

Transnational Interconnections of Nature Studies and the Environmental Humanities

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Edited by

Sophia Emmanouilidou
and Sezgin Toska

Foreword by

Scott Slovic

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Foreword	ix
<i>Scott Slovic</i>	
List of Tables and Figures	xiii
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction: Ecothinking, Transnationalism and Interdisciplinary Study	
<i>Sophia Emmanouilidou and Sezgin Toska</i>	
Part I: Ecoliterary Writings across Time and Space	
Chapter Two	17
Japanese Ecosophy: The Works of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston	
through the Prism of Ecocriticism	
<i>Małgorzata Jarmolowicz-Dziekońska</i>	
Chapter Three	43
Toxicscapes and New Sensibilities:	
Narrating Bhopal in Meaghan Delahunt's <i>The Red Book</i> (2008)	
<i>Anchitha Krishna</i>	
Part II: Ecocritical Perspectives of American Literary Writings	
Chapter Four.....	65
Murder in Arcadia: Ecology and Mary Robert Rinehart's Detective Fiction	
<i>Eleftheria Tsirakoglou</i>	
Chapter Five	83
Neither Sinner nor Saint: Wilderness in Cormac McCarthy's Novels	
<i>Kateřina Kovářová</i>	

Part III: Of Ecocide and Humanity's Interventions to Nature

Chapter Six	103
Dilemma and Outlet: The Current Situation of Water Pollution in China	
<i>Shaoyi Chen and Yanli Lin</i>	
Chapter Seven.....	129
Cultural Slowness in Travel Philosophy and Business Practice	
for Planetary Sustainability: Slow Tourism for Economic,	
Social and Ecological Care and Conviviality	
<i>Konrad Gunesch</i>	
Chapter Eight.....	155
“Why Are You Killing Us?” A Critical Approach to Animal Cruelty	
through a Primary School Art Project	
<i>Maria Emmanouilidou</i>	
Contributors.....	185

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Transnational Interconnections of Nature Studies and the Environmental Humanities is an interdisciplinary and transnational project that zooms in on the environmental crisis the world is currently faced with. The book is a wholehearted collaboration with the conjoined aims of raising readers' awareness of ecodestruction and encouraging academics and students across curricula to incorporate ecothinking into their research endeavors and teaching practices. The book is indebted for four of its chapters to the Interdisciplinary Research Foundation (IRF), a scholarly organization based in Warsaw, Poland. Established in 2015, IRF promotes interdisciplinary research and cooperation among scholars from all around the world. We are also grateful to all authors who graciously accepted our invitation to contribute their ecothinking to this volume. We also wish to express our gratitude to Professor Scott Slovic for writing a thoughtful foreword to this collection. Last but not least, particular thanks to our families and more so to our children, who had to put up with their parents' morning fatigue because of our prolonged late-night editing work.

FOREWORD

SCOTT SLOVIC

Why, you might ask, is it necessary to add another collection of humanities scholarship on environmental topics to the ever-growing list of such volumes? This is a particularly relevant question in a field that seeks to probe the ethics and utility of human relationships with and impacts on the more-than-human world.

While the question about the unique intellectual contributions of *Transnational Interconnections of Nature Studies and the Environmental Humanities* is important to address, uncertainty about whether or not to add a new book to the world—and how to go about doing so—is also significant on a practical level. Exactly what is the cost of producing a book in terms of paper and energy? It is difficult to quantify such costs, but writers and scholars are attuned to such concerns today, in the era of global climate change, as they may never have been in the past. For instance, science writer Caroline Ailanthus, in an April 2016 blog posting titled “The Carbon Footprint of a Book” (<https://climateinemergency.wordpress.com/2016/04/12/the-carbon-footprint-of-a-book/>) commented on a study in the *Journal of Industrial Ecology* that determined 2.71 kilograms CO₂ equivalent as the cost per book based on a production run of 400,000 books distributed in North America. Ecocritics and other environmental humanities scholars have long been thinking about the value of a book not only with regard to its intellectual content along but by gauging such content in relation to the ecological costs and contexts of its making. Ailanthus argues that “Writers [and presumably editors] can ask their publishers to take certain steps towards ‘greening’ their processes.” This is something I’ve sought to do since the early 1990s, asking that the anthology *Being in the World: An Environmental Reader for Writers* be printed on recycled paper and later urging Oxford University Press, when it adopted the journal *ISLE*, to make a point of using post-consumer recycled paper for the central journal in the field of ecocriticism.

