The Trumpeter
Journal of Ecosophy

The Language of Ecopoetry and the Transfer of Meaning

Cassandra J. O'Loughlin

Volume 38, numéro 1, 2022

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1095383ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/1095383ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Athabasca University Press

ISSN

0832-6193 (imprimé)
1705-9429 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

O'Loughlin, C. (2022). The Language of Ecopoetry and the Transfer of Meaning. *The Trumpeter*, *38*(1), 9–22. https://doi.org/10.7202/1095383ar

Résumé de l'article

This article explores the properties of ecopoetry that have to do with the realisation that we are not merely external observers but active and intrinsic participants within the biosphere. The type of ecopoetics I am advocating takes a subjective stance to experience: it begins from within individual consciousness and is rooted in sensory perception. Reference to the world through this type of ecopoetry evokes a tone or mood, or “atmosphere” between environmental attributes and human experience that can solicit an emotional response. Ecopoetry can deliver meaning on a level beyond the direct connotations of the signs and symbols on the page. This has to do with “presence” as a phenomenological approach to the aesthetics of nature. Employing these concepts has the potential to bridge the gap between nature and politics, and influence attitudes towards living sustainably with the earth.

The Trumpeter
ISSN 1705-9429
Volume 38, No. 1 (2022)

The Language of Ecopoetry and the Transfer of Meaning

Cassandra J. O'Loughlin

> *Poems are a verbal equivalent of fossil fuel (stored energy), but they are a renewable source of energy, coming, as they do, from those ever generative twin matrices, language and imagination.*
>
> —William Rueckert, "Literature and Ecology" (1996, 108).

Precise definitions of ecopoetry vary, but the type I refer to is generally known by the way it conveys a mutual or reciprocal relationship between humanity and the milieu of other lifeforms in which we ourselves are deeply entrenched. In particular, it has to do with the realisation that we are not merely external observers, but active participants within the biosphere. It also implies a duty of care for ecological integrity. The charge of ecopoetry is towards environmental awareness: it must be honest about the evidence but at the same time present hope for better environmental outcomes. It provides positive affirmation of our embeddedness in ecological relationships that begin from within individual consciousness and are rooted in sensory perception. In another article I have expanded on the theory that sensory perception in relation to the embodied experience of self, flesh and Earth are deeply immersed in each other (O'Loughlin 2018). The elements are more than emblems and more than background; they provide a tapestry of knowledge through which the language of the human body communicates.

While sensory perception, in its preverbal state, is already an exchange, philosophical deliberation and empirical evidence rely on the conscious sharing of the cultural artefacts of language and literature for their expression. Signs and symbols are used to fill the space between spoken language and meaning. In the case of poetry in particular, the communication of meanings is reflected in the skill of the writer: their technique, the use, for instance, of figurative language, syntax, metaphor and so forth. Metaphor, for example, allows for a complex layering of signification; it can reveal veiled connections between language and ideas. Literary techniques have the capacity to reflect the writer's perception of the relationships between the human and the other, and help us explore the possibilities of our own experience. David Abram observes:

> The disclosure that preverbal perception is already an exchange, and the recognition that this exchange has its own coherence and articulation, together

> suggested that perception, this ongoing reciprocity, is the very soil and support of that more conscious exchange we call language. (1997, 74)

Our human-made text is detached from the reality of the world we inhabit: in the act of writing and reading, we are focussed on the surface of the page; direct participation between our senses and the surrounding, inhabited environment is severed. To read emotive poetry in particular is to enter into a profound involvement with the "inked marks upon the page," and with what they can do to our senses (Abram 1997, 131).

Ecopoetic language that specifically engages with the interplay between our senses and the natural environment, offers a way of understanding our integration with the world. For instance, our eyes, focused on a word or a particular group of words, can find an image emerging, and we can also perceive associated sounds and tastes. When discussing the production of "atmospheres" in text or paintings, Gernot Böhme suggests the quality lies in the observation that it "not only communicates to us that a certain atmosphere prevailed somewhere else but that it conjures up this atmosphere itself" (1993, 124). Böhme's work is concerned with ecological nature aesthetics, the focus of which is *atmosphere*, bodily perception in space being the primary argument. He argues that "Perception is basically the manner in which one is bodily present for something or someone or one's bodily state in an environment" (1993, 125). Sensory perception experienced by the poet as a phenomenon, for instance, can be transferred to the reader whose interpretation is unique to his or her nature and experience.

