
RE-STORYING THE EARTH

Writing a New Meta-Narrative Through Eco-Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The exegesis, 'Re-Storying the Earth', and the accompanying artefact, 'Shifted', a young adult novel, address the research question, 'what is required to re-story cultural meta-narratives about the relationship of humans to the Earth through fiction?' I use the term 're-story' (derived from Narrative Therapy) in the context of creating new cultural narratives that offer an alternative to existing dominant ones. My work rests on the assumption that fiction can shift cultural ways of seeing and hence acting. Both artefact and exegesis synthesise ideas from eco-psychology (in particular the work of Koger and Winter, 2010) and eco-feminism (including Mies and Shiva 1993, and the fiction and essays of activist and writer Starhawk).

The PhD adopts a Practice-Led Research methodology. Consequently the exegesis is a performative document within which my central argument develops by accretion, reflecting my creative practice journey. Simultaneously it charts the process I underwent to attempt a re-storying of Earth narratives. It is constructed using a Narrative Therapy methodology, a therapeutic approach created by Michael White and David Epston. I argue that re-storying our relationship with the Earth offers *one approach* to addressing the deeply complex and issue of climate change, which I define as encompassing shifting weather conditions but also the depletion and destruction of the Earth's natural resources.

The exegesis defines the problem to be considered in terms of the impact of the exploitative relationship of humans to the Earth. It notes the growing call to create an alternative future by re-storying this relationship to one of interdependence and stewardship. I explore how certain cultural meta-narratives maintain this paradigm by enforcing a disconnection between humans and the natural world, whilst discouraging agency. Examining alternative narratives and eco-theory yields other ways of perceiving and acting.

In answering the research question I identify useful concepts for creating Earth-centred cultural stories. One is to balance message with Ecos, which Kaye (2013) defines as an Earth-as-home ethos aligned with biocentrism rather than anthropocentrism. Another is to use characterisation to encourage empathic resonance with the Earth. I also note how negotiating a path between intellectual exploration and creative activity led to practice learnings. Drawing on the work of Bhabha (2012) and Soja (2009) I argue that it is the process of *allowing* the merging of the epistemological, ontological and creative through entry into a conceptual Thirdspace that leads to new understandings for the writer/ researcher.

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I would never have completed this project without the outstanding support and guidance of my supervisors, Martin Andrew and Dominique Hecq. Martin's ability to pinpoint the perfect references, and the breadth of his scholarship, which he always used to inspire me to develop my ideas further, astound me. Dominique's eye for detail was indispensable in the final stages of the project, as was her knowledge of philosophy and psychology and her artful expertise with language.

I am incredibly grateful to the Research Committee of Swinburne University for awarding me a scholarship, without which I would never have been able to even begin this project.

Thank you to the wonderful young people with Williams Syndrome and their families who invited me to their camp and shared their time with me so generously. Thanks also to the CEO of Cystic Fibrosis Victoria for his insightful question which challenged me to spread my wings as a writer.

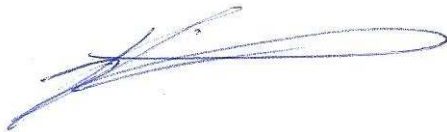
Personal thanks must go to Wendy Dunn, who made sure that I didn't become a hermit by regularly checking on my well-being, and especially to my wonderful husband Jamie, who, despite facing his own battle with the spiders of Mirkwood at the same time that I thought I'd never find a way out of that primeval forest, kept me sane.

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

This artefact and exegesis are submitted to meet the requirements of the PhD by artefact and exegesis at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.

I declare that the artefact, 'Shifted', and the accompanying exegesis:

- contain no material which has been accepted for the award to myself of any other degree or diploma;
- to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Le Rossignol', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Rachel Le Rossignol

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	7
Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings	7
Methodology.....	11
The Artefact and the Exegesis.....	15
The Interaction of the Artefact and the Exegesis	17
Chapter One – Defining the Problem.....	24
Current Context	24
The Dominant Social Paradigm and its Impact	25
Externalising the Problem Through Story	27
A Call for Change.....	29
Moving Towards Re-Storying.....	30
Re-Storying Through Fiction	32
Shaping a New Earth Ontology	34
Chapter Two – Earth Meta-Narratives In Storytelling	37
Deconstructing Earth Meta-Narratives.....	37
Depictions of Nature	38
Messages Implicit Within Nature Depictions.....	39
Agency and the Hero.....	42
Finding Exceptions and Alternatives.....	44
<i>The Fifth Sacred Thing</i>	46
<i>Gibbon’s Decline and Fall</i>	49
A Final Note on Ethos.....	50
Conclusion.....	51
Chapter Three – Re-Storying I – Message and Ecos.....	53
Message as Idea Seeding	53
Technology and Nature.....	54
Other Message ‘Seeds’.....	57
Ecos and Ontology	58
Ecos I – Connection, Community, Agency, Diversity.....	59
Ecos II – Sacredness	61
Finding a Balance Between Message and Ecos.....	63
Chapter Four – Re-storying II – Characters and Empathy.....	64

Characterisation – Empathy and Connection	64
The Process of Character Creation	66
Disability, Difference and Community	67
Finding The Characters’ Voices	69
Using Emotion to Create Empathy.....	72
Chapter Five – Re-storying III – Depicting the Earth.....	75
Why Empathy Is Important in Relation to the Earth	75
Representing Earth – Kalia.....	76
Why an Earth Goddess?.....	77
Creating an Earth Goddess.....	79
Place as Character – Sanctuary	83
Connecting with Place through the Characters	85
Specificity of Place	87
The City in ‘Shifted’	88
Chapter Six – Conclusions	89
Third Space Thinking and Cultural Change	90
Third Space in Research – Allowing Space for the Unexpected.....	92
Third Space in Creative Writing – Allowing Space for Creativity	93
Fiction as Third Space – Revealing New Possibilities	95
How Spatiality Informed the Research Question.....	97
Beyond Re-Storying.....	98
Bibliography	101
Appendices.....	111
Appendix A: Evidence of Ethics Clearance	111
Appendix B: Stories Reviewed to Deconstruct the Relationship of Humans and Nature	112
Glossary of Terms Used	113
Publications Arising from the Project	114

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: The Artefact and Exegesis Interact	19
Figure 2: The Trialectic of Stories	276

PREFACE

The use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings, and your destiny.

Ursula K. Le Guin

This preface introduces the artefact ‘Shifted’, a young adult novel, and its accompanying exegesis, Re-Storying the Earth. It explains their theoretical underpinnings, structure and content, as well as the ethical factors involved in producing them and how the two interact to reveal new knowledge. Both documents are driven by the research question, ‘what is required to re-story cultural meta-narratives about the relationship of humans to the Earth through fiction?’ The origins of and reasons for this question are detailed below.

Since the project involved both creative practice and academic research, a mixed methodology was essential. Methodology is explained in two sections: one explains the rationale for and use of a Narrative Therapy framework and the other discusses how the artefact and exegesis interact. The structured Narrative Therapy process enabled a trans-disciplinary approach which incorporated diverse threads from eco-theory, social work, literary theory and arts-based research. In keeping with the project’s methodological focus of integrating theory and practice, and because different fields of literature were relevant at different stages of the project, the literature review is embedded throughout the entire document. However, as Kindt and Müller (2006) note, where the boundaries between disciplines break down, lack of clarity in relation to critical concepts can lead to confusion rather than to common reference points. I therefore include a glossary of terms at the end of the document.

THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, with the stories that we dream or imagine or would like to tell (Polkinghorne 1988, p.160).

In this section I define the philosophical positioning which underpins my research and the key ideas used in the exegesis. My research question arose from the eco-feminist argument put forward by Mies and Shiva (1993) and others that we need a new ethos and ontology in relation to the Earth (the re-storying component) and the narrative theory idea that storytelling can be a tool to introduce this on a cultural level (the fiction component).

When I discuss ontology throughout this exegesis I am referring to an *embodied* 'Ecos'; that is an Earth-centred value system that finds expression in a way of *being* in the world, as defined by Kaye (2013). To explain further: at the 2011 AAWP conference *Speaking and silences*, a number of writers called for creative works to be imbued with an ecological sensibility (Harrison 2011; Satchell 2011; Shannon 2011). Such an approach is important if it is assumed that an artist's ethos, embedded in their work, can encourage others to embrace a new personal ethos. A more specific term applicable to this sensibility is ecosophy, an idea articulated by Arne Naess, which implies 'an evolving but consistent philosophy of being, thinking and acting in the world that embodies ecological wisdom and harmony' (Van Eyk McCain 2010, p. 42).

This term, however, fails to recognise that there is a distinction between values and practice. The term 'Ecos' could be applied to the former. Kaye (2013) defines Ecos as an Earth-as-home centred ethos aligned with biocentrism rather than anthropocentrism. This would seem to encapsulate the values which underpin eco-feminism and eco-psychology, such as recognition of the inherent value of all living things. It is only when these values guide an individual's actions that they become ontology, or a specific way of being in the world. Being guided by such an ethos would lead to a shift in the way humans see their connection to the natural world – and hence in how they actually *are* (their ontological stance) and behave – in relation to it¹. The significance of such a paradigm shift is contextualized if it is considered on a par with the way in which the American Civil Rights movement or the Suffragette movement changed the perception of African-Americans or women at a fundamental level. Yet rather than being an idealistic stance, a review of climate change literature suggests the survival of the human race may well depend on this shift, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Yet how to bring about such a significant ontological shift? As a trained Narrative Therapist I consider that stories inform how we perceive the world, and consequently how we act, so changing them can bring about individual and cultural change. The basic tenet of Narrative is that narratives function as the mechanism by which we understand, organise and find coherence in our lived experiences - we place our actions and those of others' within a story framework (Bamberg 2004, p. 354; Lee et al. 2004, p. 224; Polkinghorne 1988, p. 145). In the

¹ I use the term 'Earth' throughout this exegesis as an abbreviated way of referring to the natural world, including the biosphere and all living things, not in reference to the planet alone.

words of Oatley (2011, p. 33) 'the mental models of fiction enable us to think about ourselves in the social world'. White, the founder of Narrative Therapy, succinctly states:

... the narrative metaphor proposes that people live their lives by stories – that these stories are shaping of life, and that they have real, not imagined, effects – and that these stories provide the structure of life (1992, p. 123).

Narrative theory hypothesises that life, biography and story are analogous (Bamberg 2004, p. 354). It further posits that there is no objective reality; that we construct reality through our 'own background, attitudes, values, beliefs, biases, heuristics, and stereotypes' (Morgan & Dennehy 2004, p. 376). Knowing is found in the stories we tell about our relationships and connections. Barry (1995) uses the term 'structures of feeling' to describe how lived and felt experiences help us discover values and meanings. Thinking narratively directs our actions too; reflecting on and placing meaning on experience (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 35), we then apply such knowledge to future experiences.

Narrative thus considers that our identities arise from the stories we tell about our experiences, our place in social structures, and our cultural practices (Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; Polkinghorne 1988, p. 135; White 1992). The narratives that shape our lives can have a powerful and lasting impact not just on individuals, but on communities. These narratives can be personal, or they can be socially agreed understandings which pervade cultural storytelling, which Narrative Therapy refers to as meta-narratives. Stories aid individual enculturation, showing us how to understand the world: they teach us who we are, how to behave, where we fit, and even what to believe and why (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; Le Guin 2004; Meadows 1992; Nelson 2004; Parry & Doan 1994; Sarbin 2004). Children's literature is acknowledged as particularly powerful in socialising children at a time when they are forming their identity, embedding morality and values and enhancing psychological growth (Cashdan 1999; Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; Lieberman 1986; Pearson & Pope 1981; Rowe 1986; Salans 2006; Stephens & McCallum 1998; Warner 1996; Zipes 1986).

McAdams (1993, p. 34) makes it clear that stories work on a cultural level as well:

A society's myths reflect the most important concerns of a people. By giving narrative form to a diverse collection of elements, they help to preserve the society's integrity and assure its continuity and health.

Higgs (2008, p. 548) notes that stories not only teach but build culture, because they translate psychological knowledge. Sakakibara's (2010, n.p.) research demonstrates how Inuit storytelling, which has grown from knowledge accumulated across generations, teaches

survival skills related to living in a particular landscape, as well as appropriate behaviour for the young to ensure community stability. In considering the link between stories and identity it is worth bearing in mind Bhabha's (2012, p. 2) argument that identity forms at the point 'between', where values and priorities are exchanged and negotiated: that is, it is not via a prescriptive list but through the juxtaposition of ideas and the process of engaging with these that one establishes a sense of self.

Yet despite the power of stories we seldom ask what *exactly* they are teaching. In Chapter 1 I will consider this question, and in later chapters I will explore how stories impact on readers. As a precursor, it is important to note that research shows novels evoke an empathic response which can create a new awareness, thus shifting values or ethos, and even bringing about changes in attitudes and behaviour (Cosgrove 2006, p. 135; Oatley 2012; Sarbin 2004, p. 5). That is, fiction can have 'real world' outcomes. However, to achieve this, Eisner (2008, p. 11) says art makers need not only to be skilled at their medium, but to hold a sensitivity towards what they are trying to depict. That is, it is at least in part the writer's response to the world, given voice in their work, which can enable empathic resonance (or other responses) to occur in the reader. This implies the writer's ontological stance is impactful. This will be explored further in Chapter 2.

I take a hermeneutic perspective on the interpretation of fiction, considering that to an extent, how a text is read depends on how the reader negotiates meaning, referring to Bhabha's point that the 'terms of cultural engagement... are produced performatively' (2012, p. 3). However, I do not dismiss Stevens and Salo's (2008) point that the writer's world view infuses a work with theme and therefore meaning. As Card (1990, p. 16) states:

No two authors would ever tell a story the same way, because no two people ever care about and believe in the same things to exactly the same degree. Every story choice you make arises out of who you are, at the deepest levels of your soul; every story you tell reveals who you are and the way you conceive the world around you.

If stories can bring about value shifts and the writer can embed stories with particular values, then the writer's intention matters. Numerous writers have argued this point. Sontag (cited in Barthes 1967, p. xi) notes Sartre's definition of the writer as a 'giver of consciousness', who thus has an ethical obligation to bring liberty. Similarly, Le Guin (2004, p. 118) says the writer has an obligation:

by offering an imagined but persuasive alternative reality, to dislodge my mind, and so the reader's mind, from the lazy, timorous habit of thinking that the way we live now is

the only way people can live. It is that inertia that allows the institutions of injustice to continue unquestioned.

Others take up the cry. Fluck (cited in de Freitas 2008, p. 189) says that since fiction carves a space for other voices to be heard it has a stake in social justice. Finley (2008, p. 72) notes that art can challenge social inequity because it presents diverse ways of living in the world, while Dunlop (2009, p. 58) argues that hopeful stories about the environment can offer a bio-cultural ecological education which ‘provides a site of resistance to master-narratives, to unquestioned received knowledges’. If we construct the world through stories, and stories are powerful, then changing them can change society.

A final and important note: I do not consider that *my* story will change society. Rather my PhD is an attempt to create a story embedded with Ecos, in order to offer an example of an alternative to current meta-narratives of Earth exploitation. To achieve the outcome I theoretically propose, of a psychological shift in Earth paradigms, would require such re-storyings to be undertaken on a far greater scale than one author can achieve.

METHODOLOGY

This section explains the use of and rationale for a Narrative Therapy methodology in this project. Discussion of my research and creative methodology occurs elsewhere. Whilst narrative theory underpins Narrative Therapy, the first is a theoretical orientation whilst the second is a practical process with specific steps to be undertaken to achieve a goal of ‘re-storying’, or changing the narratives around a particular problem to diminish the effect of that problem. Within the therapeutic frame certain terms have a specific application: for example, in therapy ‘deconstruction’, a concept widely used in many contexts, asks focussed questions relating to the problem: this will become more apparent in Chapter 2. In order to differentiate between the two I use the term ‘Narrative’ as an abbreviation when referring to the therapeutic approach, and ‘narrative’ when referring to broader theories or stories.

In writing an intentional, environmentally-focused novel I recognised the need to re-story the relationship of humans to the Earth, as detailed in Chapter 1. My experiential epistemology told me that Narrative Therapy provides an effective and structured approach which facilitates re-storying, and I could see benefits in applying it to my research question. Narrative Therapy has its origins in narrative theory, but the one finds practical expression in face to face counseling and the other in arts practice. However, Narrative Therapy uses the same literary tools as creative writing, such as personification, metaphor, imagery and symbolic activities

(Bennett 2008, p. 18; Daiute & Lightfoot 2004). Since the two have many parallels, I found it was not difficult to apply the re-storying process of the therapeutic arena to a creative writing project. Examining dominant stories within a culture and how they have shaped personal narratives involves questioning how we have come to know those stories and the forms they take (White 1992), a type of literary analysis. Similarly, novels can make readers 'think about how those seemingly private situations might be shaped by very public social and political forces' (Yaszek 2006, p. 79). Unveiling oppressive social practices leads us to challenge the assumptions which underpin the social constructions we live with daily (Finley 2008, p. 75). I discovered that the post-Colonialist work of Homi Bhabha (2012, p. 4) offered a similar stance, proposing that asking questions from the interstices whilst avoiding fixed 'monolithic' answers can create space for hybridity and difference. His thoughts on allowing fluidity and movement and the value of liminal spaces (2012, p. 4) informed my conclusions.

Narrative Therapy is particularly suited to a creative writing project which intends responding to the problem of environmental threats to humanity since Parry and Doan (1994) point out that people seek out new stories at a point of crisis, when they come to understand the old story is harmful: a strong argument can be made that we have reached this point as a world culture. According to Koger and Winter (2010, p. 61), 'understanding that assumptions about nature are constructed leads to an awareness that environmental issues are deeply philosophical and psychological ones'. That is, the environmental issue is not just a scientific problem but a psychological one – how humans perceive their relationship to the Earth directs how they act in relation to it. It has been argued that solutions to environmental problems lie more in psychological factors invoking deep personal changes than in any social, political and technological approach (Buell 2001, p. 31; Loffredo Roca 2011, p. 265). In fact, according to Loffredo Roca (2011, p. 266) 'only appeals to core beliefs and values have the potential to motivate even small shifts in human behaviour'.

To change ecologically destructive actions it is necessary to change how humans perceive their relationship to nature, as I discuss in Chapter 1. Yet growing awareness, arising from films like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), has not translated into extensive action, a problem Randall (2009, p. 118) attributes to the threat to comfort, identity and security that such changes will require. Since the typical psychological response to an unclear threat is to ignore it and avoid responding, she calls for sophisticated, proven psychotherapeutic approaches related to grief and loss to overcome prevalent 'ecological anxiety' (Randall 2009, p. 118).

Narrative Therapy meets this prescription. It is well able to address issues of grief and anxiety because it has 'an optimistic orientation... [it] can be used as a crucible from which stories of

hope, success and vindication emerge' (Monk 1997, p. 4). The central idea of Narrative, that we can re-story our lives and come to a different understanding of who we are as a result of how we frame our experiences, is a *hopeful* position, which holds a 'fierce belief in people's possibilities for change' (O'Hanlon 1994, p. 28). This suggests its validity as an antidote to the ennui and despair that some feel in response to environmental issues. Narrative tells us that change is *possible*.

It also restores *agency*. Narrative not only shows clients how dominant stories shape their lives but recognises they have the capacity to bring about change, and explores what might be different if these stories were changed (Bennett 2008, pp. 14, 15 & 17). Clients realise they can actively shape the stories with which they make sense of their life, freeing themselves from the control of the problem. By recognising that they have the power to shape their life rather than simply being a passenger in it (Epston & White 1992, p. 139), they become the creator of their own narrative rather than a character in other people's narrative (Parry & Doan 1994).

Further, since Narrative separates out the problem so it is not seen as an inherent part of identity (O'Hanlon 1994, p. 24) it offers an antidote to the sometimes punitive, blaming approach of the environmental movement. The principles of Narrative – respect for individuals, flexibility, curiosity and a recognition of complexity (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 31) – are closely aligned with the principles behind grass roots movements that are exploring best practice in sustainable living (Hopkins 2008; Wheatley & Frieze 2011).

Whilst Narrative Therapy is generally used to resolve individual or family problems, there is evidence to suggest it can be applied to cultural problems. Michael White (1992, p. 139) indicates this is possible, noting Foucault's ideas about 'fields of power' encompass not only the self, but the broader social arenas of sign systems and production. White (1992) argues that recognising the 'authentic' self as a social construction and thus changeable has broad implications since it creates room to challenge 'objective' knowledge. At its core Narrative links personal stories with broader meta-narratives and reveals the impact of cultural knowledge, allowing it the scope to tackle social as well as personal issues (McLeod 2007, p. 237). Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) argue that Narrative practice is capable of addressing the diverse and complex challenges of the modern world because of its capacity to integrate person, culture and change whilst being flexible and systematic. The work of Driscoll and McKee (2007) and Polkinghorne (1988, p. 122) suggests changing organisational narratives and hence meanings and values can lead to organisational change. In fact McLeod (2007, p. 244) argues Narrative encourages people to respond through productive social action, concluding:

Narrative ideas have ... provided a basis for a new approach that challenges the individualism that has become a central organising principle of late twentieth century cultural life in industrialized societies. Given that many of the most critical problems which face society over the next decades, such as global warming and global poverty, can be viewed [as] resulting from individualism and consumerism, while requiring collectivist solutions, it may be that narrative therapy represents an emerging (if partial) cultural solution to at least some of these issues (McLeod 2007, p. 244).

Narrative Therapy is a political stance as much as a therapeutic process. Owing much to Foucault's explorations of power and Derrida's work on deconstruction, it posits that the narratives about ourselves and the world, which direct us to act in particular ways (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 145; White 1992), often derive from cultural stories containing 'specifications of personhood', or instructions on how people *should* act (Parry & Doan 1994). Such cultural stories serve to enforce cultural meta-narratives which are often, as Foucault points out, discourses of power focused on maintaining the status quo for an elite few rather than serving the interests of the whole (White 1992).

In Narrative Therapy these meta-narratives are referred to as dominant stories. Since we learn them from a young age through, for example, fairy tales, before our critical faculties are well developed, such meta-narratives can come to be seen as 'truth' (Stephens & McCallum 1998). Narrative Therapy points out, however, that truth is socially constructed and that where they create problems, accepted cultural meta-narratives can and should be questioned and perhaps changed (White, 1992). By making hidden ideologies overt it makes them open to question, *without necessarily rejecting them* (Hutcheon 1988, p. 185, my emphasis). Meta-narratives are not inherently bad: Narrative Therapy asks whether dominant narratives contribute positively or negatively to how life is lived. The aim is to find narratives, whether old or new, which are life-enhancing. If meta-narratives, embodied in beliefs, are empowering, there is no need to do away with them.

As my thesis argues, to move beyond prevailing apathy towards the environmental crisis requires new stories. Yet destructive environmental practices, supported by current meta-narratives, are the basis of current economic wealth so any call for a different approach will meet with resistance. First it is necessary to create room for new stories to be heard. The Narrative Therapy process enables *other* stories to be taken seriously (Parry & Doan 1994, p. 6). This allows for re-storying: re-writing life stories free from the *restrictions* meta-narratives may place on agency. It offers a doorway into another way of seeing, thinking and being.

THE ARTEFACT AND THE EXEGESIS

'Shifted' (The First Book of Gaia) is a young adult novel written for early teens. It is intended as the first of three books. Five young people are drawn together by the death of their friend, Zoe, from Cystic Fibrosis. One of the five, Kalia, has been fostered with Brigid, Zoe's best friend, due to an abusive past. When her step-father, Mr Darvel, turns up at Zoe's funeral, the five friends are sent on a journey by a mysterious woman, Morrigan, who charges them with taking Kalia to safety. Gin is the oldest of the five, and Zoe's brother. Taz, also a Cystic Fibrosis sufferer, was Zoe's boyfriend. The final member of the party is Vivi, a teenager with Williams Syndrome, who met Zoe when they were hospitalised at the same time.

The story occurs during and after the shifting of the Earth's magnetic poles. As a result of this shift, numerous people, now known as 'fizzers', have become unable to use technology without causing it to break down. A schism has developed in society, and policies have been developed to keep the fizzers away from technology wherever possible. Whilst well intentioned, these policies have created a kind of apartheid which some use to excuse discriminatory or abusive behaviour.

Of the five protagonists, only Gin is now able to be near technology. As the five journey along an underground railroad established by Morrigan to help fizzers find safety, as in the American Civil war, they are pursued by Darvel and find help in unexpected places. Much of their journey is spent travelling through the Australian bush that lies between the Blue Mountains in New South Wales and the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria. Gradually they become aware that the time spent in this natural setting, which they come to call Sanctuary, is having unexpected impacts on all of them, and that time itself seems to pass differently in these places.

When the five are close to their final destination, Kalia is snatched by Darvel's men, and taken to his company headquarters, a place where, her companions know, he previously conducted medical experiments on her. With the help of a community of friends, most of whom are fizzers and have a disability of some sort, they break the security of Darvel's company and rush to rescue Kalia, only to discover that she has certain powers at her disposal and is able to free herself. Darvel flees, and Taz retreats with Kalia into Sanctuary. The others are left to wonder what lies ahead, for in their time in Sanctuary they have discovered that the threat to Kalia, and to Sanctuary, is greater and more far-reaching than they could have imagined.

At the outset of this project I intended interviewing teenagers with Cystic Fibrosis and Williams Syndrome to inform character creation in my novel. I underwent the university ethics process

(see Attachment A), then made contact with two organisations in order to reach potential interviewees. Unfortunately, due to a lack of appropriate respondents I was only able to conduct one formal interview which failed to yield the depth of information required, and had to use secondary sources such as newsletters, articles and handbooks to inform the depiction of characters with these disabilities.

As a result of these experiences I fully support the statement by McMaugh et al. (2006, p.1) that the approval of the committee is only the beginning of ongoing concerns regarding ethics. My experiences suggest for a creative writer in the academic context traditional structured interviewing is inadequate. Bearing in mind the need to carefully select 'ethically appropriate and unobtrusive research methods', particularly with vulnerable research participants (Tuffrey-Wijne, Bernal & Hollins 2008, p. 163), an argument could be made that participant observation is a more appropriate method, not only because it yields richer, more appropriate data, but because it is less obtrusive.