But these questions about the practical costs of making books in terms of paper and energy are not only meaningful because they could enable us to lessen the physical footprint of our literary and academic publishing, but

they are also evidence of the kinds of questions we should be asking about every aspect of our lives during an age of urgent environmental crisis. I take this to be the fundamental purpose of what Sophia Emmanouilidou and Sezgin Toska call “ecothinking.” They are referring to a kind of academic work that aspires to guide individuals and societies toward an essential mindfulness concerning the ecological implications of our lives in the world. This book aims to provide models of new ways of thinking that are evolving in response to the current state of the planet. The most essential of these modes of thinking are transdisciplinary and transnational approaches to conceptualizing environmental issues. Even academics who speak routinely about multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity tend to become comfortable in disciplinary silos. Transcending such compartmentalization is scary and uncomfortable—it is necessarily experimental. The articles in this collection aspire to break some of the boundaries that typically define academic discourse, inventing terminology like “toxiscapes” and “slow tourism.” They also take risks in proposing potentially taboo linkages between criminal actions against people and criminal destruction of the natural environment and in proposing to expose young children to images of animal mistreatment as a way of raising awareness of such cruelty.

This book as a whole intends to signal that conversations in the environmental humanities cross academic categories and national borders. Such conversations have been taking place at conferences and in books like this one for decades now. The deeper issue is whether or not this book achieves the “plurivocal” and penetrating “ecothoretical” objectives described by Sophia Emmanouilidou and Sezgin Toska in their introduction. Each of us working in the environmental humanities is compelled to strive toward developing multiple voices that register with audiences we may never have thought of in the past, such as general readers and government officials. We must also avoid theoretical complacency, the tendency to recycle familiar scholarly jargon and cultural attitudes. I sense a strong tendency in this book to propel the field forward in bold ways that will have practical impacts on society, for society (and for the planet).

The editors themselves describe the urgent need to “transgress disciplinary boundaries” in order to produce work that promotes new levels of “ecoawareness” and “ecoaction.” Such constructive transgression (including innovative communication strategies and the goal of reaching readers, listeners, and viewers who have not previously been interested in environmental humanities scholarship) is becoming a dominant trend in what I have recently begun calling “the fifth wave of ecocriticism.” While

Transnational Interconnections of Nature Studies and the Environmental Humanities is not limited to the field of ecocriticism (environmental literary studies), the collection does seem to share the ethos and motivations of ecocriticism, representing some of the important current directions in this porous, flexible, sobering, joyful, and ever-evolving branch of humanities scholarship.

Is this book worth the paper and energy it's made of? This is the question I've been asking about my own books throughout my entire career. This is the kind of self-critical question the contributors and editors are asking in this new work, too, not only about the book itself but about our species as a whole, our ways of thinking and acting in the world. I join Professors Emmanouilidou and Toska in inviting you to explore the new avenues of "ecothinking"—and eco-questioning—offered here.

