate of films and TV dramas involving deep time appeared after my submission of *Deep Time*, in 2006, to many agents and publishers. They contain some similar motifs but applied in different ways. In *Primeval* (2007), temporary spacetime 'anomalies' enable investigators and prehistoric animals to cross instantly between the present and various geological periods. A single time portal in *Terra Nova* (2011) enables humans to colonise the Cretaceous. *Land of the Lost* (2009) invokes a timewarp across the landscape but depicts little palaeoecology except a few dinosaurs. *The Dinosaur Project* (2012) and *Extinction* (2014)

[312] For example, Buell, 'Can Environmental Imagination Save the World?'; Estok, 'Painful Material Realities'; Zapf, 'Creative Matter and Creative Mind'.

follow research teams into, respectively, the Congo and Amazon forests but soon devolve into formulaic monster movies.

Some works of popular science offer a kind of 'journey' through deep time. Richard Fortey's *Life*, for example, narrates a history of life with a descriptive style evoking imagery of prehistoric scenes. Richard Dawkins's *The Ancestor's Tale* and Thomas Halliday's *Otherlands* both parallel *Deep Time* in presenting the story backwards through time; Halliday even reconstructs semi-dramatised prehistoric scenes of selected locations around the world at particular time points, though continually slipping between present-tense narration and scientific exposition. These works contain greater density of palaeontological information than *Deep Time* but not the immersive lucidity of the novel's first-person narration of prehistoric scenery.

In Frye's sense as Tom Shippey applies it to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*,[313] *Deep Time* is 'encyclopedic' in encompassing the entire chronology of terrestrial ecology, referencing classic works of prehistoric and lost-world fiction and film, and interweaving diverse kinds of writing – nature memoir, ecothriller, cryptozoology, ethnography, lost-world romance, erotic fantasy, suspense fiction, pastiche. Like Joyce's *Ulysses*, but not *The Lord of the Rings* (which lacks 'confession'), it also satisfies all four of Frye's 'forms' of fiction: novel, confession, anatomy, and romance.[314]

8.4 Palaeoecology and human agency

As I initially envisaged *Deep Time* as a potboiler, my planning deployed classic three-act structure[315] as well as the mythic patterns described in §6.5. I also analysed the plots of six

[313] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*; Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 311.

[314] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism.*

[315] Gavigan, *The Screenwriter's Story Structure Workshop*; McKee, *Story*.

successful novels with thematic resonances with *Deep Time*.[316] However, all my structural planning morphed dramatically in the light of my research.

When I started the novel, a decade had passed since I finished my degree in earth sciences (and three decades by the time I finished it). I therefore updated my knowledge, mainly by reading, but also by visiting museums, watching films and TV documentaries,[317] and corresponding with scientists. In 'period notes' for each geological period from the Devonian to the Quaternary, I collated relevant information about palaeoclimate, palaeogeography, palaeoecology, and palaeobiology.[318] Where there were uncertainties or

[316] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*; Doyle, *The Lost World*; Haggard, *She*; Herbert, *Dune Messiah*; Innes, *The Big Footprints*; Ross, *Amok.*

[317] For example, *Quest for Fire* (1981); *Clan of the Cave Bear* (1986); *Lost Worlds, Vanished Edens* (1989); *Jurassic Park* (1993; 1997; 2001); *Walking with Dinosaurs* (1999); *When Dinosaurs Ruled* (1999); *The Ballad of Big Al* (2000); *The Lost World* (2001); *Walking with Beasts* (2001); *Aux origines de l'humanité* (2003; 2004; 2007); *Walking with Cavemen* (2003); *King Kong* (2005); *Walking with Monsters* (2005).

[318] Main sources: Agustí and Antón, *Mammoths, Sabertooths, and Hominids*; Attenborough, *Life on Earth*; Bakker, *The Dinosaur Heresies*; Beerling, *The Emerald Planet*; Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*; Beneš and Burian, *Prehistoric Animals and Plants*; Benton, *Penguin Historical Atlas of the Dinosaurs*; Charig and Horsfield, *Before the Ark*; Chiappe and Dingus, *The Lost Dinosaurs*; Cox, *Prehistoric Animals*; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; Erwin, *The Great Paleozoic Crisis*; Flynn and Wyss, 'Madagascar's Mesozoic Secrets'; Fortey, *Life*; Gould, *The Book of Life*; Johnson and Stucky, *Prehistoric Journey*; Kenrick and Davis, *Fossil Plants*; Lamb and Sington, *Earth Story*; Lambert et al., *Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs & Prehistoric Life*; Macdonald, *The Velvet Claw*; Maley, 'The African Rain Forest'; Marshall, 'The Terror Birds of South America'; McElwain et al., 'Fossil Plants and Global Warming'; Monastersky, 'Pterosaurs'; Moody, *Prehistoric World*; Norman, *Dinosaur!*; Olsen et al., 'Ascent of Dinosaurs Linked to an Iridium Anomaly'; Ostrom, 'A New Look at Dinosaurs'; Paul, *Dinosaurs of the Air*; Paul, *Scientific American Book of Dinosaurs*; Prothero, *The Eocene–Oligocene Transition*; Prum and Brush, 'Which Came First?'; Russell, *An Odyssey in Time*; Silverberg, *The Ultimate Dinosaur*; Stanley, *Earth and Life through Time*; Turner and Antón, *The Big Cats*; Turner and Antón, *Evolving Eden*; Vickers-Rich and Rich, 'Dinosaurs of the Antarctic'; Ward, *Out of Thin Air*; Wellnhofer, 'Archaeopteryx'; White, *The Greening of Gondwana.*

competing theories, I made my own interpretations as the story required. Because I was writing a mimetic eye-witness narrative, I continually had to imagine what it would be like to be physically present in each habitat I depicted. As with historical stories and the Gloucestershire legends, I sought to honour known facts while using my imagination to fill the gaps.