The exegesis is shaped by the Narrative Therapy intervention process as created by Michael White and David Epston. Chapter 1 names and maps the problem that is the focus of the research question, namely the psychological factors which contribute to environmental destruction. It explores how this problem impacts on our psychological well-being and our agency. In Narrative Therapy, the problem is externalised; that is, separated from the person in order to see it more clearly, and this chapter argues that placing the problem in a story serves the same function. Chapter 2 examines cultural meta-narratives about the Earth which underpin the problem, their role in making us, as a society, believe this is the only way things can be, and how such meta-narratives inculcate new generations into this perception of the world through storytelling. The chapter then explores exceptions to the problem; stories that giving form to other possible ways of thinking about the Earth. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explain the re-storying process I undertook as a fiction writer in order to create a new narrative removed from the meta-narratives which drive the problem. Chapter 3 looks at the themes and principles underpinning this re-storying, then Chapter 4 looks at character and voice and Chapter 5 looks at Earth as character. All three show how the idea of Ecos has shaped my world, plot and characters. In Chapter 6, I conclude by drawing together practice and research findings to conclude that allowing space in the creative process aids re-storying.

THE INTERACTION OF THE ARTEFACT AND THE EXEGESIS

The process of making art can nurture the intellectual flame that pushes the inquiring mind into a quest for new knowledge (Higgs 2008, p. 553).

In considering how the artefact and the exegesis interact, I will discuss how they relate to the research question and how readings on arts-based research led to my understanding of their relationship. I note that the relationship between artefact and exegesis is an uneasy one, then conclude by examining what emerges from their interaction.

Both artefact and exegesis play a role in responding to the overall research question; that is, how to re-story Earth meta-narratives through fiction. The exegesis offers the logical argument for why such a re-storying is necessary, and how, as a practitioner, I went about attempting this: an explication of the research. The artefact is a tangible creative piece that offers the actual re-storying: the outcome of the research. The research process of continual exploration seemed akin to overlapping spirals since both artefact and the exegesis impacted on each other's development continually. As Smith and Dean (2009) note, such research is therefore a process of iteration, with many variations of sub-cycles. The exegesis identifies and discusses outcomes from the artefact research, whilst the exegetical research is apparent in the artefact in as much as the completed novel is an exploration of what a re-storied relationship could look like.

The more I considered these spirals, the more complexity I discovered. Upon reading Knowles, Promislow and Cole (2008) I was able to give this complexity form. They define form, process, theory and methodology as the critical elements of arts-based research² and argue that bringing together artistry (in terms of form and process), methodological integrity, and reflexive and responsive inquiry (which incorporates theory) leads to research that has the intention to transform an audience (Knowles, Promislow & Cole 2008, p. 62)³.

² I use the term arts-based research to broadly encompass all creative practice that is linked with research.

³ Their emphasis on such art having an explicit intention to reach an audience is noted, and certainly underpins my work, but at the end of the research journey issues arose around whether a re-storied novel can actually retain its integrity in the face of the commercial publishing industry, an issue well beyond the scope of this exegesis.

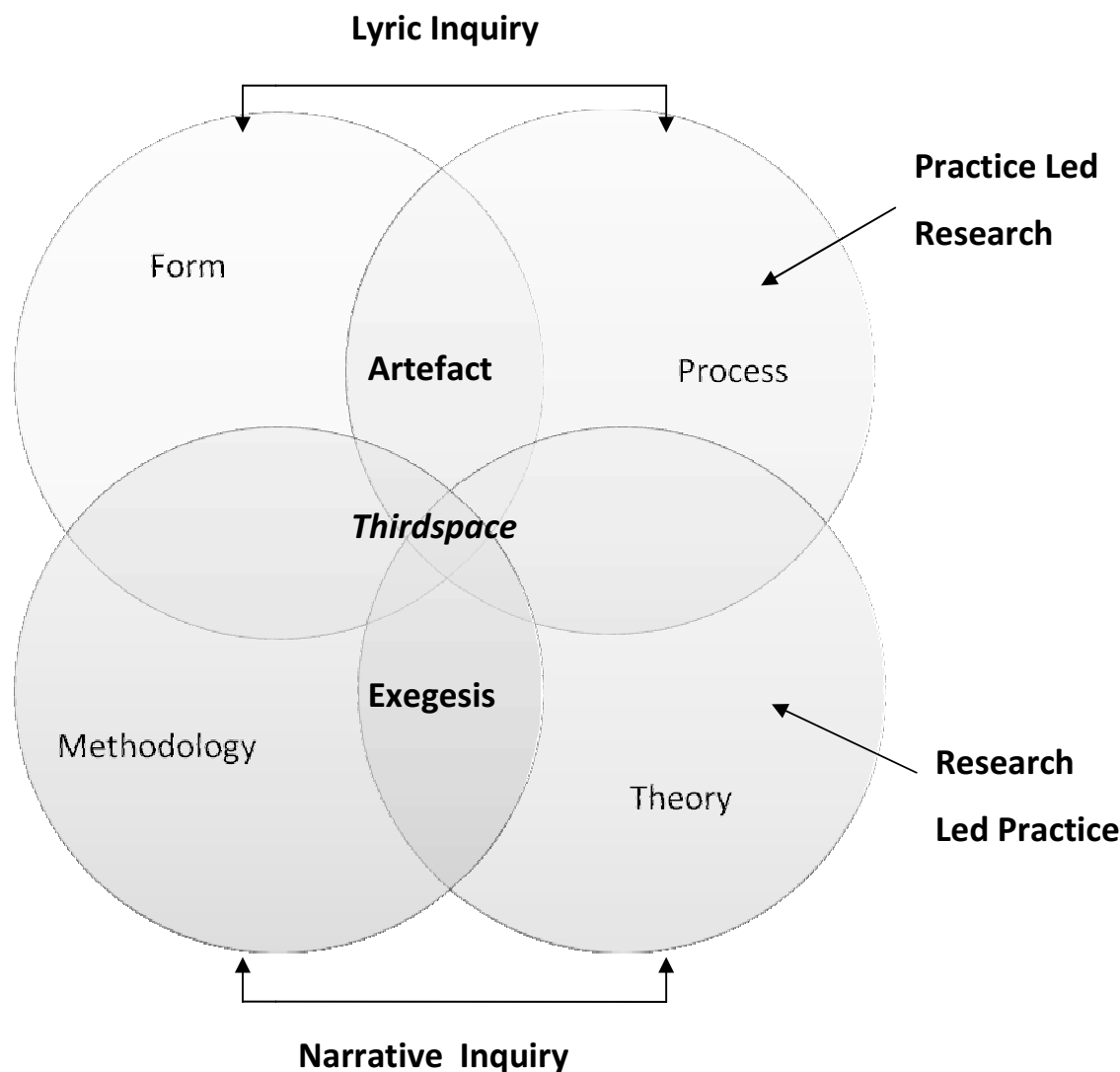


FIG. 1: THE ARTEFACT AND EXEGESIS INTERACT.

Derived from the introduction to *Creating Scholartistry* (Knowles, Promislow & Cole 2008) and from further readings on arts-based research. The term arts-based research applies to the entire diagram. Other theoretical frames come into play depending on the focal quadrant. I argue that no terminology applies solely to a specific quadrant; rather any given research frame starts from that quadrant and expands outwards to integrate the other elements.

My research began with *form*, in terms of a story idea and decisions around genre, audience and so on. I agree that 'knowing how artists of a specific genre engage with and represent subject matter is crucial for success' (Knowles, Promislow & Cole 2008, p. 5) and my initial story-shaping decisions were guided by my experience as a writer. My choice of a shifting first-person voice was supported by Barone's (2008, p. 489) argument that only by giving the

audience characters they can identify with can they be coaxed into participating in constructing a story's meaning, leading to 'insights previously unimagined about their world'. Whatever my research findings, it was important that the resultant story be engaging and resonant. Once decisions about form were made my writing *process* came into play, interacting with those initial decisions to create a complete novel. This was practice-led research, where art as research leads to insights and theorisation (Smith & Dean 2009; Donnelly 2011). However, the project also began with *theory*, particularly in terms of eco-feminist readings and a consideration of the power of storytelling, both of which I had explored during my Masters degree. My background reading gave me the desire to address certain issues. These beginnings gave me a somewhat vague research question, relating to using storytelling to address issues raised by eco-feminists. This was research-led practice, whereby my scholarly work was conceptually driving my creative work (Smith & Dean 2009).

The application of a Narrative Therapy *methodology* gave me a direction to take in order to address this research question; by applying specific therapeutic processes – deconstruction and re-storying – to a cultural problem I was, in the words of Chambers et al. (2008, p. 145) offering a way to step away from accepted narratives that held 'the illusion of truth' in order to see them anew. The Narrative Therapy methodology itself is deeply grounded in theory yet is a highly practical, real world process. Taking McLeod's (2007) argument that Narrative Therapy teaches us to analyse social problems within a therapeutic space by linking individual stories to dominant discourses, both texts could be framed in these terms, with the exegesis as the therapeutic process undertaken, and the artefact as the final result of the re-storying.

As a research practitioner I constantly moved between all four quadrants, and therefore between theoretical frames. But I also worked at the points of intersection. Through the merging of all four elements I arrived at a specific research question, and found answers.

Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall (Foucault & Deleuze, cited in Kroll 2010, p. 3).

In terms of text production, form and process were key in the artefact creation, whilst methodology and theory guided the development of the exegesis. The first two could be seen as lyric inquiry, which Neilsen (2008, p. 94) defines as both the creation of an artwork and engagement in the process of creation. The term, she suggests, covers all forms of

'nonrationalist' writing which aim to communicate an issue and to create resonance in an audience (Neilsen 2008, p. 96).

The last two could be framed, in my project, with its explicit focus on stories, as narrative inquiry, with specific reference to the work of Polkinghorne (1988) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Recognising that my process involved a constant overlapping of story with research, artefact with exegesis, it would seem appropriate to adopt the term lyric narrative inquiry⁴ for the overall process. As the figure indicates, to an extent the two forms of inquiry sit opposite each other. As Neilsen (2008, pp. 94 & 100) argues, the creative act and its outcome – story that may be read as research – can create as much impact as rational persuasion through logical argument. Similarly, narrative inquiry emphasises the use of critical reflection in conjunction with story writing – an outcome of research framed in story terms (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Yet what they have in common leads us towards the centre of the diagram, to the point where artefact and exegesis meet. Whilst the final outcome of each is different, as will be elucidated below, it is at the same meeting point that both outcomes can be achieved.

The commonalities relate to their ontological underpinnings. Both emphasise openness and fluidity; as Neilsen (2008, p. 94) notes, 'lyric inquiry is marked by the willingness to let go', whilst Polkinghorne (1988, p. 175) argues that narrative inquirers need a multiplicity of skills and systems relating to the construction of meaning itself. Both focus on lived experience: not only the lived experience of those who encounter the artwork, or whose stories are researched, but also the lived experience of the artist or researcher as they undertake the research process – and how this impacts on the research (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Neilsen 2008). Neilsen points out that since lyric inquiry aims to 'create an aesthetic experience' with which audiences can resonate, it leads to more relational, personal and experiential knowledge (Neilsen 2008, pp. 96 & 100). Both frames are also able to respond to complexity: lyric inquiry, it seems, can be particularly responsive to those things which can't be expressed in words, whilst narrative inquiry, with its emphasis on the whole rather than decontextualised parts, is suited to capturing the multiplicity of humanity (Polkinghorne 1988).

The practical application of these underpinnings was evident in my critical reflection, which at times encompassed wordless understandings of a bigger picture and of unexpected

⁴ Such a form of inquiry is well suited to questions of eco-psychology, since the underpinnings of eco-feminism also emphasise the need to acknowledge the complexity and inter-relativity of ecological problems. Eco-feminism also examines the way in which, through history, lived experience or knowing (usually by women or indigenous peoples) has been devalued in favour of scientific knowledge or 'truth', a debate which is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this exegesis.

connections. Insights emerged not only through the formal methods of supervision and the use of a writer's journal but also at uncalled for moments such as on waking, suggesting an intuitive or unconscious process at work. This required what I came to recognise as an attitude of 'radical openness' (Soja 2009), an idea I touch on in later discussions around my writing process, and in detail in Chapter 6.

Story writing and critical analysis are indeed separate gifts, like spelling and playing the flute, and the same writer proficient in both is doubly endowed. But even he can't rise and do both at the same time (Welty, cited in Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 182).

Narrative and lyric inquiry appeared to be two sides of the one coin, but recognising the overlap between them and considering my process to be a merging of both did not do away with certain inherent tensions. Academia is a world of logic and argument, whilst creative writing is a world of imagination and flow. As a practitioner and researcher I found that when my scholarly brain was dominant it was difficult to write creatively, and when my emotions were dominant writing on academic work went slowly. During the creation of the artefact and exegesis I felt there was an expectation that research findings would fit the mould of traditional university research. Tensions arose because whilst my artefact focuses on resonance, my exegesis is an ordered argument for the re-storying of Earth meta-narratives, although simultaneously its findings relate to the fluid field of spatiality.

Neilsen (2008, p. 96) encapsulates this tension in her comment:

Lyric inquiry has an uneasy relationship with knowledge as product, commodity or 'trump card'. Knowing, instead, is an experience of immersion and expression rather than one of gathering data only to advance an argument.

She goes on to argue that traditional research's focus on categorising and judging is a form of appropriation or control, whilst lyric inquiry is about honouring and recording to achieve resonance rather than making any claim to knowledge (Neilsen 2008, p. 100). According to Finley (2008, p. 73) this is a political stance since 'to claim art and aesthetic ways of knowing as research is an act of rebellion against the monolithic 'truth' that science is supposed to entail'. Methodologically, this strongly aligns with Narrative Therapy, which aims always to deconstruct stories of power over.

This clash between a formalist approach and a lyric approach (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) was worth resolving because as Banks (2008, p.161) points out, fiction can reach a much broader audience than academic writing since it can give immediacy and therefore immersion, and it can explore problems without difficult academic discourse getting in the way. Ultimately the

diagram above suggests how I resolved these tensions and brought the two together: by placing myself within the merging points of the diagram I allowed for and reflected on the interactions that occurred, whilst also embracing the flexibility of narrative inquiry, which, Clandinin and Connelly point out, allows the inquirer to both be critical and to tell stories (2000, p. 182). Following their advice I took a position of awareness or wakefulness, noticing the moments when something arose from the tension. Yet the skill of the arts researcher also arises from their ability to translate the understandings they have gained through practice for a wider audience (Higgs 2008): the exegesis becomes the expression of these understandings.

On a meta-level I observe that the tension between these processes reflects the subject matter of my inquiry. Environmental debate is similarly polarised. At its simplest it is reduced to economic argument or to over-emotional hype which predominantly uses fear to engage emotions, reflecting the emphasis in Western culture on economic growth over humanist values. Recent work by film-makers, documentarians and environmental scientists has increased awareness of issues, but it would appear that eco-ennui dominates a society-wide response. Constructive debate surely requires a balance between understanding the issues, and engaging peoples' emotions. Radical openness and a commitment to balance are the solution here too, as I discuss in detail in Chapter 6. Using two different processes, and seeing the world in two different ways, is only possible through a willingness to sit in a silent place between them to observe what emerges.

The narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, p. 42).

Taking into account Eisner's (2008, p.8) definition of art as that which crafts a form to express something, my exegesis is the explanation of what I am trying to express and why, whilst the artefact is the expression. Or, in lyric inquiry terms, the artefact is the aesthetic experience, whilst the exegesis is the argument for that aesthetic experience. In my conclusion I offer a theoretical frame for ecological re-storying, my unique contribution to the body of literature relating to eco-criticism: Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 42) would define this as a formalistic outcome. Simultaneously, my artefact aims to enhance the connection of readers to the world around them: encouraging readers to 'vicariously extend their thinking' (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 42).

Taken together, however, the artefact and the exegesis are the point where ideas and creativity collide, resulting in understanding and meaning. The ontological commonalities of

narrative inquiry and lyric inquiry propose an avoidance of rigid outcomes, honouring what Eisner (2008) defines as *knowing* rather than *knowledge*. *Knowing*, he suggests, is the more appropriate term when any inquiry yields uncertainty rather than solid outcomes (Eisner 2008, p. 4). Polkinghorne defines the outcome of narrative inquiry as 'descriptions of meaning' rather than 'conclusions of certainty' (1988, pp. 175 & 183), whilst for Neilsen (2008, p. 96) the outcome of lyric inquiry is not 'proof', but 'illumination and connection'. Perhaps Higgs (2008, p. 554) best sums up what I found through moving beyond tensions to the merging of artefact and exegesis though: he tells us that the ambiguity of the arts, which evokes cognitive dissonance and shows there is no fixed truth, can lead to growth and learning.

CHAPTER ONE – DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The cognitive dissonance we feel as GDP figures rise and we feel ever more tired, stressed and scared is real, and must be challenged.

Calvin Jones, Cardiff Business School

This exegesis argues that one response to the ecological issues facing humanity is to re-story our relationship with the natural world, and that creative fiction is an appropriate and effective avenue for such re-storying. In later chapters I detail the processes and outcomes of attempting such a re-storying through the creation of a young adult novel. However, in Narrative Therapy, in order to move toward the creation of a new story that reduces a problem's impact it is important to first clearly identify the problem. This chapter begins by defining and unpacking the problem at the heart of this exegesis, identifying how it causes harm and how it maintains its cultural dominance. It then considers how stories are able to externalise the problem and why this is important. The chapter concludes by looking at what form new stories should take according to eco-psychology and eco-feminism. In this case, since the problem exists on a socio-cultural level, rather than an individual one, the intervention is likewise considered from a socio-cultural perspective.

CURRENT CONTEXT

Although media focus is usually on 'climate change', whether it is occurring, and whether it is caused by human behaviour, this particular issue is only one part of a complex and comprehensive problem that will have global impact on the human race. Issues include impending water and food shortages, the impact of environmental toxins such as fertilizers and hormones and potentially sudden changes in climactic conditions (Cocks 2003). These issues have been in public awareness for a long time: in 1995, Ismail Serageldin, then Vice President of the World Bank, said 'the wars of the next century will be about water' (cited in Harvey, 2009). Recent decades have seen record-breaking weather events, the extinction of many species, increases in cancers and other diseases relating to environmental toxicity, climate refugees, water shortages, disappearing natural environments and more. However, the following sections argue that the problem is not climate change or even over-consumption or over-population – on the most fundamental level the problem is our relationship with the Earth. Only by changing this will we change those behaviours which lead to environmental destruction.

THE DOMINANT SOCIAL PARADIGM AND ITS IMPACT

The current way of viewing the relationship between humans and the Earth is problematical in that it encourages disconnection, exploitation and consequently, I will argue, grief and loss of agency. Eco-feminists such as Mies and Shiva (1993), Starhawk (1997) and Koger and Winter (2010) detail how a number of separate, but related shifts in meta-narratives since the Enlightenment have shaped our current view of the Earth⁵, a view which Koger and Winter (2010) define as the Dominant Social Paradigm. At the core of this paradigm is the assumption that nature is inert and can and should be controlled by individuals for economic gain in order to achieve progress (Koger & Winter 2010, p. 38).

The demotion of nature to a 'de-animated', machine-like status by philosophers such as Descartes placed power firmly in the hands of those who owned or controlled it (Bai 2009, p. 136; Chappell 2007, p. 35). Starhawk concludes that this shift in philosophy 'supported exploitation of nature because nature was inherently dead and valueless' (1997, p. 217). Gough argues that the 'global environmental crisis is in large part a direct consequence of Western industrialised societies' cultivation of stories in which the Earth or 'nature' is conceived, and thus exploited, as an object of instrumental or intrinsic value' (cited in Eppert 2009, p. 197). Weber, in his seminal work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, calls this shift 'the disenchantment of the world' (cited in Hamilton 2010, p. 144). Spiritual beliefs were replaced by capitalist beliefs, thereby denying the Earth any 'immanent purpose and intrinsic value' (Hamilton 2010, p. 144), and laying it open to exploitation for financial gain. Simultaneously, the rise of the Protestant ethic 'rubber-stamped' individual achievement, suggesting material gain was a sign of God's blessings on the deserving (Starhawk 1997, p. 212).

The growing emphasis on individual achievement over community has led to the point where identity in First World cultures now rests largely on what we own rather than how we behave (Hamilton 2010, p. 70). Together with what Murphy (1995, pp. 154-5) describes as 'growth-model economics', which drive Capitalism, this directly feeds the consumerism that has led to unsustainable exploitation of the planet's resources (Hopkins 2011 p. 34). The costs are increasingly apparent: Kanner and Gomes point out that the marketing-driven psychological drive to demand ever more consumer products is one of the central reasons why we face environmental issues now (1995, p. 77). Durning (1995, pp. 69 & 70) agrees:

⁵ The length of this exegesis does not allow the opportunity to revisit their various comprehensive overviews of the cultural shifts which occurred. Suffice it to say that their work underpins my argument.

The consumers of the world are responsible for a disproportionate share of all the global environmental challenges facing humanity... Ultimately, sustaining the environment that sustains our humanity will require that we change our values.

The ability to make such a change is met with complex resistance; Durning (1995) suggests that institutions and social pressures challenge our ability to choose another way of life. Brown (1995, p. xvi) goes so far as to call marketing ‘psychology working *against* environmental sanity’⁶. Our disconnection from nature is both physical (Aizenstat 1995, p. 92) and emotional. Despite growing concern about environmental issues, there has not been a mass social movement to change environmentally damaging behaviours (Koger & Winter 2010, p. 1). Certainly there is a growing percentage of the community that are working to raise awareness and take action, but the numbers have not reached the point that will bring about a significant social shift. Brown (1995) argues that people want to do the right thing, but the scale of the problem seems overwhelming.

We are, perhaps, willing participants in a mass delusion, due to what eco-psychologists see as a rise in psycho-pathology resulting from a growing awareness of ecological threats. Glendinning says the situation is an untenable violation which causes an ‘often aimless compulsion to fill a lost sense of meaning and connectedness with substances like alcohol’ (1995, p. 43). Watkins (2009, p. 230) argues that we protect ourselves through a process of ‘psychic numbing’, resulting in passive acceptance of the situation. Those who recognise the extent of environmental destruction become numb in order not to deal with the grief this recognition creates (Conn 1995, p. 171). Kanner and Gomes (1995, p. 118) see this as psychological wounding and note that:

To live with the repeated violation of the natural world and the harsh environment that has resulted, we shut down much of our sensitivity.

When we accept the Dominant Social Paradigm, we accept, as Kornberger (2007, p. 59) notes, a world where everything is a machine and we ourselves are only cogs in a myth of ‘subliminal hopelessness’. Denial of significant threats to human survival, whilst understandable, only furthers our unwillingness to re-connect with the natural world, as such a re-connection makes us question our own responsibility for the current state of affairs. According to Conn (1995) this is a catch 22 whereby the spiritually void, consumption-based lifestyle leave people feeling

⁶ The one positive in this is that advertising shows that psychological concepts used on a mass scale can be highly effective in changing human thinking, and therefore manipulating behaviour, suggesting re-storying could be effective if it employs the right strategies.

empty, so they consume to avoid these feelings, but recognising that consumption causes harm causes further pain and emptiness; and so it continues. She argues that the way out of this cycle is to acknowledge that these feelings are connected to the destruction of the environment, leading to a deeper connection with the Earth and hence a stronger motivation to change (Conn 1995). Others see the issue of grief differently, suggesting it relates to the need to sacrifice aspects of the current lifestyle of 'hyper-consumption', certain personal freedoms, in order to secure the future (Flannery 2010, p. 272; Randall 2009, p. 120). Roszak, T (1995, p. 2) points out that the environmental movement itself can invoke fear and guilt, and such emotions can paralyse; the solution, he says is that instead of fearing the planet's wrath we need to learn to love it.

EXTERNALISING THE PROBLEM THROUGH STORY

Fundamental to the Narrative approach is the recognition that when people live within a 'problem-saturated story', they need to separate from the problem in order to see how it is impacting on and influencing them, and they it, and also to recognise that there is a possibility for new stories, or 'ways of being' that are free of the problem (White 1988/89, pp. 3-5). This is a process of externalisation, and one of its impacts is that it 'de-objectifies' the person experiencing it, returning them to subjectivity in their own life by showing how they participate in the problem's survival: this awareness can create a sense of personal agency (White 1988/89, pp. 15 & 16). In therapy, the problem is often named, characterised or anthropomorphised, a practice which, White notes, requires imagination to play a significant part (1988/89, p. 14). This leads us to the role of storytelling as an externalisation tool.

Externalising uses certain techniques to look at a problem from the outside, separate from us: stories also have the power to do this. Monk (1997) observes how therapists use storytelling techniques to locate the problem within its cultural beliefs and discourses, not just as a personal problem. The same could be said of novels, which can show the personal against the backdrop of a wider social or cultural context (Fredericks 1982; Yaszek 2006). Novels are, by their physical nature, separate. No matter how closely we align ontologically with the narrator, they still present us with a world and world-view that is apart from ours. Kornberger demonstrates how parables can externalise problems, allowing someone to judge his or her own behaviour from the outside and reach independent judgment of it (2007, p. 7). A story can clearly work to fulfil Bhabha's (2012, p. 6) of moving beyond boundaries (whether spatial, temporal or social) through an imaginary process that creates a site disconnected from past or future in order to displace what we know. This is its power.

Certain genres may be more effective at this than others. Realism, being mimetic, is given a certain 'objective' truth by cultural meta-narratives. I would argue that as a result it can fail to separate the problem out adequately, offering only a reinforcement of the existing hegemony. Genres such as science fiction, fantasy and magical realism, on the other hand, can disrupt our understanding of reality, showing the familiar as something strange (Attebury 2006; Fredericks 1982; Jackson 1995; Le Guin 2004; McKenzie 2009; Zamora & Faris 1995).