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

- 6-1: *Comprehensive Evaluation Results of Groundwater Quality in Each Basin Area in 2016.*
- 6-2: *Types of Sea Area that Did Not Meet Category I of Sea Water Quality Standard in 2016*

Figures

- 8-1: A lion from *Animals are not clowns* campaign (From the Portuguese Animal Rights League, 2007). Copyright: Pedro Lima.
- 8-2: A tiger in strings (From a campaign to support animal-free circuses, 2010). Reprinted with the permission of Massimo Guastini.
- 8-3: Meme relying on *Fast food* by Nyoman Masriadi (1999).
- 8-4: *Cook with food* by Frans Snyder (c. 1630).
- 8-5: *Meme* relying on *Cook with food* by Frans Snyder (c. 1630).
- 8-6: Second *meme* relying on *Cook with food* by Frans Snyder (c. 1630).
- 8-7: *Social commentary meme* based on photoshopping.
- 8-8: Letter protesting the use of animals in the clothing industry.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ECOTHINKING, TRANSNATIONALISM AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY

SOPHIA EMMANOUILIDOU AND SEZGİN TOSKA

Introduction

This collection attempts an interdisciplinary exploration of the basic tenets and varied research interests of environmentalism undertaken by academic curricula across the world. Ecodestruction, the wilderness, rampant pollution, tourism developments, sustainability, educational interventions, and the plurivocal, ecotheoretical turn to textual analysis are some of the critical and scientific perspectives that this volume includes. The book aspires to introduce a multilateral understanding of environmental consciousness and suggest that the study of nature should not be compartmentalized into separate fields of analysis, but instead aim for the interconnections between disciplines. Finally, this volume presents a transdisciplinary and transnational framework to the study of the human and more-than-human world, aiming to go beyond academia and address the public by transporting the conversation on ecological issues to everyday life in societies around the globe.

While it is easy to destroy ecological systems and pollute the environment, it is very difficult to observe all the explicit and implicit impacts of these disasters, as they comprise intricate and complex systems mostly beyond the full understanding, sight and perception of humans. This condition alone makes curbing and reversing ecological destruction almost impossible. Moreover, most attempts to protect the physical cosmos may not cover each participant of the system, and it must unfortunately be accepted that each part cannot be saved from destruction. On the other hand, each attempt to reverse ecological destruction and environmental problems may create other unwanted crises that can

damage the system in varied ways or harm other less affected participants. Humans should have well understood by now that their assault on nature will eventually affect their own kind one way or another. This all-encompassing aspect of ecological destruction transforms the sense of ecological crisis from the mere subject of the more-than-human world to a very human concern. To explain, people have become the subjects of ecovictimization as well as being ecociders. So, people have started to question the impacts of ecocides on themselves by making use of philosophical, social, psychological, political, economic and justice-related issues considering the causes and consequences of ecological destruction. As humans have started to understand the connection between ecological degradation and themselves (it is no more the question of only polar bears, far off places and future times, but themselves here and anytime), the intricate and complex nature of ecological crisis has increased, become more complicated and intensified since people are directly involved in these issues.

When one analyzes the reasons for and causes of environmental destruction, he or she can acknowledge multi-dimensional issues apart from the obvious economic one. However, even though economic interests comprise the main motives for environmental destruction, they are not the sole causes of it. Theological, philosophical, sociological, psychological and educational factors also play significant roles in the exploitation and destruction of nature. The codes of civilizations on the macro level and the cultures of communities on the micro level should be questioned, studied, analyzed and reevaluated from an earth-centered perspective, which is the opposite to the anthropocentric perspective, widely accepted as the main cause of ecological degradation, in order to develop eco-friendly approaches, to reverse the ecological degradation or at least to hinder further destruction of nature. Furthermore, along with the multi-dimensional causes of environmental degradation, the consequences of environmental problems are also influential in many-layered areas. People used to assume that environmental degradation is just related to nonhuman beings, but it has become clear that environmental degradation has the potential to affect human beings as well. Thus, environmental destruction can afflict humanity with health, economic, social, political and psychological problems. Public health, environmental injustice, environmental racism, environmental exploitation, the exportation of environmental destruction and pollution, and the decline in standards of living are some of the evils that have appeared along with ecocide and natural destruction.

