

Queensland University of Technology

Andrea Baldwin

The mirror manoeuvre: Telling the same story twice

Abstract:

The emerging field of ecopsychology is marked by two theoretical concerns which can be seen as mirror images of each other. One is the concern with what humans need, psychologically, from the non-human natural world (e.g. Wolsko & Lindberg 2013). The other is what nature needs from us (e.g. Swim 2013). Ecocriticism has been exploring these questions for at least two decades, but ecocritical theory examines ways of *reading* texts rather than ways of *writing* them (Bate 2000; Buell 2001; Garrard 2012). Undertaking theoretically-informed ‘creative manoeuvres’, and reflecting and reporting on the results, is one way for practice-led researchers in the field of creative writing to progress the knowledge claims of our discipline. This paper describes an example of innovative ecowriting practice, premised on the idea that specific techniques of narrative fiction writing can deepen reader engagement with ecopsychology’s twin concerns and help motivate ecological action. Exploring this premise is time-critical given the current environmental crisis (Rust & Totton 2012), and emerging evidence that contemporary modes of representing the non-human natural world fail to elicit activist responses (Crompton & Kasser 2009; Joffe 2008). In the example of ecowriting practice reported here, the author has created two novels, *The Child Pose* and *Still Water*. The novels tell, from two different perspectives, a single story in which human characters benefit from non-destructive interactions with non-human nature. This paper argues that the unique reading experience thus constructed produces a complex and intense relationship between reader and story which generates specific psychological effects, and ultimately demands an activist response.

Biographical note:

Dr Andrea Baldwin is a clinical psychologist, practice-led researcher and emerging writer. Having explored several Australian novels of place through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis for her English Honours degree, approximately a hundred years ago, she remains fascinated by interactions among the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real in literary evocations of Australian places. As a consciously interdisciplinary practitioner, Andrea constantly grapples with the role of language in creating and crossing boundaries in text and mind. She is excited by mirrors, lacunae and islands. Andrea is currently undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing at QUT.

Keywords:

Mirrors – Psychoanalysis – Lacan – Ecowriting – Ecocriticism – Ecopsychology

Introduction

Until recently, ecocriticism has been marked by what Buell calls a ‘quietistic if not retrograde politics’ (2011: 94), which offers little theoretical or practical assistance to the ecological writer (ecowriter) aiming to foster a relationship between text and reader that results in positive ecological action. What Buell calls the ‘second wave’ of ecocriticism has been more political but less ecological, de-emphasising distinctions between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘human-made’ (Buell 2011). The goals of this creative writing project are both political and ecological: the novels aim to encourage in the reader a mindful awareness of the non-human natural world, and motivation to act in ecologically responsible ways, by creating a shared Imagining of humans benefiting through non-destructive interactions with non-human nature.

Lacanian psychoanalysis has been foundational for both ecopsychology (Rust & Totton 2012) and ecocriticism (Buell 2011), and the Lacanian scheme of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic provides a helpful starting point for arguing that textual experience might ultimately encourage ecological activism. According to Lacan, the nature of the Real - how it affects us and is affected by us - is beyond our capacity to grasp, except imperfectly through the Imaginary and the Symbolic (Lacan & Fink 1972). Dodds (2012) points out, however, that the current ecological crisis is not a text: species loss occurs in the Real, and the ecowriter attempts to engender action that will affect the Real. This is a difficult task, as recent research suggests that various Symbolic representations of nature central to environmental campaigns (e.g. representations of the beauty of ‘unspoiled nature’, the uniqueness of endangered species, the damage and destruction human beings inflict on nature) all fail to motivate ecological action, for different reasons (Crompton & Kasser 2009; Joffe 2008). The creative manoeuvre described here seeks to manipulate the Symbolic functions of language to tap into and strengthen positive shared Imaginings of relations between humans and ecologies, in order to arouse readers to take ecological action that will affect the Real.