[Fantasy] makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is chaos... it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity, which obscures from us the wonder of our being (Swinfen 1984, p. 137).

This idea is also central to Narrative Therapy:

Many of the methods of deconstruction render strange these familiar and everyday taken-for-granted realities and practices by objectifying them (White 1992, p. 121).

The reason this disruption or estrangement is central to externalisation is because it creates space for the other, for seeing things in a new light. It does so by creating dissonance, a critical idea in Narrative Therapy. Dissonance clearly shows that the current view of reality has cracks through which other ways of seeing reality and self can emerge. It problematises reality, showing us gaps and shadows, what doesn't work, despite meta-narratives to the contrary; an environmental example is how growing wealth in First World Countries is paralleled by a growth in mental health issues (Durning 1995). This divide in material and emotional wellbeing creates dissonance, which according to Narrative Therapy leads to unease and a need to question why these two don't match.

When narratives lose their coherence, they lose their authority, enabling self-reconstruction, cultural revision, and the creation of interdependent realities (Daiute & Lightfoot 2004, p. 179).

Dissonance is used in storytelling to show the divide between what is and what could be; offering what Hardy (1975) calls 'productive conflicts', which can shock the reader into new systems of thinking or new sensibilities (Fredericks 1982, p. 38). Dissonance and estrangement place us outside of the centre (Attebury 2006; Bowers 2004; D'Haen 1995; Murphy 1995) and show us what may be hidden, unspoken or absent in dominant discourses (Jackson 1995, p. 25). In 'Shifted' there is a clear dissonance between Darvel's business – 'Medical Technology for a Better Future' – ('Shifted', p. 32) and the abuse he perpetrates on Kalia in order to develop it. Dissonance can open the door to new stories.

A CALL FOR CHANGE

Our relationship to our own and other species, to the past, present and future, to land, culture, science and Empire are framed and informed by many layers of stories... If we are to understand and counter the roots of the self-destructive processes that civilisation has unleashed upon the bodies, psyches and ecosystems of the Earth, then we need to become 'archaeologists of memory'. We must look backwards and inwards, so uncovering, deciphering or inventing new stories that will help us deal with the enormity of what we are facing. We need new stories for a new time (McNaughton 2010, p. 38).

Eco-psychology has in recent years joined the long-term call by eco-feminists for a paradigm shift; both argue that we can only find solutions to the current ecological situation through a fundamental change in how we perceive our relationship with the natural environment: a shift from exploitation to sustainable stewardship (Bai 2009; Gaard 1993; Hamilton 2010; Knudson & Suzuki 1992; Koger & Winter 2010; Mies & Shiva 1993; Roszak, T 1995; Starhawk 1997). In the introduction to *Wisdom of the Elders*, Ehrlich points out that we don't lack the information or technological capacity to make necessary changes (1992, p. xxvi) so the problem lies in the beliefs that inform our behaviours.

Environmental writers favour a crossroads analogy, indicating we are at a junction where choice is critical. Hamilton says we can choose either a biospheric or an egoistic response to environmental issues, but the former will only come from reconnection with nature (2010, p. 134). Similarly, Flannery (2010, p. 173) sees the path we take as dependent on what we choose to believe about our relationship to the Earth and each other: the result, he says, will be a Gaian future, where we work with the planet, or a Medean one, where we destroy it. He frames this in scientific terms, noting that cooperation and interdependency are actually part of the process by which Earth and living things find balance to ensure ongoing life. This position lies at the other end of the spectrum from the call by some eco-feminists for recognition of the sacredness and intrinsic value in all life.

The call for change gained prominence with the growth of the environmental movement in the 1960's, but it took five decades for awareness of the issues to achieve cultural saturation. Even so, such awareness has not yet translated into significant behavioural change. In fact, the pace of environmental degradation has increased exponentially in many areas. Is this because asking for a fundamental mental shift is too much, or because something is missing from the call? A call for change must be followed by action to bring about change, but until recently this was located primarily in the realm of feminist and environmental activism, not in the broader

public realm. This is hardly surprising: eco-psychology argues that to change human behaviour in relation to the planet requires a profound shift in human psychology (Roszak, T 1995), and it is really only in the last decade that people have even become aware of the seriousness of the issue. Hamilton (2010, p. 157) says increasing peoples' motivation to act requires that their co-operative rather than individualistic view of self needs to be activated.

The documentary, *Progress: A New Millenium* (2000) argues that we need a new definition of progress, moving away from technological or material definitions to encompass values, happiness and respect. Koger and Winter (2010, p. 59) call for a New Environmental Paradigm, which would provide impetus to address serious ecological issues now. They see this as deriving from psychological shifts, pointing to indigenous ontology as a starting point, within which:

Human responsibility is to protect and nurture, rather than to use and transform. People listen to and learn from other life-forms as relatives and support them as kin (Koger & Winter 2010, p. 59).

Fortunately, as Hamilton notes, there is still a strong sense of connectedness with the natural world for many in Western culture (2010, p. 152), suggesting a move towards new stories, with these values at their ontological core, will meet a receptive audience. In fact, according to Arran (2001), recent shifts away from reductionism and towards recognising complexities in the sciences and humanities create an opportunity to re-story narratives around the environment.

MOVING TOWARDS RE-STORYING

One important way to create a more human future lies in the making of new tales (Kornberger 2006, p. 150).

McNaughton (2010) points out that although a new society influenced by ecological issues is taking form, we are ill prepared for what is to come because our sense of civilisation has been defined by the dominant stories of Capitalism, leaving us with no room to envision another way of living. Scientific models to date have been shown to be fairly optimistic in their predictions of what a future impacted by climate change, peak oil and other environmental dilemmas may look like. There have been cultural shifts in Capitalist countries such as the rise in greenwash as a business strategy, the move to green consumption, increasing ecological anxiety as a psychological phenomenon, and the introduction of a carbon tax. However, these strategies are reactionary rather than visionary because:

At present we do not even have the imaginary space to understand, let alone counter what is emerging on the horizon (McNaughton 2010, n.p.).

The central thrust of McNaughton's argument is a call for new stories that can provide this vision, a call echoed by others (Arran 2001; Loffredo Roca 2011; Roszak, T 1995, p. 2). Arran (2001) outlines how such stories should be shaped: they should envisage a desired future state fulfilled and then work back from that to establish sub-goals, in order to show what's necessary to reach that future state. What is important, he says, is to orient them for reflection and action (that is, restore agency) and underpin such stories with a process ontology, or to use the term I adopt in this thesis, an embodied Ecos.

This has already begun; in Narrative Therapy terms, there are exceptions to the dominant story. The Transition Town movement in particular is taking up this challenge. Hopkins, in the Transition Handbook (2008), defines this as *imagineering*: creating stories about innovations that haven't happened but that we would like to have happen. Workshops focussed on creating awareness of issues including peak oil and climate change ask participants to create news reports of changes in their community from a point fifteen years in the future. These sorts of stories, he says, are our best chance of dealing with the coming changes as they offer people a sense that a transition to a new way of life is a potential adventure in which they can invest energy and hope (Hopkins 2008, p. 44). This is about creating of an 'alternative story field', or what I would call a new meta-narrative, by getting activists, journalists and creative writers to work together to create new stories:

When we start doing energy descent work, we should be looking to draw in the novelists, poets, artists and storytellers. The telling of new stories is central (Hopkins 2008, p. 93).

Hopkins offers examples throughout the Transition Handbook of new stories that have been created for, and are effective in enabling communities to engage in Transition processes. He quotes David Spangler's argument that such story visions need to be positive because this:

challenges the culture to dare, to be open to change, and to accept a spirit of creativity that could alter its very structure (cited in Hopkins 2008, p. 94).

Sakakibara's report of fieldwork with the Inupiat is a practical example of how re-storying is an important part of coping with climate change. The Inupiat people of Alaska found their homes and livelihoods threatened by environmental changes, and experienced a deep sense of loss. The impact was widespread: 184 out of 213 indigenous villages were affected at the time of writing of the article. Sakakibara (2008, n.p.) reports that:

storytelling, by renewing the kinship between humans and their land, is a critical form of cultural adaptation... storytelling weaves old and new homes into a viable place of cultural survival.

He concludes that by changing their stories to maintain their connection with the land, these people found better ways not only of coping with the uncertainty caused by climate-induced change, but also of responding to what was happening (Sakakibara, 2008, n.p.). That is, stories had a direct, real life impact on real climate issues.

But adopting indigenous stories is not the answer: we need stories that are relevant to the time and place in which we live, a place where our contact with nature is severely reduced compared to previous generations. Glendinning (1995) argues that we live in a complex artificial universe that has taken control of all aspects of our lives, and that we are addicted to the technology which underpins this society, living in an artificial universe, blind to the disconnection it engenders to others and to the natural world. Glendinning (1995) further argues that we look to technology to find a sense of power and control because we fear that the natural world is wild and threatening. This requires a powerful antidote. As Gough notes, we need new 'myths and metaphors that 'sing' the Earth into existence in the conditions of urban and late industrial lifestyles' (cited in Eppert 2009, p. 197). That is, we need stories that connect us with the Earth even as we live in our technology-based cities.

RE-STORYING THROUGH FICTION

Prophets needn't offer a vision of the actual future, an answer to current problems, or even the salvation of an after-life. With historical insight and a fluent grasp of tradition, prophets illuminate the immanent possibilities of the here and now. They shake our minds loose from the iron grip of the indicative case. By substituting might be or would be for is, prophets allow us the subjunctive flight of fancy that prefigures transformation and ushers in a brand new day (Hairston 2006, p. 287).

As has been mentioned, the idea of externalisation is to show that a place exists where the problem does not dominate, and where other possibilities become feasible. Writers take time to observe, research and reflect, then to carefully formulate imaginative leaps, leading at times to startlingly accurate predictions. Writing is a continual process of selection and refinement, which can result in stories that have the ability to transport us. Like the Court Jesters of old, fiction writers can reveal truths others avoid. Since 'the storyteller is the truth-teller', Le Guin (2004, p. 220) says they have a moral imperative to engage with human suffering, give real

alternatives, explore social and moral responsibilities and pursue 'the impulse to make change imaginable'. Since stories are important in establishing how we live our lives, Le Guin (2004, p. 118) believes the writer has an *obligation* to ask difficult questions, and to propose alternatives to the way things are.

At this point in history Western culture is moving swiftly towards an uncertain future. We can hardly keep up with the pace of change, let alone consider where the current cultural paradigm will lead. However, fiction can enable readers to see how current attitudes and behaviours, which grow from how they see the world (their personal ontology) shape the future. Van Ikin (2002, p. 120) points out that in this era of rapid technological change, creating worlds that are a little further down the future path can show the possible consequences of continuing in the current direction. Speculative Fiction (such as 'Shifted') is about possibility, not only in its visions of a future, but also in terms of ways of seeing and being. It can offer 'glimpses of alternative social orders' (Yaszek 2006, p. 86). Stories, Yolen (1981, p. 57) tells us, show that certain values are important and offering a template for how life should be lived. The right story told at the right time can reveal where to go next and become a catalyst for change if it is relevant to where we are (Kornberger 2006, p. 7). In fact, Cocks (2003) argues that fiction writers sit alongside the religious and scientists, being those in our society who think about the deep future, as compared to economists, political scientists and even environmental activists, who focus on a more immediate future.

At a time when eco-ennui and eco-anxiety have become prevalent across Western cultures, we need visions that offer hope, but also new 'frames'. Murphy (1995) goes so far as to say that eco-feminist literature, which dismantles hierarchy, disconnection and the notion of 'dominance over', should be taught and studied widely to challenge people to think in new ways about environmental problems because it shows different ways of seeing without creating a new ideological centre. By its very nature such writing, which is imbued with feminist and ecological beliefs, does away with 'totalizing dogma or idealist systematization' he argues, offering 'philosophical pivots rather than idealist centers' (Murphy 1995, p. 111). Such a position restores agency because rather than replacing one ideology with another, it opens the door for dialogue about different ways of seeing the world, allowing people to actively create their own position (Murphy 1995, p. 111). This idea of moving away from binaries feeds into the conclusions of this project, as evidenced in Chapter 6.

SHAPING A NEW EARTH ONTOLOGY

Whether our immediate needs are for food, health care, jobs, childcare, housing, or open spaces, our ultimate interest is the same – restoring a sense of the sacred to the world, and so restoring value to our own lives and to the community of beings – human, plant and animal – that share life with us. That common vision, that common value, can be the base of a power no-one can wield alone – the power to reshape our common lives, the power to change reality (Starhawk 1997, p. 219).

In responding to the call for a new paradigm that moves us beyond the destructive old one, the question arises: what form should it take? I have established that one response to environmental issues is grief, and psychology recognises that an antidote to grief is connection. The discussion up to this point suggests that stories that remind us of our connection and interdependence with the Earth are important. As Tacey (2011, p. 217) tells us, 'Reconnection is healing, because through reconnection a link is established to something greater than ourselves'.

The call for a new paradigm in Western thought has often argued that this should recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life (Brown 1995; Hyde 2007; Knudson & Suzuki 1992; Mies & Shiva 1993; Roszak, T 1995; Starhawk 1997). The argument follows that only when we remember that we are dependent on and part of the web of nature will we realise that our lives too are at stake. Whilst those calling for a new meta-narrative apparently agree that it should re-story our relationship with the Earth, there is a continuum that more or less incorporates the idea of spirituality. At the end of the spectrum of environmental activists, the focus is on increasing awareness to reduce destructive behaviours, and using technology to solve climate problems. At the other end, the eco-feminist position calls for a recognition that *all* life is sacred, and therefore inherently worthy of preservation, respect and care; at its furthest point it includes a call to a return to what is sometimes defined as feminine spirituality or an honouring of the female divine (Gaard 1993; Gimbutas 1989; Harvey 2009; Kanner & Gomes 1995; Kearney 1997; Kidd 1996; Lerner 1986; Mies & Shiva 1993; Murdock 1990; Murphy 1995; Starhawk 1997). Eco-feminism offers an antidote to Cartesian dualism: soul is restored to living things and the idea of connection is central since:

Eco-feminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing (Mies & Shiva 1993, p. 14).

The call for restoration of an embodied spirituality that reconnects humans with the natural world, and our thoughts and minds with our own bodies, recurs in these debates. Kearney

(1997) notes that Goddess spirituality reminds us that we are embodied; we are not solely, as Descartes would have us believe, rational minds that can disconnect from our physical existence and emotions. Murdock (1990, p. 147) says we must urgently restore Goddess spirituality to the centre of our life – particularly in terms of connecting with the Earth as an embodiment of this. That which we honour, the argument goes, we no longer wish to destroy. When we honour life we shift from a position of domination to one of affiliation (Kanner & Gomes 1995; Murdock 1990). Whilst the notion of *re-enchantment* of the natural world might seem a call to a pre-industrial way of thinking, the literature suggests that to some extent it is important that our view of the natural world encompass a recognition of the intrinsic value of *all* life. This will be explored in detail in Chapter 5 but is summed up in this quote from Ehrlich (cited in Knudson & Suzuki 1992, p. xxvi):

Science alone is not enough to solve the planetary environmental crisis... we must recreate for ourselves a sense of place within the biosphere that is steeped in humility and reverence for other life.

If we overcome our sense of nature as ‘other’ than us and mechanistic, a position which gives us permission to use it without thought, and start to see that we too are part of the living natural environment, eco-theorists suggest this will be enough to bring about change because we will recognise that we have a duty to maintain balance in the web of life, living in a reciprocal manner (Knudson & Suzuki 1992), and that destructive practices towards the Earth are actually self-destructive (Hyde 2007; Roszak, T 1995).

Recognising the reciprocal relationship that exists between humans and the planet will not only lead to identifying more environmentally sustainable ways of living, Roszak, T (1995) says, but also move the environmental movement away from its focus on grief, to a more life-affirming position. As part of this reciprocity Roszak, T (1995) argues for storytelling that speaks for the biosphere’s conscious, in order to remove any sense that humans are separate from the Earth. Despite the somewhat magical terminology, this is not as romantic a notion as it may appear if it is considered that scientists frequently speak for non-human species or even habitats: for example, in identifying and trying to counteract issues such as melting polar ice they are taking the part of all the creatures that inhabit the arctic, and the area itself.

Indigenous storytelling certainly works to engender these understandings. As Sakakibara (2008, n.p.) notes in relation to an Indigenous Alaskan community, ‘storytelling practice keeps the human kinship with the land visible and tangible’. Such storytelling has grown from living with nature for generations, gaining insights through embodied, connected experience,

creating a vast, broad store of understanding underpinned by a sense of mutual dependency (Knudson & Suzuki 1992). However, mining indigenous beliefs in a romantic, idealized way fails to recognise the deeply practical, embodied ontology whereby Indigenous communities arrange their lives according to their sense of kinship (Roszak, T 1995).

In recent years an insidious resistance to green living and eco-feminism has been apparent; Mies & Shiva (1993, p. 19) point out that 'Earth spirituality' is frequently commodified; treated as 'a kind of luxury spirituality... the idealist icing on top of the material cake of the West's standard of living'. The result, they say, is that it is stripped of its critique of world systems. Historically, such an approach has been very successful: if a social movement can't be defeated, it is often co-opted, as when the early Church turned pagan shrines into sacred Christian sites. Concern about the Earth has been similarly subsumed by Capitalism, as is evidenced by the huge surge in 'eco' or 'green' consumption. This, Randall (2009, p. 120) points out, makes people believe they are doing something about the environment when they are still contributing to the problem.

Whilst the environmental movement emphasises shifts in behaviour rather than values, the eco-feminist perspective aligns more closely with indigenous approaches by suggesting that values, which lead to Earth-centred behaviour as a way of being (Ecos), must come first – that is, an ontological shift. Our fundamental *way of being* in relation to the Earth must change in order for our actions to change. Yet there are a number of cultural narratives which work against this: the next chapter examines these.

CHAPTER TWO – EARTH META-NARRATIVES IN STORYTELLING

Once a problem has been defined and externalized, as in the previous chapter, the next stage is to deconstruct the meta-narratives that strengthen the problem's hold on consciousness. This chapter therefore examines stories that explicitly focus on the relationship between humans and the Earth. Initially I use a deconstructive framework to reveal the cultural 'truths', or meta-narratives, underpinning such stories, and question what impact these have. I then discuss exceptions; stories that offer an alternative vision, and identify the essential elements of such re-storyings.

DECONSTRUCTING EARTH META-NARRATIVES

In the therapeutic context deconstruction asks specific questions to raise awareness of where the stories we live by come from and how they have shaped our understanding of self and of the world, and hence our thoughts and behaviours. By identifying these factors it becomes possible to see the extent of their influence: how we have been constrained or led to behave in certain ways rather than being the author of our own self (Parry & Doan 1994). Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) tell us such stories may support or limit life. White (1991, p. 121) believes it is critical, if people are to re-gain a sense of power over their lives, that deconstruction:

subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called "truths" that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons' lives.

By exposing the unquestioned influence of dominant cultural meta-narratives (Parry & Doan 2004) it becomes possible to resist, or stand against them, thus regaining a sense of agency in our own lives (Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; White 1992). We can then choose to create our own stories rather than living by unquestioned truths. Deconstruction is thus a political process since it leads to a shift away from expert power by increasing personal power (Parry & Doan 1994). Deconstructing dominant Earth stories can thus reveal how and why they have been created, how they co-opt us and how they affect our behaviour. According to Derrida, we create stories to keep our notion of self intact, meaning they are a tool for psychological survival (Parry & Doan 1994). If we discover that the meta-narratives behind our Earth stories are actually working against survival, then we should have a strong psychological impulse to recover our agency and bring about change. Brown (1995, p. xvi) argues that this impulse is at

the heart of eco-psychology, which poses the question, 'how can we encourage values that serve survival rather than suicide?'.

The deconstruction process asks how we are recruited into a belief in the meta-narratives of our culture, the over-arching stories that shape our lives. The answer may lie in the process of *ontogenesis*, by which we gain a sense of who we are and how we fit into the world as we grow from child to adult (Shepard 1995). Ontogeny differs across cultures: indigenous children learn that the natural world is sacred, and cooperation and kinship with the natural environment and all living beings is fostered; such lessons are reinforced and brought to life through storytelling, allowing children to move to a place of deep connection with the world around them (Shepard 1995). In Western cultures, by contrast, adolescents are taught to find their place in the world through achieving mastery over it, which, Shepard (1995) argues, places them in a state of permanent anxiety and disconnection. Whilst there has been a rise in environmental studies in Australian schools, the focus is generally on stewardship behaviours such as gardening and recycling whilst more value-laden messages about the Earth remain embedded in children's stories, unquestioned.

DEPICTIONS OF NATURE

Nature is eternally remote. She destroys us – coldly, cruelly, relentlessly.

Sigmund Freud

This section summarises findings from a paper I presented at the 2010 AULLA conference, *Storytelling in Literature, Language and Culture*. The length of this exegesis precludes me including the detailed examination of texts undertaken: this chapter represents a summary of the key findings only. Using a purposeful sampling of canonical and popular stories which explicitly depict the relationship between humans and the Earth in books and film (Appendix B), I undertook a detailed deconstruction of them⁷. I began by identifying the main motifs around the relationship of humans with nature, since, as Chappell (2007) argues strongly, focusing on motifs allows us to examine the ideologies underpinning these for their implicit meanings. It is important to note that in much contemporary storytelling nature is unremarked upon and undistinguished from urban backgrounds, which is a concern since feminism has shown us that invisibility can render the bearer insignificant, silent and without

⁷ The list is by no means exhaustive and is Western-centric as Australian children are not exposed to many indigenous stories. For many children movies are their main exposure to cultural storytelling, hence the large number included in the survey.

agency. From an environmental perspective, such invisibility has significant consequences: we tend not to think about the true environmental costs of our consumption because nature is invisible to us even as we consume it.

In stories that explicitly depict a relationship between humans and nature the influence of Koger and Winter's Dominant Social Paradigm (discussed in Chapter 1) is evident. The Dominant Social Paradigm has two key implications: if nature needs to be controlled, it is in some way dangerous, and if it is inert, then it has no spirit and can be exploited dispassionately (Koger & Winter 2010). Reviewing nature stories these ideas are evident in two key motifs: the extensive use of war metaphors whereby nature is a dangerous enemy to be fought, and the idea that nature is an idyllic place in need of protection from misuse – a victim. These two motifs may seem contradictory but they come together in the recurrent theme of Mother Earth's vengeance. The 'Earth as victim' motif commonly appears at its most extreme, with nature virtually destroyed, in teen dystopian novels such as those by Isobelle Carmody, Scott Westerfeld and Suzanne Collins. Such novels, which focus on long term after-effects of human destruction of the Earth, at least show that this destruction impacts on human life, a message Taylor (1997) notes is sometimes surprisingly absent from mainstream environmentalism.

MESSAGES IMPLICIT WITHIN NATURE DEPICTIONS

The deconstruction process reveals some surprising themes. Anyone familiar with eco-feminist debate would be unsurprised that notions of otherness are apparent. But there are also notable messages about blame, agency and power.

Message One: Nature is Other

Amidst the seemingly contradictory depictions of the Earth as a destructive force to be overcome, a victim that needs our protection or a dead thing which only has value when it is commodified, lies a common thread: the natural environment is shown as *other* than the human world, which in itself is not problematical, but other-ness is linked to opposition, whether the hero is protecting the Earth from the incursion of another or the natural world is in conflict with the human one. The solution to this is always war and conflict. The relationship between humans and the natural environment is characterised in these stories by a need on behalf of at least some human characters to overcome and to dominate.

Defining nature as other renders it unfamiliar and alien, increasing our disconnection from it (Jackson 1995, p. 64). Patriarchal discourses place both women and nature in this position (Rowe 1986). Other-ness is often considered 'less than' or equated with a threat to the

rational social order (Chappell 2007; Jackson 1995; Jameson, cited in Jackson 1995, p. 53). The meta-narrative underpinning nature as other is an insidious one. Starhawk argues that reducing the natural world to the status of 'other' has been a conscious process, since robbing living things of their sacred nature lays them open to exploitation, making possible 'the ruthless, extensive and irresponsible exploitation of women, working people and nature.' (Starhawk 1997, p. 189). As Gruen (1993, p. 61) puts it, 'the role of women and animals in post-industrial society is to serve/ be served up, women and animals are the used'.

Environmentally themed works such as *Avatar* (2009) and *The Lorax* (1972) expose the deeply ingrained Western perspective that humans have an unquestionable right to use nature, and that objects, including people, only have value for their usefulness. However, even stories that show certain people as protectors of the Earth stopping the exploitative few fail to identify that the relationship between humans and nature is a mutually inter-dependent one. As Kanner and Gomes (1995) point out, denying our dependence upon the Earth encourages a parasitic relationship, which marketing exacerbates by deliberately encouraging us to feed until nothing remains.

Message Two: Greed

A second recurrent theme in the stories examined is greed. Dystopian stories generally show that the collapse of civilisation resulted from human greed. In *Wall E*, the human race has reduced the Earth to a pile of rubbish where nature can no longer grow. In *Over the Hedge* (2006) a song that is accompanied by images of incredible bounty in human houses and fridges notes with irony:

You don't pay the tab til the last drop, so we all ride for nothing coz this train never stops.

This movie shows the inhabitants of suburbia as insatiable ('enough is never enough') and wasteful. Since nature is generally shown in a positive light in the stories examined, and humans as rapacious and war-mongering, the overall implicit message appears to be a positive one: if we are not greedy, and if we do the right thing, we can protect the world. Yet while it is made clear that greed leads to the destruction of the natural world, the greedy are depicted as unattractive 'bad guys'; obese, uncaring and violent. Ordinary people only do the wrong thing because they are led by the greedy one. That is, the ugly, war-mongering bad guys hold the agency in the situation. They pose the threat, and only war, which is their tool, will stop them. The implication is that the world is being destroyed by someone else. How many children will

draw a line between the rapacious Governor in *Pocahontas*, demanding all the gold that he sees as 'MINE', and their personal patterns of consumption?

Once the blame is moved elsewhere in this way we fail to see the link between our own behaviour and the environmental devastation caused by consumption. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in the gap between the 'no waste' message of *Wall E*, and the extensive *Wall E* merchandising available to purchase.