It is possible to trace the transition towards an interdisciplinary mode of analysis in modern ecothinking. Modern ecothinking started mostly within the academic disciplines separately and in an isolated way from other disciplines. At first, these disciplines dealt with ecological issues just within the limits of their research interests and expertise. Although concern for the environment helped to green the disciplines, it was too early to realize the need for interdisciplinary approaches. Nevertheless, these separately greening disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, history and law have eventually provided studies that are more collaborative. For example, the philosopher Arne Næss introduced the concept of “deep ecology” in philosophy, Murray Bookchin introduced the notions of social ecology and ecology of freedom to the social sciences, Roderick Nash introduced environmental history, Michael J. Lynch advocated “green criminology” apart from the increasing environmental laws and agreements followed by the foundation of the Environmental Protection Agency¹. Along these lines, ecothinking has become more transdisciplinary since the foundation of ecocriticism. Though literature is one of the last greening academic disciplines, its contribution becomes crucial for modern ecothinking considering the significant impact of ecocriticism on promoting collaborative studies which include aesthetics, imagination, reason and critical thinking, in order to empower the arguments for the sake of the environment. Moreover, ecocriticism, as its name indicates, brings two terms together, one from the natural sciences (ecology) and one from the social sciences (criticism), and has provided an opportunity to bridge the gap between these traditionally separate perspectives. In short, by definition ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement.

Rather than becoming a strict well-disciplined methodology of textual analysis, ecocriticism has turned out to be a lens through which to perceive the Earth from an earth-centered, green and non-anthropocentric perspective by favoring content-based critical thinking. This characteristic of ecocriticism has provided more flexibility to literary and cultural studies. It includes the application of any methodology, technique and criticism from any relevant field in order to probe the complex nonhuman-

¹ For deep ecology, see Alan R. Drengson and Yuichi Inoue's *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (1995); for social ecology, see Murray Bookchin's *Social Ecology and Communalism* (2007); for a concise explanation of environmental history, see Roderick Nash's “American Environmental History: A New Teaching Frontier” (1972); for more on green criminology, see Michael J. Lynch and Paul Stretesky's *Exploring Green Criminology: Toward a Green Criminological Revolution* (2014).

human relationships. The flexibility and tolerance of ecocriticism naturally move the approach toward an interdisciplinary character. Thus, ecocritics support their cultural and literary studies and analyses by referring to philosophical, social, economic, theological, judicial, political as well as scientific theories, principles and concepts. Other than that, they develop new theories and approaches out of the confluence of different scientific and academic disciplines. Although ecocriticism initially was dominated by the ecologically oriented criticism of nature writing, it has moved beyond that and keeps going through new stages, or waves, as well as maintaining the characteristics of previous attempts to discuss humanity's associations with the physical world². However, in all the waves of ecocriticism, even the narrowest, most focused and text-oriented ones, it is still possible to trace the interdisciplinary parameter. For example, the pioneering ecocritics, such as William Howarth in "Some Principles of Ecocriticism," William Rueckert, who coined the term ecocriticism in "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" and Glen A. Love in *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (2003) try to prove the relationship between literature and the environment by featuring the viable contribution of the natural sciences to literary and cultural studies. Other leading ecocritics focus on the relationship between nature and literature by foregrounding the perspectives of the social sciences and the humanities in their writings. For example, in "From Transcendence to Obsolescence," Harold Fromm discusses concepts of the human-nature relationship from a philosophical standpoint and Lynn White Jr. in "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" widens related speculations by adding the theological lens. On the other hand, Scott Slovic in *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez* (1992) includes the psychological dimension in the conversation. Throughout the development of ecocriticism, especially since moving beyond the "wild nature" focus towards the study of urban environments, social perspectives enriched the environmental literary criticism studies. Michael Bennett and David W. Teague contributed to ecocriticism by bringing sociological and political viewpoints into their work with the title *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments* (1999). Their idea was supported by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace's work *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*

² For more information on the waves of ecocriticism, see Lawrence Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005) and Scott Slovic's "Seasick among the Waves of Ecocriticism: An Inquiry into Alternative Historiographic Metaphors" (2017).

