

**Restor(y)ing Our Place in the More-than-human World: A Narrative
Approach to an Everyday Ethics of the Self in Relationship to Earth
Others and to Place**

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Abstract

Restor(y)ing Our Place in the More-than-human World: A Narrative Approach to an Everyday Ethics of the Self in Relationship to Earth Others and to Place

This thesis poses the question: how ought we to live in place such that survivable futures for all might be achieved? Drawing on narrative ethics, I suggest that the problems western societies face today, ranging from loss of local greenspaces and habitats to threats of global warming, are at root narrative crises. The stories we tell about who we are as individual selves and as collective communities, as well as the stories we tell about the places we dwell in and places further afield, affect how we relate to each other and how we act in the more-than-human world. The stories that dominate today are destructive ones: dualistic stories that assume a separation between nature and culture, cities and wilderness, humans and all other living creatures. If we are going to find our way to survivable futures for all (humans, animals, plants and other earth others), we need new stories to live by. I suggest that we can find some of the words to such stories through recently published ecological memoirs.

My goal in engaging dialogically with such memoirs, is to amplify the moral impulses of their authors. In order to do this, I adapt practices derived from narrative therapy and narrative bioethics. I assemble a "virtual reflecting team" made up of approaches to environmental ethics that respect both continuity and difference including theorists from care ethics, feminist science studies, and dialogical ethics

perspectives, as well as Sack's (2003) geographical guide to the real and the good. By bringing both the virtual reflecting team and my own storied life into dialogue with these ecological memoirs, I excavate subjugated alternative knowledges of living, open up new possibilities for acting ethically in the more-than-human world, and contribute to the development and increased circulation of counter narratives to dominant master narratives.

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1. Killer Stories and Narrative Crises

1.1 From Killer Story to Life Story

"It is the story that makes the difference. It is the story that hid my humanity from me, the story the mammoth hunters told about bashing, thrusting, raping, killing, about the Hero... The killer story. It sometimes seems that that story is approaching its end. Lest there be no more telling of stories at all, some of us out here in the wild oats, amid the alien corn, think we'd better start telling another one, which maybe people can go on with when the old one's finished. Maybe. The trouble is, we've all let ourselves become part of the killer story, and so we may get finished along with it. Hence it is with a certain feeling of urgency that I seek the nature, subject, words of the other story, the untold one, the life story." (LeGuin, 1989: 168)

In the essay from which the above quotation is taken, author and literary critic Ursula K. LeGuin puts forward the intriguing proposal that the crises faced in the contemporary era are not just ecological, technological, sociological, economic and political in character, but are also at root narrative crises. This thesis begins from LeGuin's proposal; taking from her words the collective goal of finding a way to new stories, to "life stories" in all senses of the term,¹ to stories that will enable us to move forward into "survivable futures for all" (Haraway, 1991 [1985]).²

¹ LeGuin's term "life stories" resonates with Connelly and Clandinin's term "stories to live by" which they use to refer to a narrative way of understanding the professional lives and trajectories of teachers, and which I will discuss further in chapter four.

² Castree and Braun (1998) also frame "survivable futures" as the goal of their geographical work on social-nature.

It is through stories that we tell ourselves and each other who we are both individually and collectively.³ Stories reveal our humanity to us even as they construct that humanity. Narrative matters because it is through our self stories, our public narratives and our metanarratives⁴ that we come individually and collectively to answer "the only question important to us, 'What shall we do and how shall we live?'"⁵ a question at the heart of ethics.⁶ These stories matter to all of us because they lead to actions taken in the world we collectively share. As Bruner, a central theorist in the newly reinvented field of narrative psychology, puts it:

"Poison gas and Big Berthas might be the deadly fruits of verifiable science, but the impulse to use them grew out of those stories we tell ourselves. So should we not try to understand their power better, to see how stories and historical accounts are put together and what there is about them that leads people either to live together or to maim and kill each other?" (Bruner, 1996: 90).

³ I follow Arthur W. Frank (2004) in using the collective pronoun "we" throughout this work. Of his narrative work on health care provision he writes: "The renewal of generosity requires envisioning this vast enterprise of care for suffering as one in which we all participate together, each doing his or her part that would be impossible without others doing their parts. We is a constant reminder of our engagement and our interdependence" (10). The process of storying a way to survivable futures for all is also one that requires engagement and is predicated on interdependence. In this thesis we is a constant reminder that we share this more-than-human world with each other and with earth others.

⁴The terms "metanarrative" and "public narrative" are being used along the lines outlined by Somers, 1994. "Public narratives" refer to those stories that circulate at various scales throughout society. Examples of "public narratives" include stories of American national origin (cf. Cronon, 1995) and stories of what it is to be a caregiver for an Alzheimer's patient (cf. Gubrium and Holstein, 1999). "Metanarratives" are broad overarching stories such as Progress, Enlightenment, Capitalist vs. Communist etc. They tend to be more abstract than public narratives (Somers, 1994). "Self stories" are those stories that we tell about our selves and which some would argue actually construct our "self" (cf. Bruner, 1990 and 1996).

⁵ This is quotation of Frank (2002:3), in the context of his call for a practice of narrative ethics in sociology, quoting Weber, quoting Tolstoy.

⁶ See Lynn's (1998) discussion of this question in relation to Socratic ethics.

1.2 A Metaphor to Work By

The dominant narratives⁷ of western societies—including such "killer" stories as those of modernist progress, culture/nature dualisms, and objective science (and social science)—have been the subject of sustained academic critique over the last three decades. These critiques have provided insights into how these "killer" stories are put together and whose interests they serve. However, little has been learned in the process about life stories, about how we can story ourselves in life-affirming and life-preserving ways.

In developing a practice for engaging with narrative in a constructive fashion, I take seriously the proposition put forward by a growing number of psychologists, philosophers and social scientists that humans routinely employ narrative reasoning in their day to day lives, particularly with regards to issues of identity, relationship and ethics.⁸ From this perspective, I am interested in exploring those stories that people have written that offer specific albeit temporary solutions to the question of "how ought I to live" in the context of efforts to contribute to survivable futures for all: humans, earth others, and the more-than-human world.

The importance of narratives lies in their power to motivate and their potential to inspire. However, counter-stories—especially newly emergent ones—can be difficult to hear over the insistent roar of master narratives and the dominance of certain metanarratives. The goal of this thesis is to engage with the question "what ought we to

⁷ Technically speaking, a narrative is a particular type of discourse that takes the form of having a beginning, middle and end (cf. Polkinghorne, 1988). However, it would be a mistake to consider narrative as derivative of or in any way subsidiary to a wider category of discourse, since the theories that lie at the root of discourses are hypothesized to be of narrative form (Bruner, 1996) and are sometimes referred to as metanarratives (Somers, 1994). These ideas will be discussed further later in the thesis.

⁸ See for example, Gergen and Gergen (1988), Bruner (1990), Clinchy (2003)

do?" in a manner that expands the 'foundations of possibilities' (M. White, 2000: 150) available within North American Societies and amplifies alternatives to dominant narratives. Rather than using the dualistic framework of an objective science as the structuring plotline for this work, I instead adopt narrative therapy as my practical metaphor for proceeding. In metaphorically donning the role of narrative therapist to a culture in crisis, I am particularly inspired by social workers Michael White and David Epston who refuse to conceive of a separation between one-on-one counselling and social change work. White and Epston locate their own practices within the broader project of challenging both modernist ethics of control and dominating, monological, universal truth discourses (White and Epston 1990 and M. White 2000).

Unlike modernist approaches, narrative therapy is not interested in uncovering some "truth" of human nature or personal identity. Instead, narrative therapy focusses on helping people who find themselves in dead-end plotlines re-story their lives in order to become "other than the received version of who one is" (1990: 132). I propose that such a transformation is what is currently needed on a societal level to deal with the "dead-end plotlines" we collectively find ourselves in. To borrow once again from White's discussion, we need an orientation that "assists us to attend to the material options for breaking from many of the received ways of life [and] to attend to those events of people's lives that provide the basis for the constitution of identities that are other than those which are given" (132).

In order to story our way to survivable futures for all, not only do we need to act differently in the more-than-human world, we also need to become other than who we are. To assist people with the re-storying of their selves, narrative therapists, through dialogue, help them to identify events that contradict received versions of who they ought to be and that reveal "alternative knowledges" of living. In White's experience such

events are often found by paying attention to what he calls the “little sacraments of daily life” which he defines as

"those little events that lie in the shadows of the dominant plots of people's lives, those little events that are so often neglected, but that might come to be regarded with reverence, and at time with awe. These little sacraments are those events that have everything to do with the maintenance of a life, with the continuity of a life, often in the face of circumstances that would otherwise deny this" (145).

White's description of the everyday sacraments of living echoes LeGuin's insistence that we will find life stories amongst the oats and the corn and therefore, in the everyday places and activities in which humans live out their everyday lives.⁹

Societies and cultures are made up of these daily activities and encounters (M. White, 2000: 146). As a narrative therapist to a culture in crisis, therefore, attention to the sub-plots and alternative knowledges suggested by everyday stories may usefully reveal counter-narratives to dominant killer stories. For these reasons, this thesis concerns itself with a group of people who have made the telling of everyday stories of oats and corn their lives' work, a group of people Schauffler has called "ecological writers."¹⁰ Schauffler (2003) contrasts these "ecological writers" to traditional "nature writers," by highlighting the intertwining of self and environment, culture and nature in their writing:

⁹ "Earth others" is a term I have borrowed from Plumwood (1993), a dialogical feminist environmental philosopher. Terms like "non-human" or "nature", problematically invoke culture/nature dualisms. "Earth others" acknowledges and respects differences while avoiding polarising them as will be discussed further in the following chapter. "Earth others" include plants, trees, animals, fish, cliffs, mountains, fields, streams, or any other "entity" that is not human in origin.

¹⁰ Murphy (1995), a literary critic, finds that self-consciously ecological writing, of the kind Schauffler discusses, is a genre that arose in the late twentieth century.

"Because nature writers have traditionally focused primarily on the external environment, those who describe the dynamic interplay between inner and outer ecology are more accurately termed *ecological writers*, which suggests an integration of human and natural realms and helps dissolve the traditional divide between them...The reflective personal accounts of ecological writers can best be seen as a form of natural autobiography, a memoir of their evolving relation to the more-than-human world" (11-13).

These writers—including Robin Wall Kimmerer (2003), Scott Russell Sanders (1993, 1995, 2000), Terry Tempest Williams (2001[1991]), and Linda Hogan (1995, 2001)—write of their everyday experiences in everyday places. They understand "ecology" in its oldest sense as "household" and "share an abiding desire to be at home on Earth and express that deep sense of belonging through words" (Schauffler, 2003: 12). Their desire to be at home is in direct contrast with the Hero story, which emphasises separation and conflict.¹¹ Instead, ecological writers write about dwelling and connection; they tell life stories.¹² It is within this context of shifting plots, characters, and imaginative geographies that I locate the work presented in this thesis.

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part I begins by looking both at the reproduction of dominant narratives as well as at foundations of possibilities in current debates in environmental ethics and "animal geographies."¹³ The last two chapters in Part I explore narrative theories and therapies and propose a particular narrative approach to self-earth other relations that emphasises the dialogical quality of thinking with stories. In Part II, I enact an ethics of "thinking with stories" by engaging with select published

¹¹ See for example Joseph Campbell's popular book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (1973 [1949]) in which he emphasises departure and return as essential to the "Hero's journey".

¹² See the critique of a conflict-centred understanding of narrative in Burroway's undergraduate creative writing textbook: *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Fifth edition* (2000).

¹³ The quotation marks around "animal geographies" are to indicate that this subfield has expanded to include work on plant-human relations, such as the book *Tree Cultures* by Jones and Cloke (2002).

ecological memoirs. In Part II, I aim to highlight those storied events that point towards alternative knowledges of living through my interpretation of these ecological memoirs. In putting together this thesis, I also aimed to be open to being changed myself through my encounter with the stories of others. I invite the reader to also maintain such an orientation of openness in reading this thesis. However, before moving on, in order to further contextualise the work presented here I would like to add a few more words on the place of narrative in universities and society and to introduce current debates around culture/nature dualisms.

1.3 Universities, Subject/Object Dualisms, and Hero Stories

Universities are complex institutions; however, in general they have been primarily the settings for Hero stories replete with ivory towers, venerable mentors, solitary journeys to knowledge, and god's eye views. With stereotyped images of the hard sciences still largely held as the quintessential models of how to heroically wrest jealously guarded knowledge from nature's bosom,¹⁴ interrelated oppressive dualisms of reason/nature, culture/nature, and subject/object continue to dominate the social sciences.¹⁵

In my use of the term "dualism" I am invoking environmental philosopher Val Plumwood's (1993) critique of particularly polarised and oppressive forms of dichotomy. Plumwood writes, "[d]ualism is the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive" (31). Dualisms render domination part of

¹⁴ I am invoking Caroline Merchant's (1980) ecofeminist treatise The Death of Nature here with my use of this imagery.

¹⁵ The prevalence of dualisms in the practice of science is discussed in Haraway (1991[1985]) amongst others.

identity by making both the dominant and the subordinate aspects of dichotomous identities seem clear-cut and inevitable (32). For these reasons, the left-hand term in notation for dualisms should be read as ascendant over the right-hand term, for example, "reason over nature." Dualisms entail either hyper-separation between the two poles (what Latour 1993 calls "purification") or incorporation of the subordinate pole within the identity of the ascendant term. In the eminently popular culture/nature dualisms, for example, culture and nature are usually framed as wholly separate. While both poles are necessarily dependent on one another for definition, the ascendant pole denies its dependency on the subordinate term and emphasises the subordinate's dependence on it. Within culture/nature dualisms, culture is often presented as controlling an external nature while the dependence of human societies on nature is denied.

