

‘NAKED IN THE OPEN AIR ... THE WAVES ... INVITED HER’: ECO-CRITICISM AND THE PICTURE BOOK

JOHN MCKENZIE

School of Teacher Education, University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand
john.mckenzie@canterbury.ac.nz

ABSTRACT

It is an inconvenient truth that the state of the planet is likely to figure powerfully in both the real and the imagined lives of children, in whatever nation state children and young people are situated. Physical space as a literary trope, representing both outer and inner landscapes, has a long tradition in the telling of stories where the child listener/reader/viewer is often positioned to see nature in terms of binary oppositions. From the survival story – where the island is represented as personally malevolent – to the country garden – where nature is represented as a benign healer; from the wild forest of the folktale – where the wolf-man/rapist roams – to the benevolent beach where children play innocently, children ‘read’ contradictory ideas about the natural world in the word. This article unlocks some of these binary oppositions in children’s literature through an examination of a range of South African and New Zealand picture books, seeking to reveal how various ideologies are inscribed in the visual and verbal space of the picture book. The article asserts that, in the context of globalisation, teachers must be awakened to the opportunity of including eco-criticism in a critical literacy curriculum, developing thus an emancipatory politic.

KEYWORDS

eco-criticism, picture books, ecopedagogy, structuralism, education

1 NATURE: FRIEND, FOE OR ...?

The representation of nature in children’s and young people’s literature is a complex and contingent matter that speaks to a range of ideologies, beliefs and values, specific to different times and places. Despite the complexity, there is an imperative to enter the arena, as the question of how children are positioned to read the world in the word, and how they operationalise learnt concepts into action, may actually shape the nature of the world itself. This may well be an inconvenient truth. Eco-criticism¹ seeks to unlock

this transaction between reader and text, consequently making explicit the embedded positioning towards nature that texts suggest and, in the context of critical literacy as pedagogy, seek to empower readers to question, challenge and possibly resist such positioning.

Nature, the perception of nature and the relationship with nature is a contested and conflicted set of discourses. On the one hand, for example, the essence of nature has been seen to be, in the Romantic tradition, benevolent, morally good, and the source of ‘natural law’. This representation of benevolent nature, full of life and fecundity, draws upon the notion of a ‘collective unconscious’, a deeply felt spirituality that marks the child as essentially different from the adult. Born ‘trailing clouds of glory’, the child is nature’s priest. That vision lingers, until, because of the unnaturalness of society and civilisation, shades of the ‘prison house’ means that innocence fades ‘into the light of common day’ and true nature is thus corrupted by human nature.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature’s priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day
(William Wordsworth, ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early
Childhood’)

Thus, this binary opposition of nature versus civilisation² is deeply inscribed in Western consciousness, and, as to be expected, is a central literary trope found within children’s literature from Western sources. That is to say, nature (and the spirit within nature) is identified with the innocent child; human nature is othered as a construct of the adult

‘Man’, who, consumed by the daily necessities of living which is inimical to spirituality, is finally in opposition to nature itself. The child that alights on a small creature, holding it in his/her hands, emanating a sense of wonder and delight, is perceived by the adult in terms of a spectacle, an object of the gaze. There is joy in the remembrance of what once was and at the same time a degree of nostalgia of a time and space that has seemingly passed. Mortgages and money, clocks and ticking time, the pressure of living in a market place, have all shaped a different stance towards the world. Children’s literature that explores benevolent nature focalised through the eyes of a child is thus dialogic, speaking to two different audiences. On the one hand, it seemingly captures the joyfulness of the innocent child in a state of worship towards nature and speaks to that audience; on the other hand, it speaks to the nostalgic adult ‘if only life was like that’.

Thus, for example, Topzand’s fiction picture book *Lucky Pateke* (2006) describes the troubled life of the endangered brown teal duck or *pateke*, of which there are only 1 200 left, mainly on Great Barrier Island, New Zealand.³ The book tells us that it is endangered largely because of introduced species and cars, that is, human activity. The narrative tells of the latest arrival of a young duck, appropriately named ‘Lucky’, who, in searching for its lost brothers and sisters, itself gets lost and suddenly discovers that corrupted nature is a hostile place. But, in an act of almost religious worship, a young boy rescues Lucky Pateke and returns it to its home. The image in Figure 1 encapsulates the Romantic vision; the child as nature’s priest. Note how the illustrator has broken the focal line of the boy’s eyes-bird to eyes-ground, suggesting an act of worship.



Figure 1: *Lucky Pateke*

Similarly, in Daly’s *Yebo, Jamela!* (2001), it is the child who joyously preserves the Christmas chicken from the cooking pot (and the evil designs of Mrs Zibi) re-enacting the ‘child as saviour’ motif central to the Christmas story. In the midst of urban spaces

and the neighbour enjoying a braai, sunflowers burst forth, matching the colourful exuberance of Jamela's family (see Figure 2). What is remarkable here is the focus on a chook; a lowly bird, subject to human exploitation. But it is the meek who inherit the earth ...



Figure 2: *Yebo, Jamela!*

On the other hand, in evolutionary discourse, nature is read as a highly competitive and dangerous space where, red in tooth and claw, the fittest survive. Species come and species go, and this is the nature of things. When we watch the hungry lion attack the young, prancing gazelle, we do not make a moral judgment (though we might wince) but simply accept that this is nature as the Other. Nature, be it found in the malarial parasite, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or the marauding lion is doing what nature does; but, as humankind, we must do battle against this reading of nature to survive too. What is natural in nature is unnatural to human nature: civil society insists that the small and the weak such as children and the sick, are not only to survive, but to flourish. Children need to believe that this as a possibility. Civil society must negate the destructive imperatives of nature and nature is thus potentially demonised. McKenzie (2006:3) argues that nature imaged as the monstrous beast is a necessary part of a child's imaginary in that, though the idea of the wolf as a ferocious (wo)man-hunting beast is biologically and ecologically incorrect and therefore a stereotype, nevertheless:

we need to accept the absolute necessity of objectifying our fears, our dreams and our nightmares in story, and avoid the politically correct imperative to present children with an idealised world of saccharine sweetness, even (if not more so) for young children in early childhood. Young children need to recognise demons, to vicariously do battle with them, and in the archetypal world as found in the folktale, know that the villain gets his comeuppance. This is often represented as a violent act, and children know too that in the real world, violence exists within and without. Beastliness deserves to be beaten. There is an extraordinary psychological aptness in the etymology that to ‘beat’ is to thrash, to overcome, to survive, and to be a winner ... The problem is that given an ideology of the innocent child in a caring world, it is adults who struggle with the necessity of monsters.

For children to develop mental resilience, they need to believe that they can overcome the beast. In this conception nature is not priestly, but rather demonic, to be outsmarted, beaten. The binary opposition may now be read as civilisation/culture versus nature where humanity is valorised in the face of the ‘inhumanity’ of raw nature.



Figure 3: *Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China*

These images from Young’s *Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China* (1989), define the central conflict that a child must negotiate in confronting the world of nature in the word. Friend, foe or simply *is*? Thus, it is that collectively we are deeply embroiled in nature and ideas about nature. To a large extent, we define ourselves in the face of nature and, almost unavoidably, construct images of nature to serve our own ends, be they survival, be they ideological, be they within the imagination. Nature, in the imaginary of children’s literature, is not a simple existent; it also possesses and is

possessed. The question that must be asked is: what lenses on nature and society in children’s literature can be used that give insight and are useful?