(2001). Moreover, Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans and Rachel Stein's collected volume *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, & Pedagogy* (2002) with T.V. Reed's contribution "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism" created ripples of change by exploring issues such as environmental (in)justice and environmental racism. Recent developments in ecocriticism expand the horizons to the acknowledgment of the links between the natural sciences and the humanities. Finally, material ecocriticism, empirical ecocriticism, and affective ecocriticism express the determination of the field to incorporate the interdisciplinary characteristic in the field's future studies³.

The transformative development from separate disciplinary attempts to a "green" academia and collaborative ecocritical studies has generated a new transdisciplinary ecothinking called the Environmental Humanities. According to Robert S. Emmett and David E. Nye, "the environmental humanities has become a global intellectual movement that reconceives the relationship between scientific and technical disciplines and the humanities, which are essential to understanding and resolving dilemmas that have been created by industrial society" (4). The environmental humanities officially try to gather all ecotheories under a single roof in order to get results that are more fruitful, encourage academics to study in a collaborative atmosphere and provide financial support for the dissemination of research findings. The environmental humanities has emerged as a new academic field since the beginning of the 21st century in order to meet the transdisciplinary need to address the environmental issues within the social sciences and to bridge the gap between natural sciences and social theories by promising a compromise and a dialogic atmosphere that considers the intricate nature of environmental issues.⁴

Addressing environmental issues in order to develop solutions may not be solely the responsibility of a scientist. Though scientists can design and build self-sufficient, energy efficient, environmentally-friendly

³ For material ecocriticism, see Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's *Material Ecocriticism* (2014); for empirical ecocriticism, see Alexa Weik von Mossner's *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion and Environmental Narrative* (2017) and also empiricalecocriticism.com/; for more on affective ecocriticism, see Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino's *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment* (2018).

⁴ For more information on the emergence and development of environmental humanities, see Robert S. Emmet and David E. Nye's *The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction* (2017) and Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann's *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities* (2017).

technologies, they alone are not enough to make the public understand the meaning of these technologies let alone communicate their significance. Their practical usage and public acceptance are not a scientific objective, but an interdisciplinary one, even when relating to the inclusion and/or exclusion of access to these technologies. Therefore, apart from scientific research, there seems to be a need for transdisciplinary studies to be active enough in order to convince people of the need for environmental protection and hopefully convince people in power to act accordingly. Besides the capacity to play a significant and instrumental role in the communication process of scientific information, the environmental humanities can intrinsically contribute to the conversation via its characteristic potential to generate concepts, make images, appeal to our heartfelt emotions, organize the public and motivate people to deal with environmental issues. Moreover, the environmental humanities can facilitate a more thorough identification of the impasses in the environmental struggle in order to cope with these impasses practically. Parallel to the above, the environmental humanities should welcome the incorporation of science and scientific approaches into their studies. This action should not be merely one-way, but the transformation of knowledge must be reciprocal. As much as science needs social theories and the humanities, the social sciences and the humanities need science in their collaborative and individual studies when they consider environmental crises. Therefore, both sides can function intrinsically as well as instrumentally in environmental conversations by eliminating hierarchical forms of knowledge and disciplines. Thus, transdisciplinary studies can offer constructive knowledge as well as criticism on environmental issues.

Besides the transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multilayered angles, the ecological crisis and the numerous environmental problems require transnational, international and global efforts to understand and tackle them. As Peter Christoff and Robyn Eckersley contend, "it is now commonly observed that many ecological problems do not respect borders, that they represent a classic collective action problem, and that they can only be addressed by concerted international cooperation and domestic environmental regulation" (2). Moreover, the transnational characteristics of ecociders show the globalized nature of ecological destruction. Accordingly, Rob D. White argues that transnational corporations in a globalized system of economy are the greatest ecocriminals (144–45). Therefore, it is not generally possible to keep the environmental problems within a restricted area. It becomes commonplace to observe the traces of environmental pollution, ecological degradation and crisis even in the least industrialized geographies and societies that can be described as "pristine."