Sensory perception in its own mode of being is ungraspable in representation: language can be conceived as an extension of the sensorial reality, but neither language nor the written word can imitate the perceived or represent it in all its complexity. Abram gives his Earth-centred interpretation of the relationship between perception and language, suggesting that "it is first the sensuous, perceptual world that is relational and weblike in character, and hence that the organic, interconnected structure of any language is an extension or echo of the deeply interconnected matrix of sensorial reality itself" (1997, 84).

Poets can bridge the gap between language and sensorial reality by utilising the silence to be understood implicitly beyond the signs and symbols on the page. The Irish poet Michael Longley, for instance, uses metaphor and simile as a *representation* to make a connection with sensory perception, rather than as an emotionally engaging *presentation* of the subject. He draws on intuitive aspects of experience which are better felt than shown. His four-line poem "Form" is one example of these concepts. The reader has a sense, or *feeling*, of experiencing the event through layers of possible interpretations:

> Trying to tell it all to you and cover everything

> Is like awakening from its grassy form the hare:
>
> In that make-shift shelter your hand, then my hand
>
> Mislays the hare and the warmth it leaves behind. (Longley 2006, 197)

This poem plays with the various meanings of the title word "form": the visual shape of a thing or as a verb to fashion or mould, or as the lair of a hare and so forth. It not only reveals the futility of trying to "tell it all" in its complexity, but it also takes into account the unknowability of nature as subject. The anthropocentric perspective is questioned; we cannot assume to be all-knowing just because we are human, or that what we profess to know is acceptable from a non-human perspective. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews suggests: "However provisional, improvisatory or open the form constructed by human hands may be, the human 'shelter' can never be adequate simply because it is human" (2008, 147). This poem, however, goes much deeper: it is a dialectical play of language between intellectual concepts and reality. It enacts an ambiguous relationship between understanding and materiality. There is flux between idea, action and purpose, imagination and reality. Just as the perceiver tries to adjust to the presence of the ever-changing nature of being in the world, and to the illusiveness of interpretation, so language oscillates. While most of the language in his poetry acknowledges communication with the natural world, Longley's ecopoetics, at times, also concedes inevitable detachment, absence and loss that are so much a part of living.

To further explain the terms "meaning" and "presence" (when referring to culture) as a phenomenological approach in this type of ecopoetic language, I refer to Hans Gumbrecht. For him, the main human self-reference in a "meaning culture" is the mind, whereas in "presence culture" it is the body: "meaning culture" being associated with modern culture, and "presence culture [is] close to medieval culture" (2004, 79-80). For meaning cultures, in his opinion, "subject" or "subjectivity" engages the main human self-reference, whereas "in presence cultures, humans consider their bodies to be part of a cosmology (or part of divine creation)"; the latter see themselves as being part of the world in "a spatial and physical way" (2004, 80).

Gumbrecht suggests a review of contemporary Western cultural configurations to expand the repertoire of analytic concepts in the humanities beyond the dimension of "meaning" to that of "presence." He is concerned with presence as a phenomenological approach to the aesthetics of nature. His intention is to "challenge a broadly institutionalized tradition according to which interpretation, that is, the identification and/or attribution of meaning, is the core practice" (Gumbrecht, 1). For him there is tension between "effects of meaning" and "effects of presence" in poetic forms; they should not be "subordinated" to meaning alone. He considers:

> Poetry is perhaps the most powerful example of the simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects—for even the most overpowering institutional

> dominance of the hermeneutic dimension could never fully repress the presence effects of rhyme and alliteration, of verse and stanza. (2004, 18)

The body's engagements and responses are ceaselessly adjusting to things outside itself, things that are continually altering. It is this active mix of receptiveness and resourcefulness by which every organism adjusts to the presence of the ever-changing temporal beings of the world that influences the event of perception and the way we feel.