Because Central Africa is underexplored palaeontologically, I had to interpolate what might have happened here from what appears to have happened elsewhere. From the Devonian to the Jurassic, Africa was part of Gondwana, as was Australia; so, for example, I was able to use Mary White's superbly illustrated account of Australia's palaeobotany to guide my picturing of African vegetation during that long interval.[319] During the Cretaceous and Palaeogene, Africa was an island continent and its flora and fauna went their own way, so in these periods I limited my bases for extrapolating a Central African biota largely to African palaeontology. From maps charting the movements and topography of continents I could identify the latitude of my Central African location in any given period and infer the likely climate and biome.[320] Graphs of the global variation of temperature, oxygen, and carbon dioxide through deep time,[321] together with knowledge about four relevant global mass extinctions (see Figure 2), also informed my reconstruction of palaeoecology. At some points the conditions were so extreme they implied difficulties my protagonists would have to contend with if they were to survive and proceed deeper into time. Thus the actualities of earth history, to the extent they're known, impinged on my story. At the same time as narrative requirements prompted me to hypothesise interpretations of the available earth

[319] White, *The Greening of Gondwana.*

[320] Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*; Benton, *Penguin Historical Atlas of Dinosaurs*; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; Gould, *The Book of Life*; Stanley, *Earth and Life through Time.*

[321] Beerling, *The Green Planet*; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*
Lamp and Sington, *Earth Story*; Ward, *Out of Thin Air.*

science, I gave agency to the earth to determine new turns in the plot. My potboiler plot was transformed into one driven as much by palaeontological data as by my characters' desires and in this way transgressive of conventional plot structure. The next few paragraphs give some examples of this dynamic.

During drier intervals in the Quaternary the Central African rainforest contracted into 'refugia' that sustained high biodiversity.[322] Brendan initially interprets the unusual species he's observing as signs the expedition has entered a surviving Pleistocene refugium, and coins the term 'palaeome' – by analogy with 'biome' – to refer to the progressively more archaic ecosystems they encounter. In the Eocene rainforest, however, temperature and humidity became extremely high.[323] This affects my characters' moods and behaviour; Portia's near-fatal bout of heatstroke then spurs the expedition to return temporarily out of deep time (*DT*, 52, 68, 137, 172–86, 198–204).

There's much uncertainty what caused the Triassic mass extinction, but a bolide impact similar to the Cretaceous one seems plausible.[324] This event required me to describe the team's traversal of its aftermath, as I'd done for the Cretaceous extinction. I inferred my own theory that these two causally similar events had very different medium-term ecological

[322] Hamilton et al., 'Hotspots in African Forests'; Kingdon, *Island Africa*; Livingstone, 'A Geological Perspective on the Conservation of African Forests'; Maley, 'The African Rain Forest'; Maley, 'African Rain Forest Vegetation and Palaeoenvironments'; Maley, 'La destruction catastrophique des forêts d'Afrique centrale'; Maley, 'The Impact of Arid Phases'; Maley and Brenac, 'Vegetation Dynamics, Palaeoenvironments and Climate Changes'; Oslisley, 'The History of Human Settlement in the Middle Ogooué Valley'.

[323] Agustí and Antón, *Mammoths, Sabertooths, and Hominids*; Prothero, *The Eocene–Oligocene Transition.*

[324] Beerling, *The Emerald Planet*; Benton, 'Four Feet on the Ground'; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; McElwain et al., 'Fossil Plants and Global Warming'; Norman, 'The Evolution of Mesozoic Flora and Fauna'; Olsen et al., 'Ascent of Dinosaurs Linked to an Iridium Anomaly'; Russell, *An Odyssey in Time.*

consequences because the prior global climate in the Triassic was far more stressed than in the Cretaceous (*DT*, 491–506, 534–5, 542, 679).

In the Upper Carboniferous, Central Africa's climate was cool because of proximity to an ice cap encompassing southern Africa.[325] Brendan's anticipation the team will therefore need warmer clothing prompts hunting efforts to obtain this, which exacerbate tensions between the remaining team members. High oxygen pressure in the Lower Carboniferous energises the characters,[326] but also inflames into a ferocious wildfire a fire Curtis insists on lighting. Brendan fears the possible downtime consequences of such an ecological impact so far back in time (*DT*, 566–70, 576–83, 586–97).

Throughout the journey the biological need to obtain food repeatedly drives the team's actions. Salome is skilled in determining which plants they can eat, but as they advance deeper into prehistory it becomes more difficult to find nutritious vegetables and the team become more dependent on Curtis killing animals. Vince's death ensues from an attempt to collect eggs from a Permian therapsid's nest.[327] When Salome gets really weak because she won't eat meat, Curtis and Brendan cooperate to force-feed her but Curtis manipulates the situation to turn Salome against Brendan (*DT*, 548–58, 573–6).