Indeed, we have come to the grave realization that the impacts of ecological degradation are becoming global and it turns out to be that both human and non-human life forms are vulnerable to these impacts in any part of the Earth.

The Oxford Companion to Global Change categorizes the global impacts of environmental problems as part of both a systemic global change and cumulative global changes. While a systemic global change refers to the global scale impacts of the large activities occurring in certain restricted areas, cumulative global changes refer to the repetition of worldwide small-scale local activities that may have global effects (Goudie x-xi). Therefore, although local perspectives are crucial for the identification of the impacts of ecological destruction, they may not be sufficient to consider the global effects of them. To analyze the ecological, socio-economic and political consequences of the ecological crisis in the whole picture, international and transnational attempts that consider the local perspectives seem necessary.

It is possible to observe the ongoing debate pertaining to the environmental problems that may have global impacts. One approach tries to act on a global scale and specialize in global environmental problems. The Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (1972), *Blueprint for Survival* (1972) and *Our Common Future*, also known as the "Brundtland Report" (1987)⁵, as well as the major environmental summits like "Human Environment" held in Stockholm in 1972, "Earth Summit" (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, "The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development" held in Johannesburg in 2002, "The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20)" held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 are a few salient examples of the global-scale discussions on environmental problems. Moreover, the "Kyoto Protocol" (1992) and the "Paris Agreement" (2015) evince some global-scale intention of action plans against environmental problems. On the other hand, there is the approach that tries to act locally in the spirit of global interest. This approach speculates on the deficits of international, global-scale action plans. First, it claims that global-scale action plans have not been successful enough to realize the anticipated goals. Yet, many of the countries that signed the agreements did not meet the criteria and some of them withdrew from the agreements or did not ratify them. In addition, to deal with global

⁵ For more information, see Donella H. Meadows et al. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (1972, 1974), Edward Goldsmith et al. *Blueprint for Survival* (1972), World Commission on Environment and Development's *Our Common Future* (1987).

environmental challenges may create a pessimistic atmosphere for people as they might think that the challenges have gone far beyond their power and capacity and so their (re)action will be meaningless. This creates a pseudoinefficacy (Vastfjall et al.). This false feeling of inefficacy may discourage people and create apathy when people are convinced that their contribution would not be appreciable on environmental issues. However, in order to eliminate pseudoinefficacy, it should not be underestimated that even one person's help might matter concerning environmental issues and even partial solutions may save the whole. Indeed, the hummingbird⁶ and butterfly effect can be meaningful examples for those environmentalists considering the cumulative global changes effect from an inverse sense. At this point, environmentalists once again may foster their hope, if not their optimism, through the power of literature. In this context David Mitchell's conclusion at the end of his novel, *Cloud Atlas* (2004) might be an inspiration for "hummingbirds": "your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean! Yet what is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?" (509). This is why ecocriticism, the environmental humanities and on a more general level ecothinking have always supported, encouraged, and promoted international perspectives, whether they have global or local-scale focuses on environmental issues.

About the book

Transnational Interconnections of Nature Studies and the Environmental Humanities brings together articles of environmental thinking in an all-purpose modality. More specifically, the book encompasses thought processes and study findings from varied disciplines, including ecocriticism, environmental racism, nature studies, the social and political sciences, and school education. The idea that facilitated the co-habitation of these diverse areas of study in one collection relates to the ethical necessity we felt at the time of writing the book proposal to venture a holistic approach to ecothinking. In hindsight, our primary concern was and still is to highlight the need for a transnational and comprehensive discourse, a discourse that will continue to flourish among even more research interests.