Recognition and experience necessarily involve a coming together of reason and feelings. In the words of Arne Naess, "Reason loses its function where there is no motivation, and motivation is absent where there are no feelings either for or against" (2002, 4). The imaginative process expands the possibilities when elemental forces reduce humans to helpless bystanders, if not victims, for instance. There is the sense of dwelling amid change and uncertainty. We are reminded that all of our efforts are entrenched in what Abram describes as this "living dimension" of an ever-changing world (1997, 41). Yet, we realize that the phenomenal world is remarkably enduring and robust; we can trust it to behave in certain ways and we accept its makeup and integrity. Recognising these engagements and responses is crucial if we are to live sustainably with the Earth.

Ecopoetic Language and the Lived Experience

Before a place can become accepted as a dwelling place for the writer's imagination, it must first be discerned, experienced, expressed, and as it were fully engaged. This requires the writer to be sensorially present, to give oneself to the immediate aesthetic experience: to be "present" in the lived moment so that sensation is stirred and perception is stimulated. The theories of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are useful for understanding the relation between experience and language and for developing an associated theory of ecopoetics. Louise Westling points out that both of these philosophers "saw literature as the central mode of biocentric dwelling" (2011, 126). In his favour, Heidegger argues in "Letter on Humanism" that "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being" (Krell 2011, 167). In his works, nevertheless, there is a dominance of language in aesthetic theory. Heidegger's main focus is not on the body or the nature-culture connection. He insists on a radical gap between humans and all else, as is evident, for example, in "The Origin of a Work of Art" (Krell 2011, 108-9, 128). He suggests that people have subverted the fact that language remains the master of human endeavour and thus, in his words, "man's subversion of *this* [his emphasis] relation of dominance . . . drives his essential being into alienation" (Krell 2011, 244). In ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . ." he insists: "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man" (Hofstadter 2001, 213). In the

same paragraph he links these observations to "unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words." Heidegger considers that there is a need to respect language's "own nature" rather than to insist on our own dominance of it (Hofstadter 2001, 213).

I now want to focus on the *way* language could be seen to govern us. One such way can be found, for instance, in poetic language that affects an involuntary emotional response in the recipient. Rainer Maria Rilke's poem "The Man Watching" as translated by Robert Bly in *News of the Universe* can evoke such a response by tapping into our innate impulses or natural inclinations and feelings. Here is the first verse:

> I can tell by the way the trees beat, after
>
> so many dull days, on my worried windowpanes,
>
> that a storm is coming,
>
> and I hear the far-off fields say things
>
> I can't bear without a friend,
>
> I can't love without a sister. (1995, 121)

Acknowledging the "real world" and our connection to it necessarily involves feelings and emotions. Yet, it cannot be denied that a certain amount of mastery of language is responsible for the creation of a poem that has the potential to elicit this type of response. I agree with Heidegger that the language of poetry can beckon us "toward a thing's nature" (Hofstadter 2001, 214), but this seems limiting: nature or landscape poetry can do that, but such poetry presents human beings as the judge of aesthetic value rather than as one experiencing integration in the whole as can be the case with certain types of ecopoetry.

The aesthetic atmosphere produced by ecopoetic language can appeal to an emotional response. It can also enhance "receptivity to the meaningful solicitations—songs, cries, gestures—of the larger, more-than-human field" (Abram 1997, 9). To identify the ecopoetic revelation as a metaphor that awakens nature into song, Kate Rigby, in *Topographies of the Sacred*, translates and quotes the poem "Divining Rod," written by the German poet Joseph Eichendorff:

> Slumb'ring deep in everything
>
> Dreams a song as yet unheard,
>
> And the world begins to sing.
>
> If you find the magic word. (2004, 114)

In this case, opening up a way for the "song" of nature is conditional upon finding the "magic

word." The task of ecopoetry is to find that word: the language that releases the song of the earth. In Rigby's opinion, Eichendorff's poem:

> is orientated toward neither Schillerian idealization, which, as Schelling observes, seeks the elimination of real nature, nor utopian transformations, which ends in the artifactualization of the given, but rather toward the reclamation of the earth as a locus of the holy. (2004, 114)