Message Three: Agency and Blame

The third theme that is apparent within many, if not all, of the texts I examined is that of agency and blame. As previously noted, the point of deconstruction in a therapeutic context is to return *agency* to the client so they can feel they are telling their story, rather than being a character in the stories of others. This raises the question; what do these stories tell us about agency?

Agency is a central issue in the deconstruction process. Both eco-feminism and Narrative Therapy note that it is critical to ask 'whose interest does any given story serve?' (Starhawk 1997, p. 188; White 1992). One of the outcomes of feminist debate is that it empowers women to be subject, not object (Sellers 2001). Only when we are aware of where power is located can we begin to challenge the assumptions that enforce it. White (1991) notes Bourdieu's point that being intimately familiar with something means we fail to see it clearly, and therefore fail to see how it shapes our thoughts and lives. Often, the holding of power is presented in stories as 'just the way things are', rendering invisible the rules and restraints that power imposes (Parry & Doan 1994).

As has been noted, nature itself almost never has agency. It is a passive victim, relying on others to protect it. Where it does have agency it is as war-like as the humans who oppose it. Agency also never lies with ordinary people: they are either in the background or unthinkingly follow whoever has the upper hand. Even stories that tell us to love and protect the Earth place agency away from *us*. Interestingly, except in depictions of nature as vengeful, nature is shown as a positive and humans as a negative force. But nature is not the 'good guy'; it is dependent on the good guy to protect it from industrialisation and subservience. In older books, the rescuing heroes are groups of ordinary children (eg *Prince Caspian* and *The Secret Garden*) but in later stories Wasko's (2001) single, all American hero emerges: Kenai in *Brother Bear*, John Smith in *Pocahontas*. Typically a bad guy attacks the natural world and a sole hero withstands and overcomes his abuse of power. This recurrent pattern implicates the fat-cats

(read corporations) as the ones to blame for the destruction of the environment, and suggests a male⁸ hero will step in and save the day through one single act of great heroism.

AGENCY AND THE HERO

The planet does not need more 'successful people'. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers and lovers of all kinds (Orr, cited in Van Eyck McCain 2010, p. 191).

The power to solve environmental problems is not located with ordinary people in these stories. Further, the cultural hero ideal has shifted over time. Stories have always given us ordinary people who have something extraordinary about them, but in the past it was related to values such as Lucy's clear sight and giving heart in the Narnia books, whilst now it is related to action and success, as in Katniss's ability with a bow in *The Hunger Games*. Myths used to show heroes who gave themselves to something greater than ego (Hyles 1992) or link their deeds to spiritual seeking (Stephens & McCallum 1998) but now to acquire the stature of hero the individual must undertake an heroic act which changes the entire world. Heroes are do-ers, not thinkers (Kornberger 2007). Such a depiction feeds the Western cult of the individual, which encourages self-interest and competition and consequently a disconnect from others, through messages such as 'follow your dream' and 'you can become all you want'.

But it does not end there, because hero status derives not just from the act, but from achieving the ultimate goal: wealth and recognition. The Western definition of success is inextricably bound with material gain; a successful person owns a lot of expensive 'things'. The cult of the individual therefore also encourages over-consumption. Indigenous wisdom, on the other hand, suggests identity comes from place (Knudson & Suzuki 1992) and gives status to those who contribute to the greater good. The latter encourages connection with one's environment and community, while the former deifies the independent, self-made man.

As eco-feminists note, these latter characteristics, embedded in the antagonistic notion of 'survival of the fittest', allow for the exploitation of people, animals and the planet (Mies & Shiva 1993; Starhawk 1997). Marketing equates buying things with self-identity and self-worth, using phrases such as L'Oreal's 'you're worth it' to encourage a focus on individual

⁸ In examining science fiction tropes, Attebury points out that in male-written stories matriarchal cultures are traditionally overturned by a single male, the implication being that female society is 'unnatural' (2006). This is a perfect summary of James Cameron's movie *Avatar*, where only the war skills of the male outsider are able to lead the indigenous, matriarchal, nature-oriented people to victory.

needs (Willettts 2010, p. 26). We are also encouraged to 'want it now', rather than to think through the long term implications of our consumption (Knudson & Suzuki 1992).

This focus on material success, and on our wants and needs as consumers rather than on what we can contribute to society encourages passivity in relation to the cultural operation of power. There may be several reasons for this. White (1988, p. 16) argues that the more cultural practices get people to see themselves and their bodies as objects, the more power can rest with a central body. Zipes (1986) notes the way that stories contribute to this: once a collaborative process, they are now produced by a single 'narrative voice' in terms of the mass media, which aims to maintain the Capitalist socio-economic Capitalist status quo. We are taught to be consumers, and encouraged to see this as the source of our freedom and power, when we are actually at the whim of corporations and marketing. The result, Zipes (1986) says, is that we feel a sense of impotence, relinquishing autonomy and losing our imagination.

Certainly we learn from an early age to see ourselves as objects, and Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) point out this is normalised by cultural narratives, robbing us of a sense of agency. Questioning or resisting meta-narratives is not easy: it creates significant struggle and conflict (McKenzie 2009; White 1988). McKenzie (2009, p. 214) suggests that we cannot break free of cultural boundaries because socio-cultural narratives are part of all our interactions, but says we can at least illuminate the boundaries, and redefine them through intentional agency. But returning to the individual hero trope, we are also unlikely to question or challenge boundaries if we think we will be saved:

America loves a hero. So does the rest of the world. There's something in all of us, perhaps, that keeps hoping that somebody somewhere knows what to do and will get us out of this mess. If a hero rushes in, then we're off the hook for solving our own problems (Wheatley & Frieze 2011, p. 206-7).

Wheatley and Frieze note that several cultural meta-narratives underpin this, leading us to willingly give away our power, waiting for leaders to direct us on the assumption that they know what they're doing. The 'hero' we expect to save us may not even be human: according to Kanner and Gomes (1995, p. 85) advertising has taught us there is a technological answer to every problem, whether social, spiritual or psychological. Yet as Wheatley and Frieze (2011, p. 207) point out, the environmental problems we face are so complex, they are beyond any one individual or government's control. Leaders need to act as facilitators, they suggest, working *with* the community to bring in the diverse range of skills and insights required to find solutions (Wheatley & Frieze 2011, p. 207).

If we wait for a hero to rescue us from the extensive global problems the human race is facing, we will wait a long time. Recent political history around the world has made this clear. Ultimately, the solution derives from a recognition that individual and collective action is required. However, the idea that all agency rests with the hero works against the idea of communal activism. In the stories I reviewed the 'collective' is either an angry mob, being led astray by the 'bad guy', or a passive, clueless crowd who only realise the error of their ways after the hero has shown them the right action. In the environmental movement too, we are seen as doing our bit if we recycle, install solar hot water and plant a veggie patch but this will not solve systemic problems caused by the actions of large corporations. They may be the greedy 'bad guys' of modern storytelling, but they only hold power because it is given to them. Only through community action such as activism or buying power can ordinary people hold agency and cause anti-environmental practices to change. The hero messages in our stories hide the reality; collective action allows communities to hold power; the power to choose to join or not to join, to cooperate or withdraw cooperation (Starhawk 1997). As Heinberg (2009, p. 200) points out:

Knowing the world is unravelling while assuming there's nothing you can do about it is a recipe for desolation. Being involved in heroic work to save the world is empowering and exciting. Once one acknowledges the dilemma we're in, these seem to be the only two options.

Murdock (1990) calls for heroism to incorporate feminine wisdom, moving away from ideas of domination to ideas of affiliation and mindfulness to offer a vision that will preserve life on Earth. Heinberg (2009, p. 203) calls for the creation of 'local centres of self-reliance around which a new culture of true sustainability can begin to coalesce'. There is a call to stop waiting for a hero and recognise we all have a responsibility to act with others, not alone (Wheatley & Frieze 2011, p. 210). Re-storying needs to embody this idea. Thus one of the key elements underpinning my book is the idea that people must become aware, listen, and realise it is necessary to act with others in community. Stories thus need to remind us not only that we are connected to the Earth, as discussed in the previous chapter, but also to each other, and that within that connection lies the responsibility for our actions, and the power to bring about change as a community.

FINDING EXCEPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

The previous section has shown that current Earth meta-narratives in contemporary storytelling reinforce the Dominant Social Paradigm (Koger & Winter 2010) and discourage

agency in response to environmental issues. Recognising this, it becomes important, as it is in the Narrative Therapy process, to seek out exceptions or unique outcomes: times when these dominant meta-narratives are not evident in the stories we encounter. Despite Doan and Parry's (1994) claim that postmodernism has allowed all the different groups in a culture to have their own legitimate stories, such examples are not always easy to find. Young adult novels, with their dystopian focus, don't demonstrate the more visionary re-storying I hoped to achieve. Instead I focus here on adult fiction. Each work was chosen because it had a significant impact on me as a reader, leading me, as a writer, to ask 'what can I learn from this text about re-storying Earth meta-narratives?'. These are works which confirm that literature, when effective, can take readers to a new critical awareness, 'interrogating' our implicit beliefs and habitual ways of seeing in order that we can come to new understandings (Iser, cited in Polkinghorne 1988, p. 97). Ultimately, the particular visions of these three novels guided my thinking around how I could achieve my re-storying aims.

The Fifth Sacred Thing, by Starhawk (Miriam Simos) shows the potential outcome of failing to address the current ecological situation. It also makes real the eco-feminist stance of seeing all life, including the Earth, as sacred; as such it has had a significant impact on my work. I chose *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, by Sheri Tepper, as an example of an Earth Goddess depiction since I aimed to create a Gaia⁹ character in my novel, for reasons I detail in Chapter 5. However, I soon realised it also offers a useful example of ecological realities and where human behaviour might lead us if we don't choose an alternative path. Both novels fit within what Murphy (1995, p. 26) would define as a category of 'daring ecological and feminist novels' of recent years which demonstrate an assumption that the construction of a new society will be found in practice, not theory.

My final example is an anti-example. As my project progressed I became convinced that a novel's ontological positioning is as important as any message or content. George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* books, currently hugely popular due to the television series *A Game of Thrones*, demonstrate the absolute antithesis of the ontology that I feel my work should project, as defined in the Preface and Chapter 1. The world he has created offers a complete absence of empathy, connection and hope, and frequently betrays the reader's connection with key characters. Reflecting on this led me to explore the importance of empathy in eco-fiction, discussed in chapter 4.

⁹ as per James Lovelock's theory about earth as a sentient being

THE FIFTH SACRED THING

Starhawk is a fantasy writer, theorist, eco-feminist and political activist who brings a spiritual and Earth-centred approach to her work. Given her background, her knowledge and understanding of environmental issues is a deeply embodied one.

The Fifth Sacred Thing follows the struggles of Maya and members of an ecologically sustainable community to prevent their lifestyle being destroyed by the totalitarian regime which controls all resources in the near future. Incremental environmental and cultural changes have altered society significantly. Starhawk (1993, p. 342) lays clear blame for the state of the world:

This is the age of the Reaper, when we inherit five thousand years of postponed results, the fruits of our callousness toward the Earth and toward other human beings.

An examination of the text suggests two key elements contribute to its impactful nature, offering a different vision of our relationship to the Earth. First is the way an eco-feminist biophilic ontology is shown as a way of life. Second is the contrast between a totalitarian world not far removed from our current reality with an intentional community that lives interdependently with nature. A third element, the presentation of explicit environmental messages, is at times overly proselytising, suggesting a light hand is required in this area.

Reading Starhawk's book I found I suddenly *understood* how the environmental issues I had read about could impact on daily life if the current trajectory continued. The book depicts a very believable future in a setting familiar to those who watch mainstream movies: Los Angeles and San Francisco. Environmental realities are depicted alongside political, medical and economic ones. Climate change, peak oil and environmental toxicity have led to food scarcity, water and oil shortages, species extinction and chronic illness and cancer in humans. Environmental destruction has destroyed infrastructure, leaving the human race with severely restricted access to technology, transportation and communication systems. Social collapse allowed the fundamentalist Christian right to establish marshal law and economic totalitarianism. They are backed by the Corporation, which owns all water, seeds, television, the government and drugs.

The detail and breadth of world creation brings to life the 'alternative reality' of Starhawk's vision. It is an excellent example of Fisher's argument (cited in Loffredo Roca 2011, p. 267) that influential stories have fidelity and coherence; that is, they flow and make sense, creating a resonance with the reader. As Le Guin (2004, p. 275) argues, the more invented a world is, the more critical it is that it have credibility, coherence and consistency. Starhawk's skill lies in

her ability to create a story of vast scope but she is only successful in engaging the reader with her alternative vision because she draws them in to the experiences and struggles of Maya, Bird and Madrone, the central characters. By coming to care about them and their lives, readers can connect with the reality within which they live.

The Fifth Sacred Thing has a strong environmental message, but of equal importance is the eco-feminist ontological stance embedded in the novel. Starhawk provides a vision of another way of being, and not only brings it vividly to life, but shows the reader the implications of this position. The novel lays the groundwork for this ontology at the outset through the preface, a Declaration of the Four Sacred Things, which states that earth, air, fire and water have intrinsic value beyond human usefulness, and that only by ensuring justice and balance can the fifth, spirit, flourish. The people of the San Francisco Bay live in an idyllic paradise, but it is clear throughout the novel that this has come from learning to live sustainably, from sacrifices and from hard, ongoing work.

Starhawk's detailed, loving descriptions of nature and its cycles endow the Earth with a sense of sacredness. The daily lives of the Bay People show how such a sense of sacredness translates into everyday living. Diversity in race, belief, sexuality and language is taken for granted and community is shown through the deep connections between characters. Starhawk not only depicts differences living side by side, but uses dialogue and plot points to show conflict as an opportunity to explore different points of view and ways of being. These values have fed into what I considered important for my book, as I discuss in later chapters.

Whilst Starhawk has been very successful in showing how an ontological position can be embodied in daily life, it is the vivid juxtaposition of a world where life and Earth are sacred with a world not far removed from our own, a world where everything is commodified, including people, that creates the book's greatest impact. This contrast offers a brutal example of where our current path might lead, not only for the Earth, but for all humanity. The Bay community is under threat from the world of control and dominance and because Starhawk has led readers to care about what Maya and others have created, the invasion of the totalitarian regime has a strong impact. The play of dark and light, in a highly believable, high stakes conflict, is crucial here.

Turning to the question of agency it becomes apparent that the novel contains numerous examples of activism in practice. Various characters discuss how power works and explain the principles of activism. Starhawk also introduces the metaphysical concept of a 'good reality' (El Mundo Bueno) and a 'bad reality' (El Mundo Malo). Characters influence events by choosing

between the two; a device that also serves as a metaphor for the two ontologies on display. Maya, as the voice of Starhawk (1993, p. 219), explains that:

Consciousness is the most stubborn substance in the cosmos, and the most fluid. It can be rigid as concrete, and it can change in an instant. A song can change it, or a story, or a fragrance wafting by on the wind.

In the end *The Fifth Sacred Thing* comes down to a confrontation between two Earth meta-narratives: that the Earth is to be lived with or that the land is to be possessed. The outcome of this clash between two realities turns on the choices of the central characters, and because the novel invites us to care about the Bay People, and to value the world they have created, we are guided to choose a new ontology.

At times Starhawk's novel borders on being too overtly message laden, as in the following excerpt. Maya, an elderly woman, is remembering what led to the current state of being:

We waged war on ourselves with nuclear testing, gave our own citizens cancer and then denied responsibility, poisoned the sacred lands of the Indians and turned great rivers into radioactive sewers, and every time there was a glimpse of peace, we scurried to find a new enemy so we could continue this mindless wasting... Our compassion eroded faster than the topsoil, and when we began to notice the earth changes, the droughts and the warming and the die-offs of the animals, the hole in the ozone layer and the epidemics of strange diseases that showed our own immune systems faltering, when we still had a chance to save so much and avert the worst of what followed, we continued to distract ourselves with war (Starhawk 1993, pp. 343-344).

Since she makes it clear that their past is our present, the responsibility is placed firmly with us. But such an overt approach is problematical. Whilst Eppert (2009, p. 197) suggests environmental education and, I would argue, storytelling, should play a role in criticising stories or ideologies about transcending nature and bending it to individual's will, Bai (2009, p. 145) correctly points out that people don't respond well to being told what to do; rather they need to reach a level of consciousness of the world that opens up respect and compassion.

Fortunately such passages are limited, and justified as part of Maya's eco-activist background. For most of the novel Starhawk creates a convincing nightmare vision of our possible future, juxtaposed with a community that has learned not to waste and not to exploit, where everyone has enough and every living thing is sacred. Ultimately my engagement came about because this was a place and a life worth fighting for, for the book's protagonists and for me.

GIBBON'S DECLINE AND FALL

Sheri S. Tepper's novel, *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, is firstly a feminist work, and only secondly an environmental one. I chose the book for its Goddess depiction in the character of Sophy, as I discuss in Chapter 5, but on re-reading it I was struck by its ontological reverence towards the natural world. Sophy is a member of the Decline and Fall Club, seven women that ultimately find themselves at the heart of resistance to the plans of mysterious business leader Webster to subjugate all women worldwide through the use of cryogenic technology.

Sophy and her family articulate an ontology closely aligned with indigenous or eco-feminist meta-narratives, valuing compassion, balance, wisdom and an alignment with the natural world. Their past is grounded in a deeply spiritual, nature-focused culture. Indigenous wisdom is included in the form of stories and through the idea that animals are family and have much to teach humans. It is ultimately revealed that Sophy's family evolved from avian creatures rather than apes; hence their different understanding of the world.

Tepper grounds her world in highly descriptive, evocative natural imagery, to which she gives positive associations. Avoiding romanticising, she recognises the natural world's wildness and danger, but at the same time links it with the infinite and removes it from the mundane, rendering the familiar strange, to return to the words of Le Guin and White. A recurring metaphor is the life-giving power of rain. Nature imagery is used for descriptions of human-built things, for example 'spilling indoor light onto the rain-wet walk to make a golden river' (Tepper 1997, p. 331). Mythic or animal imagery is also used frequently for different characters. This serves to evoke a close relationship between humans and the natural world.

Like Starhawk, Tepper uses juxtaposition and a combination of explicit exposition and implicit ontology to create a world where two different visions sit uncomfortably side by side. Again, the stakes are high, with fundamental freedoms threatened. The struggles of the seven members of the Decline and Fall Club against the dominance of the patriarchal American Alliance are also clearly paralleled with the dominance over the natural world throughout the book. Tepper's is not an unfamiliar meta-narrative: women and nature have often been implicitly connected throughout history, as has been discussed, and the American Alliance clearly sees both as resources to be used.

At the heart of the Decline and Fall Club and the novel is Carolyn, an archetypal Earth-mother. She and her husband Hal believe in a primordial covenant whereby humans, animals and the Earth all depend on each other, giving and receiving in an interdependent existence. This idea returns later in the book, when we come to understand that Webster, the head of the

American Alliance, is the personification of unchecked growth and offers a frightening final outcome if domination over the Earth is pursued to its ultimate end:

He has no covenant with earth. He will break the world, glutting himself on one final banquet (Tepper 1997, p. 399).

Ultimately Sophy stands against Webster in battle. Her life mission has been to raise women up, and Webster aims to turn women into pure breeding machines. The final conflict between these two archetypes is inevitable. We are shown that this is about choosing a world of dominion, or a world of balance; that is, an ontological choice.

Again, like Starhawk, Tepper explicitly comments on the state of the world, exploring ideas around over-population, ecological destruction and over-reliance on technology through the voices of certain characters. Issues of agency arise because, as one character notes, there is no-one to solve the problems they face, which does away with the usual reliance on some elite (the ubiquitous hero) to come up with a fix. The idea that power comes from working together and caring recurs throughout. Whilst Webster separates then destroys individuals, Sophy brings people together, and sends them out into the world to help and heal.

You were gradually learning ways that would lead to wisdom. Ways of respect for nature, ways of peace, ways of quiet cooperation (Tepper 1997, p. 393).

Tepper suggests that small changes can lead to great storms of change, a position which offers hope against a seemingly indomitable enemy. Ultimately, the balance is shifted because enough people come together and act to choose a different way of being.

A FINAL NOTE ON ETHOS

Arts reflect the dynamic self of the artist and the artist's perspective on experience. They are a personal expression of an understanding of the world, and they evoke the distilled experience of being in the world of the individual (Higgs 2008, p. 551).

My point about ethos is underlined by considering George R.R. Martin's *Ice and Fire* novels. These are in many ways similar to those already discussed as they offer a realistic and detailed world, excellent writing, fully realised characters and skilled plotting. However, the ontology underpinning the books is unremittingly bleak, sexist and brutal: infanticide, rape, incest, senseless destruction and endless violence are vividly described. The books lack balance: there is no light against the darkness. In the novels of Fantasy masters such as Tolkien or Lewis, Christian values dominate; there is undoubtedly darkness, but the sense of light and hope prevails. The constant, endless sequence of terrible events and betrayals in Martin's novels

leaves no certainty that there will be positive resolution in the end and thus nothing to hope for. The book lacks a moral centre: only those who are ruthless and led by self-interest succeed. Any character with integrity can be expected to meet a terrible end. Oatley (2011, pp. 100-101) points out that engaging with a novel requires us to trust the author so that we open our mind to his or her creations, creating a strong connection with specific characters. Empathy leads us to feel what they are feeling, and to identify with their struggles, their emotions and their relationships. Yet in Martin's novels this empathic investment by the reader is exploited. To come to care for a character and then watch them be repeatedly brutalised has real emotional impact: as a betrayal it can cause the reader to stop caring.

In later chapters I argue that empathy is an important ingredient in re-storying our relationship to the Earth, yet works such as Martin's offer an ontological position that supports empathy erosion, a term Baron-Cohen (2011, pp. 6 & 16) uses to refer to a sole focus on our own interests without consideration for the interests of others:

Erosion of empathy is an important global issue related to the health of our communities, be they small (like families) or big (like nations)... Without empathy we risk the breakdown of relationships, we become capable of hurting others, and we can cause conflict. With empathy we have a resource to resolve conflict, increase community cohesion, and dissolve another person's pain (Baron-Cohen 2011, p. 183).

Since I have already shown that self-interest is a fundamental issue underpinning environmental problems, this ontological position is diametrically opposite to what I aim to achieve.

CONCLUSION

The novels examined in this chapter provide insight into how current stories are shaped and how to shape alternative stories. The literature offers some ideas regarding this too. Loffredo Roca (2011, p. 267) argues that a cultural shift in relation to ecological issues will come not from the political or social arenas, but from deep personal change within individual narratives, arising from inspirational stories that show us how things *could be*. I disagree with her point that such stories need to be didactic or contain a moral. However, her main contention is valid; that the content of stories should show how values underpin behaviour, and should also 'include(s) ideas, characters, plot line, language and values that resonate for the listener' (Loffredo Roca 2011, p. 267). Klenbort (2012) poses the question 'does moral certitude take

away from the power of a story?', and concludes that the message will only have an impact on the way we live if it comes off the page because the writer has placed the story first.

In their novels both Tepper and Starhawk have created engaging fiction that offers a blueprint for me to follow as I aim to re-story our relationship with the Earth. When considering the 'alternative visions' of these writers, especially in the light of prevailing meta-narratives, three themes emerge as important; message, Ecos and ontology, and agency. The commonality between Starhawk and Tepper is that they both provide a concrete example of how a different Earth meta-narrative could translate into reality. Both have struck a balance between message and Ecos, epistemology and ontology, as well as introducing the empowering idea that we *can* choose a different reality, giving examples of *how*. Closely linked to this is the use of particular techniques; juxtaposition, empathic nature depictions and overt ecological messages – within a compelling world and story that engage the reader in their vision. The importance of connection, hope and empathy is striking, especially in the counter example of Martin's work, which shows how a negative ethos can negate reader connection. The next three chapters explore how I integrated these findings, and the literature analysis discussed in earlier chapters, into the writing of my novel.

CHAPTER THREE – RE-STORYING I – MESSAGE AND ECOS

In this chapter I move on to the re-storying process. Recalling that my research question considers how to re-story the relationship of humans with the Earth, I detail how I approached this in shaping 'Shifted'. Building on the last chapter, I suggest that two important elements were the choice of content, including message, and more importantly, my ontological positioning as Implied Author. I begin by explaining my approach to message content, in the form of seeding ideas, and how I implemented this. I then discuss my use of Ecos in creating a story that offers a paradigm shift from a relationship of Earth domination to one of connection. To conclude, I note the importance of finding a balance between both dynamics. In the two chapters that follow I look at how Ecos, as values, can move towards ontology, as embodied values or an Earth-centred way of being.

My ideas on what should be included as message and Ecos developed through the synthesis of eco-feminist and eco-psychological literature, particularly the critical work of Mies and Shiva (1993). Other influential ideas were Johnson-Sheehan and Morgan's (2009, p. 22) argument that conservation writing needs to show how human behaviour impacts on the natural world and how it can also restore a sustainable balance, Walker and Salt's (2006) work on resilience thinking, Murphy's (1995) point that we are intimately connected to the non-human world, Loffredo Roca's (2011, p. 270) call for a shift from hyper-individualism to community and from dominion to stewardship, and the 'real life' practice of Wheatley and Frieze (2011), who note that change must come from within a community, be focused on place rather than problems to bring it to life and prioritise relationship and connection.

I was reassured by Murphy's (1995, p. 29) point that there is no *one* uniform eco-feminist voice, and that no literature encapsulates *all* ecological and feminist assumptions – but can embody some of both. Bowers' (1992) work on metaphorical templates for pedagogical approaches to the ecological crisis, discovered after my novel was complete, affirmed my choices. Her work contrasts the guiding metaphors of a culture of progress with those of a sustainable culture. Her table comparing the two sets out clearly many of the different ontological underpinnings I had decided to include in my novel.