Critical semantics

Contemporary ecocritics routinely caution against simplistic definitions of ‘natural’ landscapes that ignore the history of human settlement and transformation, and mythic concepts such as ‘pristine wilderness’ (e.g. Cronon 1996). Some writers argue that no distinction is possible between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ environments, since ‘nature’ is present in every environment in the form of physical forces if not actual non-human species (Marris 2011), and human beings are after all just another species of animal (Garrard 2012). On such bases, some writers reject the term ‘nature’ altogether (Morton 2007). Others, however, point out that without some concept of ‘nature’ it is very difficult to define what an ecowriter is talking about (Buell 2011). For the purpose of this paper, ‘nature’ denotes those organisms that have evolved to inhabit the earth contemporaneously with humans, and the habitats that support them. ‘The non-human natural world’ is a more unwieldy phrase, but is used here to evade

unwanted anthropomorphic connotations (e.g. ‘Mother Nature’) and anthropocentric implications of terms like ‘environment’ and ‘the world around us’ (Buell 2001).

The mirror manoeuvre

Novels are often described as holding up a mirror to the world, reflecting experience (including our experience of nature) back to us in ways that highlight and illuminate aspects of that experience (Motte 2005). I have added another level of mirroring: the two texts reflect *each other*, creating a space between texts and reader that has characteristics of both a closed (loop) system and an open system. The two novels recount the same set of events in the same location, but focus on two different characters. The experiment is conceptualised as analogous to placing two mirrors at angles to an object and studying the reflections. Such a manoeuvre creates a unique kind of space between texts and reader, which goes beyond ‘ecomimesis’ (representations of the natural world; Buell 2011: 95) to generate the destabilising effects of the uncanny (Freud 1919). The unsettling, disturbing experience of the uncanny is expected to prompt an emotional and ultimately a behavioural response from the reader.

The Child Pose is a novel written in limited third-person point of view. The protagonist, forty-year-old psychiatrist Susan Wilcox, is the state director of mental health. Her decision to grant overnight leave to Nell Ogden, a woman who has lived in a psychiatric hospital for three decades, has tragic consequences when Nell murders her four-year-old great-niece. The resulting media furore sees Susan suspended pending an inquiry. Suffering from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder including nightmares and ruminations, Susan retreats to the quiet coastal town of Stillwater where she spent childhood holidays with her family. But she finds the community divided over a proposed marina resort development that threatens the rock pool – a place of profound and complex significance to Susan.

Still Water recounts the same events from the first-person perspective of sixteen-year-old Storm, recently discharged after spending a year in hospital being treated for depression and self-harm. Storm develops her own connection to Stillwater, particularly a cave outside the town that – like the rock pool – has gone virtually unnoticed and undisturbed by generations of townspeople. The demand for limestone and other building products for the marina development is likely to result in mining and quarrying and will inevitably destroy the cave.

Representation

Ecopsychologists work from a general assumption that relationships between humans and ecologies that are non-destructive on both sides are possible and necessary for the wellbeing of individual humans and for humans as a species:

Ecopsychologists argue that genuine sanity is grounded in the reality of the natural world; that the ecological crisis signifies a pathological break from this reality; and that

the route out of our crisis must therefore involve, among other things, a psychological reconciliation with the living earth (Fisher 2002: xiii)

One aim of ecowriting, therefore, is to mobilise the reader's engagement with questions of how to preserve and protect ecologies, which will in turn benefit humans (Rust & Totton 2011):

Self-transcendence values include concern for the welfare of all people and for nature (Grouzet et al. 2005; Schwartz 1992, 2006). Using a range of different investigative approaches, social psychologists have found that the more individuals endorse... self-transcendence values, the more they also express positive attitudes and behaviours towards other-than-human nature (Crompton 2011: 201-202)

The Child Pose and *Still Water*, as texts, each make the claim that a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and non-human ecologies is possible – that is, does or could belong to the Real. Reading about a beneficial relationship between a human being and a natural ecology, the reader can imagine such a relationship is possible.

Replication

One of the effects of representing such a relationship twice, in two different novels, is simple reinforcement or reiteration of this possibility. In the hard sciences, value is placed on the replicability of an experiment: the likelihood that performing the same experiment again will yield the same findings. When an experiment consistently finds the same thing, this is considered an affirmation of the experimental hypothesis, and its implications for the world beyond the experimental context. For scientists, repeated findings are an indication that what is Symbolically represented through their measurements and observations reflects a Real process at work. Something is observed to be happening, although exactly what and why it is happening are still matters of interpretation, belonging to the Imaginary.