Rigby suggests that Eichendorff's poem is "an ecopoetry, not of 'concrete content' but . . . of 'presentiment and presence'" (2004, 226). Finding the appropriate language and producing an atmosphere that is conducive to awakening nature into song should be the goal of the ecopoet. For me, this determination to capture meaning and present it in poetic language is inseparable from discovering the interrelationship between self and all else.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, rather than that of Heidegger, suits this argument better. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he stresses the appropriate use of language to "open upon Being" rather than as an attempt to reduce the world "to our idealizations and our syntax" or to arrange meaning exactly (1968, 102). According to Westling, Merleau-Ponty "came to embrace the kinship of living organisms through coevolution and described language as an embodied force emerging in many dimensions and beings in the natural world" (2011, 126). Westling argues that his "theory of language makes it far broader than a simply human creation; it is deeply integrated into the dynamism of nature as a dimension of the flesh of the world," and she claims Merleau-Ponty's chapter "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "ends with a definition of philosophy that sounds like a literature of wilderness" (2011, 132). In the last paragraph of "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty says:

> The meaning is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of 'psychic reality' spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said, the integral of all the differentiations of the verbal chain; it is given with the words for those who have ears to hear. And conversely the whole landscape is overrun with the words as with an invasion, it is henceforth but a variant of speech before our eyes, and to speak of its 'style' is in our view to form a metaphor. In a sense the whole of philosophy . . . consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language. And in a sense . . . language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves, and the forests. (1968, 155)

I prefer to consider Merleau-Ponty's reference to language in this passage as possessing "wild meaning", as Merleau-Ponty states, rather than likening it to the "literature of wilderness" as

Westling does. Wild meaning signifies preverbal communication, or the communicative voice beyond human language. Here I refer again to Abram, who clarifies the wild meaning of language as being "organic" and "relational and weblike in character" and says: "Wild, living speech takes up, from within, the interconnected matrix of the language and *gestures* [his emphasis] within it" (1997, 84). Longley, in his poem "Form," for example, uses the natural elements and phenomenon metaphorically to convey a bond between the flesh of the world and the idea that language conveys. Meaning as perceived, can be found in the way the natural world "speaks" to our senses. Longley delivers meaning obliquely by opening language to various interpretations. The assumption of human communicative superiority is challenged.

The sense of being through which the elemental nature of being is revealed and concealed as theorized by Heidegger is helpful when we consider that language should not be understood in the reduced sense of representation, vaguely related to things of the world. On referring to the Greek definition of the essence of being human in *Pathmarks* Heidegger concludes: "only because human beings *are* insofar as they relate to beings as beings, unconcealing and concealing them, can they and must they have the 'word', i.e., speak of the being of beings" (1998, 213). Gumbrecht clarifies Heidegger's concepts of "unconcealment" and "withdrawal" as follows: "Being, as it is being unconcealed, for example, in a work of art, is not something spiritual or something conceptual"; it belongs to the "dimension of things" (2004, 68); it is independent of interpretation "through any network of historically or culturally specific concepts" (2004, 70). In Gumbrecht's understanding, it presents itself "as an ongoing double movement of coming forth . . . and of withdrawing" (2004, 70).

My interpretation of this concept is that language presents the illusion of something coming and going from view: the topic is then grounded rather than abstract in Heidegger's sense of being, more than just representation in poetry. This process necessarily involves the stirring of memory; with each reading, we are capable of imaginatively visualising the subject and then the image fades as our attention is averted. Coming forward and withdrawing does not end at capturing moments in a metaphysical sense. In "The Question Concerning Technology", Heidegger suggests that it "saves" the world: "man," he says, "may be the one who is needed and used for the safekeeping of the essence of truth. Thus the rising of the saving power appears" (Krell 2011, 236). The creation of a work of art relies on "saving" the subject by revealing what is captured in a specific moment in time.