Within academic institutions, culture/nature dualisms tend to provide the objectives of modernist science and social science, reason/nature dualisms tend to inform academic valuations of different types of knowledge, and subject/object dualisms tend to define how academic research ought to be practiced. Val Plumwood (2002) suggests that western understandings of reason have narrowed so that reason is usually unproblematically equated with rationalism, which is a doctrine of the transcendence of certain monological forms of reason over everything else, and which Plumwood argues is the source of the environmental crises we are faced with today. Shagbark Hickory echoes this critique of dualisms when he characterises modernist ethical meta-narratives as largely being told in the "tragic" mode, with human moral reasoning being conceived of as not just dominating nature but completely transcending it (Hickory, 2003).

Instead of a dominant, rational, monological conception of reason, Bruner (1996) proposes that there are at least two forms of reason innate in people, logical-scientific reason and narrative reason. Within academia logical-scientific reasoning is stressed and

narrative reasoning is largely ignored. This thesis explores how ethics might be practiced in a dialogical (rather than monological) way, employing narrative reasoning as much as logical-scientific reasoning to explore alternative plotlines for our relations to earth others.

Taking a narrative ethics approach to culture-nature relations also counters subject/object dualisms. These dualisms position the (social) scientist as the Hero and that which is studied inert, passive clockwork to be analyzed, tabulated, and possibly even replicated. The role of Hero is assured through ritualised practices of detachment (hyperseparation) ranging from the scientist divesting him or herself of emotional responses before engaging in work, to only interacting with the object through one-way glass, standardized survey, microscope, or binoculars.¹⁶

Narratives, which concern meaning, cannot be studied from an objective, disengaged position. There is no absolute empirically discoverable truth in any story, only an infinite Gordian knot of interpretation. In this way narratives cannot be finalized but can only be engaged with dialogically with each new interpretation opening up new layers of meaning and new foundations of possibilities for living.

Within universities the study of narratives is still most commonly found in departments of history and literature, in the faculty of the arts or the humanities, the home of the emotional, the ethical, and the particularistic, the other to science (Richardson, 1995). The social sciences have occupied an uneasy position in between these two poles, and have generally sought to legitimate themselves through adopting the rationalist, universalizing approach of the sciences. Interpretive work has been seen as suspect, being too particularistic and not objective enough, and statistics have been held up as the

¹⁶ As Latour (1993) is so fond of pointing out, the means by which this 'purification' is accomplished involves the necessary hybridization of the scientist with parts of the more-than-human-world. So, even this archetypal act of separation is of necessity relational.

tool that would allow social scientists entry into the ascending side of the science/arts dualism (Maines, 1993). But as with all such hyperseparated pairs, attempts to purify social sciences of interpretation in general (and narrative in particular) have merely multiplied the acts of interpretation that have to be made but cannot be acknowledged.¹⁷

Fortunately, interpretation is becoming an accepted practice in some areas of the social sciences—notably in critical geographies—along with the rise of interest in meaning and meaning-making.¹⁸ However, even with the recent discursive turn in the social sciences, the study of narratives has remained marginalized. One of the deceptive aspects of modernist metanarratives (such as Progress, Enlightenment, Nationalism) is their apparent "denarrativization," that is, they are based on abstractions such as "social systems," "social entities," and "social forces" (Somers, 1994: 619). It is perhaps because of this unacknowledged process of abstracting that so much of the recent discussion of modernity has concentrated on critiquing—or "deconstructing"—these apparently universal, and therefore non-temporal, discourses. Narratives, when they are discussed at all, are represented as the somewhat peripheral subcategory of discourse that is characterised by having a beginning, middle, and end.

But what if instead of placing narratives at the margins of social theory they were to be given primacy and those abstract, static forms of discourse were to be understood as distillations of some engendering story, as derivative of or a subcategory to narrative (Brody, 2002)? This is precisely what sociologist Margaret Somers (1994) does when she asserts,

¹⁷ See for example Maines (1993) discussion of sociology's dependence on speech acts, which almost always involve narrative, as a source of data while purporting to focus only on objectively measurable (i.e. no interpretation necessary) behaviours.

¹⁸ Hickey and Lawson (2005) write specifically of the importance of interpretive approaches to the practice of critical geographies.

"that social life is itself storied and that narrative is an ontological condition of social life...that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that 'experience' is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives, and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives"(Somers, 1994: 613-614, emphasis in original).

In other words, what if we were to assume that societies function not on the basis of universalizable rules and abstracting discourses but on the basis of available stories. In this way theory (even in the so-called hard sciences) must be understood narratively (Bruner, 1996; Somers, 1994), and the derivative abstractions of knowledge, such as the principles of ethics, must be conceived of as distillations of these theoretical plotlines (Brody, 2002). It is this vision of people and societies being fundamentally storied that informs Le Guin's concern above, and it is this assumption that I propose to put into the ground in order to serve as foundation for my own hopeful exploration of those efforts being made to build a narrative home for humans to dwell in ethical relationship to each other, to earth others, and to the world around them.¹⁹

1.4 Environmental Ethics and Reason/Nature Dualisms

While subject/object dualisms may dominate the practice of the sciences and social sciences, as already mentioned above reason/nature dualisms arguably dominate the practice of ethics in relation to earth others. Given the centrality of reason/nature dualisms, it comes as no surprise that the ethics of modernity have been strictly anthropocentric with humans inside the community to which moral obligation applies and nature excluded from moral consideration, falling instead into the category of resources

¹⁹ I use "foundation" not in any absolute or essentialised sense but in the sense of weak ontologies as described by White (2000).

that can be used at will to meet humanity's needs and desires without any moral squeamishness. Indeed squeamishness, associated as it is with the body and therefore nature, is excluded from informing ethical decision-making. Even narrative itself is excluded from ethics by the modernist habit of universalizing.²⁰ Rather, the rational derivation of universally applicable rules or principles and their application using faculties of reason (that jealously guarded attribute of humans) has been seen as the goal of modernist ethics.²¹

As the geographer William Lynn has so cogently pointed out, such anthropocentrism has not entailed a simple separation between the moral considerability of homo sapiens versus all other species (Lynn, 2004). Rather, other dualisms have been dragged back into the mix with women,²² non-European and/or religious others,²³ persons with disabilities and other "othered" people being positioned as closer to nature than to humanity and therefore also on occasion left outside the warmth of the moral community. Given the exclusion of earth others from moral considerability, some contemporary theorists and activists have proposed an ecocentric approach to ethics and politics. However, the valuing of some exclusive-of-humans nature or wilderness is equally beholden to the polarised dualisms of modernity.

The metanarratives of reason or culture over nature infuse many of the stories by which societies come to define themselves and this in turn impacts the places produced by those societies. As William Cronon explores in his influential essay (1995) "The

²⁰ Clinchy (2003) discusses the exclusion of narrative knowing from the teaching of psychological theories of ethics to undergraduate students.

²¹ See Smith's comments (2000: 10) and Lynn (1998).

²² See for example Merchant's exploration of nature and the feminine (1980) and Emel's discussion of gender, class, race and American treatment of wolves (1998).

²³ See the discussion of race, taboo, and human-animal relations in Elder, Wolch and Emel (1998).

Trouble with Wilderness," in one of the dominant national stories of the United States of America, it is the frontier of untamed wilderness and the rugged individualism such spaces engendered that have made American democracy what it is. By analyzing this story Cronon demonstrates both how intertwined the ostensibly separate concepts of culture and nature are and how particular stories about culture and nature shape the way in which people come to inhabit and use different places.

Environmental ethics and practices insofar as they consciously or unconsciously draw on narratives of wilderness also reify a hyperseparation between humans and nature through their fixation on creating a particular geography whereby "pristine" lands are ostensibly bounded off from society and thereby "preserved" from human influence. Although there are good reasons to protect lands from certain types of human use, an overemphasis on "wilderness" may actually be detrimental to both humans and earth others as it facilitates a lack of responsibility for those other spaces that form the vast majority of the Earth's surface.²⁴ Cronon proposes instead to conceive of places as each being located on a "continuum of natural landscape" (1995: 89) running from urban to wilderness and encompassing everything in between.

Perhaps because of the inherent spatiality of these stories of culture and nature, geographers have been key agents in recent critiques of what some have come to call social-nature.²⁵ Like Cronon's, such critiques have pointed out that spaces of the "wild" are just as constructed as urban spaces, rendering the solutions as to how to relate ethically to earth others a much messier prospect than simply creating spatial refuges for "nature" separate from human interference.

²⁴ Environmental politics around "wilderness" often also have negative repercussions on the lives and livelihoods of those people who inhabit such spaces, particularly indigenous people. See Braun (2002) and Nabhan (1997).

²⁵ See in particular Castree and Braun (1998), Whatmore (1997, 2002), and Braun (2002).

One geographical work on ethics that has been important to the discussions in this thesis but which touches only tangentially on environmental ethics is Robert Sack's (2003) Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good. Like Bruner (1996) and Plumwood (1993), Sack takes issue with the dominance of instrumental rationality. He proposes instead that we take seriously the idea of an intrinsic, albeit ineffable, good that is real and that motivates people both to behave in ethical ways and to create better places, in the ethical sense of the adjective. Sack argues that the only way to distinguish good from evil is to assume that good is attractive to people and evil is not. In this view, unethical behaviour can only arise out of ignorance. People would, therefore, only choose bad over good if they were ignorant of what they were doing. Because he makes the assumption that the good is attractive to people, agency comes into Sack's geographical guide to ethics in relation to self-deception. Sack posits that people are morally responsible to make an effort to overcome self-deception at both individual and societal levels and to try to see through to the real and the good. Place is important both in facilitating states of self-deception and in enabling people to see through to the real and the good.

While a search for the real can be undertaken in many different ways, self-narratives as temporary solutions to the question how ought I to live are uniquely concerned with seeing through to the good. Ecological memoirs are uniquely concerned with seeing through to the good in our relations to earth others and the more-than-human world in places. As such, engaging with them in dialogue, as this thesis sets out to do, is an important contribution to storying our collective way towards not just survivable futures for all but also better places for all.

1.5 A Crisis of Narrative

Culture/nature dualisms inform and are informed by many modernist metanarratives. Metanarratives are not told to commemorate past triumphs, even as they enroll historical achievements into their plotlines, but rather are told in order to shape knowledge and action towards some desirable future. They provide resources for the writing of smaller stories, the stories of nations, social movements, institutions, and individual lives.

Sometime during the 1960s and 1970s many modernist metanarratives began to lose their shine. Public faith in the story that science and industrial progress were necessarily going to provide a better future for humanity began to erode.²⁶ Although great leaps forward had been made in infectious disease control and in material wealth for a large proportion of the people in western countries, the ongoing threat of nuclear war²⁷ and the early signs of environmental degradation chronicled by, amongst others, Rachel Carson belied the plotline that scientific reasoning would necessarily lead to a better future.²⁸ Social movements, including the environmental movement, also began to emerge at this time along with counternarratives challenging those master narratives that asserted the benefits of modernism were benefiting everyone.

Meanwhile, theory and intervention at the heart of culture/nature dualisms, began to question hyperseparated representations of reality. Research began to show the present and past extent of human impact on so-called natural landscapes²⁹ and the prospect of

²⁶ Kwa (2001), writing in the context of climate change puts the date at which a significant erosion of public faith in science was noticeable in the 1960s, whereas Leiss (1994), writing in the context of the cold war places the date earlier in the century.

²⁷ See Leiss (1994 [1974]) in particular.

²⁸ Kwa (2001) provides an interesting case study of the changes of public attitude around this time to the attempts by U.S. government scientific institutions to control weather.

²⁹ For a discussion of human influences on "natural landscapes" see Cronon (1995).

carbon-induced climate change seemed to leave no corner of the earth free from the consequences of human actions. Though it would be naively premature to predict the imminent demise of modernist master narratives, both increasingly vociferous critiques from the margins and challenges from within scientific communities are arguably pushing western societies into a state of narrative crisis.

White and Epston define a narrative crisis as emerging when the stories people tell about themselves, or that others tell about them, "do not sufficiently encapsulate the person's lived experience or are very significantly contradicted by important aspects of the person's lived experience" and/or prevent them from living out their preferred stories (White and Epston, 1990: 14). While there are clearly significant differences between individuals and societies, I invite the reader to suspend disbelief and examine with me how western culture might be a potential patient. The previously mentioned development and stock-piling of nuclear bombs, the marginalization of the majority of human beings, and encounters with environmental degradation in treasured landscapes and in human bodies are all experiences that appear to run counter to modernist master narratives such as those of continuous, cumulative, untrammelled progress.

And what of the future? Will these master narratives allow us to live out the stories we would prefer to embody? Will these master narratives enable the living out of survivable futures at all? That this latter question gets asked more and more often in classrooms, conference rooms, courtrooms, parliaments, and even newscasts reveals the extent to which confidence has been lost in the stories that have governed western societies in the past.

White and Epston (1990) locate their narrative work with individuals within broader emancipatory political struggles. They help their patients identify "unique outcomes" —life experiences that do not fit within dominant narratives—and ascribe

meanings to these experiences through plotting them "into an alternative story or narrative" (16). This process of separating from a dominant narrative and plotting out a counterstory employs imagination, creativity, and emotion as much as it does traditional logical-scientific reason.³⁰ The process is self-reinforcing; once a few unique outcomes have been identified and meaning has been ascribed to them it becomes easier to identify further unique outcomes and reinforce the emerging alternative stories.