Scientific thought pervades Western discourse, and the Western reader will tend to accept that similar effects derived through different methods have inherent validity. A finding that stubbornly turns up again and again, despite variations in methodology, will be seen as stronger, more robust, more expressive of the Real, than one that can only be elicited under one specific set of circumstances. Two novels which represent positive, mutually beneficial relationships between people and nature create, in effect, a truth claim: a stronger sense that such relationships can be achieved.

Reflection



As noted above, a common metaphor views texts as reflecting ‘reality’. The text – constructed by human hands, like a mirror – is seen as subject to natural laws which cause it to behave in particular ways (as the laws of physics cause a mirror to reflect an object, through the interaction of light with its specific structure). As Motte (2005) notes, ‘reading can be conceived as a kind of mirror-gazing’ (p. 786). The current experiment uses two texts to perform the work of two mirrors.

In the photograph above, the two figures – girl and sea-fan – represent a human being interacting with non-human nature. Neither image is a photograph of the two figures: both are reflections. One image alone would have strongly suggested that the figures must exist in ‘reality’. Two reflections, showing different elevations of the same figures, reinforce our impression that the figures exist, even though we cannot see them.

Reflection introduces another element beyond replication: it includes us as viewers. In the left-hand picture we see more of the sea-fan; in the right-hand picture, the girl faces us more directly: we know this is a function of our viewpoint in relation to the figures and the mirrors. We are in a relationship with them. In the same way, two novels describing characters and explaining events slightly differently invite us to make our own judgments about the ‘truth’ of these characters and events: to *reflect* on our viewpoint. The reader-text relationship, which can become invisible and unconscious as the reader is drawn into one text, is rendered visible and conscious by the awareness of two.

The space between mirrors, figures and viewer, has some characteristics of a closed system. The mirrors continue to reflect the figures; the viewer continues to observe the reflections. The longer the viewer looks, the more detail she/he may observe, noting what one angle reveals that the other does not. Similarly, two texts create a

unique space between texts, nature and reader. Just as the two mirrors deepen engagement with the figures, providing more interest than one mirror alone, so two texts are expected to deepen reader engagement with characters, events and setting evoked in different ways.

Recognition

Once compelled to reflect on our viewpoint, to see that we stand in a relationship with the two texts, we are more likely to perceive ourselves *within* the texts. Motte (2005), in his typology of ‘mirror scenes’, categorizes such scenes into three types:

In the first type, the subject recognizes himself or herself unproblematically. In the second type, the subject finds recognition difficult, but ultimately possible. In the third type, the subject fails to recognize himself or herself (Motte 2005: 777)

Recognition is Motte’s key concern, but he switches quickly from the character’s self-recognition in mirror scenes to ways in which a text acts as a mirror to the reader:

reading can be conceived as a kind of mirror-gazing. At least in one dimension among the many that characterize that activity; and I, for my part, feel that dimension to be an important one. Most particularly in the case of fiction among the many things we ‘see’ in literature, one of the salient things is *ourselves*, writ large... though for the most part telling ourselves that we’re engaged in another sort of activity entirely, we look for ourselves in the books we read, narcissists that we are—and there we find ourselves, or some version of ourselves... We read, that is, but we also watch ourselves read. In doing so, we construct a version of ourselves, one whom we may sometimes recognize immediately, sometimes by dint of effort, and sometimes not at all (Motte 2005: 785-6)

Motte goes on to comment that authors use specific techniques to ‘double and reinforce’ the effects of recognition, ‘for whatever reason, encouraging us to imagine identity between ourselves and textual constructs’ (787). He gives the example of Vladimir Nabokov, in his novel *Despair*, directly addressing the reader: ‘‘Gentle reader’, he says, ‘look at yourself in the mirror, as you seem to like mirrors so much’’ (cited in Motte 2005: 787). As a reader and collector of mirror scenes, Motte’s reaction to this exhortation is to be taken aback:

I had thought all along that I had been watching others gaze into the mirror, from a safe distance, and very largely removed from their travails; yet Nabokov shatters that illusion in this gesture, and places me squarely and inevitably in front of a reality which he believes to be fundamental [...] he engages us in high play, asking us [...] to consider what we *see* when we read, and what we seek to find. And if we accept his challenge, our answer—whatever else it may be—must be double. Because suddenly we are both ourselves and a character in a fiction of somebody else’s creation. As our reflection constantly reminds us, we are both us and it, simultaneously one and other, same and different (p. 787).