2 SCOPING THE CONTOURS OF NATURE’S SPACE

How can we begin to construct a sense of the eco-critical ‘landscape’, to coin a phrase? Stephens (2006:40) identifies three perspectives that writers draw upon when representing the natural world:

The first of these continues to promote mastery over nature, whereby the natural world exists for the benefit of humanity and must be subordinated to its desires and needs. The second assumes or promotes an attitude of caring, wonder and understanding of the natural world, or an awareness of environmental issues. There is only a limited degree of embeddedness however, and humans are positioned as outside of nature and as the source of value and meaning. The third perspective draws upon a nature-associated position which has affinities with deep ecology: intrinsic value is ascribed to all living beings, and human beings are not attributed with any kind of privileged status. An ideal text of this kind might entirely efface a human presence, but in practice this is impossible, as eco-criticism concedes.

Stephens proceeds to ground the perspectives in terms of specific ideologies, as for example, by asserting that the first perspective is based on a Christian theology textually constructed on an interpretation of the story of Genesis whereby ‘mastery’ of nature is seemingly asserted.⁴ However, before a grand narrative can be asserted, one has to have a sense of detail of the specifics of the field. What are the contours that potentially represent the ‘landscape’ of nature and how are children generally positioned to read these contours and some of the specific entities within these contours?

It would be fair to say that wildness and the wilderness are *the* tropes that, in contemporary terms, signify nature. To get ‘back’ to nature is to put on one’s swandri, pack the scroggin, slap on the backpack and head off into the bush, a man alone⁵ against raging rivers, thick bush, ascending to frozen heights (ie, if you are a kiwi). The man alone may be a hunter, finding in the kill the pleasure of mastery, perhaps a psychological thrill that counterbalances felt powerlessness in civil society. The (wo)man alone could be a poet in search of the mountain top, engulfed in the metaphor of ascendancy, finding pleasure in an epiphany of the self harmonised with the vastness of space, writing poetry. The wild within finds an ‘objective correlative’⁶ in the wild without. Max in his wolfsuit.

However, in the nature of modern living, getting back to nature may also be seen in the urban renewal project where private spaces are constructed in the urban ‘jungle’. Running water fountains, private courtyards, window boxes and large rubber trees signifying the same spiritual/emotional journey; the need to find a centre of meaning. It is a curious anomaly that texts that focus on a beaver building a dam; a bee constructing a hive or a

bird settling into a nest is nature in action and is valorised; but the human being building a home is civilisation, outside of nature, almost unnatural in eco-critical texts (Buell 2005:138). This persistent opposition between humanity and nature is problematic in that all space on planet earth is shared. This article argues that the swimming pool is as much a natural space for its inhabitants as the beach in that humanity is part of nature, an intersecting set if you will. The rural child reader should not be in a more privileged position than the urban child reader in relationship to what might be described as being 'natural' within their respective space.

The representation of wildness seemingly in opposition to the city is delightfully deconstructed in Mennen and Daly's *Ashraf of Africa* (2002) where it is the book and the imagination that mediates difference. Ashraf lives in Africa, not the Africa of the wild and untamed lions, crocodiles and zebras, but the city of Cape Town that lies soaked in the African sun. This is the place that Ashraf loves. The illustrations show the wild and free spirit of a vibrant city where nature is writ large in the market place. At the height of the heat he goes to the library and there takes out his favourite book: a representation of Africa wild and untamed. Ashraf expresses the spirit of the poet where the text encapsulates that sense of awe and wonder found *both* in the city and the wilderness.

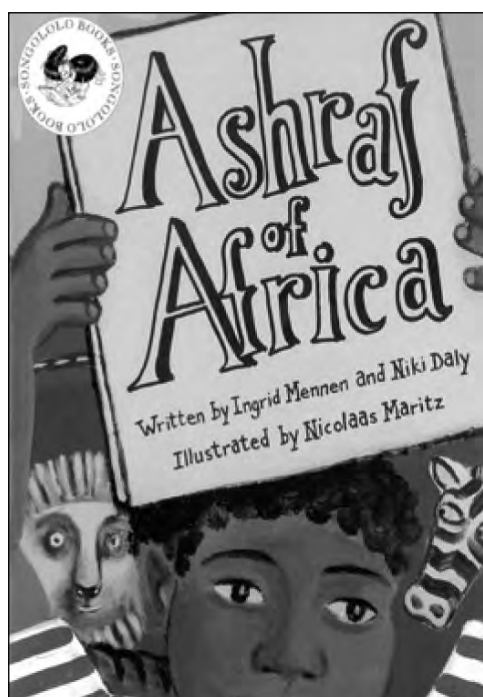


Figure 4: *Ashraf of Africa*

Contrast this approach with Isadora's *A South African Night* (1998) whereby the city is verbally and visually marked in contradiction to each other; Johannesburg is a place of safety where a child sleeps in a state of bliss and 450 kilometres away the Kruger National Park animals awake to prey upon the other. The city is othered in this text in relationship to nature.



Figure 5: *A South African Night*

Appendix 1 then indicates some of the complex and contradictory transactions that readers may engage in when experiencing the different contours of nature's spaces, be it in the wilderness (mountain, volcano, rocks, cave, desert, veld, sea, ice-shelf, island, forest, wild animals); the borderlands (river/stream, swamp, beach/coast, roads); domesticated 'rural' space (farms, domesticated animals, garden); or the town (the street, park, homes, mall, the factory, swimming pool, pets). What is self-evident in identifying specific entities within each space is that children are positioned to read different spaces in quite complex and contradictory ways, that there is no easy 'grand narrative' in the representation of nature and that anthropomorphism seems finally unavoidable.

For example, let us explore the contour of the entity beach (within the contour of the borderland) as found in Daly's *The Boy on the Beach* (1999). This is a delightful revelation of the pure pleasure that a beach inspires. The focalising character Joe is a young lad whose liveliness is absolutely writ large. With abounding enthusiasm, this lad knows no boundaries (class, ethnicity, age or whatever). The beach interrogates all social and cultural divisions to sublime nature and it is the wild child who, in the last double-page spread, is the Centre. The end papers reiterate the child/animal/nature connection as Joe reaches out to fly; desiring to be a bird. Nature here is seen as sublime.

In contrast, Tamehana's *The Sandman* (1997) is a strangely disturbing story. Marama lives by the sea (a contemporary setting) but is not an ordinary girl: she is deeply engaged with Maori spirituality. She creates a beautiful sandcastle such that all of nature

celebrates. But she is lonely and desires a companion. She constructs a Sandman and the gods favour her by bringing it to life. There is much joy in their companionship. However, the tide comes in, destroys the sandcastle and the Sandman too perishes. Distraught by her imminent loneliness, Tangaroa, the god of the sea, responds to Marama's distress and she is embraced by the elements forever. It is as if the Marama/Sandman relationship is a metaphor for the Mary/Christ-child, too good to be allowed to experience life. There is a subtle hint of suicide here as there is no return, just a variation on the 'sea as a space for suicide' trope, 'naked in the open air ... the waves ... invited her'. Nature as all-consuming.