On the societal level, the academy certainly has a role to play in the monumental task of freeing our selves from those dominant "killer" stories that aid projects of self-deception and which threaten future survivability. My concern in what follows in this thesis is not so much with the separation of our selves from dominant "killer" narratives—this has and continues to be done quite effectively by those more qualified than I.³¹ Rather, my interest is with the telling of different stories,³² ones which may fit better with previously excluded experiences, ones that may take us to different places, ones which I hope will bring us all into survivable futures.

From a sociological perspective, Arthur Frank (2002) has derived two main tasks for social scientists wanting to take narrative seriously. First, he emphasises the importance of the continuing project of critique in clarifying the assumptions and power

³⁰ See Nelson (2001) for a book-length treatment of counterstories at the scale of groups and societies.

³¹ For example, dualistic assumptions underlying destructive modernist narratives, such as those of culture/nature, have been critiqued in detail by feminist academics such as Plumwood (1993, 2002), Cuomo (1998), King (1996), Murphy (1995), and Warren (1990); science studies academics such as Haraway (1989), Latour (1993); those who study social-nature such as Whatmore (1997), Castree (2003), Castree and Braun (1998), and animal geographers including Wolch et al. (2000), Anderson (1998), Michel (1998), and Emel (1998), to name just a few.

³² Although she does not use a narrative approach, Cuomo's assertion that critique "is not sufficient grounds for ethics" and that "a rejection of oppression is logically dependent on an affirmation of some alternative" (1998:34) can be interpreted as a call for re-storying.

relations that lie behind the metanarratives, discourses, and public narratives that people draw on in determining what they ought to do in their everyday situations. It is to this project that post-modern, post-structural, and post-colonial critiques of discourse have so significantly contributed, thereby opening up space for alternative stories to be heard.³³ However, there is a second, equally valid approach for social scientists: the uncovering and amplification of the moral impulses contained within self-narratives. It is this second vocation that has inspired this thesis, along with the desire to contribute to the building of new stories, of "life stories," for survivable futures for all.³⁴

In their treatise on narrative therapy, White and Epston enjoin clinical psychologists to take care that in their practice they do not inadvertently impose 'truth' discourses on their patients and thereby add to the power of dominant narratives (White and Epston, 1990). This injunction is even more important for social scientists interested in counternarratives. Rather than attempting to derive a set of ethical principles and arguing that these ought to be followed, instead I position the writing and reading of this thesis as dialogical acts. In engaging with this practice of "thinking with stories"³⁵ I hope to amplify the ethical impulses at work in the ecological memoirs addressed, in myself, and in my readers. This necessitates a different approach to ethics than is normally taken in geography and so the next four chapters present an argument for a narrative practice of ethics and an explication of how a practice inspired by narrative therapy will be enacted

³³ For example, Castree and Braun (1998) point out that laments over the "death of nature" emanating from certain environmental circles on the basis of increases in capital accumulation and commodification are based on the same assumed hyperseparation between culture and nature that lies at the root of these phenomena.

³⁴ Again within sociology, Richardson (1995) has called for academic participation in the amplification and dissemination of counterstories.

³⁵ For a discussion of what it means to "think with stories" see Frank (1995), Basso (1992), or Morris (2002).

in this particular thesis. To make this argument I first examine current debates in environmental ethics (chapter 2), highlight those approaches to environmental ethics that do touch on narrative (chapter 3), introduce some of the theory behind narrative ethics (chapter 4), and then give an overview of the development of the particular method of narrative ethics I practice in this thesis (chapter 5).

The results of applying this process of thinking with stories to the question of how we in general (and I in particular) ought to live in relation to the more-than-human world are presented in Part II. Each chapter in Part II highlights a different aspect of this process with chapter 6 focussing on one ecological memoir, chapter 7 following a theme through several memoirs, and chapter 8 examining the question in relation to a particular kind of place. I follow these initial chapters with a short interlude (chapter 9) in which I think with a memoir that deals with reading and the more-than-human world. Chapter 10 follows on from the previous 4 chapters looking at the ethics of the relationship between writer and reader through the themes highlighted in chapters 6 through 9.

Part I
Proposing a Narrative Ethics of Living in the More-than-human World

2. Dualing Ethics: principled debates and moral communities

"The reason/nature story has been the master story of western culture. It is a story which has spoken mainly of conquest and control, of capture and use, of destruction and incorporation. This story is now a disabling story. Unless we can change it, some of those now young may know what it is to live amid the ruins of a civilisation on a ruined planet. The power to direct, cast and script this ruling drama has been in the hands of only a tiny minority of the human race and of human cultures. ...If we are to survive into a liveable future, we must take into our own hands the power to create, restore and explore different stories, with new main characters, better plots, and at least the possibility of some happy endings" (Plumwood, 1993: 196).

I begin this chapter with a reiteration of the injunction to re-story our world as a reminder of what is at stake and what needs to be done. As hinted at in the introduction, the power of story lies in the direct link it has to moral reasoning and to our motivation and inspiration to undertake actions. The assumption at the heart of this thesis is that in order to change the ethics embedded in human relations with earth others, we need to change the stories through which we live our lives.

In the introduction I proposed to approach this problem of re-storying using the metaphor of a narrative therapist; narrative therapy being one of the few practices explicitly concerned with the transformation of stories both at the one-on-one scale and at the collective scale. In the following quotation M. White (2000) makes this connection, a connection that will be explored further in chapters 4 and 5:

"We step into other modes of life and of thought that go before us. But I believe that there are opportunities for us to contribute to the 'drift' of these modes of life

and thought, as we live them, through processes that relate to the negotiation of the different subjectivities or experiences of the self that are associated with these, through interpretation, and through the management of indeterminacy" (143).

This narratively-oriented thesis seeks to contribute to the 'drift' of North American modes of living in relation to the more-than-human world. However, before exploring the ethics of thinking with stories, I will first critically explore the dominant ways in which environmental ethics is practiced today and some of the alternatives that are being suggested. This chapter begins by looking at how dualisms are still implicated in some major debates, while chapter 3 will examine recent approaches to our relations with earth others that reach beyond dichotomous thinking and which, not coincidentally, often invoke the concept of narrative.

2.1 Dualing ethics

As introduced in chapter 1, reason/nature dualisms and some of their interrelated progeny have been the targets for a great deal of critique recently, most notably in the areas of feminist environmental philosophy³⁶ and social-nature.³⁷ However, despite the critiques, these dualisms remain central to many of the ways in which ethics is practiced today, particularly in relation to earth others. Given this continued dominance, an important part of ongoing ethical reflection will need to be directed at ensuring efforts to re-story our place in the more-than-human world do not fall back on "killer" plotlines. In order to avoid dualistic thinking, we must make ourselves aware of the ways in which such thinking permeates our perceptions and conceptions of the world around us, as well

³⁶ Feminist environmental philosophers such as Plumwood, (1993; 2002), Cuomo (1998), King (1996), Murphy (1995), and Warren (1990) tend to focus on the interrelations between the reason/nature dualism and those concerning gender, race, the body and colonialism.

³⁷ Social-nature theorists are concerned primarily with the production of nature through social relations; see for example Cronon (1995), Whatmore (1997), Castree (2003), Castree and Braun (1998), Braun (2002).

as the influence dualistic thinking exerts over the processes by which we engage with those others we encounter.

There are two main ways in which dualistic thinking deals with the other, both of which tend to deny the other as other. First, dualisms are characterised by hyperseparation; that is, the dominating side of the relationship seeks to deny all similarities with its other. Descartes' radical separation of human mind from mechanistic animal is a prime example of hyperseparation.³⁸ In this form of radical exclusion, the other is treated as completely different from the self, with no possibility of finding common ground between the two. As Plumwood describes it:

"Such a self is...separated from others as a centre of striving and needs; it treats the other as alien and is thus not constrained empathically or morally by the other's needs. Hence it is not only free to conceive others without constraint as instruments, but has no motivation to do anything else" (144).

To such a self-contained self, what Plumwood calls the "master model of the self," there can be no relationship with the other; the other can be only resource or obstacle. The plotline associated with such a protagonist is the familiar one of the Hero entering into conflict with others and overcoming the challenges they pose in order to achieve his self-appointed goals.

Dualistic thinking about self and other can also manifest as incorporation, "the definition of the other in terms of the self's realm of agency" (155). This form of dualism "corresponds to the totalising denial which denies the other by denying difference, treating the other as a form of the same or self" (155). While there is an overabundance of continuity in this self/other constellation there is still no relationship, because relationship requires some degree of differentiation between self and other. Moreover, there can be no recognition of the other as having his or her own needs or goals, because

³⁸ See Anderson (1998) for a good overview of Descartes' contribution to "killer" stories.

there is no separation between the self and other. Instead, the other's needs and goals are presumed to be coextensive with those of the self. Drawing on Plumwood, Michel (1998) argues that capitalist narratives tend to involve hyperseparation between humans and nature while Marxist assertions that nature is a social construct provide examples of the process of incorporation.³⁹

Because radical exclusion and denial of otherness are twin outcomes of dualism, any move towards livable stories will need to take an approach that recognises both continuity and difference between self and other and holds these in creative tension, an approach that Plumwood calls "mutuality". Achieving such a balance between distinguishability and autonomy on one side, and connection and relationship on the other is challenging but necessary to re-storying our way to survivable futures for all.⁴⁰ As I shall discuss in chapter three, narrative and dialogical approaches allow for both difference and commonality, thus evading the twin pitfalls of dualisms. However, before engaging with dialogical ethics I will first outline some of the key contemporary debates in environmental ethics.

2.2 Reason/Nature and the Anthropocentric versus Ecocentric Debate

When people think of environmental ethics, one of the first debates that may come to mind is that between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. This debate is a useful one to begin with because it demonstrates the prevalence of modernist dualisms in contemporary environmental ethics and activism. Anthropocentric and ecocentric activism and policies also have particular geographies, as I shall outline below.

³⁹ See also Braun (2002) for an extended discussion of dualisms and capitalism.

⁴⁰ See Donner's (1997) appeal for balance in the relational selves invoked by ecofeminist writers.

The debate between anthropocentrists and ecocentrists concerns value and who or what can be said to have intrinsic value as opposed to extrinsic or instrumental value. Lynn (1998) provides one of the clearest discussions in print of intrinsic and extrinsic value in relation to earth others. According to Lynn, intrinsic value "refers to a being having moral value in and of itself" (285). Direct moral responsibilities and duties are owed towards beings with intrinsic value. On the other hand, "[b]eings with extrinsic value...are not regarded as ends in themselves. They are things, means to another's ends, and we can only have indirect duties to them, meaning ancillary duties that derive from our direct duties to others" (285).

In pure anthropocentric ethical systems, only human beings are considered to have intrinsic value. That is, humans are conceived of as completely separate from other earth others and ascendant over them because only humans have intrinsic value. In this view, earth others can only ever have instrumental value, they are not valued for themselves but only for what they provide to the ascendant identity of the dualism. So, for example, wilderness might be valued, but only for its utility in shaping rugged individuals, counterbalancing the ills of civilization, or facilitating a communion with God.⁴¹ Wilderness is not valued for being an end in itself. To return to the quotation from Plumwood above, anthropocentric understandings justify "killer" stories of "conquest and control, of capture and use, of destruction and incorporation" (143) in our relations with earth others.

Anthropocentrism is still very much dominant in western societies with places and animals generally coming under moral consideration only for their perceived instrumental value as resources for meeting human needs and wants (Lynn, 1998). In practice this strong anthropocentrism may be tempered somewhat as an organism or

⁴¹ Examples taken from Cronon (1995).

landscape moves from the everyday to the exceptional through its threatened loss. As an earth other becomes rare, through time or over space, its potential intrinsic value is more likely to garner support in the public sphere (Jones, 2000). However, from a cynical vantage point, one might argue that rarity becomes an instrumental value in the form of attracting tourist dollars or in the possibility that there might be some instrumental value in the threatened earth other that has yet to be discovered. Indeed, such present and possible instrumental values are commonly given as justifications for the institutionalization of measures protecting places and species.

Ecocentric ethics simply reverses the dualism, imbuing ecosystems with intrinsic value and incorporating individual species and organisms (including humans) into ecosystemic wholes and so denying them anything but extrinsic value in relation to the ecosystem. At its most extreme, ecocentrism conceives of nature as that which has not been contaminated by human activities or even presence. Cronon follows the plotline of such a story to its logical conclusion:

"If nature dies because we enter it, then the only way to save nature is to kill ourselves. The absurdity of this proposition flows from the underlying dualism it expresses. ...The tautology gives us no way out: if wild nature is the only thing worth saving, and if our mere presence destroys it, then the sole solution to our unnaturalness, the only way to protect sacred wilderness from profane humanity would seem to be suicide" (1995: 83).

While most ecocentric philosophy stops short of this extreme, its ongoing subscription to hierarchical dualisms—such as the abstract group (ecosystem) taking precedence over the individual (be it human or other organism)—limits the scope for potential solutions to concrete, situated issues.

Milder forms of ecocentrism, such as those which have managed to penetrate governmental and institutional discourses, can also be enrolled in killer stories of control, capture and use. Bovenkerk et al.'s (2003) examination of controversies in the

Netherlands over seals and seal populations found that the further removed a policy-maker was from actually encountering the animals, the more ecocentric their avowed ethics were likely to be. For these government officials, management and control were justified by appeal to the health of the ecosystem as measured through rational scientific means. This brought them into conflict with those people who worked at a rehabilitation centre for seals who saw individual seals as having intrinsic value and as deserving care. The government officials, on the other hand, perceived the intervention of the rehabilitation centre as at best pointless and at worst potentially interfering with the health of the seal population and/or ecosystem as a whole.