MESSAGE AS IDEA SEEDING

Such Stuff as Dreams, by Oatley (2011) provided recent psychological research with which to ground my theories about fiction. One of the central premises behind this work is that art is an externalisation of mind, and therefore engaging with it can lead to changes not only in

emotional states but in consciousness (Oatley 2011, p. 132). As Polkinghorne (1988, p. 122) notes, the choices a writer makes around creating a narrative structure, by bringing disparate events together, creates not only unity but significance. Similarly, Oatley (2011, p. 132) argues that the skill of the writer in juxtaposing words, paragraphs or scenes can move readers amongst different emotional states, leading them to experience ‘meaningful emotional effects’; they bring these scenes alive in their imagination based on the *suggestions* of the writer. He introduces the idea of Dhvani, an Indian term which encompasses the way in which suggestions or hints made in literature tap into the thoughts, emotions and memories of readers, leading them to take up the story in a personal way (2011, pp. 71 & 72).

Recognising the need for a light hand in terms of message as a result of reading *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (Starhawk, 1993), I embraced the idea of suggestion as a writer’s tool. As a reader I know that when my imagination is caught by an idea and I am given the space to explore it for myself I gain much more enjoyment and insight from my reading experience. As a writer I have therefore aimed to create a work seeded with messages which can germinate within the reader’s mind, rather than a heavily message-driven novel. Attempting to avoid overt proselytising, I aim to offer bright moments of clarity to seed interest or awareness through characters’ ideas, words and experiences.

This approach leads inevitably to the question ‘what form should these suggestions, or seeds, take?’ The environmental situation is extremely complex. Choosing what to include in a young adult novel was therefore challenging. Also, since I identified my target audience as early teens, complex debate was inappropriate. I chose in the end to focus on a number of key ideas as my suggestions, or seeds. Wishing to choose themes relevant to a young adult audience led me to prioritise the way humans relate to technology and nature, a motif which recurs throughout the book. I also touched briefly on other environmental issues at various times, as I discuss below. Questions of personal freedom and agency, the idea of sacredness, and the notion of community and diversity, which I recognised as important from my research, were dealt with more implicitly, as ontological underpinnings of the novel. I discuss these in the next section.

TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE

The exploration of issues relating to technology arises largely from the impact of the event that opens ‘Shifted’: the reversal of the Earth’s magnetic poles. This stops all computer based technology from working for a short period, causing severe global disruption and many deaths. This central plot device reveals our heavy reliance on technology and also touches on the idea

of ‘traditional knowledge’, since staff in the hospital where the initial action occurs are at a loss to know how to undertake some medical interventions without medical technology, and retired nurses are called in to teach them old ways of doing things.

The technological disruption continues when it is discovered that certain people have, since the Shift, become ‘fizzers’, unable to interact with technology without causing it to stop working. Taz’s early experiences in the novel explore what this means culturally and for individuals. He notices discrimination and even violence against ‘fizzers’, including his own mother. Denied their technology, some members of society become angry, blaming and threatening others. This touches on the idea that for some the relationship with technology is like an addiction; they value technology more highly than any human connections.

Nettle (2001, p. 179) suggests that art is successful when it concurs with how the audience perceives the world, and connects with their previous experiences, but with an element of originality. Given recent generations are referred to as digital natives, the idea that technology could become inaccessible to members of the worlds’ population, including teenagers, had potential to trigger awareness in readers. I also drew on Allott’s (1960, pp. 170 & 173) idea that the interplay of broader cultural issues – in this case discrimination and technological reliance – with more intimate events, in terms of Taz’s experience of violence, can offer texture and multiple significances.

I wished to avoid binary thinking, which would identify technology as ‘the bad guy’, aiming instead to demonstrate that our relationship to technology and how we use it has human and environmental impacts. Unlike much young adult speculative fiction, in ‘Shifted’ the world we know has changed only a little, albeit following a significant and, for many, cataclysmic event. Hollywood has taught us that significant changes come from significant events, as in movies like *2012* (2009) and *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), but the reality is that due to climate change we are already experiencing the beginning of predicted incremental changes such as the increased cost of insurance and travel (Randall 2009, p. 120). ‘Shifted’ explores how such small changes can have much larger impacts than first considered. Not all these impacts are negative however. It becomes apparent as the novel progresses that the loss of technology may lead to other unexpected changes, such as heightened senses and a greater awareness of the world.

As with Tepper (1997) and Starhawks’ (1993) works, discussed in the last chapter, juxtaposition is used throughout the novel to show two approaches to technology. Much like the old adage ‘guns don’t kill people, people kill people’, the medical technology in the book is important for

the survival of several of the characters, but its misuse also leads to human rights abuses. Kalia has experienced childhood abuse, but only towards the end is it revealed that this involved medical experimentation. Further, the suggestion that fizzers can be 'fixed' with a technological solution poses the question 'should they?' and explores the idea that this has become more important than an individual's right to non-intervention, exposing the contentious nature of medical experimentation 'for the common good'.

Problematising technology in this way fulfils the function that Yaszek (2006, p. 76) notes emerged in the 1950's in science fiction by women writers; that is, a questioning of the social implications of technology rather than an uncritical acceptance. There is a portion of Western culture that places absolute faith in technology, assuming it will solve our ecological problems. Unfortunately this belief creates a disincentive to taking other actions; akin to waiting for the hero again. Bowers (1992, p. 167) notes that in a culture of growth, technological procedures are valued as part of our power to control nature. They are considered to be rational signs of efficiency and progress, whereas sustainable cultures ensure that technology is sensitive to cultural and environmental context and that local sources of skill are used (Bower 1992, p. 167). The denouement of 'Shifted' challenges the cultural belief in technology as control when the 'fizzers' band together to stop all technologically-based operations. Kalia articulates the importance of this, telling the others that technology can stop us from seeing and hearing what is happening in the real world. In terms of environmental thinking, such a position challenges the idea that *all* technology, because it enables progress, is inherently positive.

Throughout the book the technology and environment juxtaposition is personified by two contrasting characters. Darvel, the head of Darvel Industries, is the person behind the medical developments and is surrounded by mechanistic imagery. He has a large car, he escapes by helicopter and throughout most of the novel is situated in an environment of glass and chrome, in his office. In fact, when he ventures into Sanctuary early in the novel he weakens and seems to diminish in size. Kalia, on the other hand, is associated with natural imagery and grows in strength and power when she is in natural surroundings, as does Morrigan, her 'crone' counterpart, as I discuss in the next chapter. On the one occasion that Darvel and Morrigan meet face to face, Darvel tells Morrigan he'll take all her places, introducing the idea that the natural world is under threat and gradually being reduced by the human, technological world. Yet at the end, to return to the idea that technology is not inherently bad, Kalia articulates a call for balance. Despite her step-father's experimentation, she takes the position that it is not impossible for them to live side by side, and by implication that nature and technology can find a place where they can work together for the greater good.

OTHER MESSAGE 'SEEDS'

The focus on technology is explored throughout the book, but other message-seeding relates to the concerns of specific characters. Miles, an aging actor, not only helps the young adventurers but educates them on Uranium mining and the impact it has. This section moves beyond mere exposition because of the emotional weight of Miles' position. His partner Claude was passionate about this issue, and since Claude's departure, Miles has felt useless, with no role to play, literally or figuratively. Kalia restores agency to him and returns him to the world with a reinvigorated mission. By doing so, she reminds us that change is still possible at this moment in time, a motif that recurs throughout the novel, and which relates back to Tepper and Starhawks' messages about agency.

Another idea seeded within the book is that the natural world is being poisoned, and only has a finite capacity to deal with such toxins. Gin, the pragmatic farmer of the group, becomes aware of this during their time in Sanctuary (the metaphor of Sanctuary is discussed in Chapter 5). Gin has a deep, living connection to the land, and an unarticulated recognition of the interdependency of humans and the natural environment. It is because of this that he is able to experience what he does; a deep, searing pain that brings to vivid life the sense that the Earth's capacity to absorb human domination and exploitation does not come without significant cost. Morrigan, as one aspect of Gaia, gives voice to this cost. The other teens see this differently depending on their individual perceptual preferences (visual, auditory and so on). Using several modes of perceiving and evoking a range of senses at this moment I endeavour to go beyond the descriptive and the visual to what Leland (2002, p. 214) describes as the observational and 'sensory', a technique which he argues can be particularly powerful. This moment is an important one because it offers the idea that even Sanctuary, despite being a natural haven, is not immune to human desecration, a concept detailed in Buell's (2001, p. 38) discussion of toxic discourse;

Disenchantment from the illusion of the green oasis is accompanied or precipitated by totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration.

Buell (2001, pp. 34, 38 & 40) argues that whilst a growing understanding that there is no pure, unsullied environment left in the world can provoke anxiety, it can also unify and invoke action. In a similar vein, Starhawk (1997) points out the dark and the shadows are as important as the light, and that by facing our fear we can reclaim it, finding the energy to act. By presenting the characters' emotional reactions to this awareness, I offer a moment of indirect empathetic connection to the Earth itself, something I discuss in detail in Chapter 5.

Through the action of emplotment, the narrative form constitutes human reality into wholes, manifests human values, and bestows meaning on life (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 159).

The previous chapter concluded that an Earth-centred ontology, which shows how Ecos can be embodied as a way of being, is worth presenting in any novel that aims to re-story Earth meta-narratives. The environmental issues we face are linked to our ontological perspective, one which has at its heart a mechanistic view of the Earth. Shifting to another perspective offers the chance to choose another reality, the Mundo Bueno of *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. Crossing discipline boundaries, as an experienced social worker I know that regardless of the different interventions undertaken by different services, the important factor leading to successful outcomes is the values and principles which underpin service provision. A paradigm shift from a problem focus to a solution focus can contribute to clients being empowered to effect real and lasting change (Larkins & Clear 1998).

The same is true of storytelling. Cultural values and practices are enacted and given meaning by the writer (Lepore & Smyth 2002, p. 56), a process which can offer social or even political commentary (Cosgrove 2006, p. 138), for example by avoiding any portrayal of disabled teens as 'other', or outside the normal in 'Shifted'. By writing with awareness, dominant meta-narratives can be questioned and their implications explored (Yaszek 2006). Ecos can evolve into ontology if it is taken in and becomes a part of self that directs action. As Le Guin (2004, pp. 229-230) points out:

The arts function powerfully in establishing and confirming human community. Story, told or written, certainly serves to enlarge understanding of other people and of our place in the world as a whole.

There was an unsurprising confluence between my personal ontology and my arts voice as theory and lived experience came together in the integrated space of my creative practice: I would not have chosen this project if I was not deeply committed to an Earth-centred ethos. Based on my research and my personal Ecos, in 'Shifted' I chose to place value on the idea of community, diversity and inclusion, and the idea that people and places have inherent value, or even sacredness and magic. Inherent in this approach is the idea of agency. It is through the growing awareness of threats to Kalia and Sanctuary, and an understanding of their combined strength, that the young people decide to act together to make a difference.

ECOS I – CONNECTION, COMMUNITY, AGENCY, DIVERSITY

The novel centres on the experiences of six young people. Only one of them does not have some kind of disability. Zoe and Taz both live with Cystic Fibrosis, Vivi has Williams Syndrome, Brigid is gifted and sensory defensive, and Kalia has seizures. Reflecting on my own life experiences around disability, and on a conversation I had with a relative of a teen with Williams Syndrome, I choose in the novel to frame 'different' as other but equally valid, *ways of perceiving* and relating to the world. Every character has an important role to play in the unfolding story, and this role often *grows out of* the different ways of seeing and experiencing the world resulting from their disabilities. My position is that diversity and difference is critical, a position also found within the environmental movement (for example Walker & Salt 2006, pp. 145 & 146). As an example, the following extract shows how Vivi, a fourteen year old with Williams Syndrome, relates to the world. Those with Williams Syndrome often have a strong connection with music. Vivi's aural senses make sense to her, but to an outsider, her understanding of others might seem supernatural.

The music's got louder since I was in hospital. I don't think I used to hear it at all, one time, but then I heard it, and then it got closer and closer. Now it's there all the time. But it's not bad. I like it. And it's helpful. Usually I don't really understand people. They don't say what they mean, and it's hard to work out what they do mean. But now, I can listen to the music, and that tells me more than their words ever do- if they're sad or happy or anything ('Shifted', p. 63).

Vivi's difference allows her to assess not only the psychological health of those around her, but the intentions of those, such as Darvel, who may pose a threat to the group. Her differences give her insights the others don't have. The same can be said of each character in their different ways.

The book not only shows the importance of valuing diversity, it also argues that it is only when this diversity is brought together through community that change is possible. The idea of community, or collective power, is first introduced by Kalia, in what could be interpreted as a dream sequence, when she tells Zoe she will bring people together, which will make a difference. Zoe does not realise it is her death that will gather the remaining five. When they come together for her funeral, talking about their lost friend and sister begins to weave a web of connection amongst them.

The theme of collective power is revisited by Morigan shortly afterwards when she tells the group they will need to work together to rescue Kalia, an idea which Miles later reiterates. At

the conclusion of the novel, the five protagonists find themselves facing Darvel's seemingly impregnable security system, made to withstand 'fizzers'. Darvel is surrounded by the expertise inherent in a big corporation, and completely secure in his power. But the young heroes, who fall into a category usually dismissed as powerless in society, break through the anonymous barrier of steel and glass by working together as a community, thus fulfilling Kalia's prophecy. The saving of humanity is thus situated within a local arena rather than on an epic 'battlefield', so that 'the nature of community [has] a profound impact on everyone's survival' (Hairston 2006, p. 294); a consciously feminist position on my part. Arguing for community is important because, as McKibben (2009) notes, hyper-individualism comes at a huge cost, including isolation, deterioration of common institutions, decreased happiness and tolerance, increased prison populations, decreased sustainability and even the celebration of inequality. Calling for a return to local scale communities, he points to research that shows being part of community has a significant impact on physical and psychological well-being and even survival (McKibben 2009, p. 188).

The emphasis on community action is likely to find reception with a young adult audience. Although environmental action is still not mainstream, there are movements within sectors of the community to change this and an article in the *Saturday Age* discusses the growing trend towards social activism amongst young people as a direct result of their fiction reading (Northover 2012). As Northover (2012) reports, J.K. Rowling's fictional construct, Dumbledore's Army, which appears as a student-led resistance against Voldemort's totalitarianism in the *Harry Potter* novels, is finding a real-world manifestation in the *Harry Potter Alliance*, which takes on social justice issues.

However, such community-led empowerment is not without its problems. The dominant meta-narratives around governments and institutions generally uphold their institutionalised power, particularly in relation to environmental issues. When environmental activists stand against corporate greed it is usually depicted as a David and Goliath scenario which, as Buell (2001, p. 41) points out, can contain an implicit message of 'victimage' or at least an 'us' versus 'them' binary and 'rhetoric of blame'. In reality no-one is absolved of responsibility in relation to environmental destruction: as consumers we all contribute to the wasting of the Earth's resources. Rather than take a binary position, the novel offers a different possibility: whilst the young heroes are disappointed that they didn't get to overcome Darvel, Kalia's disappointment arises from the fact that his departure means she is unable to try to find a way to work with him and find a balance.

ECOS II – SACREDNESS

[W]hen 'the sea flows in our veins... and the stars are our jewels', when all things are perceived as infinite and holy, what motive can we have for covetousness or self-assertion, for the pursuit of power or the drearier forms of pleasure? (Huxley 1977, pp. 27-28).

The second Ecos underpinning the novel is the idea of nature as inherently valuable, special, even sacred, and definitely not, as Descartes would have us believe, a dead machine. This is evident in the novel's emphasis on specificity of place. The setting is not the distant, generic unspoiled medieval landscape found in many fantasy novels; it is recognisably the Australian bush, *our own* familiar, local landscape. Even Sanctuary, which is rendered with mystical elements such as temporal strangeness and healing powers, is found within this landscape, and described in terms of Australian flora and fauna. It is not separate from the Australian bush, it is contained within it, and the boundaries are blurred. In fact, boundaries are more apparent when the young people venture out of the bush into the suburbs, implying that perhaps Sanctuary is everywhere yet nowhere.

It is the mystery surrounding Sanctuary that offers the reader a sense of the sacred. Sanctuary, like its personification (Kalia) is linked with magic and the sacred throughout the novel. Time moves differently in Sanctuary, a fact the characters only gradually become aware of. In fact for Taz it is almost a place outside time, as the symptoms of infection relating to his Cystic Fibrosis are halted when he is in Sanctuary. Another aspect is the healing water to which Morrigan introduces the young heroes at the start of their journey: their anointment with the water has aspects of ritual, cleansing and even baptism to it. There is a stillness to be found in Sanctuary, like the stillness of a temple or cathedral, most notably for Brigid, whose frenetic thinking and speaking is slowed whenever she enters its realm.

In fact all of the characters are changed, in one way or another, through their encounter with Sanctuary, and all start to have experiences that could be defined as mystical, such as Taz's growing awareness of light sources around living things and Vivi's growing perceptiveness around sounds. The characters start to realise that their connection with the earth offers them a certain power, or life force; it manifests literally for Taz, but Gin uses this connection to find calm within himself and Kalia needs to make a physical connection with the earth to regain her strength and power after a seizure.

To counteract the 'mechanistic' view of nature, imagery is used explicitly throughout the novel to depict Sanctuary and its denizens as living, changing beings with which the characters find a

growing connection. An example is the description of yellow wattle flowers as baby fairies, a purposefully sentimental image, connecting as it does with the memory of Zoe. This ontological position is important because, as Hamilton (2010, p. 134) points out:

There is persuasive evidence that our concerns about the environment, as well as our attitudes and values, are influenced by the extent to which we feel ourselves to be part of the natural world.

As the young heroes spend more time in Sanctuary, their perceptions gradually shift, becoming more acute, and each starts to experience that 'aliveness' according to their own sensory preferences. Vivi feels the heartbeat of the Earth, a sound that encompasses her whole being. For Taz it is a visual experience as he starts to notice he can see the trees breathing. Gin, who began the books with a tactile connection to the Earth that he affirms regularly, has an intense experience of the Earth's pain at one point. This connection grows stronger the more they spend time in Sanctuary.

Another nature motif is the ever-changing tree that signals the 'underground railroad' the characters follow as they attempt to get Kalia to safety. This introduces the cycles of the natural year as an important element in the story. Morrigan instructs the group that they will find help when they see the tree's image, but tells them never to stop if that tree is shown in winter, as that indicates danger. When Brigid misreads the quilt at Zorya's Kalia is recaptured by her step-father – an event which alludes to the way we have lost touch with nature's cycles and no longer know how to read important natural signs.

The depiction of living beings works towards the same aim. Claude, Miles' 'departed' partner turns out to be alive and well, living in Sanctuary, and quite possibly a Centaur, although this last point is deliberately blurred¹⁰. As a denizen of Sanctuary, and possibly at least part animal, Claude offers a bridge between the natural world and the human world. There is a growing sense amongst the young heroes that they can almost understand the birds and animals they encounter in Sanctuary, although I deliberately avoid anthropomorphism¹¹. The idea of empathy will be explored in the next chapter, but my aim is that as the characters start to recognise the natural world's inherent value and aliveness and increasingly connect with it

¹⁰ The ambiguity of Claude's physical representation is a magic realist technique which 'unsettles certainty' (Faris 1995: 170-172).

¹¹ In this regard I have avoided the abhorrent Disney-fication of the natural world as filled with singing and dancing creatures, aligning instead with Barbara Kingsolver's position, which demands intrinsic value be given to animals as they are, recognising that they are part of our community (Klenbort 2011).

this will entice readers to start to notice their own natural environment; a growing awareness and understanding that will contribute to a re-storying of relationship.

FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN MESSAGE AND ECOS

This chapter has focused on the messages within and Ecos underpinning 'Shifted', and the way in which certain writerly techniques such as descriptions, plot points and motifs have grown from, or contributed to the building of, both. There is not a clear cut distinction between the two elements, as I will discuss more when I consider my writing process, but I would note Le Guin's (1989, p. 80) argument that a writer's style emerges not only from their voice, but also their vision and way of being in the world; that is, their ethos and ontology. On beginning the revision process I noticed that whilst there was even more to these underpinnings than I had consciously written, there was also an over-emphasis on message in two places in particular in the novel, a situation I had found problematical in my reading of *Starhawk*, leading as it did to a sense of didacticism. This required re-writing to reduce some of the overt message in order to create a more balanced work. But my search for balance was not confined solely to the novel. Ultimately my exegetical voice emerged in the intersubjective space where I worked to integrate my personal ontology, my research, and my creative practice, a point I will return to in my final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR – RE-STORYING II – CHARACTERS AND EMPATHY

A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.

Franz Kafka, in a letter to Oskar Pollak, 27 January 1904

In Chapter 3 I began to touch on the idea of connection through story. In this chapter I provide a brief overview of current psychological research regarding how such connection is thought to impact on reader attitudes and consequently behaviour. I show that creating realistic characters is important in order to create resonance for readers. I then discuss the key ways in which I have worked to achieve this, including the use of voice, difference and emotions. Drawing these two ideas together the central point of this chapter is that when readers connect with 'Shifted's protagonists, their actions and sacrifices, they will also connect, through them, with Sanctuary and the dangers it faces, hence becoming aware of the possibility of a new type of relationship between humans and the Earth. It is important to note that I can only present my work from a writer's perspective; that is, how I worked to achieve my aims. I must leave the question of how successful I am to the reader.

CHARACTERISATION – EMPATHY AND CONNECTION

Writing allows one to enter another's world, to stand in another's shoes, and the potential for self-transcendent empathy and understanding is obvious (Schaff, cited in Cosgrove 2006, p. 135).

I have argued that re-storying is important since fiction can bring about changes in behaviour. Now I will examine the role connection or empathy plays in bringing about such changes. As I have established previously, our personal narratives about our lives inform the meaning we give to events, and find expression through our actions (Loffredo Roca 2011; Polkinghorne 1988; White 1992). Only through changing these can we change how people act. A sustained change in behaviour can come about when we develop social competence (Morgan & Dennehy 2004, p. 382) or, specifically, an understanding of the perspective of others (Baron-Cohen 2011; Goleman 1996; Oatley 2011).

In his book, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*, Oatley (2011, pp. 19 & 162) discusses his recent psychological research which found that fiction can elicit personality changes such as higher levels of empathy, improved theory of mind and greater social abilities. His research progresses the arguments of earlier theorists such as Parry & Doan (1994), Sarbin (2004) and Eisner (2008) that fiction can elicit personal change. Reading fiction, Oatley (2011,

p. 62) suggests, loosens 'the habitual structures of selfhood' since stories take people beyond themselves.

Exactly why this occurs appears to lie in fiction's ability to elicit feelings of empathy and connection. As readers come to identify with characters, placing themselves within a story through empathic resonance, they may also become open to new ways of thinking about, and even acting upon, such issues (Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; Oatley 2011; Polkinghorne 1988; Sarbin 2004; Schaff 2001). Oatley (2011, p. 115) notes that the psychological definition of emotion is the process whereby we link an external event or person with an inner purpose or concern, thereby making the outer stimuli meaningful to us. This allows readers, he argues, to attune to the actions and emotions of characters through a range of psychological processes such as identification, reliving and remembered emotions to the extent that what is important to a character becomes important to them and therefore:

The way we see the world can change, and we ourselves can change... Art enables us to experience some emotions in contexts that we would not normally encounter, and to think of ourselves in ways that usually we do not (Oatley 2011, p. 118).

Goleman (1996), in his groundbreaking work on emotional intelligence, points out that art speaks directly to the emotional mind, which responds faster than the rational mind. In a similar vein, Simmons (2001), a professor in creative writing, notes that stories offer the reader human attention and connection, which touches them and fulfils basic needs, such as freedom or belonging. This 'coming together' through the writing, she argues, results in a genuine human experience that feels authentic and meaningful, and which can therefore bring the reader's momentum to the reading process; a momentum which can translate into thoughts and even actions (Simmons 2001, pp. 111-112). Yolen (1981, p. 57) argues that when stories touch our human longings, fears and hopes they have the power to awaken readers.

A key aspect of this awakening occurs by creating real characters for readers to connect to: when they see familiar human emotions and experiences they recognise themselves in others' stories; the personal becomes the universal (Allott 1960; Day 2002; McAdams, cited in Bamberg 2004, p. 369). Such emotional resonance allows us to connect with those that, on the surface, appear different to us. Lee et al. (2004), in an article on cultural modelling, suggest that storytellers are powerful because of their ability to connect us with things we *haven't* experienced. Imagination, they argue, is the tool for entering other worlds and becoming other people, if only for a little while (Lee et al. 2004, p. 39). This is a kind of imposed empathy, because it is a way through which we can start to understand other people

and ways of living that are very different to our own. Stories make other lives and other worlds real. Sarbin (2004, p. 17) tells us that highly valued imaginings arising from well constructed stories can become beliefs. We connect with well-written characters, feeling what they feel and understanding their problems. In fact, in an important point for an 'issues' driven novel such as mine, Allott (1960, p. 207) argues that characters are more important than ideas.

THE PROCESS OF CHARACTER CREATION

My aim was to create realistic characters who would have the depth and complexity to draw readers into their inner and outer lives. Simmons (2001, pp. 112-113) notes that readers will connect with a story when characters come across as real people, with all their flaws, emotions and irrationalities, since such a connection makes the story meaningful. My process of characterisation in 'Shifted' was significantly different to the two unpublished fantasy books I had previously written ('The Tales of Turiya', Le Rossignol 2009). In 'The Tales of Turiya', which adopted an omniscient narrator perspective, my focus was on *how* characters would behave in any given situation, rather than *why*, since their actions served the plot. Writing 'Shifted', I wrote from a changing first person perspective, a choice discussed later in this chapter. Such a point of view demands that you know your characters' psychological make-up well. As a result, I found that the process of character creation was many layered, and consequently led to more complex characterisation.

Initially I wrote down factual information about my characters' ages, names, families and general physicality, as well as whether they were outgoing or introverted – much as with a new acquaintance – but it was only as I began writing that their personalities emerged through their own voices. I soon found I had a clear sense of how they would speak, and what they tended to focus on in their observations. This was particularly so with the two female characters, Brigid and Vivi, but with the male characters I was about a quarter of the way through writing the book before their voices became distinct. As a character, Taz was a lot clearer to me, and his style of expression came through strongly whenever I wrote either male character. Whilst the others developed more unconsciously, finding Gin's voice involved conscious effort. During re-writes I worked to differentiate the male voices more; this was unnecessary with the female voices.