Poetical language provides a way of conceiving the relation of self and the world in a more grounded way than dominant forms of abstract and theoretical knowledge because it relies on sensory related experience to transfer meaning. The meaning to which I refer is related to just being in the world. Trevor Norris proposes that:

> Heidegger wishes to return this knowledge to its proper place, grounded in

> pragmatic relationships that respond thoughtfully and ethically to the dynamism and changeability of nature, of which our sense of self and being in the world is necessarily a part. (2011, 113)

Heidegger encourages a change in awareness and understanding "of self in relation to the world, time, and the nature of knowledge" (Norris 2011, 113). He disputes the claim that the nature of truth in art is a basic question of representation. In "The Origin of a Work of Art", Heidegger says: "The essence of art is poetry. The essence of poetry, in turn, is the founding of truth" (Krell 2011, 129). For him, a more basic kind of truth is hidden from us since we have become accustomed to living in a highly technological age. The truth made available to us through a work of art arouses us from our tendency to forget by unconcealing a foundational aspect of our being. I identify this concept of unconcealment as the *revelation* of a foundational aspect of our being.

A fundamental aspect of our being is the realisation of the metaphysical certainty of our interconnectedness with all else. Freya Mathews, when discussing her relationship with the universe, claims a "holistic one of geometro-dynamical interconnectedness" and an "ecological interconnectedness" (2004, 149). When referring to the thoughts of Naess, she says for him "The biological fact of ecological interconnectedness is taken to be a model of a deeper kind of interconnectedness which permeates the entire physical realm, from micro- to cosmo-levels" (2004, 148). Some Western ecocritical theorists turn to the sciences for answers concerning human embeddedness in ecological relationships and biological processes. Elsewhere I have explored some theories of the ontological inseparability of entities consistent with recent experimental and theoretical developments in quantum physics and quantum mechanics (O'Loughlin 2020, 3). In that article I refer to the work of Serpil Oppermann, Werner Heisenberg and others.

The concept of our interconnectedness with the other-than-human seeks to support Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, which identifies everything as connected to everything else (Cheryll Glotfelty 1996, xix). When discussing the relationship of literature to the ecological principle of connectedness, Glotfelty goes so far as to say: "we must conclude that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* [her emphasis] interact" (1996, xix). If we are to consider her argument valid, then we can assume that the literary expressions of ethically sound environmentally conscious ways of feeling we are part of an integrated world, as presented in certain types of ecopoetics, would be beneficial for the progress of *all* Earth's life systems. I suggest ecopoetics searches for grounds upon which the human and the other-than-human can, as William Rueckert states: "coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere" (1996, 107).

Ecopoetic Language in Relation to Environmental Politics

Now in the age of environmentalism it is necessary to respond to the causes of human alienation from the natural world. Self-conscious ecocentric poetry attempts to bridge the gap between politics and nature; the two terms are not mutually exclusive. Ecocentric orientations question all hierarchical systems that basically privilege the concept of dominion. The human establishing dominance over other creatures, forests, rivers, and ultimately nature itself is alienated. I believe this attitude of estrangement from nature has brought us to the current ecological crisis. For Jonathan Bate, ecopoetry "is not synonymous with writing that is pragmatically green": a declaration for ecological accuracy will not be poetic because its language is likely to focus on *doing* instead of *presenting* the experience of dwelling (2001, 42). In the same book he places emphasis on narrative and revelation in relation to dwelling:

> Whereas the biologist, the geographer and the Green activist have *narratives* of dwelling, a poem may be a *revelation* of dwelling [his emphasis]. Such a claim is phenomenological before it is political, and for this reason ecopoetics may properly be regarded as pre-political. (2001, 266)

Bate turns to Heidegger for a theoretical platform for ecocritical discussion in relation to Romantic literature. Heidegger's vision is fixed in the wake of Romanticism and it echoes European aestheticism out of which his philosophy grew. Nothing can operate outside of context. Norris suggests that "for Heidegger, the poetic reminds us of the *limits* [his emphasis] of our interpretative mastery of the world and the essential importance of dwelling in uncertainty" (2011, 124). Perhaps for Heidegger, dwelling in uncertainty is not a contrived or imagined situation to overcome, but rather a journey to a greater understanding of the complexity of our natural state and the challenge of interpretation through the written word.