This volume is structured on a pluralist arrangement of ecotheory with the purpose of creating an interdisciplinary junction since all the

⁶ For more information on the hummingbird, watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F7L5Ccl8o8. For a concise definition of "pseudoinefficacy," see www.arithmeticofcompassion.org/pseudoinefficacy.

contributions tackle the conjoined subjects of ecocide and ecobeing. The book offers a dual opportunity: different study areas converge and readers can negotiate the ways that literature, educational curricula, tourism practices and political enactment inform some of the environmental exigencies Earth is faced with. In a sense, the interdisciplinary lens of the collection contests academic specialization and expertise, two intents that may compartmentalize people's awareness of ecodestruction. With this volume we concede to the fact that the current world order is characterized by a plethora of technological advances and information material, but we also caution that if the world of academia continues to present scientific findings and develop branches of knowledge that overcomplicate our sense of ecobeing, then we run the risk of alienating the public from the crucial environmental nuances we put forward.

We have divided the book into three parts which may appear as separate accounts of humanity's interactions with nature, but in reality all three parts create an inclusive framework of ecothinking. Part I, entitled "Ecoliterary Writings across Time and Space," coalesces two distinct expressions of environmental being: Japanese ecosophy in the internment camps of the U.S. and toxicity in the city of Bhopal, India. Małgorzata Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska asserts that the philosophy of ecological harmony is a fundamental trait of Japanese cultural identity. The article undertakes an ecocritical approach to Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's literary writings, in order to bring forth the interconnections between nature and philosophy. Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska maintains that although Wakatsuki Houston's works do not address environmental issues per se, they make a significant philosophical and aesthetic contribution to environmentally oriented literary criticism. The most resonant argument of the article is that Wakatsuki Houston's writings bring about a cross-pollination of ecocritical thought and literary aestheticism, incorporate various fields of interest such as the imagination of place and place-attachment, identity and the land, and provide a valuable source within the purview of ecocriticism.

Anchitha Krishna draws attention to the detrimental impact human interventions have had on the planet in the epoch of the Anthropocene. Toxic towns, ruined landscapes, diseased bodies and lost livelihoods are some of the tropes Krishna incorporates into her discussion of sites struck by environmental contamination, where human rights are largely ignored and violated. These sites comprise the Anthropocene's cartography on a global scale and pose transnational dilemmas about humanity's material, socio-political and cultural configurations. Krishna terms these sites "toxicscapes" and construes them as the outcome of toxic encounters that

rewire human and non-human systems altogether. The article focuses on the “toxicscape” of Bhopal as sketched out in Meaghan Delahunt’s novel *The Red Book* (2008). Often referred to as the worst industrial disaster of modern times, the Union Carbide gas leak of 1984 in Bhopal is still affecting life forms through disease, damage and violence. By adopting the critical lens of material ecocriticism, Krishna examines how the narrative voices in the text combine with the “toxicscape” of Bhopal to bring out the anxieties and emerging sensibilities of living in the epoch of the Anthropocene.

“Part II: Ecocritical Perspectives of American Literary Writings” presents intriguing ecocritical interpretations of American literature as the articles reshuffle critical definitions of detective fiction and established notions of the wilderness. Eleftheria Tsirakoglou relocates generic definitions of the American detective fiction by exhibiting the anxieties of environmental degradation in Mary Robert Rinehart’s best-selling novel *The Circular Staircase* (1908). Although the formulaic tropes and narrative authority of detective fiction define Rinehart’s work, Tsirakoglou pinpoints that in *The Circular Staircase* criminal acts are symptoms of a broader pattern of cultural and environmental decline. The article scrutinizes the environmental imperatives of Rinehart’s work, arguing that ecodestruction is symbiotic with the morally fraught milieu of the cityscape. Kateřina Kovářová acknowledges that the wilderness has always been related to strong emotions, emotions that span from the fear of untouched nature’s primordial essence, to the contemporary idealization of the natural world and humanity’s present fear of losing the wilderness altogether. Opting for a brief, yet concise, historical overview of the meanings assigned to pristine nature from the 19th century onwards, Kovářová claims that the wilderness has acquired a unique status in the United States of America because the New World’s sum total of natural elements do not have their counterpart in the Old World. The article argues that Cormac McCarthy belongs to the long tradition of American writers defending the wilderness, even though he destabilizes prominent past and contemporary definitions of the concept.