Figure 6: *The Boy on the Beach*

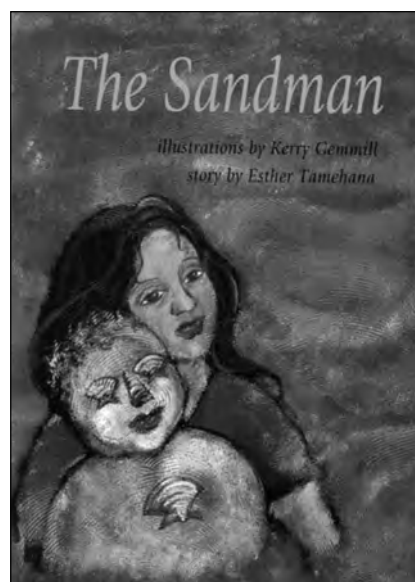


Figure 7: *The Sandman*

Thus, children are presented with a complex array of possible meanings when reading 'the sea' as an entity within the contour 'borderlands', contingent on period, culture, ideologies and national identity. Here are some critical questions that need to be considered then about specific spaces and what they signify:

- What are some key texts (as, eg, in New Zealand and South Africa) that represent the different relationships of nature and society in terms of the different contours as described?
- Can children read across the cultural/national boundaries of nature symbolism? In the globalised world of book publishing, how are national and cultural difference as well as sameness negotiated? Are there universal perspectives on nature?

- Whose voices are heard/marginalised/silenced in eco-critical picture books? Can eco-criticism be another space for unintended racism?
- To what extent is the complexity of eco-criticism (both in nature and in text) irresolvable in a post-colonial context?

3 REPRESENTING NATURE'S SPACES: TOWARDS A THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF ECO-CRITICISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The article proposes that an examination of a range of picture book texts reveals that there are eight possible eco-critical domains in which nature and society can be represented in children's literature. What needs to be noted is that eco-critical texts are texts that position readers to experience and consider aspects of nature and society that may, in the nature of responses of readers, evoke a praxis. Further, it needs to be noted that a single book may contain a mix of orientations as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Eight possible eco-critical domains

Orientation	Description
Pastoral/Utopian	An orientation to idealising nature, such as in the idyll, whereby nature is assumed to be benevolent, a reflection of God's space, a site of healing and harmony. An evocation to worship/the hymnal.
Historic	An orientation towards the representation of historical developments and traditional cultures whereby past stances towards nature are interrogated and/or valorised as a means to understand contemporary issues. An invitation for reflection.
Mimetic	An orientation to representing contemporary involvement with nature in a manner that assumes authenticity. Nature is represented as an existent where anthropomorphism is minimised. An invitation to consider the complexity within nature and issues related to contemporary relationships between nature and society.
Magical realism and allegory	An orientation to using magic to enter nature's space whereby humans and flora/fauna linguistically interact with each other as a means for Earth to be given a voice. An invitation for reflection as the secondary world speaks to the primary world.
Dystopian	An orientation to a pessimistic view of nature's inter-relationship with society whereby readers are positioned to read nature as deliberately malevolent. An evocation of fearfulness and disdain.

→

Orientation	Description
Apocalyptic	An orientation to prophecy whereby there is an expectation of calamity unless contemporary issues are not resolved in radical ways. A call to activism.
Fantasy and the futuristic	An orientation to representing nature in the context of other worlds beyond the earth and/or future time as a device to explicate contemporary issues/imperatives. An evocation of the use of the imagination to envisage new possibilities. A tendency to hope.
Comic	The representation of nature as a space of playfulness. It evokes a reader-response orientation to an enjoyable moment rather than a contemplation of broader issues.

The article proposes that Rosenblatt’s (1978) theory of reader response is a useful way into beginning to unlock the complexity of responding to the representations of nature. Rosenblatt speaks to two interactive stances that readers bring to negotiating a text. Firstly, there is the aesthetic ‘living through’ the experience of the text, where the heart is engaged as much as the head; secondly, there is the efferent stance, the readiness to ‘take away’ information from the text. Hence the use of the word ‘orientation’ above speaks to textual positioning that invites readers to engage in both stances. Additionally, the article proposes the possibility of a curriculum and the use of critical literacy as pedagogy in that readers are positioned also by the text to read nature in specific ways. That is to say, texts can assume a rhetorical stance with regard to the relationship of nature and society that can be best stated in terms of structural oppositions. The nature of the resolution of these oppositions may call upon different cultural/ideological views of nature that may be accepted, challenged or resisted. What needs to be noted is that conflict is not only essential to plot (Lukens 1999) but is also central to a curriculum. Representing the rhetoric of a text in terms of binary oppositions leads to the possibility of class discussions and debates and through this process, develops critical thinking.

Hence, the article proposes that a matrix of the eight eco-critical domains can be developed, each producing the possibility of different reader positions towards nature’s spaces and responses to nature as a concept. The matrix can be potentially applied to each of nature’s contours/entities as follows (see Appendix 2). What needs to be noted also is that, in the nature of complexity, these categories are not absolutes; that a singular book may call upon different orientations.

Table 2: Eco-critical domains in children’s literature

CONTOUR / ENTITY	Efferent / informational	Literary / Aesthetic	Rhetorical / Didactic
Pastoral/utopian			
Historic			
Mimetic/realism			

→

Magical realism and allegory			
Dystopian			
Apocalyptic			
Fantasy and the futuristic			
Comic			

For the purposes of brevity, a broad coverage of this matrix will be demonstrated with some salient picture book texts, mostly from New Zealand and South African sources, with potential readings described, the analysis demonstrating some of the binary oppositions that need to be negotiated.

3.1 THE PASTORAL

Holden's (1997) *The Peace Star* is a good exemplar of the pastoral tradition using the contour 'the garden'. The garden as a site of healing and harmony (McKenzie 2003) is explicated in the context of a South African township. The bilingual text can be read as a metaphor of what was at the time of publication, the newly emerging concept of the rainbow nation. Certainly there is a coming together of black and white as the 'child as nature's priest' is delineated. There is a very clear rhetorical positioning within the text as the organisation *ChildLine* is marketed as a space of healing, a replication of the garden. The binary oppositions benevolence versus malevolence; sentimentalism versus naturalism; innocence versus experience; and child versus the adult, are played out very clearly in this text. That is to say, the protagonists Philani and Rebecca live in an uncertain world where gunshots, cries and shouts disturb. The issue of violence in South Africa, human nature red in tooth and claw/naturalism, is the opening scene but is immediately juxtaposed verbally and visually with the sympathy Philani and Rebecca feel towards a delicate plant, bruised as they stood up (sentimentalism). They name the plant 'The Peace Star' and as it grows, everyone who sees the 'miracle' feels peace and happiness. Enter neighbour Siphoh who distances himself from such aestheticism (he carries a soccer ball), but when Philani sees him crying and hears of his family in a state of distress, Siphoh is offered safety. This begins a process of community transformation where even bullies are humbled before nature's restorative processes. Clearly, the text's rhetorical stance valorises nature as benevolent and positions the child reader sentimentally as an agent of restoring innocence and wholeness. To the extent that the text juxtaposes the personal story of transformation within the frame of social issues such as community violence, *The Peace Star* can be read as a utopian text.