As these examples illustrate, the tension in *Deep Time* between the powerful geo-ecological forces impinging on the characters and the impact of human agency upon the ecology reflects the paradox that nature is both strong and vulnerable, and so are we. The novel expresses how palaeoecology makes evident that human activity has become a geological force.[328] But it seems to me hubris to imagine an 'Anthropocene'[329] epoch defined

[325] Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution.*

[326] See Beerling, *The Emerald Planet*; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; Fortey, *Life.*

[327] Therapsids = a group of prehistoric tetrapods from which mammals are descended.

[328] See Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*.

[329] Crutzen and Stoermer, 'The Anthropocene'.

by human impact. From a deep-time perspective, what we're wreaking is not an epoch; it's a mass extinction.[330] The causation, thus far, is principally through overharvesting, invasive species, and the ecological simplification of large areas of land to serve human needs.[331] We've yet to see the full consequences of anthropogenic climate change. In my reconstruction of the Permian mass extinction,[332] when Brendan is hallucinating in the anoxic air, he has a vision of the whole world in which the extreme ecological crisis of that time is compared to what's beginning to happen today. In this vision, Curtis's ambition to exploit deep time's resources symbolises the blind greed with which humankind is destroying the basis of our own existence. The story implies here a symbolic equation of ecological and evolutionary ontologies (*DT*, 213–15, 246–50, 532–5).

The fictitious Fênbé in *Deep Time* are anatomically modern people who've inhabited the forest since Palaeolithic times. The three tribes encountered in deep time are descended from groups of Fênbé led there by someone gifted, like Salome, to navigate through time. The contrast between the ecotopian Cretaceous community and the patriarchal Jurassic one derives partly from the character of their respective leaders but also reflects the increasing difficulty of resisting biological instinct as one strays deeper into time. The tribe stranded in the Carboniferous are physically identical to the Fênbé – they are *Homo sapiens* – but in this primeval environment have so yielded to base instinct that in spirit they're no longer fully human. Curtis ultimately falls into the same condition.

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[330] Leakey and Lewin, *The Sixth Extinction*; Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*; Wilson, *The Future of Life*.

[331] Behrensmeyer et al., *Terrestrial Ecosystems through Time*; Day, *The Doomsday Book of Animals*; Maclean, *Silent Summer*; Peterson, *The Deluge and the Ark*; Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo*; Silverberg, *The Dodo, the Auk and the Oryx*; Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*.

[332] Sources: Beerling, *The Emerald Planet*; Benton, 'Four Feet on the Ground'; Benton, *When Life Nearly Died*; Dixon et al., *Cassell's Atlas of Evolution*; Erwin, *The Great Paleozoic Crisis*; Fortey, *Life*; Lamb and Sington, *Earth Story*; Ward, *Out of Thin Air*.

Deep Time shows there's much beauty in nature, and opportunity for human–nature communion, but also much harshness, horror, and suffering. The paradox the novel advances, like *Storytelling and Ecology*, is that, although humans are indeed part of nature and need to experience more deeply our ecological interconnectedness, the possibility of mutual flourishing with non-human nature demands something more. The emphasis in 'material ecocriticism' on recognising our indistinctness from the rest of nature[333] offers no escape from the biological compulsion to pursue our material self-interest as inferred by sociobiology[334] and dramatised by Baxter's chillingly anti-utopian *Evolution*. What we need also is the capacity to transcend the 'selfish gene',[335] a freedom to choose to act otherwise. Brendan's quest for the centre of the spacetime anomaly, and scientific understanding, is terminated by his and Salome's arrival on a Devonian seashore, which references the far-future seashore H.G. Wells's time traveller reaches in *The Time Machine* and the eponymous beach at the end of Neville Shute's *On the Beach.* Whereas the latter two seashores are nihilistic images of the end of everything, *Deep Time*'s signifies an ambiguous new beginning. Salome's fate is surrendered to mystery as Brendan chooses not to obstruct her choice to swim away and, symbolically reborn, he begins his solitary journey forwards through deep time to a new life in his own time (*DT*, 651–4, 668–74). In 'The Story of People on the Earth', too, the fulcrum between the two future scenarios is a choice. The collective choice of nations. The choices made by each individual. The question is how to engage that capacity to choose the good.

[333] Iovino and Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism*.

[334] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*; Wilson, *Consilience*; Wilson, *On Human Nature.* See Berry, *Life Is a Miracle*; Ward, *God, Chance & Necessity.*

[335] Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene.*

§9. Supernatural ecology

My research for *Storytelling and Ecology* revealed a concern among nature interpreters that information about nature in stories should be factually correct.[336] Ecological crisis demands respect for science (see §1). I've emphasised that users of traditional stories need to be alert especially to any potentially damaging misrepresentation of aspects of nature – such as the demonisation of wolves (*Canis lupus*) by European folktales, which Lopez sees as complicit in wolves' extermination (*S&E*, 18–22).[337] However, traditional stories – especially 'mythic stories', as I categorise tales with some supernatural dimension – contain imaginative content that can't be reduced to judgements of factual truth. The same goes for reports of 'transpersonal experience'[338] in which awareness extends beyond the 'skin-encapsulated ego'.[339] In traditional cultures, and among spiritual believers, supernatural aspects of stories are understood to reflect supernatural aspects of reality.