“Part III: Of Ecocide and Humanity’s Interventions to Nature” consolidates our attempt to bridge disciplinary divides. In this section of the volume, we include three articles which address the notions of ecocide, ecobeing and ecoawareness. Shaoyi Chen and Yanli Lin introduce China as a national economy that has developed at a high speed since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy. The article concentrates on the aggravating environmental problems that have followed the country’s economic development and focuses on the

shocking levels of water resource pollution in China. With relevant statistics and measurements, Chen and Lin reveal that the succession of industrial accidents combined with lax governance indicate that water pollution has not yet been effectively curbed or tackled in China, and that pollution levels seriously affect the citizens' physical and mental health. Konrad Gunesch charts the practical, spiritual and environmental dimensions of the "slow" movement. As a mode of being-in-the world, the movement has found its expression in "slow tourism," the key themes of the trend being environmentalism, sustainability and low-to-no carbon emissions. Gunesch holds that slow tourism increasingly accommodates modern global travel facilities and promises to bring out the best in stakeholders and forms of travel for the benefit of profit, people and the planet. For example and in line with slow agendas, youth and student travel has grown in size and importance, all along corresponding to the complex matrix of interests of travellers and the environment. Similarly, religious tourism has become a key sector of global tourism with increasing economic potentials, but also ecological pressures for the preservation of the landscape in religious sites, the latter culminating in motivations as high as world peace contributions. Gunesch claims that social and environmental considerations of fast and competitive travel are inspired and enriched by the philosophical and practical tenets of the more contemplative forms of slow tourism, especially sustainability.

Maria Emmanouilidou's critical approach to animal cruelty is a fitting conclusion to this volume. The article is a research study expounded through a primary school art project. Some of the questions Emmanouilidou addresses include: What if animals had a voice? How can young students reinforce a campaign against animal violence? Emmanouilidou's article presents the design of a successful teaching intervention with primary school children in Greece, utilizing art paintings and photographs to portray animal cruelty. The intervention revolves around the production of "memes," a fad spreading all over the internet, with a view to sensitizing the receivers of the students' "visual texts" and creating visual multimodal texts against animal cruelty. The article offers an in-depth analysis of some of the participants' final products, a meta-textual discussion with respect to image/text relations along the lines of improving empathy for animals being tortured.

Although it may read as an overt certitude, let us underscore the fact that the physical world is the product of a complex interdependence of numerous life forms and inorganic formations. This web of ecological relations makes Earth the home of the sum total of living organisms. Accordingly, if the environment is in its essence a complex system of

connections and interactions, it is a bit of an oxymoron for our environmental explications to resist integration of knowledge stemming from diverse areas of study. In other words, we often tend to divide and rule ecothinking and create notional repositories that break up ecoawareness into separate sections of understanding the natural cosmos. In this light, academia often creates separate cognitive realms of environmental thinking and concedes to writings that risk becoming elitist and obscure. In order for the world at large to reconceptualize ecoawareness and undertake ecoaction, environmental writings need to transgress disciplinary boundaries that impede communion. And if the process to “greening” human cultures includes the reassessment of past and present *praxis* (thus classified among the so-called practices *de la liberación*), ecothinkers around the world should greet this fascinating and engaging dialogue for a common purpose: environmental protection.

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PART I:

**ECOLITERARY WRITINGS
ACROSS TIME AND SPACE**