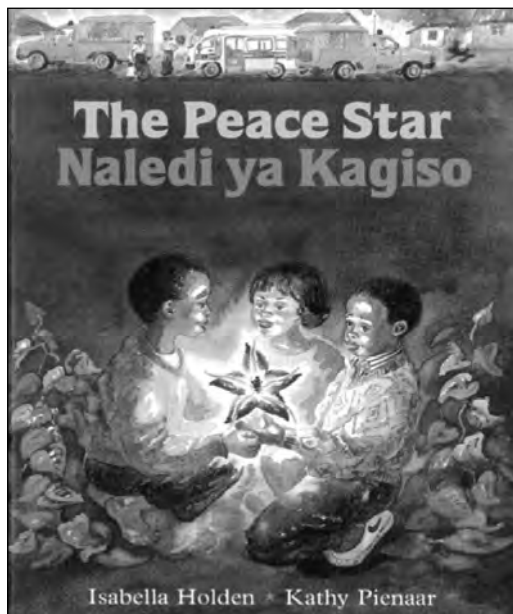


Figure 8: *The Peace Star*

3.2 THE HISTORIC/TRADITIONAL

Bishop's *The House That Jack Built* (1999) tells the story of the colonisation of Maori by the British using the nursery rhyme as a parallel intertext. The verbal rhyme is virtually reproduced without amendment (except for one important change) but the pictures tell quite another story (McKenzie 1999). Drawing upon Hogarth's visual representation of *The Rake's Progress*, Jack is represented as an iconic historical type: the colonial settler who leaves an overcrowded homeland in search of a better life.

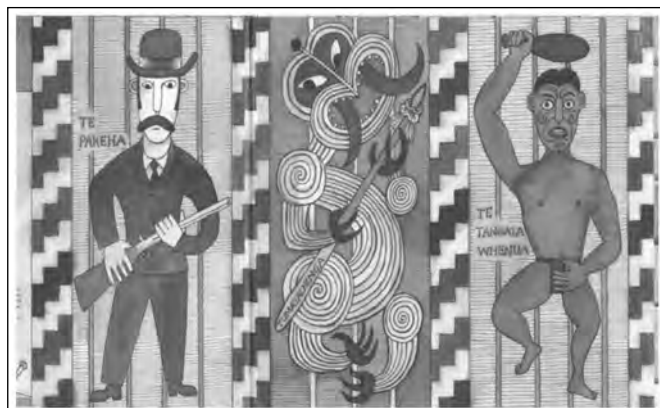


Figure 9: *The House That Jack Built*

Unfortunately, without self-reflection and through ignorance, old ways of thinking about nature are reproduced in the new environment such that the Maori’s sense of their embeddedness with the gods/nature/the world views are represented in the frame text which speaks of the Maori story of creation, a story that tells of *wairau*, the spirit within and without, the collective wholeness of all. The consequence of Westernisation (inclusive of an image of the early missionaries) introduces oppositions; matter versus the spirit, the individual versus the collective, subsistence versus trade and exploitation, nature’s fecundity versus humanity’s destructiveness. The rake’s progress is reproduced in the new land. It would be easy for the author as a leading Maori writer/illustrator to create an ‘us versus them’ rhetoric towards the colonial project, but Bishop is more honest and historically accurate. The pictures show Maori willingly engaged in trade, using the arrival of goods and services for their own ends. The coming of literacy and education as well as trade in new technologies brought new possibilities for Maori, though the insatiable nature of the colonial project (imaged in terms of capitalised farming, deforestation and urban population growth) inevitably brought conflict (the Maori European Land Wars, 1860s).

The peritext endpapers are the heart of the book’s rhetorical power. Readers are confronted by *tuku tuku* panels that speak of the challenge of the *haka*. The values of *Te pakeha* (the European) and *Te tangata whenua* (the people of the land) are at war with each other (an historic reality). Yet the challenge of the *haka*, drawing upon Maori spirituality, transcends time and speaks to the current. How are readers, both *tangata whenua* and *pakeha*, to collectively respond to the rhetorical issues as expressed in these oppositions in the present moment: spirituality versus materialism, being centred in the existent versus change and modernity, indigenous values of caring for the environment versus the imperial project/capitalism, heaven versus hell? The historical domain invites reflection of the present through the lenses of the past.

3.3 THE MIMETIC

The mimetic is, of its nature, a problematic domain in that anthropomorphism is extremely difficult to efface in the nature of stories that present the protagonist/antagonist dyad and the possibility of reader (eco)identification. We simply do not know how an animal/plant ‘thinks’; we project onto the (in)animate what would think if we were that object, the moment of anthropomorphism. Furthermore, language choice itself is implicated in projecting emotions such that the attempt to represent nature as simply an existent is difficult. But this is ‘essentially’ the aim of the mimetic; to tell it how it is. In this sense, the dystopian attitude of human society towards nature can be read as mimetic. This is *the* environmental crisis. However, when nature is read as having a malevolent intent towards society, we shift from the mimetic to dystopia. We could expect that the emphasis of the mimetic is on the individual animal (species) and/or plant in the context of ecology: the notion that interconnections between the animate and the (in)animate speak to interdependency. That interdependency involves the food chain; and

the food chain implies the necessity to kill. This is mimetic. However, when killing is described in ways that are not reflective of observed nature, then we are not speaking to the mimetic. Empiricism (and Western metaphysics) thus forms the basis of the mimetic and to an extent, situates this orientation in scientism, in this context a neutral term to describe the authority of natural science over all other discourses.⁷

In Aslund's *The Bean's Story* (2007) there is a delightful exposé of the counterpoint between nature as an existent (the mimetic) as opposed to nature anthropomorphised. Again based on the nursery rhyme 'The House that Jack Built', the cumulative rhyme tells of Jack planting a bean in the rich soil of the earth and the interdependence of the animate and inanimate to bring forth life. Rich language enhances the use of appliqué collage in the illustrations that together reinforce the idea that creativity is essential to nature. But there is a clever twist at the end. 'And this is the giant, grumpy and glum, who grinds old bones and growls, "Fee Fi Fo Fum!"' The anthropomorphic turn reminds us that children's literature itself is deeply implicated in how children read nature.⁸



Figure 10: *The Bean's Story*

3.4 MAGICAL REALISM AND THE ALLEGORICAL

Entering into the secondary world of nature as a participant in the manner of Dr Doolittle is at the heart of magical realism and the allegorical. This may be as a human character in nature's space; or it may be simply through the eyes of the narrator only. In Preller's *I am Simon* (2003) the book is a metafictional device for Simon to enter nature as a secondary world and engage with animals and in the process, learn something about himself as well as the animal world. The reader in the text is invited to share this

archetypal journey and, through sharing Simon’s perspective, respond aesthetically (in fear, laughter, awe and wonder) and efferently (contemplating the nature of difference between human and animal). This includes learning about what it is to be truly human; not better or worse but different. If children read that the human being is dominantly a colonist of nature, this text suggests that there may be another story.

Simon suddenly discovers that he is literally ‘in the picture’ when he reads about an elephant pushing over the mopani tree and reacts to the elephant’s challenge in terms of ‘who is the strongest of us all?’ trope. Simon obviously discovers his limitations and ‘turns the page’ (the metafictional gesture). From the duiker under the baobab tree, Simon learns that he is not the fastest; from the spider he learns that he is not the smartest; from the monkey hanging from the branch of a wild syringe tree he learns that he is not the nimblest, and so on. ‘Waking up’ in a state of distress, he learns from his parents that there are some things he can do which presumably animals cannot do: doing sums at school; building model aeroplanes; and helping Mum make pancakes. Most of all, he belongs to *his* parents ‘... and we LOVE you!’