Limited third person point of view, sometimes compared with looking over the protagonist’s shoulder (because the reader sees only what the protagonist sees), may equally validly be described as looking into a mirror. The reader, asked to identify

with the protagonist by seeing through her eyes, critically observes how the protagonist interacts with other characters and the world around her: *does she behave as I would in this situation? Does she behave differently?* The reader, while watching the protagonist's world through her eyes, also watches the protagonist, in quest of self-recognition. In this way, limited third person point of view is used to 'double and reinforce' the effects of recognition in *The Child Pose*.

In *Still Water*, the first person point of view performs a similar 'doubling and reinforcing' function in a different way. The narrative is structured as the protagonist's diary. This places the reader simultaneously in the position of 'I' (Storm, the protagonist) and in an implied 'you' relationship with Storm: the reader is the diary, receiving Storm's confidences. Storm consciously uses the diary as a way of making visible to herself her emotions and experiences, enabling her to reflect on them. Storm can see herself in the diary: the reader looks for herself in Storm.

The two novels provide a further dimension of 'doubling and reinforcing' with two protagonists of vastly different ages and backgrounds, whose characteristics sometimes echo and sometimes contrast with one another. Despite their disparity, each develops a beneficial relationship with a specific natural place. Opportunities are thus maximised for the reader to 'recognise' herself, to identify with aspects of each protagonist, and to recognise her own non-human natural environment in the textual construction which the two novels share.

Reverberation

Two mirrors do more than just reflect an object twice. Depending how the mirrors are angled, and how far they are placed from the object and from each other, they yield multiple reflections of the object, along with different fragments of the background and glimpses of the viewer. It becomes difficult to distinguish what is a 'direct' reflection of object, background and viewer, and what is a 'reflection of a reflection':



This complex visual situation is approximated by the two novels, written concurrently and through a process of referencing back and forth from one to the other. On the one hand, the space between reader, texts and world (like the space between viewer, mirrors and objects) is a closed system, with reflections reverberating against one another, bouncing back and forth. On the other hand, there is an open quality about this space. In the image above, the viewer sees the objects, glimpses of the photographer's body, and segments of the background, and these elements are expressed differently in each reflection (there are still only two mirrors). Similarly, the reader of two novels dealing with the same events will experience 'echoes' from one novel in the other. The exercise is premised on a hope that these echoes will be persistent and insistent, prompting the reader to an ecological activist response.

Witnessing

If we read novels to recognise ourselves, as Motte says, we also read them to recognise the other. But here Oliver (2001), working in a postcolonial framework, argues that recognising the other is not enough: that models of mere recognition perpetuate oppression. Oliver rejects the idea that recognition is at the centre of subjectivity – a notion Lacan inherited from Hegel – because a subject-object relational framework leaves the subject fundamentally alienated and denying the subjectivity of others. Instead, Oliver argues a need to develop a conception of ourselves that links us more intimately to other subjects. She advocates for a practice she calls 'witnessing', which goes beyond recognition. Witnessing, in Oliver's terms, means radically understanding the other as having agency – an idea downplayed throughout the body of Lacan's work. Witnessing decentres the autonomous self, and is based on the idea that difference, rather than sameness, is that which is most

valuable between self and other. Oliver's idea of witnessing embraces both seeing the other, and believing in or 'bearing witness' to otherness (2001).

The two-novel creative manoeuvre provides an opportunity for the reader not only to witness the protagonist's interactions with the non-human natural world as other, but to witness one protagonist witnessing the *other* protagonist's interactions with other. The most significant of these moments, from an ecowriting point of view, are those in which what is witnessed is a confrontation between subjectivity and othered subjectivity: the agency of the non-human. One example is an encounter with humpback whales, shared by Susan and Storm. This extract is from *The Child Pose*, focussing on Susan:

What's beside her in the water – suddenly, silently there – is for a moment impossible to take in. Something from a dream dropped into the world, suspended in empty blue without context or connection or background, without past or present, just there.