In shaping the story I made deliberate decisions around who would tell each event, on the basis of how they would act in any given situation, the need to gain insight into their thinking or, as I will detail in the section on place as character, because it was important to use that

particular character's way of seeing at that point in time to introduce a particular idea around ecological issues, such as Taz's emerging ability to see energy in living things.

The process of characterisation therefore involved both deliberate construction, in terms of conscious decisions about what would best serve the story, and intuitive practice: getting to know the characters as they emerged. I would argue that this reflects Le Guin's (1989, pp. 66-67) point that the artist must go into themselves to reach others, drawing on the truly personal and meaningful to give characters life in order to communicate on an aesthetic, emotional and intuitive level. It was only on re-reading the manuscript that I clearly saw the different layers that I had built into my characterisation as a result of this process.

DISABILITY, DIFFERENCE AND COMMUNITY

In 'Shifted' I deliberately ask my readers to connect with characters whose experiences might be different from their own. In doing so I respond to Le Guin's (1989) urging to write for those who are in the out-group, not the in-group. The five protagonists of 'Shifted' are not typical heroes: only one has no illness or disability. Gin initially appears to fit the fictional hero mold as the oldest in the party. He is tall, strong, and a natural leader. He also has a strong sense of responsibility from having cared for his sister Zoe throughout her life. However, he is not as perceptive as the others, and makes a serious error of judgment early in the story in relation to Mr Darvel, which has unfortunate consequences for everyone.

On the surface the other characters don't fit the hero mould either. Taz has cystic fibrosis and experiences periods of illness which frequently prevent him taking action during the story. Brigid, although prone to acting in an heroic manner, is sensory defensive, and consequently has difficulty thinking clearly in over-stimulating environments. Vivi lives with William Syndrome, a condition characterised not only by certain physical disabilities such as heart problems, but also a lower IQ. She is the youngest and most overtly disabled of the group. Yet Vivi has an intuitive grasp of what is unfolding much sooner than any of the others, and is the one who most often comes up with the appropriate course of action in response. And like a hero, Taz is driven to do what is right, as in Chapter 4, where he defends a woman and her disabled child against a group of thugs at the shopping centre. Despite his illness, he keeps going regardless of the cost, which in his case is possible death.

The characters share some common desires; to be part of the group, to have their voice heard and to be able to live their lives how they want. Even Zoe, who is seriously ill, is a typical teenager in her willingness to break rules and her fierce loyalty to her friends. Telling stories of

life disruptions such as chronic illness not only helps make sense of those events by giving them shape, but also shows how such stories ‘mesh with a community of life stories’ (Riessman 2008, p. 10): these are not just personal stories, but universal ones.

From the perspective of empathy, this allows readers who may not have had much experience with disability or chronic illness to connect with these characters through what they have in common, and therefore come to understand more about how disability impacts on teenagers’ identities, for example due to physical constraints or discrimination. In the spirit of Parry and Doan (1994), I aimed to restore the stories that are censored by the presence of one dominant story which defines the (in this case, teenage) self. This restoration, they argue, encourages others to tell their own stories in their own words by reminding them that there is no ultimate external measure of how legitimate a story is, no matter how cultural stories show us that some stories are more legitimate than others (Parry & Doan 1994).

Through my characters I thus introduce the idea that a hero can be anyone, no matter what personal constraints they may face. I also legitimise a multiplicity of stories, including those of individuals who are often disregarded in fiction and in society, remaining voiceless or story-less. The depiction of characters with disability also introduces the importance of diversity and community action. Everyone in the story has their own gifts and all are important to the success of their quest, regardless of their disability or gender¹². Their power derives not from acting as individual heroes, but from working together, which they do well, despite their differences and disabilities. Ultimately they will not succeed if they do not. This does not apply only to the five protagonists, but all their friends as well. Without bringing the broader local community of disabled young people to Parramatta, the protagonists are unable to enter Darvel’s building to rescue Brigid and find Kalia. In this regard my narrative is ‘strategic, functional and purposeful’, encouraging political mobilisation and fostering belonging whilst revealing ‘the flow of power in the wider world’ (Riessman 2008, p. 8).

Such an approach stands in direct contrast to contemporary storytelling’s emphasis on lone heroes and competitive acts, discussed in Chapter 2. Yet offering this alternative, cooperative meta-narrative is important: as Andrews (2009, p. 193) notes, when we accept competition as the cultural norm, we see others as adversaries or open for exploitation, whereas if we care for

¹²The scope of this exegesis does not allow for discussion of feminist issues in relation to hero depictions. Suffice it to note that the arguments of Stephens & McCallum (1998), Zipes (1986), Warner (1996) and others were important in helping me ensure that all the female characters in my book are equally active protagonists whilst embracing their femininity, and that the question of beauty is included in the novel only as it relates to the physical presentation of the characters (of *both* genders) with Cystic Fibrosis.

others we not only feel that we are part of a community, but this connection enables us to care about all life and to take constructive action. Starhawk (1997, p. 12) offers a similar alternative cultural meta-narrative in *The Fifth Sacred Thing* and in her essays by arguing that choosing to cooperate with others, at the root of which is recognising their inherent value, creates dynamic relationships where conflicting needs can lead to creative solutions.

FINDING THE CHARACTERS' VOICES

The more we face and acknowledge the plurality of persons and perspectives in the postmodern world, the more we are brought up against the unfathomable mystery of the human imagination, the author of all stories (Parry & Doan 1994, p. 29).

From the outset I decided to tell the story by shifting between the points of view of all the main characters, for several reasons. From a writing perspective, first person point of view allows readers to 'dip into characters' thoughts', which can heighten dramatic intensity (Allott 1960, p. 193) whilst offering increased scope to connect with the characters. My central goal, however, was to do away with the cultural idea of dominant meta-narratives as Truths by using a multiplicity of voices. Examining the work of Starhawk and Tepper I concluded that from an eco-critical point of view it is important to show there are other ways of thinking about, framing, being and living in the world. In fact, Arran (2001), in a call for new stories about the Earth, argues strongly for the need to be polyphonic and to allow for continued questioning of single truths.

Looked at from another perspective, the Narrative Therapy technique of ensuring everyone has a voice in family sessions reveals that any story can be told from a multitude of perspectives, thus countering the idea that any one story is more legitimate and allowing those who are often silenced to create their own stories and meanings. This approach lets me give all my young and disabled protagonists a voice; a deliberately ethical stance. I note Clandinin and Connelly's (2000, p. 147) call to consider the purpose of a text in choosing voice¹³ and Cosgrove's (2006, p. 135) argument that since choice of tone and point of view can manipulate how a text is received, representation must be done ethically.

As Gergen (2004) notes, if stories are to encompass the multi-faceted nature of real experience, we must seek ways to ensure what she calls the mono-myth (and I call meta-narratives) doesn't dominate the process of creating stories. For vulnerable groups, this is a

¹³Whilst their point relates to writing up qualitative research, the same principle applies to fictional characters who represent those who would otherwise be silenced in our culture.

real risk, as Carney argues in her paper on the homogenisation of voice in mass media regarding Holocaust survivors. She concludes that it is critical to actively embrace and legitimise a multitude of stories because ‘including and legitimising different realities, viewpoints, and a greater variety of narratives influences- and alters- social discourse’, causing accepted dominant narratives about the way the world works to lose some of their power (Carney 2004, p. 216).

By weaving together not just my characters stories, but their voices, I am creating a ‘métissage’, as defined by Chambers et al. (2008): a single text that nevertheless retains a multiplicity of voices. Chambers et al. (2008, p. 142) argue that such an approach not only shows the multiplicity of experience, but highlights difference ‘without essentialising it or erasing it, while simultaneously locating points of affinity’. New connections are imagined through this process of bringing together. In their praxis example each thread is written by a separate individual, whilst with mine the voices are all imagined by the single author, but as a literary device it can potentially achieve the same outcome. However, for this to work it is important that the voices be completely distinct. The revision process required me to tone down these differences somewhat, since ‘teenspeak’ could also be interpreted as poor writing and bad grammar. However, I strove during the re-writing to ensure the essential differences remained, whilst working towards a consistent and professional writerly style. Much like an Action Research cycle, whereby knowledge grows from practice, then feeds into practice, I found that my knowledge of their voices grew from my praxis, then fed into my praxis. Revising the novel I focused specifically on consistency of voice since I had written later chapters with more confidence about my characters’ voices.

Ecos and ontology emerge through voice, in terms of what the characters value, and how they see themselves as being in the world. Taz and Brigid’s strong sense of social justice is apparent, as is Vivi’s courage and giving, loving nature. Taz will stand up to bullies, and Brigid has a fiery temper when she sees the mistreatment of others. Because of his sister, Gin has a strong focus on responsibility, always thinking about looking after others, and he wants to do the right thing by everyone, even if, like Darvel, they are not worthy of it. Each character has a particular way of being in the world, and this is generally reinforced by how others see them, but not always in a positive light. Shifting between the points of view of several characters allowed me to play with ideas about identity and labels in relation to their disabilities. The behaviours that arise from our sense of self can be misread. Brigid is seen by others as outgoing but impetuous and too talkative, whilst Gin is seen as chivalrous but at times pedantic in his assumption of leadership. Taz is seen as pig-headed because he won’t take his

illness into consideration, and Vivi is perceived at times as odd. Taking the reader inside their heads lets them see beyond the negative behaviours and understand why they act as they do.

Initially making the voices distinctive came down to language choice, style and in one case, tense, but as the multi-layered process of characterisation took me further inside their heads, other factors came into play, such as what they focused on in their interactions with the world, and their personal ontologies. Reflecting on how each character would think because of the influence of their families, disabilities and experiences helped me understand what was important to them.

Since Brigid is sensory defensive she finds the world over-stimulating, and I conveyed this through her hurried, overwhelming way of speaking and thinking as well as the deliberate use of the present tense. Her sections contain long blocks of stream-of-consciousness writing, because she cannot switch off the stream of words in her head. Others frequently observe that she talks a lot. She also regularly focuses on and reports dialogue because of her interest in people. Since her mother is a foster-carer she is aware of the world's injustices and carries a simmering anger; hence she swears a lot. For the same reason, she is very empathetic. We see her trying to put herself inside Taz's head. Finally she needs to *know* – she is not intimidated by authority and asks a lot of questions, refusing to take at face value anything that is presented to her. Despite this she can be impetuous and make snap judgments.

Gin is the opposite of Brigid: he thinks a lot before he forms an opinion and is more willing to give people a go. Consequently there is more reporting and less judgment in his sections. Since he spends a lot of time alone, he doesn't focus much on what people are saying, and reports minimal dialogue. Spending all his time in nature, he focuses on and frequently describes the natural world. Many observations about the environment come from Gin.

Taz is also observant about his surroundings, but focuses more on people, including their body language. His writing is very descriptive and he sees a lot, which foreshadows his growing awareness of energy later in the book. He also thinks about his observations, without jumping to instant conclusions: he is the one that works out that disability and fizzing are connected based on the incident with the young girl in the wheelchair. Taz also has a highly developed sense of humour, giving his descriptions of incidents a comedic aspect.

Vivi's observations are more intuitive. Her reporting is therefore not as descriptive as Taz's. She has an instinctive sense of what is going on, and therefore notices unusual occurrences more frequently. She accepts these readily, whilst the others are more resistant. Our sense of the sacred arises from Vivi's openness. At the same time, since she sees the world in black and

white, she is much clearer about Darvel's motives than Gin, who has reserved judgment. Vivi's sensory preference is auditory; she talks frequently about music and sounds. Finally, it is through Vivi that we learn the most about discrimination, because she doesn't understand why she is treated differently to others, for example through her question 'why doesn't Gin listen to me?'

USING EMOTION TO CREATE EMPATHY

What Zwicky argues, however, is that we need to recognize that imagination allows us to enter the experience of another without appropriation, ownership or reductiveness (Neilsen 2008, p. 95).

As I will discuss shortly, encouraging empathy in readers has important implications for re-storying the relationship of humans with the Earth. Successful characterisation can create resonance with readers, an empathic connection and emotional involvement which draws them into the story by bringing characters to life as real people, with motives, fears, difficulties and dreams. White argues that Bruner's (1986) idea of the landscape of consciousness (how characters interpret events) in texts is important if we are to reach an understanding of others, both in literature and in real life. In a similar vein, Keen notes that first person narration, which draws readers into characters' thinking and emotional states, supports 'character identification, contributing to empathetic experiences, opening readers' minds to others, changing attitudes and even predisposing readers to altruism' (cited in Cosgrove 2006, p. 140). Knight (2011, p. 61) attributes this to fiction's ability to explore 'a multiplicity of realities and divergent worldviews'.

Empathy is defined as identifying what others are thinking and feeling, then responding with an appropriate emotion (Baron-Cohen 2011, p. 16). Clearly, then, drawing readers into the emotional life of characters is critical. Sarbin notes that people will be moved by a story when it engages their emotions, leading to 'embodied imaginings that are integral to the reader's or listener's participation' (2004, p. 17), whilst Loffredo Roca argues that stories that reach closer to someone's core on a personal level are more likely to be 'sticky', by which she means memorable (2011, p. 273). The implication for the writer, Oatley argues, is that they must present 'emotionally significant events' and characters' actions and consequences in a way familiar enough for the reader to recognise and engage with them (2011, pp. 21 & 125). This suggests the need for characters whose emotional states are honest and realistic. Once stories create resonance, Daiute and Lightfoot (2004, p. 2) note, they become 'meaningful acts [which] have unintended, future consequences of socio-cultural significance that outdistance

their immediate relevance'. More explicitly, if readers are drawn into the inner lives of characters, they can begin to recognise that actions derive from intentions and values (Loffredo Roca 2011, p. 267; Oatley 2011, p. 95), an important awareness that moves emotional connection into the realm of behaviour change.

What emotional states might create reader resonance in 'Shifted'? One is courageousness: the protagonists keep striving even in the face of disabilities which increase the difficulty of achieving their goals, such as Taz's worsening infection and Brigid's tendency to be overwhelmed by her environment. Children's writer Jane Yolen (1981) argues that children will borrow courage from a story's protagonist, which can free them from fear of failing and from powerlessness, both important components in enabling agency. If 'Shifted' serves to create awareness of environmental issues, the next step is to have the courage to act. Children, and to a lesser extent, young adults, are in a position of inherent social powerlessness. Offering characters their own age who have agency, despite extreme difficulties, offers an alternative story where children like them can and do make a difference. The characters are all aware of, and emotionally affected by, their differences. Examples include Zoe's fear of dying, Taz's comments about food and Vivi's distress that Gin won't listen to her. At the same time they all, to differing extents, demand to be accepted for who they are, another courageous act and one which is central to the growing sense of self of teenage development.

Emotional resonance could also occur through the relationships between characters. Although Zoe dies early in the novel, we learn about her through the other characters, but importantly, we also learn about them. In his memories about the wattle babies we see a young Gin who is much more vulnerable than the near-adult of the story, and what we learn about his relationship with Zoe shows us their deep emotional connection. Gin sees aspects of her personality and behaviour that their parents don't, particularly her fear of dying. All the main protagonists tease each other frequently: Zoe teases Gin about being her slave, Brigid teases Gin about his size, Taz makes jokes about how much Brigid talks and they all joke about how quickly Vivi can move through the bush. This establishes a close connection between all of them, and such gentle teasing typifies teenage relationships. We also see their relationships becoming closer as they share stories, another common form of social bonding. When Brigid tells the story of Zoe and her theft from the school canteen, it helps Taz to understand how Brigid, like he, is missing their friend, and how close they were. Whilst we gain insight into each character's emotional state when it is their turn to speak, Brigid is particularly

empathetic, trying to place herself inside others' heads, thus modeling and maybe encouraging a greater empathic response.

Grief and death is a strong theme in the book; one which not only binds the characters together, but shows them at their most vulnerable and human. They are all suffering a loss, and for Taz, Zoe's death is a reminder of his own, potentially imminent mortality. Yet their grief brings them together, and bonds them, creating a point of connection:

And once we started sharing our memories of Zoe it felt like every story became a thread stretching between us, until we were all wrapped together in an invisible web ('Shifted', p. 45).

As Allott (1960, p. 185) notes, 'in the art of the novel the sense of infinity is communicated most poignantly when we are aware of the steady ticking-away of time 'by the clock''. Whilst public perception is that young adults think they are immortal, the rates of youth vehicle accidents and suicide suggest the death of friends would actually touch the lives of many young people. An overwhelming public response to the Four Corners television program on youth suicide, *There is no 3G in heaven* (aired 10/9/12) shows these concerns are highly impactful. Yolen (1981, p. 57) tells us stories are a map to the human psyche, a way of revealing truths common to all. This requires the writer to reveal some aspect of their own truth about what matters to them (Card 1990, p. 16; Le Guin 1989, p. 66) and certainly my own experiences of grief, including the death of a friend to anorexia nervosa, have fed into how I write these issues. As each character reflects on the impact of Zoe's death they exhibit a range of reactions, from being unable to talk about it to remembering the good times to getting angry at the thought that others might be moving on. Grief is also an environmental issue since climate change will lead to significant losses and personal sacrifices (Randall 2009, pp. 121 & 122) and like the death of a friend, there are certain stages that need to be experienced before acceptance is reached. Depicting grief can therefore resonate on a broader level too. Taz embodies this sort of personal sacrifice at the end of the novel, when he must leave his friends, probably forever, in order to remain well enough to work to save Sanctuary.

'Shifted' is layered with empathic resonance through the creation of multi-layered characters who openly express their thoughts and emotions, and who deal with broad human issues such as discrimination, grief and a longing to be themselves. In the next chapter I look at how I used the same approach to connect readers to the Earth.

CHAPTER FIVE – RE-STORYING III – DEPICTING THE EARTH

In this chapter I continue to focus on how my novel works to re-story Earth meta-narratives. I begin by arguing for the importance of empathy in relation to the Earth, and hence offer a justification of my representation of the Earth in 'Shifted'. One such depiction is via the character of Kalia, a Gaian archetype. I discuss why I chose to include such a character in my novel and how I imbued her with various aspects of nature Goddess mythology, using Sheri S. Tepper's character of Sophy in *Gibbon's Decline and Fall* as my model. I then move on to a discussion of how I depicted place as a character in the novel, firstly in terms of the natural world – named as Sanctuary in the book – and then in terms of the city. I consider the ways in which these depictions encourage a connection with the natural world and note that they fall within the mythic Magical Realist tradition. I also discuss how I aim to evoke a connection with place for readers through the relationship of the novel's characters with their environment. This section concludes with an argument for the importance of specificity of place in 'Shifted'.

WHY EMPATHY IS IMPORTANT IN RELATION TO THE EARTH

We initiate our children into an economic order based on exploitation of the natural life systems of the planet. To achieve this attitude we must first make our children unfeeling in their relation with the natural world. For children to live only in contact with concrete and steel and wires and wheels and machines and computers and plastics, to seldom experience any primordial reality or even to see the stars at night, is a soul deprivation that diminishes the deepest of their human experiences.

Thomas Berry

My novel offers a meta-narrative of empathy towards the Earth. This is a significant split from the Dominant Social Paradigm and a much needed one, since, as I have established in Chapter 1, modern culture creates a disconnection between humans and the natural environment; dominant meta-narratives of materialism, consumption and economic growth teach us to value the natural world as nothing more than a resource. The consequences can be significant. Writing about the Holocaust, Arne Johan Vetlesen argued that psychic numbing is the worst human crime because failure to feel the pain and humanity of others can lead to mass destruction (in Bai 2009, p. 135). Bai points out that the same impulse, that is, lack of feeling for the intrinsic worth of the other, results in ecocide because of our numb indifference to the destruction of the planet (Bai 2009, pp. 135-6). As I have argued previously, this enables the

natural world to be controlled and exploited. Only when a connection is restored to those that are suffering, whether human, animal or nature, will people care enough to act.

There is hope. Baron-Cohen (2012, pp. 183 & 186) optimistically argues that empathy can resolve interpersonal problems even on an international scale and is, he suggests, our most potent resource at this point in time. Research on re-storying in the workplace has found that values such as compassion can be restored when those within that culture feel connected to a meaningful story or purpose (Driscoll & McKee 2007, p. 209). It would appear then that empathy is crucial to successful re-storying of our relationship with the Earth. Arguing for a 'culture of connection', Andrews (2009, p. 193) sums this up:

As people learn to care for each other, they can learn to care for the Earth. One reason people do not care about nature is that their very ability to care about anything and anyone has been stunted. When we revive the ability to care, we can reconnect with nature and the planet.

Such a restoration, or re-story-ation, can be achieved through fiction. Oatley (2011, p. 115) notes that when reading fiction 'we engage with issues because they are emotionally important to us' and Eisner (2008, p. 11) points out that art, by showing us our 'interior landscape' of emotions, can restore awareness of our humanity. The rest of this chapter discusses how I aimed to create this connection with the Earth throughout 'Shifted'.

REPRESENTING EARTH – KALIA

This Earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am, how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know: we are stunned by this beauty, and I do not forget: what she is to me, what I am to her (Griffin, cited in Kidd 1996, p. 158).

To encourage connection and empathy with the Earth, I created the character of Kalia and to a lesser extent Morrigan and Zorya. Kalia is intended as a Gaian character, an archetypal Earth goddess and possibly an anthropomorphisation of the Earth, although that is never made overt. On the surface, she is a teenage girl with an abusive past. She has been fostered with Brigid and her mother following a court case which determined that her step-father, successful businessman Darvel, cannot make contact with her as he poses a threat to her well-being. The impetus for the protagonists' journey into Sanctuary occurs when Darvel attempts to kidnap Kalia. Over the course of the novel it is revealed that during her childhood Darvel conducted

medical experiments on her and by novel's end it is apparent Kalia is far more than a typical teenager: the greening of Parramatta and Darvel's personal living quarters is due to her.

WHY AN EARTH GODDESS?

The Goddess gradually retreated into the depths of forests or onto mountaintops, where she remains to this day in beliefs and fairy stories. Human alienation from the vital roots of Earthly life ensued, the results of which are clear in our contemporary society. But the cycles never stop turning, and now we find the Goddess re-emerging from the forests and mountains, bringing us hope for the future, returning us to our most ancient human roots (Gimbutas 1989, p. 321).

In creating Kalia my aim was to develop a character who, as an embodiment of the natural world, would offer a connection between readers and the Earth. The use of the term Gaia (as per James Lovelock) in the subtitle of the book flags for readers that it is an ecologically-themed novel. However, there were two potential arguments against using Gaian imagery: Murphy suggests such an approach can lead to sex-role stereotyping and argues that anthropomorphising the Earth can potentially emphasise rather than decrease its other-ness (1995, p. 110). I will address each of these in turn.

Whilst Murphy (1995) notes that 'Earth Mother' imagery can encourage people to see the Earth as sacred, he also sees it as problematical in that it reflects sex-role stereotypes and encourages hierarchal differentiation. Betty Roszak (1995) expresses concern that an emphasis on Earth as goddess disconnects males from it and places undue responsibility on females to save the planet. Murphy (1995) suggests a compromise: to present the Earth in a gender-neutral way that recognises the reciprocity and interdependence of humans and the natural environment. However, I take contention with this position because depicting the Earth as female is not essentially problematical in itself; it is the cultural overlays which not only equate 'female' with the natural world, but also define both as *inferior* rather than simply another way of being, that create a problem (Gaard 1993; Mies & Shiva 1993; Starhawk 1997). Murphy's position seems to suggest feminisation of the Earth demotes it. To remove gender from the equation reinforces the idea that female – equated with nature – is essentially wrong.

By offering readers a strong, empowered female Earth goddess in 'Shifted' I am working to remove hierarchy from the equation: that is, the dissonance between expected stereotype and actual depiction might encourage readers to re-imagine the Earth *and* their view of young women. Active and powerful female protagonists are in short supply in the stories of Western

cultures. Feminist theorists who trace the history of Goddess mythology argue that original Earth Goddesses were powerful and revered, but over time cultural re-tellings (re-storyings) transformed the Goddess in a way that increasingly led to her demotion and loss of power (Boyer 2000; Gimbutas 1989; Kidd 1996; Lerner 1986)¹⁴. My depiction of Kalia as a young woman of increasingly apparent power is thus an attempt to re-story our modern understanding of what a Goddess is, and to re-store power to her.

In Narrative Therapy, re-storying is not about inventing completely new stories, but about finding the affirming aspects of existing stories, bringing them to light and giving them strength to stand in the public arena. It is thus not necessary to completely reject familiar tropes such as a female personified Gaia; it is necessary to change the underpinning implications which may be problematical. I would also argue that by creating connections between Kalia, despite her other-ness, and the humans who inhabit my novel, I am working in the opposite direction to Murphy's (1995) idea that the use of anthropomorphisation in depictions of the natural world serves to further separate it from humans.

Lerner (1986, p. 159) specifically notes that the cultural demotion from anthropomorphic, visible Earth Goddesses to an unseen, gender-ambiguous Holy Spirit reflected changes in the way gender was viewed in these cultures. According to Murdock (1996, p. 135) such changes also led to a demotion in the status of women. Starhawk (1997, p. 217) concludes that this shift contributed to the ability to exploit the Earth. Hence I use anthropomorphisation as a way of restory-ing agency to the Earth, consciously taking a position which stands directly against the Dominant Social Paradigm, with its emphasis on the Earth as an inert machine.

At times in 'Shifted' (during her childhood and during her capture) Kalia's body is controlled by her step-father, a deliberate metaphor for the way the natural environment is exploited by economic interests. Extending this, ultimately Kalia does *not* need rescuing- she is powerful enough not only to free herself but to transform the city environment completely, if only briefly. This is a return to depictions of the Goddess in early cultures as a source of abundance and creativity (Lerner 1986; Murdock 1990) but also as a being who is active and powerful (Kidd 1996): it is a reclaiming of early Goddesses. Much as particular words, such as queer, have been reclaimed culturally through political movements, creating images of Earth Goddesses who are not only nurturing mothers but have inherent power and agency can be part of a greater re-storying process.