Figure 11: *I am Simon*

The oppositions, personal optimism versus pessimism and nature versus society, have been resolved as a result of nature having been given a voice versus nature being silenced. In this text, there is an implication of deep ecology; the interdependency of all living things where humanity is simply a part, albeit at a personal level, an important

part. Readers are positioned in the magical realism/allegory domain to use the power of the imagination to enter into *this* Earth's space and react, for example with awe and wonder in a utopian orientation as in this text; or, fear and despair in a dystopian orientation; or, to see that there are new ways of seeing oneself relationally with nature in a mimetic orientated text.

3.5 THE DYSTOPIAN

The defining characteristic of the dystopian is the representation of anthropomorphised nature having a malevolent intent. In children's literature (and indeed society in general), this is nature as the monster, where ecological truths are silenced as the monstrous is writ large. Snakes, spiders, whales, wolves, hounds, eagles/vultures and bears have all suffered from a dystopian perspective. Similarly, the forest, the desert, swamplands and the island are contours that evoke dystopian representations and responses. Specific plants too can represent the dystopian as in permutations of the man-eating plant trope.

The dystopian is evident in Bacon's version of *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman* (1979: n.p.) which tells the story of the youngest 'abused' brother being lost in the bush, captured by a monstrous bird and

She looked at him to eat him, but when she pinched him to feel him, she found he was too little and too thin to eat. 'I shall keep him,' she said, 'until he is fat, then I shall eat him.'
So, she told Hatupatu he could stay with her to help her with the birds.

Resonating with the 'Hansel and Gretel' tale type of the distorted woman devouring the child (a femme fatale trope), this story demonstrates a reader positioning of nature as the barbaric Other to be tamed. And indeed, the bird woman is destroyed in the course of the story.

Thus it is that the dystopian nature story as a gendered discourse is ripe for deconstruction as the monstrous/demonic is frequently defined in terms of gender. It would be essentialist to simply see this as a Western patriarchal imperative as the monstrous animal is associated with both genders and across different cultures. Indeed the monstrous female bird in opposition to a boy; and the monstrous male wolf in opposition to the girl suggest more the possibilities of a Freudian/Jungian reading. Whatever, it is important that the dystopian is read grounded in the particular culture and period that produced the story. Contemporary readers will have to negotiate the oppositions: pessimism versus optimism in the face of nature; bio-phobia versus bio-philialia; and strength versus weakness (and the ethical implications towards nature) when confronted with life's challenges.



Figure 12: *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman*

3.6 THE APOCALYPTIC

It is the nature perhaps of children's literature that it orientates to hope/utopianism, such that extreme doomsday literature of planetary catastrophe is rare, but nevertheless there are some picture books with elements of the apocalyptic. When, for example, in Galbraith's *The Three Fishing Brothers Gruff* (2006), the mean and greedy Anglo Gruff, the youngest brother, Anvil Gruff, the middle brother and Angora Gruff, the oldest, head off to sea in their respective fishing boats (The Whipper Snapper, The Trawler Crawler, and the largest for the oldest, The Cod's Wallop) their greediness knows no bounds and they fish out the stocks. They head off to the Bay of Plenty after depriving Poverty Bay ('there's plenty more fish in the sea') and continue their catastrophic exploitation. Even Minke Whale cannot overcome the oldest and greediest brother and defend the bay and so avarice has a field day. Eventually the community rise up in anger and order them out; but this warning is ignored. However, villainy gets its comeuppance and The Cods Wallop is sunk (by a revengeful Minke whale) and all the villains end up as fish food, one way or another.

Winner of the NZ Post Book Awards for a first time writer/illustrator, Galbraith's picture book is a wonderful take on the folktale and certainly draws upon the apocalyptic domain in that there is call for activism to prevent imminent catastrophe. Not only does the community say 'enough is enough' but, as befitting apocalyptic literature, there are little didactic warnings for the child reader to take action about caring for nature focused on sustainable and ethical fishing. Again, learners are confronted by a range of binaries in this text that speak to an apocalyptic text: human depravity versus eco-

health, bio-phobia versus bio-philía, denial versus activism, inaction versus urgency, extinction versus survival. The sense of paradise lost as a trope is arguable here in that New Zealand sees itself as an iconic environmental paradise ‘God’s own’. Humour does moderate any sense of the nightmarish possibilities of the apocalyptic and consequently the picture book is dialogic, speaking to the adult as much as the child.



Figure 13: *The Three Fishing Brothers Gruff*

3.7 THE FUTURISTIC

If there is a most suitable trope for new beginning to be imagined, it would have to be the story of Noah in the face of the archetypal Great Deluge. Wildsmith’s *Professor Noah’s Spaceship* (1980) is a clever take on the notion that the future lies in outer-space. Animals begin to complain about pollution that is destroying their habitats when Owl, being wise, tells the assembly that it espied a strange contraption being built nearby. They investigate and learn about Professor Noah’s spaceship. Reflecting nature’s creativity and fecundity, they assist in its construction and when the time is right, they climb aboard. However things go astray after take-off and elephant (not being the most scientific of characters) makes a mistake. They go back through time to when all was

well with the world! The notion that there might be another planet to inhabit calls upon the lotto complex perhaps, and so to avoid this, Wildsmith grounds change very much in terms of what actually is. To a degree, it is a counter-text to futurism but, positioning the child to actually believe in a mathematical rarity for current dilemmas would be false hope (perhaps). And so, there is, in this text, a return to the pastoral, the persistent dream of heaven on earth, paradise regained. Wildsmith in this text uses the African wild animals (lion and elephant) as key players in the drama.



Figure 14: *Professor Noah's Spaceship*

3.8 THE COMIC

Despite the gravity of inconvenient truths, we need to be reminded that nature is also a space for the pleasurable moment. There is pleasure in confronting nature's oddities (an anthropomorphic space), and fun in realising the potential incongruities of imaginatively manipulating aspects of the otherness of animal life. However, an enduring source of humour using animals is the trickster tale where the small and the weak cross the borders of powerlessness and through wit, wisdom and sometimes plain naughtiness, overcome the powerful. This playfulness with borders (big versus small, brains versus brawn, and the sacred and the profane) is associated with the carnivalesque as a source of humour (McKenzie 2014). There is much that can be explored in traditional trickster tales and the idea of the carnivalesque (McKenzie 2005) but it depends on writers and publishers, let alone teachers, being open to using these messy stories to critically reflect on the messiness of the lived realities of real children.

Medearis's *Too Much Talk* (1996) gives different objects a voice in a cumulatively patterned book, much to the horror of various passer-bys. Yams talk, dogs talk, cloth talks as the inanimate becomes animate. In a carnivalesque moment, the chief contemplates the absurdity of the talking yam. The chair agrees. 'Aiye!' the chief cries, and vanishes, never to be seen again. Social order is totally interrupted if nature truly is given voice!