A whale.

A whale, and a calf.

The mother's eye under the heavy lid rolls to keep Susan in view as she passes. The whales arc and breathe without haste, light making ribbons and diamonds shimmer over their pale bellies. Beside the calf the mother is enormous; in the great ocean, miniscule. For a moment Susan can feel her, *be* her, sliding through polyrhythms of warm and cool that dance along her flanks and tail, moving easily, breathing easy... then the whales are gone in the blue opacity as if they were never there.

The same incident, reported from Storm's point of view in *Still Water*, privileges Storm's witnessing of Susan's encounter:

They sort of loomed out of the blue, a mother and calf, moving languidly like they had all the time in the world. I saw Susan turn and see them, and I was jealous as all hell – they were so close to her! You can't read body language underwater – Susan was just a floating body with her arms out, her face masked and turned away from me. I blew out my air and dived down to get a better angle. Sunlight rippled across Susan's legs and the whales' bellies. Clouds of bubbles bloomed around them like huge pale blue flowers.

One, two slow pulses of their bodies and they were gone, as if they'd never been there.

I struck out for Lacuna as fast as my arms and fins would take me. I reached the ladder before Susan, and without even pulling off my mask I spat out my snorkel and yelled (idiotically) 'Did you see them?'

... 'Mummy, mummy, she *talked* to you!' screamed Caitie. Susan had pulled off her mask, and I couldn't be sure it was just salt water from her hair running down her face.

'Yes, darling,' she murmured. And I wondered if Susan had been closer to the whale than I could see.

The intentions of this act of reflection are multiple. I have aimed to emphasise the subjectivity of the whales without anthropomorphising them. To Susan, they are

other, yet some identification or kinship of experience is imaginatively possible. Limited third person point of view places the reader close to Susan's experience, providing sense impressions but leaving the emotional impact of the encounter for the reader to generate. This sense of impact is amplified (without loss of openness) through Storm's act of witnessing: Storm suspects the encounter has moved Susan to tears, but cannot delineate the nature and degree of her emotion, or the significance of the 'closeness' between Susan and the whale. Susan is uncommunicative, Storm is uncertain, the whales are other – yet in witnessing this incident through two mirrors, I hope the reader will experience it as unsettling, resonant, memorable, and ultimately actionable. Through encountering the whale in the mirror, I hope the reader will ask mindfully, 'What do whales give us?' and the converse, 'What do whales need from us?' And in engaging with these questions, act on the answers.

The Uncanny

According to Freud, encountering oneself unexpectedly in a mirror and not immediately recognising the specular image evokes a sense of the uncanny – that which is both familiar and unfamiliar (Freud 1919: 247). Citing examples from his own life and the work of Ernst Mach, Freud identifies a strong sense of *repugnance* on first glimpsing and failing to recognise one's own reflection, and asks, 'Is it not possible [...] that our dislike of (the supposed strangers) was a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction which feels the 'double' to be something uncanny?' (1919: 247).

Freud's formulation of the uncanny describes a particular type of uneasy, fearful feeling which occurs under two circumstances: 'either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed' (1919: 248). Examples of the former include the evocation of experiences Freud says threaten to reactivate the castration complex and womb phantasies: dismembered limbs and severed heads, feet that dance by themselves, burial alive. Examples of the latter include the stimulation of beliefs about the omnipotence of thoughts, fulfilment of wishes, secret injurious powers, and the return of the dead. In addition to these two types of experience, Freud identifies a third (though he acknowledges a relationship between this and the first two):

an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on (Freud 1919: 243)

Freud then goes on at some length to discuss ways in which writers of fiction achieve uncanny effects, despite the fact that as readers we know the entire fictional world to be (in lay terms) 'imaginary' rather than 'real'.