Such understandings contradict the ideology of scientific materialism that dominates contemporary public discourse. This ideology – not to be confused with science itself – is so entrenched as normative that transgressions of it are commonly dismissed out of hand, often using pejorative labels such as 'New Age' or 'mystical'. *Storytelling and Ecology* points out that this 'dismissive stance fails to uphold the standards of criticism it claims to represent' (*S&E*, 180) and that it presumes the critic possesses a superior vantage point to those subject to critique. In the context considered here the latter include many storytellers, creative writers, and – implicitly – indigenous people. My encounters, in both Gloucestershire and New Caledonia, with people who'd had paranormal experiences challenged my own prior

[336] For some American perspectives on this concern, see Forest, 'Nature Tales'.

[337] Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men.*

[338] Grof, *The Holotropic Mind.*

[339] Alan Watts quoted in Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*, 74.

scepticism. Just as Mircea Eliade observes that critics unexperienced in yogic practice have no authority to judge yogic states that 'go beyond the condition that circumscribes us when we criticize them',[340] so I argue we should be wary of default scepticism towards other people's experiences that don't fit our ontology (*S&E*, 178–80, 184–6).

Indigenous perspectives are today less likely than those of Western dissenters from materialism to be openly dismissed. Acknowledging the limitations of conventional materialism,[341] material ecocriticism has sought to rehabilitate aspects of animism, acknowledging qualities of 'consciousness', 'cognition', 'agency', 'intelligence', or 'awareness' pervading non-human nature.[342] This is to be welcomed insofar as it enhances respect for non-human nature and the insight of animistic cultures, but it does so by reframing 'consciousness' and related qualities in terms of physically evident phenomena,[343] thereby occluding any ontological space for the invisible realm of transcendent and inwardly experienced consciousness. Patrick Curry, similarly, seeks to rehabilitate the Weberian 'enchantment' lost from modern life with the demise of supernatural beliefs,[344] but, in abstaining from acknowledging any reality beyond the material, he reduces enchantment to mere feelings of 'wonder'.[345]

Chapter 6 of *Storytelling and Ecology* carefully and explicitly breaches the academic taboo against transgressions of scientific materialism, arguing that mythic stories and transpersonal experiences bespeak a spiritual dimension of life on earth – what I've dubbed

[340] Eliade, *Yoga*, 39.

[341] Wheeler, 'Natural Play'.

[342] Abram, 'Afterword'; Bergthaller, 'Limits of Agency'; Rigby, 'Spirits that Matter'; Wheeler, 'How the Earth Speaks Now'.

[343] See also Abram, *Becoming Animal*; Favareau, 'Why This Now?'; Hoffmeyer, 'Semiotic Scaffolding'.

[344] Weber, *The Sociology of Religion.*

[345] Curry, 'The Experience of Enchantment'; Curry, *Enchantment*.

'supernatural ecology' – whose relevance to ecological storytelling relates not only to the content of many stories but also to the storytelling experience. I argue that efforts to address the ecological crisis without engaging this aspect of life are likely to be futile, since the assumptions of scientific materialism imply both the sociobiological and the economic determinism driving humankind's destructive impact on the biosphere. If consciousness is not reduced to cybernetic processing of information, however, authentic spiritual engagement offers the possibility to choose to behave otherwise (*S&E*, 180–4).

My thinking here is influenced by the 'perennial philosophy' that the material world is pervaded by and contingent upon a transcendent reality.[346] Phenomenologically, the latter may be encountered in the consciousness – in which we can be aware we're aware – that's prerequisite to our knowing anything about the world.[347] *Storytelling and Ecology* takes the position that within the mystery of consciousness – individual, collective, divine – lies the potential to escape the predetermined, to imagine and act otherwise and remake the world. Through the vast terrain of philosophy and spirituality relating to this subject, I've navigated a route drawing upon my own journey of open-minded learning. My tantric explorations, in particular, have facilitated my understanding that matter and consciousness cannot be reduced to each other, yet neither are they separate, that they're interwoven and reciprocally transformative.

The divine is by definition a mystery beyond human comprehension, but the recurring insight of spiritual traditions is that facets of the divine may be disclosed to human experience.[348] Helpful to my understanding of this is the Mahayana concept, important in Buddhist tantra, of 'sambhogakaya' – 'the middle region of consciousness' between

[346] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*.

[347] Spira, *The Nature of Consciousness.*

[348] Ward, *Images of Eternity.*

'dharmakaya' (the transcendent) and 'nirmanakaya' (the material).[349] This 'realm of spiritual manifestation'[350] – and its analogues in other traditions – is the locus of transpersonal experiences that resist scientific demonstration and engage the imagination. My ontological stance is that this 'invisible world'[351] has as real an existence as the material world, but that the need to use metaphor to narrate experiences of it brings about the construction of mythologies and religions, which can in turn inflect the imagery of those experiences. My critical writings argue that supernatural motifs in mythic stories metaphorically represent aspects of transpersonal experience. If we recognise that these metaphors shouldn't be interpreted literally but nevertheless refer to an independently existing invisible world, then apparently incompatible spiritual cosmologies can happily coexist and the sharing of mythic stories offers a means of engaging collectively with this invisible world as an interface with the divine (*S&E*, 179, 184–5, 196; *Words*, 79–85).

Chapter 6 of *Storytelling and Ecology* is discursively complex because it interweaves different kinds of language: 'the imaginative language of mythic stories, the spiritual metaphors of religious traditions, and the more neutral lexicon that I hope will be accessible to those for whom notions of "spirit" seem inseparable from implausible belief systems' (*S&E*, 211). That 'neutral lexicon' includes 'consciousness', which in Hindu tantra is divinised as Shiva and conceptualised as space, and 'energy', the mysterious non-material quality that in cultures worldwide (as 'prana', 'chi', 'mana', 'spirit', etc.) is understood to pervade the whole of nature, including human bodies, and which in Hindu tantra is divinised as Shakti. The loving union of Shiva and Shakti symbolises the fusion of consciousness and

[349] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 206. See Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*; Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.*

[350] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 206.