Figure 15: *Too Much Talk*

4 NEGOTIATING THE IDEOLOGICAL

Finally, the article proposes that ideological stances towards some key issues in representing nature need to be unlocked both in singular readers/texts and also the community of readers/texts in terms of critical literacy pedagogy. As a class of learners engage in discussions and debates in terms of the various binary oppositions that texts rhetorically evoke and seek to locate their personally felt stance, they will have to negotiate some key issues about nature and society. The teacher in this process may help the learners to locate their arguments in terms of ideologies that underpin the issues and their responses to them. It is necessary, however, to be careful about assigning a specific belief system (capitalism, Christianity, patriarchy or whatever) as a singular cause in that such a process can lead to essentialist discourses. Learners will need to think about the implications of assuming a particular world view in terms of themselves as individuals within their community and their local space, as well as consider humanity as a species within the larger context of the planet. Here are some of the issues that learners, particularly those from the senior school using senior fiction, might negotiate

in an eco-critical literacy curriculum. The journey can start, however, in the primary school:

- Do(es) God(s) exist within as much as without, nature (or not at all)? Is nature simply a material existent or part of a transcendent space, expressed through various religious stances? What are the implications of taking a pantheistic or materialistic view of nature? What counts as evidence?
- Is nature (as expressed through religion or myths) sentient and can it be best described as essentially benevolent or malevolent, or simply as an existent? What are the implications of investing nature with intent? What counts as evidence?
- Is science, or religion, or traditional cultural beliefs (or?) the best source of developing an ethic of caring for nature? What are the respective contributions/histories of these different discourses?
- Is there a hierarchy of importance or significance within nature or are all things equal? If so, what is the nature of the hierarchy? Who decides and for what purpose? Does it finally matter if some species become extinct? For whom? What are the dangers of taking an extreme ‘post-human’ stance?
- Is there ‘no turning back’ in terms of modernity and that in order to restore a balance between society and nature, we can trust new technologies to save the day; or do we need to literally return to traditional life styles and alternative communities? Or, can we imagine the city if/when petrol runs out?
- Is it true that the individual counts as much as the species and that an ethic of caring for poor/dispossessed/disabled/vulnerable no matter what the resource cost is the highest moral good? What is the relationship between the individual and the species? What counts as ethics in the context of deep ecology?
- To what extent is the care of nature a local, regional, national and/or global issue? What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of each space?
- To what extent is anthropomorphism necessarily problematic? Is there value in some anthropomorphic texts? What criteria could be applied to so distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate uses of the anthropomorphic voice?
- What stance do learners most relate to: the aesthetic or the efferent in term of eco-criticism?

As the oppositions that the article has enumerated are faced, and through critical literacy pedagogy the underlying ideologies and world views have been laid bare, there might arise the possibility of hope for the future of nature and society, and more convenient truths empower children to make a difference to what is finally going to be their world. This is the heart of the eco-critical praxis within the possibilities of children’s literature.

NOTES

1. Buell (2005) defines eco-criticism as a ‘study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to [an] environmentalist praxis’. In theory, there is much heated debate about the nature of Nature: is Nature only known through discourse and representation, or is Nature ‘real’ and beyond discourse, such that an eco-pedagogy is actually intellectually viable? McKenzie (2011) explores this tension taking up a critical realist position.
2. Note the post-structuralist criticism of the hierarchy in dualisms that valorise the first of the binary pair.
3. In this article I have linked deliberately picture books from two nations, both separate across space and both ecologically distinct to signify that eco-criticism and eco-pedagogy are global issues. Whilst each reader may focus on the local, they need to be aware, and positioned to think about, the global.
4. However, the hermeneutic of stewardship is ignored in this representation of Christian eco-theology (Garrad 2006). See H. Paul Santmire’s *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* or W. Jenkins’ *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*. Further, the notion of an alleged notion of ‘dominion’ as a Christian prerogative ignores the reality of polluted nature in the former USSR and China; hardly sites of Christian dominion.
5. Man alone is an archetypal theme in New Zealand literature referring to the man who feels himself to be an outsider in his own land, alone in the world and finding nature as the Centre.
6. T.S. Eliot’s notion defined as ‘The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is evoked’.
<http://www.millenniumlibrary.co.uk/millib/reference/notes.php?entry=Objective+Correlative&fromdb=1>
7. In this sense, the mimetic is ‘rehabilitated’ in the face of poststructuralist metaphysics (Bergthaller 2006; Buell 2005).
8. The negative impact of modernity is explicated in R. Brown’s take on the nursery rhyme *This is the World that Jack Built* (New York: Dutton Books, 1991) where the pastoral world is revealed as exploited and nature destroyed as a result of the factory that Jack built. Similarly, C. Taylor’s *The House that Crack Built* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1992) details the misuse of nature by society. Both are mimetic in that, through the use of intertextuality, they draw attention to what actually happens as a consequence of human depravity.

REFERENCES

Primary sources

- Aslund, T. 2007. *The bean’s story*. Illustrated by V Unka. Auckland: Scholastic (NZ).
- Bacon, R. 1979. *Hatupatu and the bird woman*. Illustrated by SJ Woods. Auckland: Collins.
- Bishop, G. 1999. *The house that Jack built*. Auckland: Scholastic (NZ).

- Daly, N. 1999. *The boy on the beach*. New York: McElderry Books.
- Daly, N. 2001. *Yebo, Jamela!* Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Galbraith, B. 2006. *The three fishing brothers Gruff*. Auckland: Hodder Children’s Books.
- Holden, I. 1997. *The peace star*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Isadora, R. 1998. *A South African night*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Medearis, A. 1996. *Too much talk*. Illustrated by S Vitale. London: Walker Books.
- Mennen, I & Daly, N. 2002. *Ashraf of Africa*. Illustrated by N Maritz. Pietermaritzburg: Songololo.
- Preller, M. 2003. *I am Simon*. Illustrated by V Oelofson. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Tamehana, E. 1997. *The Sandman*. Illustrated by K Gemmill. Aotearoa: Huia.
- Topzand, M. 2006. *Lucky Pateke*. Wellington: Reed.
- Wildsmith, B. (1980) 1987. *Professor Noah’s Spaceship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Young, E. 1989. *Lon Po Po: a Red Riding Hood story from China*. New York: Philomel Books.

Secondary sources

- Bergthaller, H. 2006. ‘Trees are what everyone needs’: *The Lorax*, anthropocentrism, and the problem of mimesis, in *Nature in literary and cultural studies: Trans-Atlantic conversations on eco-criticism*, ed. C Gersdoff & S Mayer. New York: Rodolphi: 155-175.
- Bradford, C. 2003. The sky is falling: children as environmental subjects in contemporary picture books, in *Children’s literature and the fin de siècle*, ed. R McGillis. London: International Research Society for Children’s Literature.
- Buell, L. 2005. *The future of environmental criticism: environmental crisis and literary imagination*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dobrin, S & Kidd, K. 2004. *Wild things: children’s culture and eco-criticism*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Garrad, G. 2004. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge.
- Gersdorf, C & Mayer, S. 2006. *Nature in literary and cultural studies*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodolphi.
- Houriham, M. 1997. *Deconstructing the hero*. London: Routledge.
- Lukens, R. 1999. *A critical handbook in children’s literature*. New York: Longman.
- McKenzie, J. 1999. The use and abuse of history: a response to Gavin Bishop’s *The house that Jack built*. *Magpies* 14(4).
- McKenzie, J. Bums, poos and wees: carnivalesque spaces in the picture books of early childhood. Or has literature gone to the dogs? *English Teaching. Practice and Critique* 4:(1). <http://www.soe.waikato.ac.nz/english/ETPC/>
- McKenzie, J. 2006. The power of imagery: exploring a wolfish appetite for the dark side of children’s literature. Guest lecture at Storylines Heritage Festival, Christchurch, New Zealand. *The Inside Story* 52–65.

- McKenzie, J. 2011. The real in the reel: the need for critically reflective teachers in the media classroom. *Pacific-Asian Education Journal* 23(1):57–70. http://pacificcircleconsortium.org/uploads/PAE_23__1__final_11.pdf
- McKenzie, J. 2014. The trickster tale and its educational value: challenges for writers and illustrators, in *One big story. Delving deeper into Asian children's literature*, ed. M Garces-Bacsal. Singapore: AFCC Publication: 29–45.
- Stephens, J. 2006. From Eden to suburbia: perspectives on the natural world in children's literature. *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 16(2):40–45.