There are other examples of ecocentrism putting needs of ecosystems before those of individual organisms (including, of course, individual humans) and species. From an ecocentric perspective, individuals of so-called "invasive" species should be exterminated for the good of protecting "native" ecosystems in some pristine form.⁴² Even the killing of individuals of native species can be justified with ecocentric principles, if numbers reach a threshold deemed to threaten the stability of an ecosystem (Jones, 2000). Of course assessing "invasiveness" and numbers returns scientific reason to the position of ethical arbiter. Furthermore, the abstract nature of the collective into which individual interests are incorporated belies the dominance of the universal over the particular implicit in this approach.⁴³ Jones (2000) argues that by focussing on groups of earth others, and in particular by treating them statistically, individual earth others become ethically invisible to people and are thus removed from "practical everyday moral or even emotional consideration" (279).

⁴² For a discussion of invasive species, racism and xenophobia see Brook (2003).

⁴³ Just to clarify, I am not arguing that collective obligations should be subsumed under individual rights, rather I am arguing that neither should dominate the other and that both should be held in creative tension.

Whereas managerial ecocentric approaches to ethics appeal to the monological authority of science, deep ecology at its extremes can tend towards a spiritual monologism. Deep ecology is one of the most popular philosophical forms of ecocentrism and, as such, has come under sustained critique, particularly from feminists (cf. Cheney, 1987; King, 1996; Whatmore, 1997; Donner, 1997; Cuomo, 1998; Plumwood, 1993, 2002). Plumwood (amongst others) argues that extreme forms of deep ecology reproduce reason/nature dualisms through the process of incorporation.⁴⁴ She finds that in order to avoid ethics, which she claims some deep ecologists find problematic, deep ecology advocates extending conceptions of the self outwards to embrace broad communities like the ecosystem and even the cosmos. She argues that this has the effect of incorporating the other into a broader, universalised Self.⁴⁵ Once identity is understood in terms of this Self, then these deep ecologists can simply appeal to instrumental rationality and Self-interest as the appropriate way to determine the best course of action: An enlightened self should realise that it is in his or her interests to protect the ecosystem because that ecosystem is really his or her Self. Because the self and the ecosystem are conceived of as one and the same, there is no room for difference or for dialogue.

To take a slightly different tack, let me bring in Haraway's insights regarding the god's eye view (1991). Haraway argues that the goals of modernist science, of universalism and objectivity, aim at giving scientists a god's eye view of reality. However, since this is impossible—each one of us can only really see things from our

⁴⁴ Not all forms of deep ecology fall into this pattern. For example, the writing of David Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* was partially funded by the Foundation for Deep Ecology, and yet it draws on phenomenology to emphasise the sort of mutualistic tension between self and earth other in relationship that Plumwood advocates.

⁴⁵ See also Castree's discussion (2003).

own limited, situated position—scientists instead end up substituting their own partial perspectives for the god's eye perspective. That is, they impose their own partial perspectives upon the rest of the world by arguing that they have the god's eye view, that what they see and conceive of are objective and universally applicable. The god's eye view is simply another variation of a reason/nature dualism.⁴⁶ This critique applies equally to those who seek a science-based ecocentric approach as well as those who take the more metaphysical stand that we are all really One. Because we cannot ever see from the perspective of the ecosystem or the cosmological One, any assertions we might make about the interests of these abstract entities can only be understood as extrapolations from our own limited, situated positions.

Because of their shared roots in the hyperseparation of humans and nature, when ecocentric activists come up against government or industry forces driven by anthropocentric goals, they often find common ground in geography through the concept of wilderness. As discussed in chapter one, wilderness is a geographical embodiment of the conceptual separation of society and nature (Cronon, 1995). For reasons alluded to in the above discussion of endangered or rare earth others, those places that eco-activists are more likely to get protected status for are the ones where an argument can be made that the current or potential instrumental values of sublime experiences, tourism, and human health outweigh the returns to society from other forms of exploitation, such as resource extraction. Thus, environmental organizations often focus on constructing organisms or places as relatively pristine or endangered as well as of aesthetic or economic value. Such strategies have resulted in the construction of a place known as the Boreal Forest

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Arne Naess, one of the central philosophers to the deep ecology movement, was obsessed with having a cabin high up a mountain that could only be reached by someone who was very proficient in rock climbing (Anker, 2003). I would suggest that this is a physical desire for a god's eye view. The cabin was built but sadly a worker lost his life in the process.

and its consequent production as needing protection (Baldwin, 2004), in battles over the number of spotted owls and their dependence on stands of old growth forest (Proctor, 1999b), and dire warnings regarding the disappearing temperate coastal rainforest (Braun, 2002).

While such strategies may help to win individual battles, they deflect discussion away from potentially pertinent ethical issues such as the quality of relationship between humans and the more-than-human world and human responsibilities to earth others, and onto numbers' games played by duelling rationalists, scientists, and statisticians. Such strategies also tend to produce segregated geographies, borders, and the reservation of some places for certain relations between humans and earth others, while relations in the other places—comprising the majority of the planet—remain uninterrogated (Cronon, 1995, Whatmore, 2002). Neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric approaches with their hyperseparated spaces can help us with "the unending task of struggling to live rightly in the world—not just in the garden, not just in the wilderness, but in the home that encompasses them both" (Cronon, 1995: 90).

Just to clarify, I am not making any arguments regarding the existence or lack of existence of ecosystems or cosmological wholeness; such debates are outside the scope of this work.⁴⁷ I am explicitly taking a weak ontological approach to the project of re-storying our relationship to the world (S.K. White, 2000). That is to say, I am arguing that neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric approaches are useful because they both tend to reproduce reason/nature dualisms, they are both monological approaches to ethics. As a result, both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism are easily enrolled in "killer" stories "of capture and use, of destruction and incorporation" (Plumwood, 1993: 196). More useful

⁴⁷ Indeed, some religious and spiritual approaches to cosmological oneness point to the paradoxical importance of heterogeneity on one level to wholeness at another. See for example, the amateur documentary "One, the movie" (Powers, 2005).

strategies are those that enable us to recognize both selves and others as existing both in and through relationship to each other, stories of connection and of dialogue. Neither a hyperseparated self nor an all-inclusive Self can be conceived of as being in relationship to an other, and therefore such selves preclude the sort of open-ended negotiation of ethics required to the everyday telling of living stories.

Before leaving this discussion, I want to deal with one more argument often made for anthropocentrism: that because we are humans and therefore can only approach the world from our own perspectives, we can only ever be anthropocentric. For example, Braun (2002) interprets David Harvey's (1996) argument that any valuing of nature by humans will necessarily be informed by human concerns as the basis for calling his own social-nature theory anthropocentric. And philosopher Lynne Lee, drawing on Haraway's situated knowledges argues that a situated practice of environmental ethics must be one of "conscientious anthropocentrism" because even though compassion demands that we try and imagine what it is like to be the other, any imaginings can only ever be grounded in our own, situated, human selves. While I agree with Lynne Lee's observation, I wonder why she stops at *anthropocentrism*. If we take her argument through to its conclusion, we can only really ever ground any imaginings (whether we are trying to imagine what it is like to be a vole or to be the elderly man who lives next door) in our own situated self, in *egocentrism*. I would suggest that Lynne Lee stops at "anthropocentrism" because she is assuming a hyperseparation between humans and earth others, a hyperseparation that denies difference within the category of human and makes human incommensurable with other earth others. Certainly there are greater challenges to developing empathy for a vole, a fern, or a cliff than for a human neighbour—not least of which is a dualistic culture that prefers to conceive of the human as completely divergent from the nonhuman. However, as some of the memoirs I explore in Part II

demonstrate, such imaginative relations are not only possible but often desirable. As Elder, Wolch and Emel write at the end of their chapter (1998):

“Neither human nor animal lives can ever be fully known, of course. We are obliged, however, to discern them as best we are able, through both the practices of interaction and exchange, and the exercise of all our powers of empathy and imagination” (88).

In order to avoid the twin pitfalls of incorporation and hyperseparation, we must take seriously the notion of the self as both situated (Lynne Lee, 2005) and relational (Braun, 2002), and acknowledge that those relationships in which the self is embedded extend beyond the human community. The practice of ethics must have an anthropogenic and egocentric origin (the human self) but not necessarily an anthropocentric or egocentric orientation.⁴⁸ As I shall establish below, concerning ourselves with the responsibilities of humans in their encounters with earth others does not require that the moral community be restricted to human beings as anthropocentric ethics has traditionally assumed. Nor does a focus on the particular moral agencies of humans require a foreclosure on other types of moral agency and other moral agents. Assuming humans are the only ones with moral value and moral agency involves falling back on a hyperseparation between humans and the rest of nature.

2.3 Rights and Being More Human-like

Anthropocentric and ecocentric philosophies circumscribe who has membership in the moral community and who has intrinsic value. Those who are acknowledged to possess intrinsic value are owed moral responsibility and are, therefore, part of the moral

⁴⁸ Similar arguments are made by Plumwood (2002: 132), who points out "human epistemic locatedness" is not the same thing as anthropocentrism, and Friskics (2003), who writes of the Rocky Mountain area he lives in: "'I readily admit that my concern for the Front is deeply personal and necessarily anthropogenic (after all, I'm only human); however, it need not be egocentric nor anthropocentric" (19).

community. In anthropocentric ethical systems, it is humans who have intrinsic value and form the moral community, whereas in ecocentric ethics only ecosystems have intrinsic value. Recently, however, philosophical and political moves have been made to extend the moral community to include earth others. In this section I briefly examine arguments around reason, rights and membership in the moral community.

Reason (that upper half of the reason/nature dualism) is often held as a characteristic that (hyper)separates humans from earth others. Reason is a precondition for membership in the moral community in two dominant ethical theories: natural law (associated with human rights) and social contract theories (associated with civil rights) (Whatmore, 1997: 38). In natural law theories, it is humans' capacity for reason that provides them their unique moral standing and assures them membership in the moral community. In social contract theories, it is the individual rather than the human who is the subject; however, an individual's moral agency is still dependent upon the establishment of and adherence to "laws of reason." Under social contract theories "[e]thical agency becomes cast in terms of the impartial and universal enactment of instrumental reason, institutionalised as a contractual polity of like individuals" (Whatmore, 1997: 38-39). Within dominant public narratives, therefore, reason is what enables individual humans to act ethically—to be moral agents—and subsequently entitles them to inclusion in a moral community.

Natural law and social contract theories have been challenged by those concerned with the moral standing of earth others. The animal rights movement, for one, has focussed on the issue of the moral considerability of animals from a rights-based philosophical perspective. However, while they have sought to extend various rights to a large number and variety of animals in such everyday places as farms, slaughterhouses, and laboratories, their successes have generally only been with regards to exceptional

animals—animals that could be shown to possess those characteristics that have traditionally marked humans as moral agents and, therefore, as deserving of moral consideration. With ability to reason being assumed to be the essential characteristic of an ethical individual, arguments for extending membership in the moral community to those animals who have demonstrated reasoning capabilities—dolphins and primates being prime examples—have occasional success (Jones, 2000).

Individual plants and animals bearing similarities to humans in other ways also occasionally gain membership in moral communities. For example, organisms lucky enough to develop a unique life history—to become the heroes of a narrative—in the public imaginary may gain entry into the moral community since such stories impart unique individuality to them. Thus certain individual trees have gained protection from being cut down (Jones and Cloke, 2002), and Keiko, the orca whale star of "Free Willy," became the subject of an international rescue effort.

Being the subjects of narratives also imparts a certain degree of agency to such earth others. Given that most approaches to ethics still assume that people are motivated by self-interest,⁴⁹ membership in the moral community is often predicated on the ability of the other to reciprocate, that is the ability of the other to act as a moral agent. Therefore, those individual animals who exhibit agency, such as the Tamworth Two (pigs that escaped from a slaughterhouse on the eve of their ordered demise), are recognised as moral agents. In the case of the Tamworth Two, who were also the subjects of public narratives, they were allowed to live out the rest of their "natural" lives in a suitable retirement home (Jones, 2000).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Lynn (1998) is critical of this orientation to ethics, arguing for value instead of agency, see below. For a geographical approach to ethics that assumes people can be motivated by altruism see Sack (2003).

⁵⁰ I deliberately use the pronoun "who" here rather than "which" as these animals gain honorary status as people through their possession of agency and story.

Over the past few decades, by appealing to capacities for reason, individual life histories, and apparent agency the moral community has been extended to embrace a few individual earth others. However, during this same period the situation for the vast majority of animals has worsened. Wild animals have been put under unprecedented pressures from the rapid development of vast tracts of land for human habitation and resource extraction and the polluting of still other areas. Meanwhile, through the continued industrialization of agriculture the living (and dying) conditions of domesticated animals have also deteriorated dramatically. The winning of some rights for some individuals has failed to translate into the extension of such rights to all earth others, or even to all members of a species.

Rights itself is a universalistic concept that tends to be associated with the public sphere and with individualism and so is caught up with the dualisms of modernism.⁵¹ Therefore, it should not come as any surprise that the greatest accomplishment of animal rights activism so far has been to shift the boundary between humans and nature to include a few non-human individuals. The ascription of rights onto certain individual animals or even certain species does not represent the overthrow of the dualism between humans and nature, per se, but an acknowledgement of a very few non-human others as more human-like than previously acknowledged (Jones, 2000).