[351] O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes.*

energy to evoke the active compassion that motivates transformation.[352] The framing of Somadeva's *Kathā Sarit Sāgara*'s hundreds of stories as being told by Shiva to Shakti as they sit in union, I've suggested, symbolises how a story can be a 'crucible of love',[353] containing a structure of space in which patterns of desire stir the caring for others, both human and non-human, so crucial to our response to ecological crisis (*S&E*, 186–7, 193–4).[354]

When consciousness is cultivated via meditative practices, one can detect energy in and around the *body*, as robust Western and Asian studies describe.[355] *Storytelling and Ecology* argues that the group dynamics of storytelling possess an energetic dimension, requiring storytellers – however they conceptualise this – to 'hold the space' for the group and sensitively manage the energetics of imagery,[356] voice,[357] pause,[358] language,[359] 'rasa',[360] 'trance',[361] and 'entrainment'.[362] Bardic invocation of 'awen' is one way some British storytellers, including me, engage with energy.[363] Crucial to my axiom of spaciously respecting listeners' agency of response is that storytellers seek not to coopt energy in techniques of power to dominate the listener (*S&E*, 150, 166, 187–9, 196).

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[352] See Feuerstein, *Tantra.*

[353] The phrase 'crucible of love' is from Ramsay, *Crucible of Love.*

[354] I'm indebted to Maya for introducing me to various principles applied in this paragraph.

[355] For example, Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*; Lickhart, *The Subtle Energy Body*; Mookerjee, *Kundalini*; Samuel and Johnson, *Religion and the Subtle Body.*

[356] Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols.*

[357] Goodchild, *The Naked Voice.*

[358] Oelrich, *The New Story.*

[359] Gilman, 'The Languages of the Fantastic'.

[360] Coomaraswamy, 'The Theory of Art in Asia'; Daumal, *Rasa.*

[361] Parkinson, *Transforming Tales*; Stallings, 'The Web of Silence'; Sturm, 'The Enchanted Imagination'.

[362] Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*, 185–205.

[363] Manwaring, *The Bardic Handbook.*

Robust analyses of energy's presence in the *environment* are more difficult to find, perhaps because of the subjective nature of energy perception.[364] In traditional cultures, such as the Kanak's, energy's presence in the environment is perceived in terms of spirits whose presence is interwoven with the human community and the ecosystem and who animate and are invoked by stories.[365] *Storytelling and Ecology* suggests that energy is in play in stories' enchantment of places, and organisms, as when stories conjure experiences of 'aura',[366] 'liminality',[367] or 'taboo'[368] – which can in turn nurture perceptions of these places or organisms as sacred and deserving of respect and protection (*S&E*, 142–3, 177–8, 186–7, 189–90).

Reliably reported transpersonal experiences can be acknowledged as part of the continuum of people's lived experiences.[369] However, as, my argumentation makes clear, the phenomena in question cannot meet the empirical tests of proof demanded by the scientific method. Uncertainty has to be accepted, as it does also in our understanding of complex ecological systems.[370] Discernment is required in evaluating stories of transpersonal experience, as too with truth claims pertaining to science and history (see §1). With these careful provisos, I've argued that storytelling and storywork, when founded upon some kind of consciousness practice, can support *collective* access to spiritual sources of consolation, connectedness, and empowerment that can enable us to transcend biological and egoic

[364] See, for example, Michell, *The Earth Spirit*; Rawson and Legeza, *Tao.*

[365] For example, Godin, 'Croyances'; Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*; Leblic, 'Les Kanak et les rêves'; Leenhardt, *Do Kamo*; Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne*; Salomon, *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks*; Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, *The Ecology of the Spoken Word.*

[366] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction'.

[367] Turner, 'Liminality'.

[368] For example, Brou, *Préhistoire et société traditionelle de la Nouvelle Calédonie*; Tjibaou, *Kanaky*.

[369] Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*; Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, *The Ecology of the Spoken Word.*

[370] Capra, *The Web of Life.*

impulses and speak and act in the world with authentic freedom and compassion (*S&E*, 168–70, 184–5, 200–5).

Our capacity to ameliorate the ecological crisis is limited not only by our personal and collective agency but also by time. Nature has great powers of regeneration, but, by translating geological time into travel narrative, *Deep Time* conveys the millions of years it takes nature to recover from a mass extinction. However much we change our ways, the species and ecosystems we've destroyed won't return within our lifetimes. Our mortality conditions the inadequacy of our response. My critical writing observes that mythic stories are a primary resource for engaging with mortality[371] – offering hope and guideposts with respect to our personal and collective 'Hades journey'[372] and the possibility of the earth's healing. Addressing the 'cultic' potential of storytelling to mediate people's relations with cosmos and community, I've analysed storytelling's affinities with and differences from ritual and shamanism (*Words*, 164–9; *S&E*, 39–45, 153–4, 163, 185, 205–10).