Appendix 1: Nature's contours

THE WILDERNESS

<p>Mountain Beauty and transcendence. Maternal symbol; object of veneration. Object of desire: obstacle to be overcome. Masochism and the heroic. Untimely death. Menacing and hostile. Boundaries and demarcations: identity formation.</p> <p>Volcano Element of the transcendent: site of gods and monsters Mutability and change. Nature has agency and autonomy. Imagery of hell and the damned.</p> <p>Rocks Mineral wealth: site of exploitation Globalisation. The precious. Spiritual signifier: element of magic/ the talisman.</p> <p>Cave The unknown. Source of monsters, the supernatural. Extreme sports. The wild 'man'. Womb of mother earth: re-birthing and transformation. Tomb raiders. Site of treasure seekers. Transitions: above and below. Ancient histories, cave paintings, early civilisations.</p> <p>Desert Desolate / Dust bowl. The inhospitable: nature as extreme. Climate change and the encroaching desert. Nature's revenge. Site of withdrawal from civilisation: the monastic and the mystic.</p> <p>Plains / Outback / Savannah 'Virgin territory' as a misogynist male projection. <i>Terra Nullius</i> as a space for the imperial project against the indigenous and nature. Expansive, openness. The hunter/gatherer. Site of the exile.</p>	<p>Sea Site of human exploitation: over-fishing. The unknown: the deep. Frontierism. Sea as subconscious and the pleasure drive. Sexual innocence. Site of suicide, death and oblivion. Return to the womb. Historic symbol of regeneration.</p> <p>Ice-shelf / Ice caps Unfathomable age. The eternal and seemingly impermeable. Arctic: the cold mother: austere, disciplined and anti-carnal. Object of masculine desire: exploration, masochism and survival. Awe and wonder: Aurora borealis. Fragility and preciousness. A thermometer for nature's health. Antarctic: <i>terra nullius</i>. Vastness. The glacier and slow decay. Implacable and unforgiving.</p> <p>Island Site of the exotic Other, both human and not-human. Site of sensuality and sexual play. Natives/inhabitants are barbaric and uncivilised: them and us. Isolation enables nature's eccentricity. The Robinsonnade: and being marooned: survivalism. The tourist and holidays. Western deprivation.</p> <p>Forest / Bush / Jungle Nature as malevolent: site of rapacious wolves. The wild / demonic (wolves and witches). Getting lost and death: survivalism. Touchstone of Nature's health: deforestation as an issue. Symbol of energy and fruitfulness of nature. Site of cultural dislocations: traditionalism and capitalism. Masculinity. Man alone. The hunter.</p> <p>Wild Animals National identity. The monstrous other; the beastly. Survival of the fittest. Man the ultimate hunter. Bio-diversity. Anthropomorphism: the wild and the civilised juxtaposed; the nature of humanity detailed.</p>
---	--

BORDERLANDS

<p>River/ Stream The New Zealand death. Source of sustenance. Life blood. Waterways as site of exploration and settlement. Site of exploitation: irrigation and hydro-power. Boundaries and demarcations: identity formation. Spiritual significance for Maori. Extreme sports.</p> <p>Swamp Wildlife: rare species Danger: non-space for humans. Drainage and development. Monsters.</p>	<p>Beach/Coast Boundaries: signifier of national identity. Area of historical change: site of arrivals and departures. The family at peace. Holidays. Social class leveller. Nature and naturism. Site of exploitation of nature’s plenitude: shell fish. The foreshore as a political issue. Capitalism and land values. Death: drowning and suicide.</p> <p>Roads/Highways/Motorways The journey and coming of age. Lines of interconnectedness. Adolescent freedom. Urban complexity. Mass transit. Frustration, road rage.</p>
--	---

THE RURAL

<p>Farms The hillbilly and the simpleton. Nature as teacher: good husbandry. Economic power in global marketplace. Nature as machine, reducible and manipulated. Visual uniformity. Nature subdued. Capitalism and land values: site of the rich (life style blocks). Exploitation: battery farms. Genetic engineering: Man as god. The animal as object. The organic farm: return to the pastoral.</p> <p>Domesticated animals The guide dog: nature as saviour. The police dog. The hero in combat with villainy. The sheep dog: Tireless worker. The horse: powerfulness domesticated. Control and being controlled.</p>	<p>Garden Secret spaces: the walled garden. Nature as healer / traditional medicines. Pastoral and the bucolic. Signifier of social class (trim garden versus country garden / types of plants). Natural health: the organic garden. The decorative. Femininity.</p>
---	---

THE CITY/TOWN

<p>Street Imported American gangsterism. Mean streets Signifier of social class. Boundaries and demarcations: the neighbourhood and identity formation. The odd and bizarre. Eccentricity.</p> <p>Sub-Urban The mundane. Uniformity. Signifier of social class. Boundaries and identity formation. Enclosed spaces and the construction of the nuclear family. Enclosed spaces and urban renewal. Repatriation of native species.</p> <p>Mall Consumerism writ large. Signifier of Western values. Site of teenager melting pot. Element of the corporate universal: sameness.</p> <p>Factory The dark satanic mills. Anti-nature. Fordism and the automata. Wealth production, capitalism and class divisions.</p>	<p>Park Nature acculturated. Nature reconstituted in service to humanity. Social meeting place and class/cultural leveller. Play space: rest and relaxation. Dualistic: day versus the night. Dangerous spaces: the sexual predator. Nature caged: the zoo and the aviary.</p> <p>Swimming pool The competitive spirit, (potentially destructive). The fit body and identity formation. Site of romance and urbanised pleasure. The hotel chain, tourism and holidays. Western deprivation. Health and recuperation. Social class leveller. Weightlessness and freedom. Site of the (fe)male gaze. The private pool and social class/opulence.</p> <p>Pets The anthropomorphic animal. Species and the signifier of social class. Protection and wildness within the neighbourhood. Masculinity, power and the pit-bull. Assertion of wildness. Space for bureaucracy and control. The nanny state.</p>
---	--