¹⁴ Lerner (1996) and Kidd (1996) both link this process to the increasing cultural subordination of women so to argue for the reverse is a feminist stance.

CREATING AN EARTH GODDESS

The progressive secularization of modern man has altered the content of his spiritual life, but not broken the mould of his imagination; a huge residue of mythology lingers in the zones that have escaped fragmentation (Mircea Eliade, cited in Boyer 2000, pp. 4-5).

Eco-feminists favour the idea that all life is sacred and see this as key to re-storying our relationship to the Earth. Whilst Starhawk's book demonstrates how one can live a sacred life alongside nature, in my novel my aim is to connect readers to the natural world by connecting them with Kalia as Gaia, an embodiment of the natural world. In her exquisite attribution of Goddess stature to the character of Sophy in *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, Sheri Tepper offers writerly techniques to guide me in this process.

Sophy is a metaphorical depiction of an idea, in this case Wisdom, and she is an elusive, haunting, ever-changing mystery. In the novel she plays a crucial role in enabling her friends, the Decline and Fall Club, to prevent the complete world-wide domination of women by a mysterious figure called Webster. From the beginning Tepper's phrases and ideas imply a hidden, undefined wonder, whilst also linking Sophy with the natural world. Although she is not physically present for most of the book Sophy holds significant agency. Goddess-like, she is not to be commanded: she may or may not help when called upon because 'Wisdom's face is always veiled' (Tepper 1997, p. 431). The sense of mystery is heightened by Tepper's use of lyrical, evocative, even slightly archaic language and prophecy to allude to a more mythic reality. For example, Sophy's voice takes on 'an inhuman hardness coupled with an all-too-human desperation, as though two people... two creatures spoke at once... a ringing adamant, weighty as fate itself' (Tepper 1997, p. 18). When Sophy claims victory at the end of the novel, the ineffable is expressed:

There were aureoles of light, enormous voices calling greetings across an eternity of time, a crying of choirs aloft, a name! A name cried out by every voice in the universe, by every creature who had a voice to cry (Tepper 1997, p. 452).

Allusions to temporal fluidity add to Sophy's Goddess stature. She is connected with previous generations through the wisdom of her peoples' stories. Discussion around Sophy's death hints at an eternal aspect to her being; this is reinforced when her friends meet her sister and enter a moment of 'timeless enchantment' (Tepper 1997, p. 411). Throughout the book the mystery of Sophy expands to become linked more explicitly with Goddess imagery and ideas. She is first linked with an angel, creating 'a shattering glory' (Tepper 1997, p. 157) and later with the Goddess of her people, Sovanuan, when both are described as beautiful as the dawn.

Tepper frequently uses the imagery of nature in relation to Sophy, particularly powerful natural forces and animals. The natural world becomes something greater than it is in her presence. She is not merely beautiful, but terrible as well. She is said to sustain life, like blood itself. What she sets into motion has a 'nature' aspect to it, for example an army of old women are described as:

drifting together like tattered leaves blown by an autumn wind, swirling, casually turning, joining into larger drifts that went spiraling down streets and alleys to join others already there (Tepper 1997, p. 381).

Sophy's enemies are worthy of a goddess. Like Sophy, Jagger is a personification of an ontological perspective, in this case a Cartesian world view. He treats others as machines, objectifying even his children, and the imagery around him is cold, dead and sterile. His mysterious master Webster is linked with imagery of oppression, the primordial and hell. He is a figure of illusion rather than mystery. Domination and harm characterise his interaction with others: he is described as an unembodied hunger and is said to tear the Earth with his laughter.

Sophy's life mission is described to teach other women (referred to as her disciples) to track by their own star, the path of the Goddess. In fact, when her friends encounter the Goddess at the end of the book, the description of her as someone mysterious, who shares with and includes all women, does away with formalities and has found hard won wisdom, could equally be a description of Sophy as shown throughout the book. In the end, when Webster is about to achieve a terrible victory against womankind, Sophy comes to them as and with the Goddess, claiming victory against dominion.

Using Tepper's Goddess as a model, in 'Shifted' I introduce a triple Goddess. Morrigan and Zorya sit alongside Kalia as Earth Goddesses, so much of what follows applies to all of them, or to the collective representation that they offer. Triple Goddesses are evident in the mythologies of various cultures, often as Maiden, Mother and Crone, and represent the different forces found in the universe; forces, Gimbutas (1989) tells us, of creation, preservation and destruction. Murdock (1990) details the different roles the Goddess is seen to hold, noting that as preserver she shows compassion, protects the vulnerable and creates community, all roles I have ascribed to Kalia or Zorya. Morrigan fits Murdock's (1990) description of the Grandmother role, offering insight, wisdom, and help with difficult transitions. Yet these characters have darker sides: Morrigan is dispassionate in responding to the protagonists' failure to trust her, and Kalia has a deep source of power. Even Zorya, who is

largely depicted as nurturing mother, has an underlying fierceness and directness in the way she deals with Darvel's men ('Shifted', p. 119). But these are not extremely dark qualities. Lerner (1986) argues that later depictions of Goddesses focused on their nurturing qualities rather than their warrior aspects, painting them as less dualistic, with less of a shadow side. I admit to doing this in my own book, which could be regarded as drawing a 'toothless' Goddess. However, this has been a conscious choice: I have deliberately chosen to avoid describing Kalia or Morrigan as a warrior despite early depictions of Goddesses incorporating this because of the over-emphasis on armed conflict or violence as the *only* solution in much of Western story-telling and Earth meta-narratives in particular, as outlined in Chapter 2. There are other, less destructive ways to resolve conflict, as Starhawk depicts in *The Fifth Sacred Thing* when the Bay people speak on behalf of the dead to the invading soldiers, or when the bag ladies in Tepper's *Gibbon's Decline and Fall* practice civil disobedience. Noting Murdock's argument that our culture has a dearth of 'heroine's journeys', I incorporate and place value and emphasis instead on what she notes are frequently devalued 'female' traits of partnership and cooperation, creativity, healing and emotions (1990, p. 10).

There is an intense storm in 'Shifted' but rather than offering a 'vengeful Gaia' meta-narrative whereby the storm represents revenge on human behaviour it is ascribed to Kalia, as the Earth, becoming overloaded with toxins. During the storm Gin comes to realise the extent of Kalia's connection with her Earth, observing that every time she loses physical contact with the ground her condition worsens. At the novel's end Kalia calls for balance, not revenge; my readings of Goddess spirituality suggest that a Goddess who embraces creation and destruction will not privilege one over the other.

This final scene of the novel shows that Kalia is decidedly not without agency: she doesn't fall into the 'Earth as victim' meta-narrative. Yet she is the only character I render voiceless in terms of not narrating any chapter. The intention behind this is to create a sense of mystery about her, rather than to rob her of voice. She embodies Murphy's (1995) argument that beings without language, including the Earth, are not merely passive, silent objects of attention; that is, the absence of language does not equate with the absence of agency. Murphy (1995) calls for a recognition of the interdependence of all living things, and therefore a recognition that they are not 'other' but 'another'. The other characters see Kalia as different: they know little about her past. She stands out physically and through her knowledge of what is going on. She is 'other' to them for these reasons, but at the same time she is 'another' of them in that she too has a disability (seizures) and is experiencing the same plight. Vivi and Brigid in particular develop strong bonds with her.

Kalia's Goddess nature is apparent through several plot points. The first is when they discover the hut in the middle of Sanctuary, during the storm. The characters literally enter a dark, foul place and this scene is a turning point for all of them: Gin accepts Kalia's Goddess nature, Taz realises his feelings for Brigid, Vivi starts to embrace her wildness and Brigid recognises the calmness Sanctuary is instilling within her. This is an allusion to the dark moments in the heroine's journey, when those who follow the Goddess enter the dark places and are transformed (Kidd 1996, p. 108; Murdock 1990).

The final chapter of the book is the most revealing of Kalia's Goddess nature. At the moment of her rescue it becomes apparent not only that she does not need rescuing, but that her power brought about the greening of the city of Parramatta. The inspiration for this scene is the range of Goddess stories such as the Navaho myth of Changing Woman, the Lady of Plants and Sea, who 'creates beauty where she goes' (Murdock 1990). The entire city becomes laden with flowering and fruiting plants; the buildings are engulfed in greenery. When the protagonists finally reach the place where Kalia has been held captive, they are able to follow her path through the apartment and up to the roof by the flourishing growth that springs up in front of them, growing not from soil but from cement and carpet.

As with Tepper's work, the final technique I use to endow Kalia, along with Morrigan and Zorya, with a Goddess nature is imagery and symbolism. Kalia has an owl tattoo on her wrist, a traditional symbol of the Goddess (Gimbutas 1989). We first see her through Zoe's eyes, during an out of body vision during the Shift. Here she is a being of unreal beauty and intense energy, who speaks of the difficulties of embodiment, an early clue to her Goddess nature. When the others meet her, her outstanding feature is holographic hair, which keeps shifting in colour. Kalia's differences are difficult to pin down. We learn from Vivi that she's more 'in' the music, while Taz sees her giving out golden light, and Gin realises she draws energy from the Earth, an allusion to Kidd's (1996, p. 218) notion of female spirituality as 'belonging to the fabric of the Earth'. Finally, like Sophy in Tepper's work, a spiritual dimension is added through prophecy. Vivi and Gin have a recurring sense that something is coming, but it is Kalia who puts it into words when she appears to Zoe:

"Listen," she said. "Everything's going to change now. Everyone's going to have to do things differently. You're going to bring some people together, and they're going to make a difference. It's going to be pretty hard for them, but the chances are running out." ('Shifted', p. 20).

PLACE AS CHARACTER – SANCTUARY

The second way in which I have brought Earth to life in the novel is through the depiction of the natural world as Sanctuary, a place with a distinct identity, including possibly some fantastical qualities. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, time runs differently there, and Sanctuary's sacred aspect gradually brings about changes in the central characters. The borders of Sanctuary are clearly delineated: when the group steps out of the bush through which they have been travelling, they feel instantly that they have left its realm. This is particularly noticeable through Brigid, whose thinking and speech calm down almost instantly when she enters Sanctuary, only to speed up when she returns to the urban world, and for Taz, whose chest infection is only apparent, and progressing, when he leaves the safety of Sanctuary. These physical markers of the crossing of borders show the clear contrast between the urban and natural landscapes.

Depicting a world that is co-present with our own, but which has fantastical qualities, is very much within the mythic realist tradition as defined by Wilson (1995), a tradition elucidated further by Delbaere-Grant (1995, p. 253) as writing where the landscape is alive and active and where there is a deep connection between place and character. It is not a parallel world as found in fantasy – Swinfen's (1984, pp. 44 & 74) dreamlike place which can be a reflection of internal states – but it does have two of the features she defines as typical: time displacement, whereby time runs differently, and the creation of a place where the marvelous can be acceptable (Swinfen 1984, p. 94). However, Faris (1995, p. 173) points out that these can be characteristics of place in Magic Realism too.

The importance of any alternative place, Faris (1995, p. 94) argues, is that if it awakes the reader's identification it can present different values and this is what I have aimed for by using vivid descriptions of its beauty and power to draw readers in. These descriptions are multi-sensory, aiming to create emotional resonance by transporting readers to a time or place where they connected with the natural world, as when Brigid tells about the first time she and Zoe found their secret place:

The whole place was dark and shaded, and smelled loamy and damp. The water wriggled its way down a wall of rock into a tear shaped pool surrounded by ferns. It was one of the quietest places I'd ever been in my life, so it became my favourite, straight away ('Shifted', p. 50).

Descriptions of flora and fauna are rendered as accurately as possible, and the characters' connections to the land, particularly Gin's, have grown from a living relationship with it. His descriptions and understandings are what bring it to life for us.

Sanctuary's sacred aspect is highlighted when the teenagers first meet Morrigan and she instructs them to wash their hands: the waters offer a kind of healing and benediction. It is a living place 'infused with moving energies' (Starhawk 1997, p. 9). Each of the characters begins to feel a sense of communion or even communication with the creatures or the Earth that surround them. Vivi is able to conjure birds with her song, Gin feels the Earth's pain, Brigid takes on the calming energies of place and Taz sees the connection and flow between everything. The animals that they encounter are not anthropomorphised to the point where they speak, but the characters increasingly feel that understanding could almost be possible, particularly in the scene of the bird conjuring.

Fiction writer David Malouf suggested that the mythology, history and culture of place create who we are (cited in Hodgins 1993, p. 74) and this is evident quite literally in the way that Sanctuary begins to transform all of the characters. Brigid's sensory defensiveness abates whilst in Sanctuary: she becomes calmer and more able to think clearly. Taz is not only physically well within its borders, but becomes able to see auras around living beings, first with the aid of Miles' glasses, and then without them. Since this ability is not legitimised in the real world, it may be occurring only in his head, offering a possible detour into psychic realism as defined by Delbaere-Garant (1995, p. 251) when a 'fissured' individual, in this case possibly because of illness, becomes more sensitive to invisible realities – but the presence of invisible realities, real or not, implies a certain mysticism. Gin's change is more subtle but there are hints that he is becoming larger in size, whilst Vivi becomes increasingly fey and able to tap into her natural intuitive wisdom. Kalia, of course, draws literal strength from the earth of Sanctuary. Darvel, on the other hand, seems to shrink when he enters the realm of Sanctuary. Importantly when the characters return to the city of Parramatta to rescue Kalia they are conscious that they carry a piece of Sanctuary with them and with it some of the changes that have been occurring, a Magic Realist theme:

Many Magic Realist fictions... carefully delineate sacred enclosures... and then allow these sacred spaces to leak their magical narrative waters over the rest of the text and the world it describes (Faris 1995, p. 174).

CONNECTING WITH PLACE THROUGH THE CHARACTERS

Before the characters in 'Shifted' change emotionally and physically through their contact with Sanctuary it becomes apparent that they are increasingly forming an emotional bond with it. Each of them connects predominantly via a specific sense: for Vivi it is through sound, for Gin it is through a physical connection with the Earth, for Brigid it is through smell and for Taz it is through vision. This is a further extension of my multi-sensorial depiction of place, offering readers a chance to connect with place via a range of sensual experiences, according to what resonates best for them.

Whilst this connection is mediated by the young people in the novel, this is not a bad thing: according to Oatley (2011, p. 30) in his examination of the psychology of fiction, we undertake a process of mental enactment when we connect with characters, having experiences and feelings that we wouldn't normally. As Taz and the others connect with the natural world, I am encouraging readers to connect with it *through* them. Emotional resonance is critical if readers are to try on other ideas and other ontologies, my aim throughout the novel.

Whilst my shifting awareness and emotions as a writer fueled the development of the different attitudes of my various characters towards the natural world, both for and against, in 'Shifted' I have not shown them adopting other life choices, such as living simply or reducing consumption; rather I have shown, through their growing connection with the natural world, a concomitant increased awareness of the impact of human behavior on the natural world. They begin to experience grief as they see the damage done to the Earth, even as they face their own personal difficulties because of grief and disability. The next novel would be the appropriate place to consider how their behavior changes as a result of this understanding.

A shift away from the Dominant Social Paradigm (Koger & Winter 2010) as a personal ontology first requires an awareness that that paradigm is impacting negatively on the Earth. The characters must first feel a connection to Sanctuary before they become concerned about the damage being done to it. My thinking draws on the ideas of humanistic geography, which considers that how people relate to place impacts on their environmental values, and that the arts, including literature, can impact on this by using story to connect people to their environment as home (Sakakibara 2008, n.p.). Louv (2009, pp. 206-7) tells us restoring such a connection is critical because in one generation children have moved from having direct, regular contact with nature through play to spending most of their time away from nature, yet

research suggests contact with nature is critical to healthy human development and psychological well-being¹⁵.

My characters' personal ontologies, or ways of being, shift as their connection with Sanctuary increases. Using the terms of Hamilton (2010), they move beyond independent self-construal, with its focus on personal goal achievement (a dominant meta-narrative in Western culture) to interdependent self-construal, which emphasises belonging, and taking on the concerns of others. They set aside their personal griefs and difficulties to come together in order to save Kalia and Brigid. In fact, they continue along this continuum towards meta-personal self-construal, or 'a sense of self inseparably connected to all living things or some wider notion of the Earth or cosmos' (Hamilton 2010, p. 153). Taz gives up everything he knows in order to help Kalia save Sanctuary, and Vivi considers doing the same. By showing this shift in my characters I am offering readers an example of a new way of relating to the environment:

independent self-construal is correlated with an egocentric form of environmental concern, that is, a concern for the effects of environmental decline on one's own welfare; interdependent self-construal is correlated with altruistic values, that is, concern for the effects of environmental quality on others; and meta-personal self-construal is associated with 'biospheric values', a concern for the whole natural environment and all living things (Hamilton 2010, p. 154).

Remembering my earlier examination of the work of Starhawk, it is important to show readers how this can lead people to act. The characters model potential responses to climate issues. Another response is the idea of resilience. Walker & Salt (2006) argue that resilience thinking is important when significant change occurs in systems, including human ones. Climate change will bring about significant changes and such resilience will become increasingly important in the coming years. Resilience thinking is demonstrated throughout the novel in the way that the characters move on from the technology issues and through their ability to deal with the changes in their perceptions.

¹⁵ While Louv's call is for a return to direct physical contact with nature, I am offering a fictional connection. This raises the spectre of the way in which our connection with nature is mediated by language, a debate which unfortunately is outside the scope of this exegesis.

SPECIFICITY OF PLACE

How we write and think about place then, has as much to do with our private politics, our views on human rights and our personal idea of the spiritual, as it has to do with any observation of the spiritual world (Brady 2002, p. 51).

'Shifted' is set in real locations: the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, Bateman's Bay on the coast of New South Wales and the city of Parramatta. This is a familiar landscape for the Australian reader, but one with international recognition since these are popular tourist destinations. Brady (2002, p. 50) suggests that for a writer it is important not only to name a place but also to connect with it. These are all places where I have spent a significant amount of time. My connection to them is deeply emotional: I love them for their beauty, but also for the experiences I had there, and I affirm Hodgins' (1993, pp. 77-78) argument that place can become hardwired into you, impacting on what and how you write.

The ontology of place is important. We can relate to our personal environment as backdrop or it can become part of who we are. Mest (2008, p. 53) argues that since the environmental movement fails to draw a connection between the environment and 'home', what can be achieved is limited. Environmentalism focuses on saving distant landscapes such as the Amazon, whilst eco-feminism shows us inhabited landscapes peopled by the vulnerable (Buell 2001, p. 37). However, there is a sense in which both approaches distance us from 'the environment' and environmental problems, since both frame them as something that happens in other places, or to other people¹⁶. When storytelling brings environmental issues back to the personal and the intimate, showing readers what is happening now, where we are, this is likely to have more impact because we care about that which we are most familiar with.

White (1971, p. 96) notes that myths lost their power once they were set loose from the historical locales and events that connected them with listeners' experiences and realities. At least in Magic Realism mythic events are still grounded in historical realities so that 'history is the weight that tethers the balloon of magic' (Faris 1995, p. 170). This suggests a way of blending the political and embodied life, or grand events and personal experience. It also offers reality coloured by possibility; the world as it is combined with the world as it could be. This blending requires specificity of place: we will only recognise that another possibility can apply to our reality if we first see the connection between the story and our reality.

¹⁶This, of course, depends on your perspective- cutting down the Amazon, and therefore removing 'the lungs of the planet' is NOT a local issue, but few take such a holistic view.

Mest (2008, p. 53) suggests transformation will occur only when we cultivate stories of Nature as *home* to encourage people to see their relationship with it differently. Mest (2008, p. 53) also points out that 'eco' derives from 'oikos', meaning the household dwelling or the dwelling of god; that is, a profoundly personal and even spiritual place that reminds us of our connections and relationships. He argues that reminders that the Earth is our home, in a personal, embodied way, can lead to what I would describe as an ontological shift; a move to 'profound participation in our perception and experience of the Earth and vice versa' (Mest 2008, p. 53). Taz, Brigid, Gin and Vivi connect intimately with Sanctuary, relying on it for their physical and emotional well-being. Yet Sanctuary is the Australian bush: it is our home. As their connection with it grows, so too might the reader's.

THE CITY IN 'SHIFTED'

I would briefly note the importance of the inclusion of the city of Parramatta in 'Shifted'. McClaren (2009, pp. 302-304) points out that in contemporary culture the majority of people live in urban settings and ignoring this in any call to reconnect with nature devalues the reality of peoples' lives, whilst simultaneously dismissing the opportunity to address environmental issues in the city. The consequence, he suggests, of focusing on 'the environment' as a large, abstract concept rather than connecting it to a personal sense of place, reduces the possibility for personal action (McClaren 2009, p. 305). Whilst still rare, there are increasing numbers of examples of environmental activities occurring even in inner city environments, such as roof gardens and carbon neutral office buildings. Parramatta is a real city located west of Sydney and thus serves as a familiar space for outer urban residents. By setting the final moments of the novel here the story is brought back to the personal landscape of many readers and consequently offers another point of connection between the environment and their own life. Offering a vision of a green city alive with growth, where the vehicles have come to a standstill and community action has brought about change also offers another example, as per Starhawk, of how a different reality could look. This is another Magical Realist trope: Stewart (1995, pp. 477-478) points out that Magical Realism can offer a meeting between the rational and controllable, and the irrational, since the city is often equated with the rational and taken as evidence of the ability of humans to achieve mastery over nature. Just as Kalia reclaims her agency from Darvel, the Earth reclaims agency in the face of the city's metaphorical mastery. But more, I offer another liminal space which grows out of the merging of the familiar city environment and the natural environment, a space where such environments can merge, if only briefly, to offer a vision of a different future.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

‘But to dwell ‘in the beyond’ is also... to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hitherside. In that sense, then, the intervening space ‘beyond’ becomes a space of intervention in the here and now.’

Homi Bhabha (2012, p. 33)

In my research question I endeavoured to bring together many knowns to create the new and unknown and as I did so, I found more and more that I was working across and between borders in many ways. My project was deliberately cross-disciplinary, combining my social work epistemology with the various arguments in the eco-critical disciplines. My research into environmental issues argued that Cartesian dualism and binary thinking pose a fundamental problem, calling instead for an ethos of balance and bringing together. My writing practice involved a hybrid process of conscious development and unconscious allowing. Finally, it was through the confluence of my creative practice, my research and my personal ethos that many of my research and writing ideas emerged from an integral space. What became apparent was that my personal Ecos and my research aims were confluent, revolving as they did around a shift from seeing the world as a conflictual either/or to a commitment to drawing together diverse elements to see what emerges.

Whilst drawing together all these threads, I became aware of Homi Bhabha’s theories about the Third Space and spatiality. I found these enabled me to make sense of the constant process of recombination and exploration that occurred throughout my project. This chapter therefore examines how these concepts informed my creative writing and research practice and ultimately helped me to conceptualise the answer to my research question. Remembering that my aim as a researcher was to investigate how I could re-story the relationship of humans with the Earth through fiction, I argue that the use of Third Space thinking impacted significantly on my ability to meet this challenge. I suggest that ‘extraordinary openness’ (Soja 2009, p. 50) and a willingness to allow for the intersection of the known and the unknown in both writing and research practice offered me entry into the Third Space, and hence to unexpected discoveries in terms of story and meaning, allowing me to convey challenging ideas in an engaging manner. Reflecting Soja’s (2009, p. 50) argument that Third Space is ‘a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings’, I note that concepts

of spatiality can be applied in different ways at different stages of arts-based research, and that they are particularly suited to a project with environmental themes.

I begin by examining the hybridity that grows out of the interplay of conceptual Spaces, firstly for an arts-based researcher, and secondly for a creative writer. I then consider what happens when writers as researchers engage in reflexive practice side by side with their creative practice. Such practice, which involves both critical and creative thinking, requires a constant process of negotiation between research issues and story aesthetics; the result can be a difficult meeting of different epistemological and ontological stances. I show that by adopting Lefebvre's concept of trialectics, these differences can be brought together in research and creative practice to render new understandings. Finally I consider fiction as Third Space, the ways in which writers invite readers to enter into this space, and the implications of this for re-storying our relationship to the Earth.

THIRD SPACE THINKING AND CULTURAL CHANGE

As my research developed, I came to see recurrent themes of liminality, borderlands and space, particularly in terms of the intersection of fields of 'eco' research and the need to create space for new stories. Eco-feminism calls for balance, a move away from binary thinking. This led me to consider the challenge that Murphy's (1995) argument about dialogics poses for the Narrative Therapy approach of deconstructing meta-narratives. Murphy argues that deconstruction alone creates a binary, and a victim position, because there is always a centre – the privileged meta-narrative – and a margin, the dissenting minority voice, both of which are fixed. He proposes instead recognising the complexity of each perspective and that the relationship between the two positions is a dynamic, 'constant dance of revisioning' which, being always in motion and development, leads understanding forward and creates paradigm shifts (Murphy 1995, p. 29). Similarly, Bamberg (2004, p. 365) notes that meta-narratives and counter-narratives, the components of this dance, are never fully formed in themselves, emerging through interaction, and as such have the potential to shift, and even shift rapidly, sitting as they do in a disputable space. He defines such a shift as 'microgenesis', when better understandings and new identities, including a shared cultural sense, emerge from interactive narrative space (Bamberg 2004, p. 368).

Both ideas offer a way of framing ecological issues that offers hope for change, but both fall short of a full solution, not being quite far enough away from binary thinking to resist the possibility that existing meta-narratives are too strong, or too invisible, for dissension and resistance. In fact, Bamberg (2004, p. 368) contends that new meanings are not necessarily

ones that did not exist previously, but simply ones that now emerge as relevant and hence are always at risk of being dismissed or absorbed by more powerful meta-narratives.