In storytelling, the 'text' of words spoken is only one element of an embodied, interpersonal, emplaced, and energetic situation that otherwise exists independently of language. Prose fiction, on the other hand, is an entirely textual entity. The reading of a story can elicit an energetic response, as Arthur Machen's *The Hill of Dreams* did for me with its ecstatic rhythmic prose;[373] but it's difficult to discern from a written text whether any transpersonal content is conceived as fantasy or reflects the author's ontology, as has been debated with respect to magical realism.[374] Genre fantasy characteristically distances the supernatural in a 'secondary world',[375] and even there enchantment is often disenchanted by

[371] See Gersie, *Storymaking in Bereavement.*

[372] Clarke, *Green Man Dreaming*, 235–48.

[373] Nanson, Contribution to 'Best of 2014'.

[374] Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism.*

[375] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories'.

irony and/or treating the supernatural as analogous to science and technology.[376] In magical realism, textual games may raise ontological questions, and/or the metaphors of mythology may be made real within the fictional world.[377] The latter strategy equates to Todorov's category of the 'marvellous', as distinct from the 'uncanny', in which the supernatural is presented as only apparent, not real, and the 'fantastic', in which ontological ambiguity is preserved.[378] The current vogue of 'folk realism' explores facets of this continuum.[379] Todorov's insistence that supernatural interpretations have 'no reality outside language' – except from the perspective of 'the drug-user, the psychotic … the infant' – confirms Lindsay Clarke's view that in contemporary fiction the doctrine of scientific materialism inhibits what's acceptable.[380]

Running against the grain of the materialist zeitgeist is rare 'transrational'[381] fiction, like Clarke's and arguably Graham Joyce's, which depicts the experiencing of transpersonal experiences within a realistic contemporary context.[382] One aim of the blending of genres in *Exotic Excursions* is to evoke such transpersonal experiences. For example, Perry's perception of Prue is altered during part of 'The Leap of Faith' as if she's become her own doppelgänger. The only clues that some characters in 'The Sun Cafe' may be gods are that they're just too beautiful, self-assured, and circumscribed by symbolic coincidence. 'Touching Bedrock' conveys my own spontaneous experience of ecstatic stillness while observing a gull in flight.

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[376] Le Guin, *The Language of the Night*, 29–35, 73–86; Nanson, Review of *Fearsome Journeys*.

[377] Frost, 'Reading the Slipstream'; Sieber, 'Magical Realism'.

[378] Todorov, *The Fantastic.*

[379] Barnett, 'Folk Realism'.

[380] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 92, 120; Clarke, *Green Man Dreaming*, 88–92.

[381] Clarke, *Green Man Dreaming*.

[382] For example, Clarke, *Alice's Masque*; Clarke, *The Chymical Wedding*; Clarke, *The Water Theatre*; Joyce, *The Facts of Life*; Joyce, *The Limits of Enchantment*; Joyce, *Some Kind of Fairy Tale.*

Deep Time's metaphysics are complicated. As in much SF except 'hard' SF,[383] the novel's central premise is scientifically impossible and yet is *presented* in scientific terms according to the intrinsic materialism of SF.[384] Local legends of mysterious creatures are cryptozoologically demythologised. However, materialist assumptions are destabilised in several ways. Salome's navigation through time involves an energetic sensitivity to the environment, especially watercourses, which also evokes the symbolic association of otherworldly female beings with running water (see §6.4). Her induction of Brendan into conscious connection with everything around him is proto-tantric. Her swimming away into the prehistoric sea has to be understood symbolically, not realistically, and in relation to her conflation of the mother she's longed to meet again with a kind of maternal spirit permeating the earth through the whole of time. Several dream sequences directly deploy symbolic imagery. After Salome's departure, for example, Brendan has a dream of paradise which dissolves the distinction between life and death. Vince's conservative Christian faith is challenged by witnessing biological evolution in deep time. In a near-death experience during the Permian ecocatastrophe, Jesus shows him the way through the vagina of a goddess to an ecological paradise. When he's actually dying, Vince struggles to cling to faith in God and eternal life, and Salome gives him the assurances that Brendan can't (*DT*, 94–6, 554–8, 664–72). These uneasy interfaces between scientific realism and the transpersonal leave the reader the space of unresolved questions about what's real and what matters.

[383] See Cramer, 'Hard Science Fiction'.

[384] Roberts, *Science Fiction.*

§10. Conclusions

Now that I've unravelled the main strands of reflective practice woven through my Collection – synergies between storytelling and storywriting; embodied experience; dynamics of space and desire; ecobardic intention; intertextuality and innovation; field research; ecological history; and spiritual exploration – I'd like to consider what insights may be gleaned from the fabric of this Thesis.

From analysing my studies of ecological storytelling alongside my ecobardic fiction, it seems clear that the embodied, collective, dialogic dynamic of storytelling has potential to contribute to ecological connectedness in ways unavailable to prose fiction. The latter's strength is that it can engage deeper psychological, intellectual, and narrative complexity and nuance in response to contemporary problems that are complex and also exacerbated by the delusion, distraction, and polarisation that newer technological media are amplifying.[385] However, aspects of my theorisation of storytelling are applicable to fiction. My tantric conceptualisation of 'structures of space' and 'patterns of desire', which draws upon writerly concepts of 'omissions' and 'desire', clarifies how one might more consciously bring such structures and patterns into play in storywriting as well as storytelling and storywork. In both storytelling and fiction, there can be a transmission of energy from the rhythm of language into the eliciting of feelings and thereby into ethical responsivity and the possibility of change. This dynamic between aesthetics, feelings, and ethics – according to the animus of my Collection – signals the importance of authentic art in an age when all these things are threatened by commercial imperatives, dehumanising technologies, polarising politics, and ecological emergency.