Arousing the uncanny – uneasy, fearful, anxious feelings that demand to be allayed – is potentially a way to engender action. A vast body of gothic scholarship deals with the power of the double within a single text (e.g. Dougherty 1998). But the relationship between a reader and a novel can easily be viewed as a closed system:

discrete, contained and integral, like a spectral image. It is easy enough to put down a novel and end the relationship. A novel is a product, existing within two covers; it is a singular object that can be put on a shelf or packed in a box. It has a beginning and an end. It can be reviewed as a discrete work of art; liked or disliked, acclaimed or disdained. *Two* texts which reach out to each other across the boundaries of their covers/frames are a much more unwieldy, unpredictable force to deal with. They are not a single entity. They spawn doubles, diverge and converge asymmetrically, reproduce aspects of one another and the reader and her world in wild fragmented cycles of reflection, and consequently are much more unsettling and insistent.

Doubling reinforces, but a perfect double does not evoke the uncanny. The concept of ‘the uncanny valley’ captures the idea of a match not so close as to be consonant, and not so distant as to be unrelated, but sited precisely in the place where an unsettling sense of dissonance or discordance is generated between the original and the copy (Lewkowicz & Ghazanfar 2012). Where the double is just different enough, it reinforces but also extends. To literally write the same story twice would achieve nothing. Arguably to *read* the same story twice is never to do so – time and previous experience intervenes, you read a different story, take something different from the text – but this is not a process the *writer* can manipulate. To *write* the same story twice with conscious attention to that which is the same and that which is different – how the mirrors are placed and angled – is to create possibilities, to intentionally manipulate how the imaginary echoes sound.

To formulate a theory of how experiencing the uncanny might engender ecological action is too large a task for the current paper. The key would seem to lie somewhere in the territory between Lacan’s understanding of desire and Freud’s theories of anxiety. According to Lacan (1972), the difference between the perceived wholeness of the specular image, and the fragmented consciousness experienced by the subject, creates desire because it creates the perception of lack. The subject longs for reconciliation with the other. Freud’s concept of anxiety also relates to that which is lacking, missing, not whole; and the possibility of taking action for reconciliation and closure (Hamber & Wilson 2002). The two texts, generating their multiple reflections, form an engine for generating the possibility of reconciliation – between the texts, between reader and text, between human subject and non-human world.

Why two texts?

It might be argued that the effects of more than one character encountering the same situation, and of one character witnessing another, can be achieved within the same text through the use of multiple narrative viewpoints. But there are a number of reasons for attempting this exercise through the use of two texts. Firstly, despite excursions into other models, the narrative tradition of the singular protagonist continues to dominate contemporary Western literature. By convention, the reader expects to identify with the protagonist. Various novels depart from this convention by providing two or more protagonists (Australian texts *All That I Am*, *Foal’s Bread*, *The Slap*, *What the Ground Can’t Hold*, and *Five Bells*, are just a few examples), but in each of these texts there is a focus on the relationship between or among the

characters in their situation. Ultimately the various points of view contribute to a single story. *The Child Pose* and *Still Water* are not primarily about the relationship between Susan and Storm; they are about how each of these individuals relates to the non-human natural world. The two points of view are not intended to coalesce inward, rather to reach outward and embrace the reader in their widening spiral of reflection. In *The Child Pose*, the reader watches Susan watching Storm. In *Still Water*, the reader watches Storm watching Susan. The fact that at the moment of reading, the other book's protagonist is only accessible to the reader through the eyes of the current protagonist is inflected in complex ways by the reader's experience of the other book (already achieved or yet to come). This particular reflective process is only possible because there are two mirrors.

It takes time to read a book, even if one reads the entire book in a single sitting. One's perception of the beginning has changed by the end: this is a simple enough dynamic that every author takes into account¹. The act of reading *two* books introduces an additional time factor: the amount of time that passes between finishing one book and beginning the other. This may be a long time, or a short time. Some readers may choose to read the two books contemporaneously. A reader may re-read one after reading both. Some readers may never read one of the books, but impressions of the unread book garnered from reviews or publicity may colour the perception or memory of the book that is read. The two texts thus introduce a range of new relationships with time, multiplying the possibilities for how the books are read and how they impact the reader imaginatively.