2.4 Agency

In an effort to eliminate these boundaries altogether, a number of "animal" geographers have rejected rights discourses in a search for more radical extensions of the

⁵¹ Low and Gleeson (1999) point out that the notion of rights is inherently dualistic as it sets up a separation between rights-holders and those without rights. See also, Plumwood (2002) and Curtin (1996).

moral community.⁵² As Cloke and Jones (2003) argue: "The tightly drawn boundaries, which codify moral communities as human, need to be reconceived in order to foster new moral relationships with nature and thereby help to drag the everyday practices of society into new ethical formations" (196).⁵³

One of the more common tactics taken by those seeking to expand the moral community beyond humans has been to challenge definitions of agency.⁵⁴ The theoretical inspiration for this work largely comes from Bruno Latour's theories on hybridization and hybrid agency, and Actor Network Theory (ANT). This approach decentres agency by reconceptualizing it in a way that does not prioritize reason, language, and intentionality. From this perspective, agency is understood as emerging, not from individual intentional action, but out of actor-networks—agglomerations of humans, technological artifacts, and earth others (Castree, 2003).

ANT rejects the division of humans and nature, citing such hybrids as mice genetically engineered to grow human ears on their backs (Wolch and Emel, 1998), and the differing behaviours of elephants in different social contexts (Whatmore, 2002). Castree (2003) labels this approach "post-environmental ethics" in reference to the impossibility of making a clear distinction between the human and non-human.

This hybrid approach has been specifically constructed in contrast to the dualistic tendencies of modernist discourses. Latour in his influential extended essay, We Have Never Been Modern, writes of two processes, purification and translation (or hybridization), which have been used by moderns to create the dualisms between culture

⁵² For a history of the subfield of animal geography see Philo (1998).

⁵³ Cloke and Jones (2003) also challenge the label "animal geography" focussing their attention primarily on tree-human networks.

⁵⁴ Hitchings and Jones (2004) provide an overview of the use of ANT to challenge conceptions of agency. See also, Jones and Cloke (2002), Philo and Wilbert (2000), Woods (2000), and Whatmore (1997 and 2002).

and nature we live with today. Through practices of purification, culture and nature are rendered separate—this much we have already seen. Latour's significant contribution to the argument is his recognition that this hyperseparation must be mediated by connections between the supposedly separate poles of these "purified" dualisms. Thus, the process of purification (or hyperseparation) is both facilitated by and facilitates the proliferation of hybrids made up of elements from the two sides of the dualism. This insight has led to the assertion that agency must be understood as a product not of purified individuals but of networks or hybrids of actors. Indeed to distinguish its theory from modern ones, ANT uses the term "actant" to refer to the members of agential networks including biologicals such as viruses and microbiologists, and technologicals such as microscopes and Petrie dishes. According to this conception, it is only in their connections to each other that an actant has agency, and that agency is always shared.

The ANT approach dispenses with the hyperseparation between humans and nature by challenging the notion that purified essentialised categories of actors can be established, and that a clear distinction can be drawn between humans and non-humans. As Castree states, this work "calls into question the possibility of anchoring ethical arguments in the fixed or essential characteristics of worldly entities. ...Future ethical arguments will therefore have to be acutely sensitive to the contingent material specificities of the constituents under consideration" (2003:10). The ANT approach enables discussions of ethics to move beyond the exclusions inherent in defining membership in a moral community based on specific, finalized categories. This refusal to finalize an entity is an important step in taking a dialogical approach to ethics, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Geographers have found the ANT approach particularly appealing because of the spatial aspects of networks. Networks must come together in place. In the following

quotation, Hinchings and Jones (2004) point out that from ANT's assumptions, agency is partially a product of place:

"concern for non-human agency has more recently been approached relationally, such that all agencies are seen to unfold together. Here no single entity is allowed to own the agency which is now, rather, a property of the coming together of attributes constituted by a place" (7).

However, they caution against conceiving of agency as exclusively a property of place, finding that when those who use ANT to discuss ethics bring place into focus the tendency to deny any possibility of individual creativity and responsibility becomes acute.

Following on Hinchings and Jones, ANT removes the human conceit that we are *the* moral animal and highlights the relational nature of identity, thought, and action. However, its emphasis on networks and its reluctance to differentiate between actors makes it difficult to discuss either the actions of individual actors or issues of responsibility. For these and other reasons, some of the most informative work on "animal" geographies supplement their use of ANT with theories that specifically deal with relations between the self and other, an area of ethics on which ANT must remain silent. Whatmore writes of the "too often flat political and ethical landscapes of ANT" (2002: 57), the tendency of Latour to write from some neoimperial outside position, and his work's "apparent indifference to the witness of those living (and dying) at the sharp edge of technoscientific re-orderings" (2002: 161). In order to overcome these limitations, she supplements her use of ANT with insights from feminist science studies, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Jones and Cloke (2002) are also cautious in their use of ANT. In their book, Tree Cultures, they explicitly define what they see as the limits of ANT. First, they find that most ANT studies still centre on technological objects and, therefore, remain tied to

human agency.⁵⁵ Second, by understanding agency as only being enabled by hybrid collections of actants, the ability for individuals to have agency is denied. While this might be a good counter to Enlightenment ideas about individualized humans, they believe that this limits exploration of the unique agencies of non-human biological organisms. Such an approach is not sensitive to otherness, difference, and individuality. They argue convincingly of the need to understand particularities of tree agency in relation to the construction of places, that trees need to be understood as "creative meaningful others" (215).⁵⁶ Furthermore, in terms of geography, by paying attention to the agency of creative meaningful others, they assert that a better understanding of place can be arrived at:

"Networks exist precisely because different actants bring different qualities or creativities to the effort. In our view, then, alongside an appreciation of relational agency, there is still a need to understand the *creative contribution* of people, beings and things, and to tease out more precisely how this creativity is related to the qualities of any wider network. We are also convinced that by focusing analysis solely on networks, a range of between-spaces will be omitted from view. We believe that these between-spaces can often be relevant in terms of understanding particular places, and we also consider it extremely likely that between-spaces will not be devoid of agency, a factor which again suggests that individual creative contributions may be an appropriate starting point for the understanding of creative agency" (215, emphasis in original).

The other aspect of ANT that Cloke and Jones criticise is that it can have little to say in regard to moral concern for the other. Cloke and Jones (2003), therefore, supplement ANT by drawing on three dialogical environmental ethicists: Plumwood's (2002) re-animation of "nature both as agent in our joint undertakings and as potentially communicative other" (177); Cheney's (1999) ethical mindfulness of being *for*, rather

⁵⁵ See a similar criticism in Hitchings and Jones (2004).

⁵⁶ Katz (1997) also writes about the agency of plant life in changing the experience and meaning of place. His reflections concern his experience of two places where Nazi atrocities had taken place and where plant life had grown over the "scars".

than *with*, the other; and "postmodern" reworkings of Levinas (see Jones, 2000). These dialogical approaches to ethical relations with earth others will be examined further in the following chapter.

Despite Castree's (2003) assertion that this "post-environmental ethics" does not fall into the hole of "ontological holism" that extremes of deep ecology dig for themselves, in practice ANT has a tendency to incorporate the other into a still largely human-centred network. Moreover, although ANT has played an important role in challenging modernist master narratives and the exclusion of non-humans from the moral community, its focus on networks to the exclusion of individual creativity or responsibility means that, on its own, ANT cannot provide answers to the question of how we ought to live. While it expands the moral community of agents at the scale of individual lived lives, ANT does not go far enough in helping us to story our ethical relationships to others.

Nevertheless, I would like to take from this brief overview of ANT the insight that any ethical action taken occurs both in conjunction with and on a background of relationships that extend beyond the human community. In the words of Jones and Cloke (2003), ANT demands from us "an acknowledgement of the ethical resonances of relational agency between humans and non-humans, and [provides us with] a continual reminder that caution and reflection should replace any innate assumption that most non-human life forms do not appear on the ethical map" (108). However, arguing for the moral considerability of earth others is only a first step. In the words of Plumwood (2002), these are only "preliminary concepts that speak of our stances of preparedness to enter into ethical relationships with earth others rather than shedding light on the ethics of specific kinds of relationships" (169).

Before leaving the topic of agency, I want to say a few words about "intentionality" since this is another concept often invoked to shore up the border between human and earth other. For Plumwood (1993 and 2002), our willingness (or, more commonly, unwillingness) to see earth others as potentially intentional conditions our ethical response to them. In order to throw over reason/nature dualisms, therefore, she advocates taking an "intentional recognition stance" (2002: 177), which she describes as an attitude of openness towards the possibility of intentionality and agency, in relation to earth others and the more-than-human world. Cloke and Jones (2003) explicitly adopt such a stance towards trees in their examination of tree places and cultures. They characterise tree agency as "purposive": "the acorn, for example, has some form of future plan embedded within it, and is purposive in acting on that by growing and living and adapting in specific ways" (199). Such an orientation towards earth others is supported by recent scientific evidence of many birds and mammals undertaking seemingly intentional behaviours (Gullo et al., 1998). The intentionality (and agency) of any earth other must, therefore, be seen both as comparable to human intentionality (continuous with it) and yet different from it and from that of other earth others.⁵⁷

Finally, geography and its production also shapes who is included in moral communities. From a contextualised and explicitly geographical perspective, Lynn

⁵⁷ Philo (1998, see also Philo and Wilbert, 2000) despite admitting that he wants to retain some idea of intentionality amongst animals, in the end shies away from such an attribution for fear that such a conception is anthropocentric: "interpreting nonhuman beings through the lens of the human world" (52). Again I would suggest that humans can only conceive of earth others from their own human standpoint (that is anthropogenic) but that it is possible to extend one's imagination out towards the alienness of the other, and thus to come to recognize both commonalities and differences. To foreclose on the possibility of something as potentially important as intentionality simply for fear of imposing human standards is as dangerous as imposing those standards (the first is an example of hyperseparation, the latter of incorporation). Instead the creative tension between continuity and difference must be maintained.

(1998) advocates taking a "geocentric" approach to moral communities defining them as "multiple and overlapping communities of humans, domestic animals, and wild creatures" (284). Lynn concludes that only by creating moral communities that are coextensive with geographic communities, at any scale of analysis or organization, can the false dichotomy of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism be effectively left behind. Ultimately this orientation to ethics might be useful; however, given that the spaces we currently inhabit have been produced by modernist master narratives and are, therefore, highly compartmentalized, care must be taken that in practice such a geocentric approach does not reify exclusions. Sack's (2003) recent treatise on geography and ethics concludes that evil comes out of self-deception, and that self-deception is partly facilitated by geographic compartmentalization, that compartmentalization acts as a barrier to people becoming aware. This is a fancy way of saying: "out of sight, out of mind." Self-deception is an everyday occurrence when it comes to human-earth other relations in western societies.⁵⁸ As Elder, Wolch, and Emel write, "keeping mass, mechanized, and industrialized violence toward animals 'out of sight' is necessary to legitimize suffering on the vast scale required by the mass market's demand for meat and medicine" (85).

Through anthropocentric and ecocentric land-use policies, as well as through industrial farming practices, the spaces in which we interact with and relate to earth others have become highly compartmentalized. Given Sack's warning, this continued compartmentalization should be questioned. Jones (2000), for one, writes:

"There is a need to open up [closed] spaces, and to attend to the fates that non-human others meet in them, fates that will vary wildly. ...[T]hese are far from

⁵⁸ See for example, Emel's (1998) discussion of the slaughtering of wolves and the parallels to totalitarianism.

being spaces where nothing of concern is happening, but rather are spaces where the ethics of the encounter are not being told" (281).⁵⁹

Following up on his analysis of compartmentalization, Sack argues that people are morally responsible for increasing their awareness of what is going on around them and what the consequences of their actions or inactions might be. People are responsible for opening spaces up and for helping themselves and others become aware of who is there, what they are like, and how our choices are implicated in their fates.

2.5 Public/Private and the Bureaucratization of Ethics

The previous sections of this chapter have dealt with the content of ethics, arguing that both anthropocentric and ecocentric valuations of moral standing depend upon oppressive dualisms that either hyperseparate humans from nature or incorporate nature into some extended concept of the Self. In order to overcome these hierarchical and destructive divisions between culture and nature, I have also argued that assumptions about reason and agency will need to be re-evaluated and geographical compartmentalization will need to be overcome. However, the implications of re-evaluating reason and moral agency extend beyond a redefinition of the moral community. In the remaining two sections of this chapter I will examine the practice of ethics, beginning first with an examination of how reason/nature dualisms persist in the institutionalization of ethics, and then continuing with an overview of some of the proposals for non-dualistic practices of ethics in relation to earth others.

The practice of ethics as the derivation and application of a code of rules by experts dominates western societies (M. White, 2000: 148). For example, according to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, ethics is first "the *science* of morals in human conduct;

⁵⁹ While Jones (2000) does not draw on Sack (2004) there are many similarities in their ethical concerns over bounded opaque spaces.

moral philosophy" and second, "moral principles; rules of conduct" (Barber, 1998, emphasis added). The aim of the first sort of ethics is often perceived to be the production of the second.⁶⁰ This is a definition in which dualisms are implicitly present. First, the use of the term "science" invokes a particular form of reason, one of scientific rationalism and its emphasis on universalism and objectivity. This is cemented by the second definition in which the terms "principles" and "rules of conduct"—read universal and objective laws—are taken to be synonymous with ethics.⁶¹ In popular parlance, then, ethics is still firmly ensconced within the dualistic frameworks of modernist master narratives.

Plumwood and other feminist theorists have argued that in the dualisms of modernism, ethics is linked to emotions, to women, and to the private sphere and, therefore, has been marginalised from the public realm. However, the narrow dictionary definition cited above clearly places ethics in the hands of experts, those rational members of the public sphere practiced in the "science" of deriving codes of conduct and applying them to render judgement on the actions of the populace. This reduction of the scope of ethics to rationalist practices brings ethics over into the public sphere where it dominates the private sphere of the everyday and what White calls "personal ethics" (M. White, 2000: 148).