[385] See, for example, Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*; Klein, *Doppelganger*; Smith, *The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is.*

Another commonality of storytelling and fiction evident in this Thesis is the dynamic between intertextuality and innovation. This is an age-old phenomenon, but it requires new salience in today's context of political pressures tending to constrain creative work, on one hand, and a technologically supercharged commercial impetus to exploit everything possible to maximise profit heedless of the social, cultural, and ecological cost.

Here I wish to foreground a set of powerful social constructs that I'll call 'pieties',[386] meaning ideologies whose validity is taken for granted and that present themselves as beyond critique; if you publicly transgress them, you risk censure, possibly with lasting consequences to your reputation. Five pieties that show up in this Thesis are those of scientific materialism; neoliberal capitalism; identity politics; individualistic 'freedom'; and technological progress. The fields of endeavour from which these pieties have arisen have produced welcome benefits; it's the hardening into reductive ideologies that's problematic. In the aggressively self-righteous hardening of identity politics (see §6.4), for instance, we're seeing the rise of what I would term a 'New Puritanism' – already reflected in capitalism's work ethic.[387] From a spiritual perspective, identity categories support the ego, the sense of a separate self, from which spiritual practice seeks to liberate us into an authentic consciousness in which we can experience loving transpersonal connectedness with others, both human and more-than-human.[388] All five pieties that I've highlighted are antagonistic to this spiritual process, as they are also to efforts to address the ecological crisis. With respect to artistic work like storytelling and fiction, the impetus of these pieties is towards closing down possibilities. A recurring emphasis in my Collection is that of *opening* possibility, in the stories we tell and write, in the worlds we imagine and desire.

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[386] This term is inspired by Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*, whose subtitle is *The Price of Piety*.

[387] See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*.

[388] My understanding here draws on Maya's teaching and on Durham, *Coherent Self*.

Evident in this Thesis, resisting those pieties, are various 'realities', by which I mean phenomena that can be experienced and ought not be ignored or denied. Realities such as: ecological crisis; biological desire; evolving tradition; modern society's alienation from nature; problems requiring cooperation; transpersonal consciousness; and death. It's certainly possible to derive pieties from these realities, as religious history demonstrates. Environmentalism has potential to become a piety but at present only has that status within limited circles. The urgency of collective response that ecological crisis demands imparts a pressure upon activities like storytelling and storywriting to become propaganda (see §4). Since Ruskin and John Muir in the 19th century,[389] many words have been written calling for action to regulate the ecological impact of industrial civilisation, and yet, despite positive steps that have been taken, the crisis keeps escalating. The gap between words and action remains wide. It seems to me that those who feel called to instrumentally bring about positive ecological change should seek to do so, not through storytelling or creative writing, but in formulating and implementing *action* through some form of politics or practical activity. Yet the politics and effort of action ride upon the knowledge of reality and the psychology of desire conditioned by the cultural milieu. It is particularly in the 'education of desire'[390] that stories can be catalysts of transformation.

Just as there's a cumulative effect of all the small actions each of us can contribute to making a greener world, I've suggested there's a cumulative impact of all the stories each of us chooses to share or imbibe (*Words*, 85, 94; *S&E*, 194). My intention, applied in the creative work in my Collection, is that each story I tell or write should be consistent with my ecosophy and, as Lopez says, 'contribute to the general effort, to bring beauty and grace and

[389] Hill, *Ruskinland*; Worster, *A Passion for Nature.*

[390] Baccolini and Moylan, 'Introduction', 11; Parham, 'The Poverty of Ecocritical Theory', 31.

light … where there is now cruelty and darkness and spiritual ugliness'.[391] My critical writing advocates this principle to other storytellers and writers. Their desires won't precisely match mine. Nor will our audiences'. An interplay of desires is enacted through the dialogic interplay of characters within stories and of the people who produce and receive them.[392] Within each storyteller and storywriter, too, there's an interplay of desires – between desires, say, for the world to flourish and be beautiful, and desires for our own flourishing within the world as we find it, and the mysterious impetus of desire that compels us to tell stories.

One distinction of my creative and critical work is an 'ecospiritual'[393] willingness to bring open-minded spiritual enquiry into relation with ecological concerns. In retrospect, I notice foreshadowed in my earlier publications some rudiments of the insights from tantra that informed *Storytelling and Ecology*. These insights include: commitment to self-transformation as requisite to contributing to positive change in the world; body as pivot between mind and world; clarifying intention while letting go of seeking to impose your will; cultivation of space in which something new may emerge; desire, lightly held, as the engine of transformation; and opening the heart as key to active compassion.[394]

The work represented in my Collection is original and significant in several other respects. *Storytelling and Ecology* is a pioneering ecocritical exploration that, according to Heinemeyer, is 'Wise, precise, scientifically fluent while achingly expressive' and 'reimagines storytelling for this moment of ecological emergency'.[395] Other essays – drawing on my ecobardic collaboration with Fire Springs, my pedagogy teaching SF writing, and my primary research on Garnett and Thomas – emphasise the importance of intention and

[391] Quoted in Tydeman, *Conversations with Barry Lopez*, 128.

[392] See Brooks, *Reading for the Plot.*

[393] Ramsay, *Soul of the Earth.*

[394] I'm much indebted to Maya for guiding me to these insights and the practice of living them.