Whilst Bhabha's idea of 'cultural hybridity' begins with the idea that new representations and meanings grow from such a dance, by introducing the idea that such negotiation happens in-between and on the edges, he opens up a realm where anything becomes possible (Soja 2009, pp. 58 & 59). It is only through Third Space's true commitment to complexity, to creating a space entirely separate from centre and margin, no matter how fluid and interactive, and a space 'open to the recombinations and simultaneities of the real-and-imagined' (Soja 2009, p. 53) that possibility is truly opened up. Lefebvre describes this as a space that is truly open, where all things can be seen from every angle without privileging any (Soja 2009, p. 53).

There is a strong parallel between Third Space thinking and what theorists call for as a new mode of thinking about ecological issues. Both are about moving away from control and reduction to allowing for many meanings and ways of being. Watkins (2009, p. 221) argues that eco-therapeutic practice needs to open space to explore contradictions, question established modes of thinking and being, voice concerns and especially to wonder aloud if other stories are possible, to allow for new insights and practices to address ecological issues. This would suggest that the very process of adopting a Third Space approach is a contribution to a new ecological ontology, because, Watkins (2009, p. 222) suggests, consciously exploring cultural ideas embedded within our personal narratives will contribute to cultural activism. This fits with Soja's (2009, p. 56) idea that Third Space is a place:

where old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge. A Third space consciousness is the precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power.

Soja (2009, p. 57) concludes that radical openness is a critical precondition for this to succeed, an idea I repeatedly found in my own work. Whilst it could be suggested that moving Third Space thinking away from its original post-colonial focus de-politicises it, I would argue that creating space for new stories that offer an alternative vision of living and being in the world is a radically political stance, a point White continually returns to in his many writings on Narrative Therapy (for example, 1988). The challenge is to do this whilst retaining the power of engagement inherent in good storytelling.

My preliminary explorations therefore revealed that Third Space thinking was not only an effective way of conceptualising my writing practice, but potentially in guiding me in my challenge of re-storying ecological meta-narratives.

THIRD SPACE IN RESEARCH – ALLOWING SPACE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Arts-based research is an interplay of conceptual spaces. The researcher brings their personal epistemology, derived from life experience, to meet with the epistemology of other researchers and arts practitioners, a meeting which is framed by the chosen methodology. This combination feeds into, and is fed by, the arts practice. My methodological starting point for 'Shifted' was Narrative Inquiry, which considers how meaning is constructed through the stories we tell. Recognising that knowledge is negotiated within a community and that dominant cultural narratives direct us to decide what is true or meaningful (Freedman & Combs 1996, pp. 20 & 32), I chose in my research to move away from the centre, the dominant cultural narrative of the Earth as a machine, and to uncover the 'mass of intertextuality' (Parry & Doan 1994, p. 29) of other voices.

Kroll's (2010) exhortation to move into unknown areas using a fluid, free ranging approach led me to consciously cross discipline boundaries, whilst adopting the structured approach of Narrative Therapy as my 'travel guide'. Narrative Therapy specifically aims to open space for the creation of new stories. As McKenzie (2009, pp. 215 & 216) notes, bringing together different frames of reference and exploring the collision of ideologies through critical reflection is a precursor to imagining other possibilities because it creates a 'consciousness of the Borderlands'. In the Third Space created by this hybrid methodology I found a definite shape which moved my research forward, although the extensive range of ideas and theories I was reading did not always lend itself to a clear path ahead. I was reassured by the words of Springgay et al. (2008, p. 336) that 'difficult spaces of unknowing' are part of arts-based research. In fact, their findings reinforce the idea of radical openness as a path to discovery, noting that meaning comes through dissolving dichotomies between disciplines, through disruption and pulling things apart, and by asking the right questions and being open to what is discovered rather than by following a more linear process (Springgay et al. 2008, pp. 336 & 342). I found it particularly reassuring to note their conclusion that 'only time gives the understandings, threads and connections necessary for the coalescing of new ideas' (Springgay et al. 2008, p. 344).

This required radical openness not just to the process, but also to a 'multiplicity of perspectives' (Soja 2009, p. 50), a stepping into the Third Space where I could examine my research question by looking not only at eco-theorists, but also the creative exploration of ecological issues by fiction writers. My research began with an examination of the epistemological frames of eco-feminism and eco-psychology. Accepting the basic premise that

underpins both – the need to re-story our relationship with the Earth – as the focus of my exegetical research, I explored the many arguments put forward for how this should be done. At the same time I examined what meta-narratives currently exist in fiction about our relationship with the Earth, and what stories stand outside this centre. Specifically, I wanted to know how other writers have successfully undertaken a re-storying process.

As I moved between the conceptual spaces of psychologists, eco-feminists and writers, recognising the importance, in arts practice, of the words of Knudson & Suzuki (1992) that knowledge can derive equally from the intellect or the soaring imagination and therefore privileging neither, I caught glimpses of commonalities and possibilities. This openness to different ideas and understandings about ecological issues opened the door to flashes of insight, whereby I would suddenly see connections between concepts. A recurrent finding which concurred with my practice epistemology as a researcher in the field of social work was the importance of ontology. The values and beliefs that form your sense of how the world is ordered are important in directing your actions. If there is to be a change in how people act towards the Earth, it needs to begin with a psychological shift in how they see their place within it.

Gare (2001, n.p.) in a paper that calls for ‘a new polyphonic grand narrative’ to respond to the ecological crisis, says that stories can provide this shift and that therefore ‘it is of immense importance to uphold the ontological assumptions of stories’. I identified a difference between fiction that holds a message which may be more or less explicit, and fiction from which meaning emerges because of the ethos underpinning the story. Ontology is embedded through this value system, which impacts on all aspects of the storytelling. Specific values that emerged during my re-storying process were community and connection, stewardship and sacredness, and simply the recognition that there is another way of being. My next challenge was to build these into the story.

THIRD SPACE IN CREATIVE WRITING – ALLOWING SPACE FOR CREATIVITY

... if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination – the single vision (Virginia Woolf, cited in Allott 1960, p.236).

Writing fiction is a process whereby everything we know, think, and have experienced, coalesces and is transformed through the creative process. This creative coalescence fits well with Bhabha’s concept of Third Space, as fiction can cope with complexity and contradiction, doing away with binaries to look instead at blendings; not the ‘either/or’ duality which

frequently underpins Western epistemologies, but the 'both/and' outlined by Soja (2009, p. 50). However, it is not always an easy blending.

It was impossible to encapsulate the complexity of ideas, theories and beliefs I uncovered through my research and reflexive practice in an entirely conscious process. I went through dark periods where I felt that my skill as a writer was not up to the scope of the task. To progress the novel I decided to approach the developing story with the same 'extraordinary openness' (Soja 2009, p. 50) I had brought to my research, trusting to what Coleridge (1817) described as the 'esemplastic power' of the imagination, the process by which everything we have experienced is brought together into a coherent whole, in that Third Space where combinations and connections bring to life something that is greater than the parts. The conflict between political effectiveness and artistic excellence in arts-based research is acknowledged by Finley (2008, p. 72), citing Meyer & Moran; she notes that it takes shape 'in the tension between truthfulness and artistic integrity.' For me this tension was between deliberate eco-critical conceptualising and the demands of my imagination. I chose to privilege the aesthetic demands of creating a story, trusting that my research would feed into my practice, but ensuring that the creative practice followed its own impulses. This process proved fruitful.

Whilst I used specific devices in the story to consciously portray or suggest certain ideas or values, others emerged of their own accord, and I only became aware of them whilst reading the first draft. Coming in to the writing process I had specific ideas relating to the plot and world of my novel, and a basic sketch of the central characters, and I held the broad aim of re-storying humanity's relationship with the Earth, through the Ecos I had identified during my research. I incorporated Kalia, as a character who personified the Earth, and created a place, Sanctuary, that effectively served as a living character in the story. The final denouement of the plot required the coming together of a diverse community, and the central characters embodied a growing connectedness to the natural world.

I discovered that if I fully allowed the creative writing process, I could enter the de-limited space Oberg & Cranmer (2008) define as *temenos*, a space where if you are willing to explore without a pre-determined destination you can witness 'extraordinary events'. During moments of clarity I saw how the story should progress, or how a character would behave. Trying to forcibly define my characters at the start of the process was unsuccessful, but allowing my imagination to enter a creative Space, their voices and motives began to become clear to me. Likewise, when I wrote with a conscious intention to portray specific ecological or

ontological messages, the work read later as overly message-laden, whilst if I trusted that these would emerge in the open Space of my creativity, they did so in unexpected ways.

My writing practice thus involved a similar process of bringing together and emergence as did my research, in this case blending creative writing techniques with Ecos to create an eco-themed story. Creating a coherent story I needed to trust my own 'single vision', and my skill as a writer. This vision grew out of a significant amount of research, but the words of Barthes (1953, pp. 10 & 12) awakened me to my 'personal and secret mythology' and philosophy, the themes of my existence in terms of biography, biology, metaphor and memory, all of which notably impacted on my choice of imagery and delivery.

The revision process further allowed me to build on motifs that emerged from Ecos, and also to tone down moments that felt too much like 'message'. It gave me an opportunity to use conscious critical reflection to identify areas in my novel where I was, as Bamberg (2004, p. 363) puts it, complicit with dominant meta-narratives. Imagination can release story in the Third Space, but the chances are that meta-narratives, implicit in all aspects of our daily interactions and thinking, will re-emerge in this Space as well. Surprisingly, the main area where I had fallen prey to dominant meta-narratives was not in relation to ecological issues, but gender issues. Entering the Third Space of imagination will not, therefore, preclude the need for critical thinking and revision later in the writing process.

FICTION AS THIRD SPACE – REVEALING NEW POSSIBILITIES

I have noted that bringing openness to the research process allowed understanding to emerge, in terms of the discovery of the importance of Ecos, whilst trust in the writing process allowed story to emerge, replete with ontological underpinnings. It was not a simple linear process, with research feeding into practice; the interplay of both was more like an emerging fractal, with each feeding into the other. Unexpected meanings emerged in the recombinant moments when creativity and criticality met, a process which again led back to my understanding of Third Space. Finley (2008, p. 72) expresses this beautifully, stating that arts-based inquiry:

takes form in the hyphen between art and social science research. It creates a place where epistemological standpoints of artists and social science workers collide, coalesce, and restructure to originate something new and unique among research practices.

Finley (2008, p. 73) says arts-based research opens space for new cultural interpretations, meanings and transformations, and that the researcher's responsibility is to create entrances

to emotional, spiritual and ephemeral spaces. Similarly Banks (2008, p. 161) notes the way fiction enables openness to new interpretations. Writer-researchers do this through story, and Oatley (2011, p. 19) describes fiction as an invitation to a dream, a simulation of multiple realities that are found in 'the space-in-between' the world and the mind. In this space, he says, creativity occurs and culture grows, so that:

the reader's imagination can expand without coercion. It is in this space that the reader can take up and turn over the words of the writer. The experience of the book can become the reader's own (Oatley 2011, p. 55).

Stories take what we know and show it to us through different eyes. In a discussion of magical realism Faris (1995, p. 172) quotes HP Duerr's work *Dreamtime*:

perhaps you are aware that seeing takes place only if you smuggle yourself in between worlds, the worlds of ordinary people and that of the witches.

This idea elegantly highlights the thought that in the space that forms when two worlds intersect, which, in fiction are the real world and the world of the writer, we can really see something new, even if all that we see is that it is possible to see things differently. Fiction, then, functions as a Third Space. But a consideration of spatiality does not need to end there. Fiction, de Freitas (2008, p. 188) tells us, creates a space for speculation. By its very nature this is a space where narratives can be re-visioned, a critical step, Parry and Doan (1994) argue, for creating new frames of reference. Once such a space is made, it can show us new ways of conceiving of and perceiving reality, showing that other ways of thinking and being are possible. This moves beyond values to an embodied Ecos, or a new way of being in the world: an Earth-centred ontology. This is particularly effective when writers create characters that readers can resonate with. Bringing all this together, story can hold different cognitive frames within its borders; epistemological, ontological and resonant, whilst at the same time shaping something new. The idea of conceiving and perceiving reality in different ways brings to mind Lefebvre's concept of trialectics of spatiality, (Soja 2008, p. 53). I articulate this in figure 2 (below).

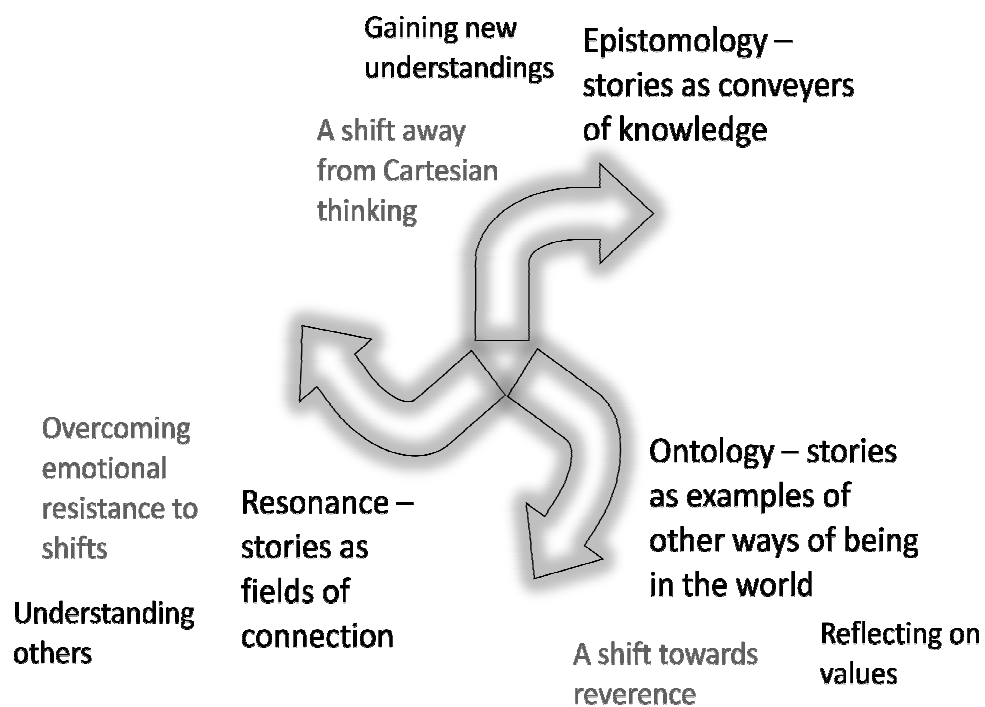


FIG. 2: THE TRIALECTIC OF STORIES.

HOW SPATIALITY INFORMED THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Having become aware that the constant dialogue between research practice and creative practice can lead to new understandings, I applied this trialectic of conceptual spaces in fiction to the range of research I had undertaken into ways in which environmental issues can be conceived and re-conceived. As I have noted previously, theorists identify an apparent binary between traditional environmentalism, with its emphasis on unpeopled landscapes and distant species that need saving, and eco-feminism, which points out the social injustice that environmental collapse creates for the vulnerable. The former takes an epistemological stance, primarily focusing on creating awareness of problems, whilst the latter calls for an ontological shift. Yet my research into eco-psychology and depth ecology identified the need for a third approach to ecological issues, since even broad understanding and deeply held values can fail to lead to action because of the paralysing effect of emotional reactions such as grief and fear.

This suggests the need to approach environmental issues from the same three cognitive spaces I identified as being found in fiction; epistemological, ontological and resonant, or the fields of knowledge, values and emotions. My research suggests it is important not only to conceive of a different way of ordering our knowledge of the natural world (a shift away from Cartesian

thinking) and of relating to it (a shift towards a degree of reverence), but also of overcoming emotional resistances to these shifts. Re-storying therefore needs to encompass this trialectic. Stories that encourage reflection and compassion can awaken and inspire readers to reflect on their values, to relate to others in new ways, to gain new understandings and, by offering shared visions, build community and bring about shifts (Driscoll & McKee 2007, p. 211). This is because:

People reflect on well told, meaningful stories that are told from the heart and soul. They resonate and stick with us. This, in turn, helps us with discernment, in making better decisions, more ethical decisions (Driscoll & McKee 2007, p. 211).

BEYOND RE-STORYING

Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says (Genette 1980, p. 198).

Conceiving of fiction as an invitation to the Third Space and noting that it can offer the trialectical thinking environmental issues need suggests stories can lead not only to a shift in thinking about ecological issues, but also to shifts in behaviour; that is, a move from a fictional ontology to a real world ontology is possible. If the arts are taken as an expression of what it is to be human, then it could be argued that by sharing art an alchemical communication can occur in the Third Space, when expression and receptivity meet. Hyde (2007, p. 199) argues that art embodies the spirit of any group (race, culture etc.), thereby linking one (the artist) to many, but also creating connections across communities and generations, going beyond the life of its maker to articulate and renew the spirit of the group. According to McKenzie et al. (2009, p. 9) this is because art encourages daydreaming, and, by offering 'new imaginaries', expresses hope that change is possible.

Art can certainly be an invitation to discover new possibilities, as long as the reader approaches it with a willingness to enter into a different reality; a state of radical openness. By laying themselves open to imagination, Oatley (2011) says readers can abstract themselves from immediate reality, gaining the 'ability to conceive alternatives and hence to evaluate. We gain the ability to think of futures and outcomes, skills of planning' (Oatley 2011, p. 30). McKenzie (2009, p. 220) notes that when stories create a sense of dissonance between the real and the imaginal world, which we have connected to through its characters, it can lead to critique of, resistance and even acting with intention in the real world.

I have argued that Soja's (2009, p. 57) radical openness is important in arts-based research and creative practice if new discoveries are to occur. But there is a sense in which such openness is may be problematical, because the meanings that emerge are fluid. Bamberg (2004, p. 354) points out that thinking in narrative terms does not always lead to coherence; it can also lead to fragmentation and the uncovering of discrepancies or the unknown.

Writers cannot guide readers to a definitive reading of our work so that they understand every message we hoped to convey. Yet in a sense this offers the freedom to continue to operate in a state of radical openness, because by taking the perspective that in narrative, no-one can know anything definitively but only interpret experience from their own perspective (Freedman & Combs 1996), the writer cannot solely conveying a single truth. In fact, McAdams (1993, p. 30) argues that giving birth to many meanings is the mark of a good story, and that although we can never be sure how our stories turn out, as a 'child' of our original meaning, it will be in its image; it will carry some kernel of what we hoped to convey. Speaking about metaphors, Kornberger (2006, p. 217) says that it is only when they 'breathe in the spaciousness of the imaginal world' that they gain life, noting that it is through imagination that stories gain many meanings and interpretations, and thus, importantly, many levels on which people can connect with them (Kornberger 2006, p. 257). Oatley (2011, p. 61) says 'fiction should have many meanings'. Perhaps it is this openness to a multiplicity of meanings that allows fiction to spark the imaginations of so many.

My research cannot consider the impact of my novel on readers, or of my exegetical theorising on other writers. But the ideas in this section offer hope that my novel and research begin something more, and certainly different, than I imagined.

When a story's finished, it's always less than your vision of it was before it was written. But it may also do more than you know you were doing, say more than you realised you were saying (Le Guin 2004, p. 229).

I should note before concluding that the key limitation of my project, given it is an intentional text, is the inability to predict what will happen with the book; whether it will ever be published and, if it is, how it will be received. However, as a writer, and especially as an unpublished, un-established novelist I have no influence over this. Nor do I think it should be my concern. Children's author Sofie Laguna (2012), in a workshop at a primary school, noted that she never thinks about the audience whilst she is writing her books. Although the idea of writing as a closed communication which is not, for the writer, open to response (Barthes 1967) no longer applies in our age of hyper-technology, that is not something the timeframe of

this project can encompass. However, whilst I cannot define nor envisage the impact of my work I have achieved what I set out to do, which is to create one example of re-storying.

To conclude I offer a final image that encapsulates the ideas of this artefact and exegesis. The artefact 'Shifted' is the performance of a juggler who uses spheres of light. The exegesis is a report on that performance. In the exegesis, the researcher's skills of observation and reflection come into play, as I describe what can be seen. The spheres of light are the specific devices, ideas, images and other mechanics of writing. Choosing the right spheres and keeping them moving and balanced in the air is the task of the creative writer. Yet it is the observer who notices the spheres' intersections, which occur because they are made of light. At these times new colours briefly appear before moving to new possibilities. Such collisions spark ideas and offer moments of clarity, creating an ever-shifting Third Space that is an entry point into new ways of seeing.

Ultimately perhaps the value of re-storying is not to be found in the content of the stories themselves, which can only ever offer suggestions and not prescriptions for new ways of being (Ecos), but in the way in which they open up dialogue away from what Narrative refers to as meta-narratives, and Bhabha (2012, p. 4) defines as 'fixed monolithic answers', making us aware of epistemological limits in order to enable the enunciation of other voices (Bhabha 2012, p. 6). Art that offers new stories at the borders of a culture show us how 'the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing*' (Bhabha 2012, p. 7).

Creative writers work in the Third Space, creating hybrid new realities from the collision of their 'singular vision', derived from knowledge and values, and their imagination. Out of this collision ideas and meaning can emerge, offering readers new knowledge and understandings, but also showing them that other ways of being-in-the-world are possible. As Bhabha notes, the new can offer 'an insurgent act of cultural translation' which 'renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present' (2012, p. 10). When writing is well crafted, creating emotional resonance, it invites others to enter a space of new possibilities and to begin a dialogue with what they discover. Narrative shapes culture: who we are and what we believe impacts on how we act upon the world. One way to bring about the profound cultural shifts required of our time may be to create stories that offer an alternative to the Dominant Social Paradigm. The trialectic of epistemology, ontology and resonance offers signposts to guide the creation of Earth-focused writing that engages, educates and shows new ways of being.

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Yaszek, L 2006, 'From Ladies' Home Journal to The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction: 1950s SF, the offbeat romance story, and the case of Alice Eleanor Jones', in J Larbalestier (ed.), *Daughters of Earth*, Wesleyan University Press, CT, pp. 76-96.

Yolen, J 1981, *Touch magic*, Philomel Books, New York.

Zamora, LP & Faris, WB (eds) 1995, *Magical realism: theory, history, community*, Duke University Press, Durham, UK.

Zipes, J 1986, *Don't Bet on the Prince*, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd., England.

Zipes, J 1992, *Breaking the magical spell – radical theories of folk and fairy tales*, Routledge, New York.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: EVIDENCE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE

All conditions pertaining to the clearance were properly met and a final report has been submitted. As noted in the body of the exegesis, the interviewing process was abandoned after one interview was completed due to the difficulty in obtaining subjects that met the criteria.

Ethics clearance number: 2010/ 231

Approval duration: 24/6/2010 – 24/6/2013

by SUHREC, Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee.

APPENDIX B: STORIES REVIEWED TO DECONSTRUCT THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANS AND NATURE

Avatar 2009 [DVD], Twentieth Century Fox, USA. Distributed in Australia by Roadshow Entertainment.

Brother Bear 2003 [DVD], Walt Disney Corporation, USA. Distributed in Australia by Roadshow Entertainment.

Burnett, FH 1911, *The Secret Garden*, this edition 1978, Purnell Books, Berkshire.

Carmody, I 1987, *Obernewtyn*, Penguin Books, Australia.

Collins, S 2010, *The Hunger Games*, Scholastic Childrens Books, UK.

Dr Seuss 1972, *The Lorax*, [television show], DePatie-Freleng Enterprises, viewed 23/10/10.

Lewis, CS 1951, *Prince Caspian*, this edition 1975, Penguin Books, Victoria.

Over the Hedge 2006 [DVD], Dreamworks, USA. Distributed in Australia by Roadshow Entertainment.

Pocahontas 1995 [DVD], Walt Disney Corporation, USA. Distributed in Australia by Roadshow Entertainment.

Tolkien, JRR 1954, *The Two Towers*, this edition 1977, The Folio Society, London.

Turner, E 1894, *Seven Little Australians*, Penguin, Australia.

Wall E, 2008 [DVD], Disney-Pixar, USA. Distributed in Australia by Roadshow Entertainment.

Westerfeld, S 2005, *Uglies*, Simon Pulse, New York.

Westerfeld, S 2005, *Pretties*, Simon Pulse, New York.

Westerfeld, S 2006, *Specials*, Simon Pulse, New York.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

<i>agency</i>	used here in its Narrative sense, agency recognises individuals' capacity to become the author of their life story and self.
<i>arts-based research</i>	a broad term encompassing all creative practice that is linked with research.
<i>deconstruction</i>	as used in Narrative Therapy, this refers to the process of asking specific questions to raise awareness of where the stories we live by come from and how they have shaped our understanding of self and of the world, and hence our thoughts and behaviours.
<i>Dominant Social Paradigm</i>	as defined by Koger and Winter (2010), this paradigm dominates Western thought. It defines nature as inert, and as something that can and should be controlled by men for economic gain.
<i>Earth</i>	in this context refers to the natural world, including the biosphere and all living things, not solely the planet.
<i>earth-centred ontology</i>	an <i>embodied</i> Ecos; an earth-centred value system that finds expression as a way of <i>being</i> in the world.
<i>Ecos</i>	a term Kaye (2013) uses to define an earth-as-home ethos aligned with biocentrism rather than anthropocentrism
<i>externalisation</i>	during Narrative Therapy the individual must separate from the problem to see how it is impacting on/ influencing them, and they it, and also to recognise the possibility for new stories.
<i>message</i>	content found within stories that conveys (implicitly or explicitly) certain understandings.
<i>meta-narratives</i>	socially agreed understandings which pervade cultural storytelling.
<i>Narrative therapy</i>	specific structured therapeutic approach created by Michael White and David Epston
<i>re-story</i>	in Narrative Therapy it is the outcome whereby personal/ cultural narratives are re-written to be more affirming of life and identity.

PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE PROJECT

Le Rossignol, R 2011 “‘You’re not going to magic away their disability are you?’: the ethics of magic and the ethics of realism’, *Ethical imaginations, writing worlds: refereed conference papers of the 16th conference of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs*, Southern Cross University, Byron Bay.

Le Rossignol, R 2012 ‘Emergent Eco-Narrative in the Thirdspace’, *Encounters: place/ situation/ context: refereed conference papers of the 17th conference of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs*, Deakin University, Geelong.