The ethics of the public sphere are bureaucratized practices. Ethics committees are becoming a more and more common fixture in hospitals, universities, governments, and corporations, where they provide "non-partisan" judgments using universalistic, unsituated, impersonal, intellectually-derived principles to evaluate conduct and

⁶⁰ See Smith's comments (2000: 10) and Lynn (1998).

⁶¹ Some theorists who call for contextualised approaches to ethics argue for the development of principles or rules that are more than local and less than universal, see David Smith (1999 or 2000) for example.

adjudicate in moral dilemmas. The type of ethics that these experts practice is sometimes referred to as the "theoretical-judicial" model, which "has tended to assume that moral judgment in the face of a dilemma is *the* moral activity in people's lives" (Brody, 2002: 186) thereby limiting the scope of what constitutes a legitimate moral activity to those activities that can be subjected to judgement on the basis of principles or rules. Most written work in this genre is not accessible to the average member of society, but is rather aimed at the experts: society's ethics-workers. Bauman (1995) goes so far as to suggest these discussions about ethics are kept inaccessible to ordinary people so that ethical experts can hold onto their authority (11). Brody (2002) argues that bureaucracies find it useful to have these institutionalised, ostensibly objective specialists in order to maintain the illusion that ethical rulings—which often have unpleasant outcomes for one or more parties—simply make themselves. In this model, the expert merely applies the correct ethical law to the problem (much as a mathematician might apply the rules of calculus to a differential equation) in order to arrive at the one true solution. In summary, in this story of ethics, experts are the heroes, able to separate themselves out from the everyday, ascend to the heights of the abstract, wrest principles out of the universal through the wielding of logical argument, and then return bearing laws and/or rulings for the populace left behind.

Importantly, there is also a geography to this bureaucratic practice of ethics, a geography of political boundaries and institutional reaches (Whatmore, 1997). It is an uneven geography of encounters between humans and earth others that is "shadowed" by an equally uneven spatiality of ethics (Jones, 2000). This geography does not overlap comfortably with the geographies of earth others, as the killings of wolves who wander outside the protected spaces of nature reserves (Emel, 1998) and the hysteria regarding cougars in suburbs (Gullo et al., 1998) attest. But these spaces must also be considered

temporally so that what is considered to be in place at one time might at a later date be understood as out of place, as Lynn's (2002) example of wolves in the north-eastern U.S. demonstrates. Moreover, because the spaces of earth others are often (though not always) removed from the spaces of human deliberation (such as the House of Commons and television studios), animals must be represented in those spaces. Within dualistic modernist discourse it is science that is allowed to represent the non-human world (Woods, 2000). Those who would speak on behalf of animals, plants, or places who are not scientists (or who are explicitly *concerned* scientists) are seen as transgressing the boundaries that separate these earth others from the moral community (Lynn, 1998).

The social sciences are implicated in the domination of everyday ethics and everyday spaces by the public sphere and its narratives of anthropocentrism, its bounded geographies and moral communities, and its ethical elitism. Just as White and Epston (1990) enjoin clinical psychologists to take steps to ensure that they do not reify dominant discourses, social scientists hoping to help people free themselves from "killer" master narratives also need to reflect upon their practices. All too often social scientists and ethicists deploy what Lynn (2002) calls "imperialist theory": theories that seek to achieve domination over all other theories in a field and even over society. Lynn finds these theoretical attempts to colonize other conceptualizations of ethical issues particularly prevalent in environmental and animal ethics. The reduction of environmental ethics to a territory to be fought over by competing imperialist theories is intertwined with the assumption that theoretically derived abstract theory applied at the scale of policy adequately deals with ethical issues. Lynn contrasts this publically dominant mode of ethics to a practice of practical and contextualised ethics:

"Scholars frequently assume that the moral dimension of public life is adequately mapped by the application of an abstract ethical system. The method here is to overlay one's chosen theory onto the...controversy, trusting that one's abstract

deductions will produce the proper moral position. ...To my mind, a better approach is a *practical ethics* that understands the situated nature of moral understanding, and is sensitized to the reciprocally informing ecology of theoretical insights and empirical cases. Theory should not be divorced from context and practice. Instead it should be well situated in the circumstances of particular cases, and adaptive to changes in context and knowledge over space and time" (314).

While Lynn enjoins social scientists to engage in a practical contextualised ethic within the public sphere, geographer Ann Buttimer tries to bridge the gap between the public and the private, writing for herself the role of helping people sort out how to live a good life. In her influential 1974 paper on values and geography, she criticised the narrow focus of social scientists on helping bureaucrats manage the public and their naive faith in institutionalized values. Rather than conceiving of ethics as something to be removed from the hands of the people and placed in ivory towers and committee rooms, she argued that values permeate all aspects of everyday lives and interactions. As such everyone is called upon at all times to practice ethics in the form of moral reflection.

Instead of performing a prescriptive role, Buttimer would like to see social scientists take on a supportive position:

"the social scientist's role is neither to choose or decide for people, nor even to formulate the alternatives for choice but rather, through the models of his discipline, to enlarge their horizons of consciousness to the point where both the articulation of alternatives and the choice of direction could be theirs" (Buttimer, 1974: 29).

Buttimer is particularly scathing in her criticism of those geographers and environmental philosophers whose normative theories fail to influence their own behaviours. It is this disjuncture between academic rhetoric and lived lives that, for her, reveals the bankruptcy of instrumental rationality and of a top down approach to ethical responsibility. It is worth quoting her on this in full:

"If we could be relatively certain about the reasonableness of rationality, if we could still have faith in the gods of the Enlightenment, we could then perhaps conscientiously set about convincing people's intellects of what needs to be done,

and rest fairly confident that a moral commitment to doing so would follow. But today we find ourselves morally incapable (or unwilling) to live the kinds of lives which our highly trained minds realize are necessary. We add to that ambivalence by mouthing dogma or rhetoric which has little meaning in our own living. It can only serve to increase the schizophrenia of a society which responds to moral dilemmas by training specialists for the diagnosis of problems and by creating commercial empires for the dissemination of specialized information." (34-35)

Buttimer highlights the dangers posed by the institutionalization of values and the development of specialized ethical experts to all that inhabit the earth. She offers, instead, an approach that places hope for the future in a collective change in consciousness stemming from the renewal of a sense of ethical responsibility at the individual level. However, in the more than thirty years since Anne Buttimer expressed her concern over the troubling discrepancy between her colleagues' academic arguments and their lived lives, things have become worse not better for the majority of non-human organisms. Meanwhile, academic writing on the environment and ethics has proliferated and has maintained its dominant orientation to everyday life (Hitchings and Jones, 2004). In the following quotation, Hitchings and Jones (2004) share Buttimer's concern:

"Environmental ethics, then, has been largely explored within a more philosophical mode, as though it were through more protracted and distanced academic reflection that we should find the correct arguments for living rightly with the many others that share the planet. The heroes of the day here are the deep-thinking philosophers, whilst wider societies seem, to an extent, to wait unproblematically in the wings, watching for the outcomes of the cut and thrust of logical argument" (3-4).

The story of the expert ethicist is the Hero's story, a variation on the "killer" story and one beholden to the maintenance of the border between the realms of the public and the private, and the dominance of the latter by the former. To move beyond such dualisms, the boundary between the private and public needs to be breached, allowing the everyday to spill into ethical deliberation and enabling the experts to reposition their

selves as resources, facilitators, and people whose lived lives are not separate from the problems they engage with on paper.

To make this change, we need to return to a more basic definition of ethics, such as the one proposed by Socrates, who stated that in discussing ethics "we are discussing no small question, but how we ought to live" (Lynn, 1998: 281). To follow from Socrates, ethics is an attempt to determine the best course of action to take within concrete situations, or an engaged effort to live a life worth living. In the words of geographer James Proctor: "In its best sense, then, ethics becomes a practice of consistent...moral reflection, turned both inward and outward"(1999a: 4).⁶² This is a definition of ethics free from dualisms, and it is the definition I suggest working with in trying to story ways to survivable futures for all. By engaging not with "the cut and thrust of logical argument" but instead with the memoirs of people who work out the ethics of their relations to others through their storied lives, this thesis hopes to facilitate everyday reflection on the part of its writer and readers. It strives to inspire the living of everyday ethical lives.

2.6 The Emotional and Aesthetic Qualities of Doing Ethics

As already touched upon in chapter one, this thesis begins from the premise that instrumental rationality is not the only, nor even the primary, means for ethical deliberation. Excluding other sources of knowing, such as narrative knowing, circumscribes our abilities to develop new stories to live by, thereby hindering us from transforming our selves and our societies in ways supportive of survivable futures for all. In the previous section I suggested that bureaucratic, dilemma-oriented approaches to ethics dominated by experts comprised Hero stories that were implicitly based on "killer"

⁶² See also Smith (2000: 10).

dualisms. Before our ethical relations to earth others can be restored, therefore, the way in which ethics itself is practiced both within and without the academy must be restored. This final section provides an overview of some recent suggestions that provide foundations of possibilities for new practices of ethics.

Within geography, Roebuck argues that rather than focussing on deriving codes from theory, ethics should concern "meaning [and] clarifying our understanding of ourselves and our lives, both individually and in the many overlapping collectivities of which we are a part" (1999: 19).^{63,64} In chapter one, I suggested that our selves and the meanings given to the events of our lives should be understood as narrative constructions fundamentally concerned with ethics. From this perspective, therefore, to clarify our understanding of ourselves requires an engagement with narrative ways of knowing. This insight is congruent with Roebuck's assertion that lives should be lived as embodiments of meanings and values (narratives being important sources of both), and that lived lives can be understood as individual and collective practices of ethics as reflection (again, the assumptions of narrative ethics being that we reflect on our lives through the construction of life stories). Importantly, such an approach to ethics requires interacting with different others while remaining "authentically open to change in our normative viewpoints" (Roebuck, 1999: 28).

Buttimer suggested that the elitist and rationalist approach to practicing ethics that dominates academia can do nothing to make the world a better place. Similarly, Murdoch (2003) asserts that the "practical truth of the matter" is that people (including, it

⁶³ Roebuck specifically takes this approach as part of a project of healing one of modernisms dualisms: "This connection between meaning and being breaks with the Cartesian dualism of subjectivity and objectivity" (1999: 26)

⁶⁴ While Roebuck uses "collectivities" to refer to human groupings, following the insights of ANT scholars non-human others must be included in any elucidation of our lives as they are lived relationally.

would appear, professional ethicists) don't often make ethical decisions based on philosophical deliberation; rather they undertake actions because they are moved to do so. For this reason, he suggests that the key problem with regards to human relations to earth others involves "enlarging our circle of sympathies." Such a project would necessitate changing our practice of academics, a challenging proposition because "[h]ere geography's contribution becomes rather hazy for we encounter not complex theoretical argument, rigorous description or methodological sophistication but something rather intangible, something associated with the construction of community (a community that now includes non-human animals)" (288-289). I am suggesting that such emotions like being moved, or having sympathy are based not in logical-scientific reasoning but in narrative knowing. Geographers desiring to engage in enlarging circles of sympathies will need to foray outside of accustomed fields into the realm of stories.

Dawson's (1999) piece on pigs and ethics in the edited collection Geography and Ethics provides an example of how geography might be practiced in a way that both increases awareness, thereby overcoming spatial compartmentalization, and extends sympathies. Dawson explicitly frames ethical relationship to pigs as one of overcoming the separation between humans and animals through learning to "see the pig as it is, and acknowledge that in it which is in us also" (1999: 204). While work on social nature—in particular Whatmore's (2002) chapter on the contextual co-construction of elephants—calls into question the idea that there is any essential pig that can be uncovered, room should still be left to allow animals more influence on how they become and on how they are perceived.

Sack (2003) contends that evil occurs at the point of choosing ignorance over awareness and that qualities of place, such as its opacity, mediate people's ability to deceive themselves. Following from this, the spaces of food production and consumption

in western societies can be understood as unethical in that they allow people to ignore—even deny—the exploitation of domesticated animals, such as pigs, and prevent them from learning about the animals from the animals themselves.

Stories can imaginatively open up these spaces. Appealing implicitly to narrative, Jones (2000) remarks that fictional stories and movies in which animals are individualised create "ripples in the exploited spaces of the collectives from which these animals are lifted" (282). These narratives can open up the closed spaces where earth others are exploited. How individuals and societies prefer to story their selves and their society produces space.⁶⁵ In turn, writing, reading, telling, and hearing counterstories can enable people to transgress, resist, and change the spaces of their everyday lives.

Self deception in relation to earth others is not merely a failure of awareness but also of imagination. More than anything else, going beyond the dualisms of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism will require unending open-ended acts of imagination grounded in everyday spaces and encounters, as Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998) articulate so nicely:

"Neither human nor animal lives can ever be fully known, of course. We are obliged, however, to discern them as best we are able, through both the practices of interaction and exchange, and the exercise of all our powers of empathy and imagination" (88).

Cloke and Jones (2003) label such grounded practices of encounter, "ethical mindfulness in place."⁶⁶ Such an ethics will both require and produce new ways of dwelling, new reflective engaged ways of living in place(s) that extend the question "how ought we to

⁶⁵ For a sustained discussion of the world as created by stories see Rolston III (1998). From a geographical perspective, Curry (1999) makes the point that place is created by stories in reference to stories of colonisation. See also Jones and Cloke (2002).

⁶⁶ Jones and Cloke (2003), see in particular their discussion of ethical mindfulness in relation to dwelling (page 212).

live?" to "how ought we to live here?" As Rolston III (1998) points out, "[b]ehind ethics is ethos, in the Greek, an accustomed mode of habitation" (286).