[395] Catherine Heinemeyer, quotation on back cover of *Storytelling and Ecology.*

responsibility in stories' capacity to promulgate hope and possibility amidst ecological crisis. Eric Maddern described *Words of Re-enchantment* as 'a richly wise and provocative book … threaded through with a passionate faith that well-chosen, well-told stories … can lift us from the mundane and help us see and feel what is truly valuable in life'.[396] My Gloucestershire work, together with Hartsiotis's contribution, has recreated for this county a substantial legendarium of traditional tales and is innovative also in its ecobardic intention and ecologically engaged field research. Other stories in the Collection demonstrate an extension of the diversity of ecological stories, in which I've sought to match innovation with craftsmanship; Mimi Thebo wrote of *Exotic Excursions* that 'Reading Nanson's prose … is an intense pleasure. His sheer technical ability makes my bones rattle with joy.'[397] *Deep Time* achieves a unique combination of ambitious scale, narrative daring, intertextual awareness, psychological intensity, imaginative lucidity, and ecological detail and commitment; Tudor Ciocarlie commented, 'Deep Time took me on a incredible journey through the heart and soul of time, of nature and of the human being … My mind was blown away.'[398]

Writing this Thesis has clarified areas of theory, intention, and technique to take back into my creative practice. I shall complement the ecospiritual subject matter of my novel-in-progress – and further fiction, storytelling, and memoir I have planned – with deliberate opening of space within my narration and with awareness of the energy I bring to my language. I shall be mindful that whatever I imagine and put into words may disclose 'possible worlds'[399] and thereby help them come into being. The principles presented in *Storytelling and Ecology* also underpin a practical storywork methodology I'm developing, which aims to triangulate between the exploration of *meaning* in stories, the experience of

[396] Maddern, 'Foreword', xi–xii.

[397] Thebo, 'Foreword', ix.

[398] Tudor Ciocarlie, Amazon review of *Deep Time*.

[399] Paul Ricoeur quoted in Coupe, *Myth*, 155.

connection with others, and the empowerment of participants' *voice.* In all this I'll continue to reflect on my practice, interrogate the truth of stories and experience, and seek to cultivate consciousness and compassion.

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Zapf, Hubert. 'Cultural Ecology, the Environmental Humanities, and the Transdisciplinary Knowledge of Literature'. In *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*, edited by Serpil Opperman and Serenella Iovino, 61–79. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

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APPENDIX. PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THE COLLECTION

Critical writings

Nanson, Anthony. '"The Future Has Gone Bad; We Need a New One": Neoliberal Science Fiction and the Writing of Ecotopian Possibility'. In *Storytelling for Sustainability in Higher Education: An Educator's Handbook*, edited by Petra Molthan-Hill, Heather Luna, Tony Wall, Helen Puntha, and Denise Baden, 130–42. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.

Nanson, Anthony. 'Jumping the Gap of Desire: Telling Stories from Ecological History About Species Extinction to Evoke an Empathetic and Questioning Response'. In *Storytelling for Nature Connection: Environment, Community and Story-Based Learning*, edited by Alida Gersie, Anthony Nanson, and Edward Schieffelin, 140–52. Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 2022.

Nanson, Anthony. *Storytelling and Ecology: Empathy, Enchantment and Emergence in the Use of Oral Narratives.* London: Bloomsbury, 2021. (Finalist, Association of American Publishers Prose Awards 2022; Honors, Storytelling World Awards 2022)

Nanson, Anthony. *Words of Re-enchantment: Writings on Storytelling, Myth, and Ecological Desire.* Stroud: Awen, 2011. (Honors, Storytelling World Awards 2013)

Nanson, Anthony. 'The Writer and the Reader: Edward Thomas, Edward Garnett, and the Pursuit of Literary Worth'. *Logos* 24, no. 4 (2014), 44–56.

Nanson, Anthony, Kevan Manwaring, David Metcalfe, Kirsty Hartsiotis, and Richard Selby [Fire Springs]. *An Ecobardic Manifesto: A Vision for the Arts in a Time of Environmental Crisis.* Bath: Awen, 2008. (My contribution: primary author)

Creative writings

Nanson, Anthony. 'The Dead Are Not Dead'. *Ariadne's Thread* 1 (2012): 51–2.

Nanson, Anthony. *Deep Time.* Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 2015.

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Nanson, Anthony. *Gloucestershire Folk Tales.* Stroud: History Press, 2012. (Honors, Storytelling World Awards 2013)

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Nanson, Anthony, and Kirsty Hartsiotis. *Gloucestershire Folk Tales for Children.* Cheltenham: History Press, 2020. (My contribution: 'Things You Can Do with These Stories', 'Goram and Vincent', 'To Gloucester a-Mothering', 'The Mermaid's Curse', 'Crocket's Hole', 'The Land of Dreams', 'Whitsun Revels in St Briavels', 'A Candle in the Window', 'The Tailor of Gloucester', 'A New Year's Blessing')

Nanson, Anthony, and Kirsty Hartsiotis. *Gloucestershire Ghost Tales*. Stroud: History Press, 2015. (My contribution: 'Introduction', 'The White Lady of Over Court', '"Save Me Tonight from Benhall's Dreary Wood"', 'The Prior's Guest', 'Toby', 'Llanthony Secunda', 'The Royalist Ferryman', 'The Gypsy's Bear', 'Snowshill Manor', 'The Gibbet on Durdham Down', 'The Shadow of the Workhouse')