Two texts create the 'space between' that one text cannot, however much its structure plays with multiple voices, multiple registers of language, or multiple stories. Texts like *Cloud Atlas*, *If On A Winter's Night A Traveller*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*, each retain a sense of integrity as an artefact. These books create multiple environments, one might say multiple worlds, within themselves. Series create the same world, but each novel narrates events taking place at different times, and/or in different places. The two-novel manoeuvre attempts to construct the *same* place, at the same time, from two different viewpoints, separated by the distance between two separate works, paradoxically making the fictional place both more obviously constructed (because the two texts reflect each other, drawing attention to similarities and differences in the language used for this construction), and more apparently real (because of the psychological effect of replication as reinforcement or confirmation).

Conclusion

There are conflicts involved in being two kinds of researcher: both a psychologist and a writer. My inner psychologist will not acknowledge any value in this 'experiment' until pre- and post- surveys of readers' ecological attitudes and behaviours are undertaken, with a sample size providing sufficient power for significant effects to be detected. As a creative writer, I have more modest and hopefully achievable aims: to stimulate and contribute to discussion about how ecowriting can motivate ecological action, by presenting some theoretical conceptions and practice explorations that may contribute usefully to this pursuit. In particular, exploring and exploiting the ways in

which texts behave like mirrors seems to me a potentially fruitful line of investigation. The creative manoeuvre presented here is a beginning.

Endnotes

1. Some people read and re-read parts of a book before reaching the end, some skip to the ending at some point and come back, but such non-linear reading methods are not the norm.

List of works cited

- Bate, J 2000 *The song of the earth*, London: Picador
- Buell, L 2001 *Writing for an endangered world: literature, culture and environment in the US and beyond*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard
- Buell, L 2011 'Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends', *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19: 2, 87-115
- Crompton, T 2011 'Back to nature, then back to the office', in Ruste MJ and Totton N (eds) *Vital Signs: Psychological responses to ecological crisis*, New York: Karnac, 201-210
- Crompton, T & Kasser, T 2009 *Meeting environmental challenges: The role of human identity*, Worldwide Fund for Nature UK: Godalming
- Cronon, W 1996 'The trouble with wilderness: Or, getting back to the wrong nature' *Environmental History* 1: 1, 7-28
- Dodds, J 2012 'The ecology of phantasy: ecopschoanalysis and the three ecologies', in Ruste MJ and Totton N (eds) *Vital signs: Psychological responses to ecological crisis*, London: Karnac, 119-132
- Dougherty, N 1998 'Vampires, eroticism, and the lure of the unconscious', in Kittelson ML (ed) *The soul of popular culture: Looking at contemporary heroes, myths and monsters*, Peru Ill: Carus, 168-180
- Fisher, A 2002 *Radical ecopsychology: Psychology in the service of life*, New York: SUNY
- Freud, S 1919 'The 'uncanny'' <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf> (accessed 1 December 2013)
- Garrard, G 2012 *Ecocriticism*, New York: Routledge
- Hamber, B & Wilson, RA 2002 'Symbolic closure through memory, reparation and revenge in post-conflict societies' *Research Papers, Paper 5, Human Rights Institute* http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/hri_papers/5 (accessed 16 July 2013)
- Joffe, J 2008 'The power of visual material: Persuasion, emotion and identification', *Diogenes* 55: 1, 84-93
- Lacan, J & Fink, B 2006 *Ecrits: The first complete edition in English*, Norton: New York
- Lewkowicz, DJ & Ghazanfar, AA 2012 'The development of the uncanny valley in infants', *Developmental Psychobiology* 54: 2, 124-132
- Marris, M 2011 *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*, New York: Bloomsbury

- Morton, T 2007 *Ecology without nature: Rethinking environmental aesthetics*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard
- Morton, T 2008 'John Clare's dark ecology', *Studies in Romanticism* 47: 2, 179-193
- Motte, WF 2005 'Reflections on mirrors', *MLN* 120: 4, 774-789
- Oliver, K 2001 *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota P
- Rust, MJ & Totton, N 2012 *Vital signs: Psychological responses to ecological crisis*, London: Karnac
- Swim, JK 2013 'Confronting for conservation', *Ecopsychology* 5: 1, 1-2
- Wolsko, C & Lindberg, K 2013 'Experiencing connection with nature: the matrix of psychological well-being, mindfulness, and outdoor recreation', *Ecopsychology* 5: 2, 80-91