The idea of dwelling is in a constant state of flux; it moves between perception and its linguistic expression. The dichotomy of being in the world, and the representation of experience through language, discloses something essential about being. This sense of identifying with a place where we feel we belong is established in dwelling: the inhabitant associates with the happenings of the place—perhaps any place where a personal history has been established and memories made. It need not be a place of birth or cultural family heritage. Neil Evernden suggests: "Metaphoric language is an indicator of 'place'—an indication that the speaker has a place, feels part of a place" (1996, 101). This association is deeper than that of the traveller who might appreciate only the outward appearances, while the resident might connect with "inside" knowledge (Evernden 1996, 99). The inhabitant might feel part of a place perhaps in the sense that Northrop Frye intended when he claimed that the aim of art is to "recapture, in full consciousness, that original lost sense of identity with our surroundings" (1964, 29). In Heidegger's opinion:

> The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen,* which says that man *is* insofar that he *dwells*, . . . however, *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine [his emphasis]. (Krell 2011, 245)

If we were all to cherish, protect, preserve and care for the world we might save the environment in which we dwell but this concept is limiting and exclusionist. Given our understanding of global lifestyles, economies and communications technologies, it is necessary to consider the concept of dwelling on Earth in a holistic and all-encompassing way rather than being just place specific or local.

In their proximity, we can learn that living, non-human entities are not unreceptive objects of human perception and exploitation; they too present through experiencing bodily sensory existence. To be sensitive to the needs of others, and to create meaning-filled words, the writer is required to be present intellectually, spiritually and sensorially. Being present means to give one's whole self to the lived moment. Proximity with the natural world allows for particular places, humans and the other-than-human to share in one another's existence, to affect and be affected by each other. It also helps us remember our carnal inherence in a milieu of sensations and sensibilities.

Rueckert sees a way of overcoming what some theorists call the crisis of representation. He considers that "a poem is stored energy, a formal turbulence, a living thing, a swirl in the flow," and is part of what he calls the energy pathways which sustain life (1996, 108-111). For him, "what a poem is saying is probably always less important than what it is doing and how" (1996, 110). Gary Snyder, in *The Real Work*, discusses a comparable link between the community and its poetry (1980, 173-174). For Bate, poetry is a form of renewable energy in the sense that when "we read or discuss a poem, we are recycling its energy back into our cultural environment" (2001, 247). He, however, points out that "Snyder's claim for poetry as a form of renewable energy failed to come to grips with the problem of writing, the gap between 'presence' and 'representation'" (2001, 248). The discrepancy could be a source of suspicion. Bate suggests a way of overcoming this problem:

> Good interpretation [of a text] is a synthesis of the two parts of the dialectic constituted by author and reader. In this synthesis, the author's and the reader's horizons of experience come to overlap with one another – to overlap, but not to be overlaid one exactly upon another. This overlapping allows for an overcoming of the problem of reference to the world. (2001, 249)

This could be the path through the scepticism concerning the "crisis of representation" or "hermeneutic of suspicion" that, as Bate claims, is present in all versions of "'postmodern' literary theory" (2001, 247). Interpretation of the lived experience has the potential to elicit an emotional response at the level of reception for the reader; the horizon of experience for the writer and the reader overlaps. Rueckert understands this principle. He suggests: "Reading is clearly an energy transfer as the energy stored in the poem is released and flows back into the language centers and creative imaginations of the readers" (1996, 110). This is, however, academic and mere rhetoric unless the "stored energy" gleaned from the ecopoetical works is translated in the classroom and carried to the wider community for it to stand a chance of benefiting the biosphere; this is one of the essential problems ecological poetics would have to address (Rueckert 1996, 120-121).

The occupation of the ecopoet is to present sufficient response to the circumstances in the world, to be a source of truth especially given the kinds of anxieties humanity is subject to with regard to the despoliation of our planetary home. Even though poetry, as expressed by Seamus Heaney, is "involved with extreme fictions as well as actual conditions," it might be influential in altering attitudes concerning the biosphere: "What it is offering," Heaney says, "is a glimpsed alternative, a world to which 'we turn incessantly and without knowing it'" (1995, 192).