Appendix 2: Eco-critical domains in children's literature

CONTOUR / ENTITY	Efferent / informational possibilities	Literary / Aesthetic possibilities	Rhetorical / Didactic possibilities
Pastoral / Utopian			
<p>Some key texts: Anderson, L. <i>Ndito Runs</i>. Geraghty, P. <i>The Hunter</i>. Kavanagh, P. <i>Love Like This</i>. Kurtz, J & Kurtz, C. <i>Only a pigeon</i>. Le Tord, B. <i>Elephant Moon</i>. Nevan, T. <i>Why Sugar Cane is Sweet: A Zulu fable</i>. Tadjo, V. <i>Mamy Wata and the Monster</i>. Topzand, M. <i>Lucky Pateke</i>. Whitman, C. <i>The Night is like an Animal</i>. Williams, L. <i>Torch Fishing with the Sun</i>.</p>	<p>Eco-theology and stewardship. Transcendentalism as a world view. Romanticism as a literary space. Pantheism. Deep ecology. Nature's beauty (eg, value of art, music and literature).</p>	<p>Paradise and the golden age in myth, legend and folktale. Seasonal myths, archetypes and bio-rhythms. Awe and the wonder in nature. Nature as mother / teacher as in the dislocated / feral / rebellious child motif. Curiosity. Nature as a site of healing. Pleasure. Animals as guides, eg, birds / dolphins. Nature as goddess / guide. Reciprocity and the transcendent. Return home motif (search for sanctuary). Nature as a moral state, eg, the innocent child trope. Iconic nature, eg, flower fairies. Miniature worlds reflect ideal practices.</p>	<p>Benevolence versus malevolence. Sentimentalism versus naturalism. Innocence versus experience. Child versus the adult. Stewardship versus dominion.</p>
Historic			
<p>Some key texts: Bougaeva, S. <i>The visitor</i>. Morrison, Y. <i>Waka a wairua: the spirit waka</i>.</p>	<p>Indigenous ecology and land use (eg. herbs and medicines). Indigenous beliefs and values. Industrialism and the dark satanic mills Functional view of nature. Description and/or critique of modernism / humanism- redefining linear progress.</p>	<p>Nostalgia for the past. Spiritual renaissance related to past attitudes to the environment. Nature's plenitude. Nostalgia. Taming the wild / exotic Other as a colonial / civilising project. Regret.</p>	<p>Spirituality versus materialism. Freedom versus subjugation. The pristine past versus progress. Traditional values of caring for the environment versus patriarchy and the imperial project.</p>

Mimetic / Realism			
<p>Some key texts: Arnaoutis, N. <i>Panda the brave: a Zulu tale</i>. Asare, M. <i>Sosu's call</i>. Baker, J. <i>Belonging</i>. Brown, R. <i>The world that Jack built</i>. Grimsdell, J. <i>Kalinzu and the oxpeckers</i>. Henderson, K. <i>The storm</i>. Highwater, J. <i>Songs for the seasons</i>. Hilton, N. <i>In my backyard</i>. Kurtz, J & Kurtz, C. <i>Water hole waiting</i>. Lester, J. <i>The man who knew too much: a moral tale from Zambia</i>. McMillan, D. <i>Coming home</i>. Stock, C. <i>Where are you going Manyoni?</i> Stojic, M. <i>Rain</i>.</p>	<p>Consumption of nature (fossil fuels). Functional views of nature. Contemporary destruction of nature (land use, waste, deforestation). Technology as both problem and solution. Rural versus urban as eco systems. Industrialism / capitalism and its consequences. Evolution, natural selection / and the predator. Stereotypes (re. animals) are interrogated. Inter-human equity and the eco-system. Minority people and the issue of environmental racism. Maintaining bio-diversity. Human over-population and the metropolis. Nature and human health. Localised recuperation projects (both topography as well as flora / fauna). (Sub) urban renewal; nature in the city.</p>	<p>Place attachment (local and global) and belonging. Nature subject to human pleasure, eg, hunting, fishing. Pleasure of recognition. Nature as a site of mutability (change can result in nature being destructive and constructive). Insight and fear. Nature's vulnerability to human agency. Concern / insight. Nature in the (sub) urban as an aesthetic project; the pastoral revisited. Being centred. Nature simply as existent. Awe and wonder.</p>	<p>Attachment versus dislocation. Local versus global. Bio-regionalism versus universal Nature Stewardship versus domination. Conservation / sustainability versus exploitation. Eco-system complexity versus individualism. Health of eco-system versus equity of socio-economic systems. Modernism versus post-human. Future-focused versus present-focus. Benevolence (nature as stable) versus malevolence (nature as unstable). Culture (male / andocentric) versus nature (female / eco-feminism). Eco-centric literary values versus anthropomorphism.</p>
Magical realism and allegory			
<p>Some key texts: Burningham, J. <i>Oi! Get off our train</i>. Conway, D. <i>The most important gift of all</i>. Gravett, E. <i>Meerkat mail</i>. Seuss, Dr. <i>The Lorax</i>.</p>	<p>Nature (especially animals) as a secondary world. Reflection of nature's point of view. The anthropomorphic as a didactic device.</p>	<p>The sentient plant/ animal given voice. Shared languages. Anguish at human attitudes and behaviour. The role of the imagination: visualising new horizons / possibilities. Awe and wonder re-ignited.</p>	<p>Optimism versus pessimism. Nature given voice versus nature silenced. Utopian versus dystopian.</p>

Dystopian			
<p>Some key texts: Anderson, H. <i>The snow queen</i>. Bishop, G. <i>Maui and the goddess of fire</i>. Cartwright, P. <i>Poukai the man-eater</i>. Crew, G. <i>Automaton</i>. Medearis, A. <i>Too much talk</i>. Rubenstein, G. <i>Hooray for the Kafe Karaoke!</i></p>	<p>Evolution: survival of the fittest. Natural selection. Vivisection / animal experimentation for human ends. Cruelty against the Other as a universal phenomenon. Dominion and mastery over nature as a human right.</p>	<p>Nature as the barbaric Other to be tamed. Excitement / fear. Animals as antagonist / monster. Fear. Place as antagonist / alien, eg, the forest, the wild sea, the desert. Nature as revengeful / malevolent. Nature as an austere mother / discipline figure. Masculinity and the Man Alone figure. Egocentricity. The colonial pioneer / settler as hero unaware of consequences.</p>	<p>Pessimism versus optimism. Weakness versus strength in the face of raw nature. Bio-phobia versus bio-philia.</p>
Apocalyptic			
<p>Some key texts: Galbraith, B. <i>The fishing Brothers Gruff</i>. Van Allsburg, C. <i>Just A dream</i>.</p>	<p>Climate change. Political and economic factors: North / South divide. Globalisation and the dark satanic mills revisited. Animal rights activism (eg, the whale and Green Peace). Overpopulation and eco-justice issues. Nuclear weapons and disaster. Imminent catastrophes (local as well as global). Extinction of aspects of nature.</p>	<p>Paradise Lost: sense of grief. Catastrophe, crisis and impending doom motif. Fear. Christian millennialism and the End. Fear / hopefulness in a new order. Nightmares and extinction.</p>	<p>Human depravity versus eco-health. Bio-phobia versus bio-philia. Denial versus activism. Stasis versus urgency. Extinction versus survival.</p>

Fantasy and the futuristic			
<p>Some key texts: Burningham, J. <i>Whatdoyoumean?</i> Hoban, R. <i>M.O.L.E.</i> Wildsmith, B. <i>Professor Noah's spaceship.</i></p>	<p>Eco-psychology and therapy. Alternative communities. New technologies as solution. Alternative theologies revisited (eg, pantheism). Space exploration / futuristic habitations. Virtual worlds and the cyborg: re-imagining space. 'What if?' as an act of contemplation.</p>	<p>Nature as impersonal agent: eco-centric and the post-human. The return of the pastoral / traditions: the child as priest. New life forms and spaces are yet to come. Nostalgia / return to the mytho-poetic and the sublime. Human agency marginalised in a text that embeds a deep ecology perspective. Curiosity: what if?</p>	<p>Call to activism versus denial. Transformation versus reformation. Urgency versus fatalism. Deep ecology versus social ecology. Optimism versus despair. Future focused rather than past.</p>
Comic			
<p>Some key texts: Alakija, P. <i>Catch that goat!</i> Bush, J. <i>The giraffe who got in a knot.</i> Medearis, A. <i>Too much talk.</i></p>	<p>'What if?' as a space of immediate pleasure. Nature's oddities from a human perspective.</p>	<p>Nature as site of play. Nature's voice and the incongruous. The slapstick: human comeuppance.</p>	