Geographers can participate in such re-imaginings through studying the practice of ethical mindfulness in place, as Jones and Cloke's (2002) study of treed places does so finely. But if we are to adopt Buttimer's role of increasing people's access to alternative ways of becoming, being, and doing in service to a renewal of ethical responsibility at the individual level, such studies will need to be more closely intertwined with pedagogy. I have already brought up many arguments against practicing ethics in a top-down, rules-based, judgement-oriented way. From a dialogical perspective, Friskics (2003) argues that such prescription actually runs counter to ethical responsibility:

"To preserve any original sense of the term, responsibility can never be separated from the call of the real and present other to whom I must respond—to whom I remain responsible. As such, we can never say what the necessary course of action might be prior to our participation in the evocative situations demanding our response. In other words, ethically responsible actions cannot be prescribed. Aside from the obvious contradiction of pre-scribing a re-sponse, what good would it do? Our concern for things is born and nurtured in our contact with them; it does not come from some conscious or willful obedience to a prescriptive mandate. To tell myself that I ought to care...cannot, of itself, make me care. Rather, in the very telling, I recognize the symptom of a lack of genuine concern" (26-7).

All of this means that living a moral life remains ambiguous but also obligatory. So what part can academic pedagogy play in all of this?

Bennett (2001) writes of the steady demise of command moralities, those ethical systems dependent upon people slavishly following a set of prescriptive ethical codes developed by experts in their ivory towers. She writes that "command moralities have lost their hold on many people today, and they secure it for others only by recourse to forms of fundamentalism that are violent and exclusionary in character" (152). Instead of coercing people into following an ethical code of behaviour, Bennett suggests focusing

on cultivating moral sensibilities and a sense of moral responsibility in people. For acting ethically, she suggests "one needs an aesthetic disposition hospitable to [ethical codes], the perceptual refinement to apply them to particular cases, the energy or will to live them out, and the generous mood that enables one to reconsider them in the face of new and surprising developments" (29). I suggest that the education of this "moral sensibility" is a legitimate task of pedagogy. For Bennett it is our encounters with enchantment and the wonder such meetings engender that inform and cultivate the necessary embodied and affective moral sensibility.

Cameron (2003) offers one, experiential, model as to how ethical sensibilities might be cultivated in geographical academic practice. He has developed an undergraduate course in geography that brings students out of the classroom into places where they encounter earth others. Although he does not mention wonder or enchantment directly, he does emphasise visceral experience and meaning. Not coincidentally, at the centre of his experiential pedagogical approach to ethics is story: story of place and story of self and their experiential and narrative intertwining.

Jones and Cloke (2003) offer a different, textual, model of studying and cultivating moral sensibilities. Returning to Frank's (2002) suggestion that the illumination and amplification of ethical impulses is a legitimate vocation for a social scientist, it could be argued that this is in fact what Cloke and Jones (2003) do in their empirical work on trees and people. Explicitly drawing on Bennett's (2001) writing, they found that trees brought enchantment to the places they grew in, and that this enchantment served to stimulate "personal moral impulses" in the people who entered such places (211). In their relatively (for academic writing) lyrical text some of this enchantment is captured,

"Our conversations with local residents, users and managers confirm that each of the tree-places was able to affect a sense of captivating delight: the dappling of

bright sunlight through the leaves of mature apple trees...the playfulness of leaves and wind on a bright autumn morning...the mysterious magnetism of the overgrown cemetery as a place for children to play, or elderly locals to stroll, each finding escape from the surrounding urban humdrum...the awesome majesty of the ancient tree which has witnessed surrounding socio-economic dynamism with stoical and sage 'wisdom'...we believe that such enchantments often connect intuitive feelings with reasoned ethical thoughts, and thereby release ethical potential." (211).

Words, it seems, have the potential to capture some piece of enchantment and communicate it to a reader, helping to cultivate his or her moral sensibilities.

To conclude this chapter let me just reiterate that universities are the sites in which much research, theorizing, and consequent codification of ethics takes place (Roebuck, 1999), but they are also sites of teaching and learning, and places where "stories to live by"⁶⁷ are both played out and refined. This thesis represents an exercise in pedagogy, both academic and lived, rather than yet another attempt to wring ethical codes out of philosophical theory. This thesis takes seriously the contentions outlined here that an ethical sensibility is both needed and cultivatable.

As discussed above, I am starting with the assumption that ethical deliberation is narrative. This assumption has been at the heart of projects in medical schools using literature to cultivate compassion and moral sensibilities in medical students. I propose to do the same here, engaging with published life stories (memoirs) in a process of thinking with stories.

Proctor (1999c) writes:

"Our moral imagination is inescapably a part of our earthly lives. To conceive, then, of a moral earth is not so much to look at everything with colored glasses as to notice the moral threads running through our practices and their traces on the earth" (160).

⁶⁷ This term comes from Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) collaborative work on narrative, autobiography and teaching.

Both to notice and strengthen these moral threads and to engage in reweaving them are skills that can and need to be learned. It is this practice of imaginative, contextualised, engaged ethics more than additional skirmishes on the battlefield of imperialist theories that is needed today.

To engage in such a practice requires maintaining an attitude of openness and a willingness to look at ethics in terms of one's own life. Thinking with stories is not done with the intellect alone, it is done with the full bodymind and thus it may seem a risky business for the self to engage in. However, if we are to story our way to survivable futures collectively, we must engage with what is at hand, the everyday places of our own lived lives and the encounters therein with those that are recognizable, yet at the same time other. The following chapter traces the narrative impulse through those approaches to environmental ethics that recognize both continuity and difference between self and other and that hold these in creative tension.

3. Productive Tensions: self and earth others in narrative relationship

"Our challenge is to stop thinking...according to a set of bipolar moral scales in which the human and the nonhuman, the unnatural and the natural, the fallen and the unfallen, serve as our conceptual map for understanding and valuing the world. Instead we need to embrace the full continuum of a natural landscape that is also cultural, in which the city, the suburb, the pastoral, and the wild each has its proper place, which we permit ourselves to celebrate without needlessly denigrating the others. We need to honour the Other within and the Other next door as much as we do the exotic Other that lives far away—a lesson that applies as much to people as it does to (other) natural things. In particular, we need to discover a common middle ground in which all of these things, from the city to the wilderness, can somehow be encompassed in the word 'home.'" (Cronon, 1995:89).

It has been my contention from the beginning of this thesis that culture/nature dualisms lie at the thematic heart and in the plotted action of those modernist tales that threaten to story us all into an unliveable future. In the previous chapter, current trends in environmental (or post-environmental) ethics⁶⁸ were examined for their dualistic allegiances and their re-plotting potential. I will briefly review the debates addressed in that chapter before moving on to examine those trends in environmental ethics that do manage to go beyond dualisms.

⁶⁸ This overview of environmental ethics has been necessarily circumscribed. There are many groupings of ethical approaches that I have not even mentioned in this thesis. Fortunately, a number of other authors have written such overviews and I would urge interested readers to refer to them for a broader understanding of the range of environmental (and "post-environmental) ethics advocated over the past few decades. Castree (2003), for example, offers a succinct overview.

Ivory tower ethical theorising and bureaucratic moral judging were found wanting. Such approaches leave aside the everyday responsibilities of everyday people and provide little fodder for answering the question "how ought I to live here?" They remove ethics from the private sphere, placing it within the sphere of experts trained in the ideals of reason and objectivity, making it a tool for the continued subjectification of emotions, the body, and the world of the everyday. In contrast, life stories will need to redefine ethics as a practice of consistent moral reflection that brings different forms of reason, emotions, and imagination into dialogue with earth others.

Extending the moral community to include earth others is an essential task to any re-storying towards survivable futures for *all*. Not surprisingly, given their modernist roots, rights-based approaches to earth others have not challenged the reason/nature or human/nature dualisms, but merely shifted the boundary between humans and others to include a few human-like organisms. Actor-network inspired animal geographies, on the other hand, have challenged notions of agency and broken open the boundaries of the moral community so that earth others might be included. However, these approaches offer little in the way of resources for storying our ethical *relationships* with these others. Finally, both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism were critiqued and found wanting, anthropocentrism for its continued advocacy of a hyperseparation between humans and earth others, and ecocentrism for its subsumption of those others within either a god's eye view or a cosmological Self.

This chapter continues my review of contemporary theories and debates in environmental ethics. However, I now turn my attention to those areas of thought that provide promising resources for telling stories in which self and other can be understood as both separate and continuous, similar and yet different. I focus here on the insights of feminism regarding care, emotions, and the body, feminist science studies, and the

processes of dialogics. As we shall see, all of these different approaches also highlight the role of narrative in ethics.

3.1 Earth Others and First-person Narratives

Before discussing particular philosophical approaches to ethics and their use of narrative, I want first to examine recent work that has employed first-person accounts. While some interventions in environmental ethics debates have included autobiography, most do not discuss their use of narrative form.⁶⁹ I will, therefore, restrict my discussion in this section to those works that have theorized the use of autobiographical narrative.

Cheney (2003), heavily influenced by native North American storied ways of knowing and writing as "Shagbark Hickory" uses first-person narrative purposefully, aiming to convince readers to live their lives in storied fashion, grounded in communities that are rooted in place. Cheney's emphasis on place and story has also been greatly influenced by environmental philosopher, Holmes Rolston III⁷⁰ who argues that "we ought to live in storied residence on landscapes" (1998: 286). For Rolston III, ethics should be practiced narratively and should be embedded in biography, place, and history. He finds that neither science nor philosophy can produce an argument as to why any species deserves to continue to exist. However, he asserts that narratively, the continued presence of earth others can be justified because they enrich the stories being created on Earth, both by participating in the telling of more-than human stories (such as those told

⁶⁹ Dawson (1999), for example, includes in her historical overview of the fate of pigs in western society a brief description of her own experiences with them. Katz (1997), interested in ethics and place, writes a very personal, and narrative, account of his encounter with the vegetative growth that has overgrown sites of Nazi atrocity. And Cuomo (1998), includes a second-person narrative section "sisterwomanchainsaw" in an interlude in her call for a feminist ethics of flourishing.

⁷⁰ Preston (2001) makes this observation in her attempt to reconcile feminist care ethics (Cheney) and arguments for intrinsic value (Rolston III).

by DNA and landscape) and through their participation in people's storied residences. The continued presence of humans can be justified by our capacity for interpreting and telling stories, which is where the ethical practice of storied residence comes in.

Rolston III conceives of people as “place become conscious of itself” (296). It is the ethical role of people to enrich the stories of place through storied residence, the creative act of “writing an appropriate part of an ongoing story” (296)—a story that is made up by the unfolding narratives of geomorphology, biology, climate and human history of inhabitation. Such a storied residence involves a “career...of environmental interpretation” and of learning how best to live within the larger narratives that intersect within the place where one dwells.⁷¹

Rolston III chooses narrative over traditional philosophies because he finds these traditions entirely bankrupt as far as ethics goes; they cannot derive an ultimate argument as to why one choice is better than another. He concludes: “The best that I can give you is good stories, and hope that you can accept them for that” (287). That is, the logic of rationality cannot make us save the world, or even ourselves, but good stories might.

Despite the articulation of a grounded practice of storied residence, Rolston III refuses to give up the privileges of the god's eye trick of seeing everything from nowhere and, in so doing, he also shores up the wall between humans and the rest of creation. “Animals have the capacity to see only from their niche; they have mere immanence,” he writes, “[h]umans can have a view from no niche, transcendence in immanence” (291). This placement of humans above other animals is done seemingly reluctantly and for the best of reasons, and Rolston III asserts that transcendence can only be perfectly achieved

⁷¹ In a recent article that traces the development of his environmental philosophy, Cheney (2005) highlights Rolston III's concept of “storied residence” as deeply influential on his own work. He uses this concept of “storied residence” to extend of aspects of Gilligan's care ethics to environmental ethics as will be discussed further in following section of this chapter.

if we accept our duty of "caring for the others" (295). But this is a familiar story and one that can no longer be held innocent. It is the story of humanity as designated stewards of the Earth. It is a Hero story par excellence, for in this tale humans are separate from the rest of creation and can view it from some objective height (in this case as a result of moral evolution) in order to determine what is best for all. So while Rolston III's argument for storied residence as ethics provides an important alternative to rationalist derivations of codified principles, the stories he chooses to tell are still imbued with culture/nature dualisms.

Cheney, drawing on Rolston III, manages a better balance, locating storytelling within moral relationships between humans and earth others and declaring that "[t]he animal and plant people decided that they would provide what we humans need so that we may tell the stories needed to create and continually renew this sacred world" (1999: 164). In Cheney's vision, people are storytellers grounded in place and relationship not transcendent ones. Rolston III, himself, seems uncomfortable with the heights he has placed people at; towards the end of his paper he tries to return to the ground writing,

"Ethics must be written in theory with universal intent, but the theory must permit and require ethics to be lived in practice in the first person singular. The logic of the home, the ecology, is finally narrative, and human life will not be a disembodied reason but a person organic in history in some particular time and place" (295).

These intuitions of narrative as being tied to identity, place, and ethics, and as incorporating much diversity, are important ones that I wish to hang onto as I proceed to develop a specifically narrative ethical approach to human-earth other relationships.

Despite their important insights, both Rolston III and Cheney again bring culture/nature dualisms into their work through the assumptions they make about place. On close reading, it becomes apparent that not just any place is right for storied residence, but that place must itself be closer to "nature" than to "culture". The

autobiographical narrative Cheney (as Hickory, 2003) presents as an example in his paper is one of a backpacking trip into the "wild." As Mick Smith (1995 [1993]) points out, Cheney's emphasis on "natural" or "wild" areas as more likely to produce environmentally-friendly storied residences than areas more clearly dominated by human-made artifacts reinforces culture/nature dualisms. Moreover, if the ethical quality of one's storied residence is dependent upon the type of place one lives in, then Cheney and Rolston III must be read as pessimists since the bulk of humanity now lives in cities. However, I believe this is an overly negative assessment of the situation, one that arises out of the criteria that Cheney uses to judge stories.