Conclusion

The type of ecopoetics advocated here draws attention to our bodily communication with things. Understanding our breathing, responsive body as it inhabits and experiences the world is essential to this philosophy. Ecopoetics of this kind has a strong ecocentric perspective rather than one that is egocentric; it rejects a hubristic disrespect of the natural world. Reference to the world, particularly through poetry, is enhanced when the poet engages with the production of atmospheres in relation to sensory perception. It could be a ground-breaking way of reaching readers emotionally regarding a sense of responsibility for the natural environment.

The challenge for the ecopoet is to write poetry while in two states of mind: the one watchful of climate science and all its documented possible/probable scenarios, the other not losing sight of the feelings of wonder when experiencing the natural world. Meaning is often found in the silence that stands outside of human language and understanding, the silence that expresses a sense of awe and astonishment. The ecopoet is perpetually trying to come to terms with the incongruity between images and concepts, and between imagination and reason. The poet has the unenviable task of being both socially accountable and creatively spontaneous. It is up to the ecopoet to use innovative language, its formulas, configurations, syntaxes and grammars to forward the cause of living sustainably in a world of radical disconnectedness.

Works Cited

Abram, David. 1997. *The Spell of the Sensuous:Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books.

Bate, Jonathan. 2001. *The Song of the Earth*. London: Picador.

Bly, Robert. 1995. *News of the Universe: Poems of Twofold Consciousness*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Böhme, Germot. 1993. "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics." In *Thesis Eleven*:1993 36:113-126. http://the.sagepub.com/content/36/1/113

Evernden, Neil. 1996. "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the Pathetic Fallacy." In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, 92-104. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Frye, Northrop. 1964. *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, eds. 1996. "Introduction", xv-xxxvii, In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Goodbody, Axel, and Kate Rigby, eds. 2011. *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. 2004. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Heaney, Seamus. 1995. "The Redress of Poetry." In *The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures* 1-16. London: Faber and Faber.

Heidegger, Martin. 2011. "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Heidegger: Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 239-255. London: Routledge.

---. 2011. "Letter on Humanism." In *Heidegger: Basic Writings,* edited by David Farrell Krell, 147-181. London: Routledge.

---. 2011. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *Heidegger: Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 89-139. London: Routledge.

---. 2011. "The Question Concerning Techology." In *Heidegger: Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell 217-238. London: Routledge.

---. 1998. *Martin Heidegger: Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---. 2001. ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ." In *Martin Heidegger*: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, 209-227. New York: HarperCollins.

Kennedy-Andrews, Elmer. 2008. *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland 1968-2008*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.

Krell, David Farrell. 2011. Editor of *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. London: Routledge.

Longley, Michael. 2006. *Collected Poems*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Mathews, Freya. 2004. *The Ecological Self*. London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968. *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis. Edited by Claude Lefort. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Naess, Arne. With Per Ingvar Haukeland. 2002. *Life's Philosophy: Reason and Feeling in a Deeper World,* translated by Roland Huntford. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Norris, Trevor. 2011. "Martin Heidegger, D. H. Lawrence, and Poetic Attention to Being." In *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches,* edited by Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby, 113-125. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

O'Loughlin, Cassandra Julie. 2020. "Critically Imagining a Decolonised Vision in Australian Poetry." In *Landscape: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, Vol. 10. Iss. 1. https://ro.ecu.edu.au/landscapes/vol10/iss1/5/

---. 2018. "The Post-Pastoral Elements in Michael Longley's Poetry". In *Estudios Irelandeses,* Issue 13. 82-97. https://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/2018/03/the-post-pastoral-elements-in-michael-longleys-poetics/

Rigby, Kate. 2004. *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Rueckert, William. 1996. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, 105-123. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Schelling, Friedrich W. J. von. 1968. *Appendix* "Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to

Nature." (1807). Reprinted in *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry,* translated by Michael Bullock, edited by Herbert Read. London: Faber and Faber.

Snyder, Gary. 1980. *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964-1979,* edited by Wm. Scott McLean. New York: New Directions.

Westling, Louise. 2011. "Merleau-Ponty's Ecophenomenology. "In *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, edited by Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby, 126-138. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.