Culture/nature dualisms are not just present in Cheney's conceptions of places. They are inherent in the very assumptions he makes about story. Cheney sets up a dichotomy between philosophy and narrative, the former he associates with rationality and the latter with native approaches to knowing and with nature. His arguments for storied residence flip the relationship between reason and nature, giving nature (native narrative knowing) ethical supremacy over reason (bankrupt philosophy) rather than challenging the dualism. Besides the important issue of the denial of native voice and political agency engendered in the continued association of native peoples with polarized nature—written convincingly of by Cronon (1995) and Braun (2002) amongst others—such a link between narrative, native, and nature prevents Cheney from conceiving of narrative ethics outside of specific places and romanticized forms of "residence." It also forces him to deny any use of reason in judging stories, leaving him open to accusations of duplicity from critics like Mick Smith (1995 [1993]). That Cheney is indeed drawing on assumptions that do not necessarily arise out of living in place is made more obvious in an earlier paper (1995[1989]) subtitled "ethics as bioregional narrative." In the title,

storied residence is clearly linked to a particular, bioregional, ethical prescription for storied living.

In critiquing Cheney, Mick Smith (1995 [1993]) assumes that judgement must necessarily come from outside narrative, but recent developments in psychology point to a different solution, one which can bridge reason/nature dualisms. Plumwood (1993) points out that part of contemporary reason/nature dualisms is their reduction of reason to the overly restrictive instrumental rationality mode of thinking. Bruner (1996), one of the key proponents of narrative knowing in the field of psychology, agrees. His suggestion, backed by clinical research, is that narrative knowing be considered an equally valid form of reasoning that everyone routinely engages in and that is necessary to social living. Narrative reasoning is central to meaning-making and therefore to identity and ethics, but it is still a form of reasoning and therefore no more nor less important than any other form of reason. The difference between native and western societies is not that native people do not use reason and are therefore closer to nature, but rather that they use reason differently in their relations to place and earth others. Western societies can learn much from the position of narrative reasoning in native North American societies but only if both native culture and narrative knowing are approached in non-dualistic ways.

Narrative psychologists and sociologists propose that people construct their own life stories through the use of "narrative resources" comprised of the stories and discourses that circulate through the societies they are embedded in.⁷² From this perspective, Cheney's storied residence can be understood as drawing on the narrative resources of bioregionalism. That is, he is judging individual stories as better or worse through reference to a set of discourses and narratives associated with the academic and political movements of bioregionalism, which is an entirely legitimate approach but one

⁷² The term "narrative resources" comes from Holstein and Gubrium (2000). It will be explained further in the following chapter.

that can only be explicitly acknowledged when reason and nature are no longer placed at incompatible poles.

Moreover, building on the literature of social-natures, place insofar as it is given meaning, is in part a product of narrative. As King (1997) points out, places are shaped by stories even as they in turn shape the stories that come after: "The experience of place as wild or domesticated is itself conditioned by the narratives that help construct the meaning of the place and the experience" (224).⁷³ Therefore, our storied residence in place does not begin fresh from nothing at our arrival in that place, but rather develops through our use of the individual and collective stories we and others bring to that place.

It is this understanding of narrative and place that informs one of the most cited articles to address the two together: Warren's 1990 article on ecological feminism. In this article she includes a first-person narrative of her experiences climbing a cliff-face, describing how her relationship to that cliff changed with her narration of the experience:

"At that moment I was bathed in serenity. I began to talk to the rock in an almost inaudible, child-like way as if the rock were my friend...It felt as if the rock and I were silent conversational partners in a longstanding friendship. I realized then that I had come to care about this cliff which was so different from me, so unmovable and invincible, independent and seemingly indifferent to my presence...I felt myself *caring* for this rock and feeling thankful that climbing provided the opportunity for me to know it and myself in this new way... If what I have said so far is correct, then there are very different ways to climb a mountain and *how* one climbs it and *how* one narrates the experience of climbing it matter ethically" (Warren 1990:134-5, 138)

Note, too, that Warren is drawn into conversation with the cliff; such an instinctively dialogical approach to relating will be discussed further below.

In the above cited article, and a subsequent one (1999), Warren demonstrates that first-person narration changes our relationships to earth others and to places. In Warren's

⁷³ See also Jones and Cloke (2002).

view the stories we bring to places and encounters are just as important to the quality of our storied residence as are the embodied, historical relationships we find ourselves in.

But there is something else in Warren's narratives, something that comes out more strongly in her second story (1999) of swimming with a pod of dolphins, and that is the world beyond human creation. Narrative psychologists and sociologists have tended to focus on humans and on exclusively human societies, including only human stories and discourses amongst the resources that can be drawn upon in storying and re-storying our individual lives. This is reinforced by the limited attention paid to place and its common restriction to the concept of setting—that is as a passive stage upon which human dramas unfold.

Holstein and Gubrium, two prolific narrative sociologists, include in their book, The Self We Live By (2000), a short case study of a meeting of a support group for caregivers to Alzheimer's patients in which members create both individual and collective storied understandings of their lives. This case study is unique in the examples they provide because of the prominent attention given to an earth other. The room where the group is meeting has a door to the outside, and a "weed" has managed to push its way in. One woman, spotting the weed, incorporates it into her life story saying that she is like the weed, that although her life is full of adversity she is tough and persistent. This in turn gets picked up by others, and soon the weed has taken root in the collective story of what it is to be a caregiver for an Alzheimer's sufferer. What is interesting about this anecdote is that while Gubrium and Holstein are comfortable discussing the agency of the caregivers, the plant to them is only a metaphor. There is no discussion of the weed as it is, an earth other that for the period of the meeting occupied the same place as a group of people developing a shared understanding of their experience; an earth other who participated in the co-construction of that shared story.

This blind spot is not unique to Gubrium and Holstein. In general, narrative studies (other than those in anthropology that draw on native North American traditions⁷⁴) have simply not noticed the participation of earth others in the storying process. This, then, is what Cheney, Rolston III, and Warren have to offer to narrative studies: the insight that earth others impact upon the stories we humans tell about our selves both individually and collectively.

The agency of earth others has already been discussed through a review of the geographical literatures on plant and animal others that draw on Latour, Haraway and ANT for inspiration. While all of this literature argues for a relational understanding of agency that includes earth others, the best of this literature also argues for understanding the unique and specific creativities that earth others bring to agential relationship. At the very least, therefore, earth others must be acknowledged as having some impact upon human experiences. And as White and Epston have demonstrated, experiences that are contradictory to individual or master narratives can serve as impetus to engage in practices of re-storying. That is, encounters with earth others may lead to the questioning of narratives, whether they be individual life stories or dominant public narratives.

However, a narrative environmental ethics would go further than simply suggesting that earth others impact on experience. As Rolston III assures us, although stories are created and narrated by people "[t]his does not make nature mere instrument in a human story, any more than it makes the fellow persons in our drama merely tools" (295). Rolston III perceives stories other than human ones circulating around and through societies, stories told by the geology of the Earth and the DNA of its organisms, for example. The flower that inadvertently crashed the Alzheimer's caregivers' support group was not merely a metaphor but an agent pursuing its own unfolding over time

⁷⁴ See in particular Basso (1992).

which, through sharing a place with a group of people, brought a non-human narrative resource to their collective self-storying.

Those geographies that address the agency of earth others through ANT make frequent use of the term "narrative"; however, they rarely bother to specify what they mean by the term, or acknowledge that narratives might need to be dealt with differently from other forms of discourse. Rather, narrative seems to be used interchangeably with the concept of discourse, or with networks, or time. For example, although Jones and Cloke (2002) in their study of tree cultures go to great lengths to introduce the concepts of culture, agency, place, and ethics, they seem to take narrative for granted, never defining it even as it becomes central to their conclusions that "in places such as West Bradley and Victoria Square it is the trees which have contributed centrally to the sustaining place-narrative which offers these very threads, presences and imaginings on the local scale" (216). Despite this lack of theoretical engagement with "narrative" I believe that Jones and Cloke have arrived at an important intuition, that earth others, places, and narratives are intertwined in ways central to ethics. I suggest that taking an explicitly narrative approach—one which draws on illuminating work on narrative done in other disciplines—will help to clarify the role of narrative in relation to culture, agency, place, and ethics. From this perspective, the trees in West Bradley and Victoria Square are central to the continuation of the stories surrounding and emerging from those places because they are present in those places as narrative resources, embodiments of the stories they have been and continue to be co-creators of.

The published narratives that will be explored in this thesis have all been co-created by the author and the earth others encountered in the places that they write about. The centrality of the earth other to the self-story is perhaps the defining feature of the contemporary ecological memoir (Schauffler, 2003). That is to say these stories could

neither have been experienced nor told in the way they are without the literal (not merely metaphoric) presence of these others. These memoirs are also told within the context of North American societies and draw on the variously common assumptions and master narratives shared by its peoples. While the dualising approaches discussed in chapter two have made their impact on some of the stories told, with deep ecology and bioregionalism being particularly popular discourses to draw on, these stories also touch on other approaches, ones that hold self and earth other in more creative tension. It is to some of these latter narrative resources that I now turn, reviewing the academic literature briefly before outlining (in chapter 4) a specifically narrative approach to place, identity, earth others, and ethics.

The last three approaches to environmental ethics that I review here are those that draw on feminist care ethics, those that draw on the insights of feminist science studies and finally those that take a dialogic approach to self-earth other encounters. I have chosen these three approaches because they maintain a useful tension between continuity and differentiation between self and other. However, they also possess another common element and that is their references to narrative. This is not a coincidence, as narrative can be a useful means for achieving and maintaining such a creative tension.

3.2 Caring About Earth Others.

There is a certain amount of diversity in the way in which care has been discussed in works on environmental ethics. For example, Murdoch's (2003) proposal that part of the agenda of geographers be the extension of our circle of sympathies to non-human others touches on caring. Jenkins' (2005) actually takes his concept of care from the ecological memoir of William Kittredge (1999), in which the author puts forward writing as a caring practice of relating to a particular place. On a more abstract level, Lynn Lee

(2005) asserts that "Convincing people to *care* about the possibility of environmental catastrophe is, of course, a central issue for any ecologically focussed moral philosophy" (emphasis added: 246). For her, this caring is informed by aesthetic experience in natural areas.⁷⁵

Despite the diversity, the majority of discussions of care in the context of earth others are explicitly linked to the ethic of care first proposed by Carol Gilligan in A Different Voice. A Different Voice provided empirical evidence of a practiced ethic that valued connection and personal responsibility over separation and individualized rights. Interestingly, from the perspective taken in this thesis, the evidence that Gilligan collects is in the form of personal narratives. The "care ethics" Gilligan derives from her analysis of these narratives is linked to a sense of the self as part of a web of connections with others and, therefore, as fundamentally relational. To act morally within this context is to respond adequately to the needs of the other. Such responses are facilitated through awareness of the other's needs, reflection, understanding, and compassion. The overall goal of care ethics is to maintain and enhance the quality of connection between self and other.

Gilligan contrasts this care ethics to the justice approach, which she likens to using mathematical equations — an observation that resonates with my discussion in the previous chapter of principles and the bureaucratization of ethics in society. The concept of identity as interdependent and of morality as responsibility to different but connected others offers a conceptualization of self and ethics that moves beyond the dualistic tendencies of hyperseparation and incorporation.

⁷⁵And she proposes that aesthetic experiences of nature offer a way by which we can be reminded, as embodied beings, of the interdependent and vulnerable quality of our relationship to non-human others and places and thereby come to care about the destruction of such aesthetic opportunities.

The compatibility of Gilligan's care ethics with narrative work has been explored by Davies (1996); who concludes that care ethics loses much of its potential to empower ethical actions when it is reduced from narratives to a principle.⁷⁶ According to Davies, Gilligan offers a means by which previously marginalized narratives can be heard as moral narratives, and can thereby be brought out into public discourse (129). However, by reducing what might be understood as a care master narrative to a principle, the moral field of action is once again reduced to the theoretical-judicial model. The reduction of narrative ethical knowledge to principles fails to acknowledge the moral human being as one embedded in relationships, or to factor in emotional reactions to situations in which ethical decisions are called for (Fraser, 2001). Drawing on classical Greek assertions that emotions are central to the development of ethical knowledge, Morris (2002; see also Hawkins, 2002) argues that narratives are, therefore, essential to ethical deliberation because they engage emotions, rather than suppress them.

Gilligan and some of the feminist and ecofeminist writers who have drawn on her work have also been criticized for linking care ethics to women in an essentializing way that reinforces gender dualisms and, by association, therefore, reifies the public/private split and consequently marginalizes care ethics.⁷⁷ In order to deal with these criticisms, Tronto builds on Gilligan's work to develop a politically relevant ethic of care, one that is detached from gender and that can be shown to have a place in both the private and public spheres.

⁷⁶ The principle of care is defined as: "acting so that 'everyone will be responded to and included and that no one will be left alone or hurt.' " (Davies, 1996: 25).

⁷⁷ In terms of the dualistic tendencies in Gilligan's care ethics, Tronto's (1993) Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care, provides the most sustained and in depth of critiques of essentializing uses of care ethics. For critiques of Gilligan in environmental ethics see King (1996), Cuomo (1998), and MacGregor (2004).

The authors discussed below have been selected because they use care ethics in ways that challenge damaging dualisms, and because they extend care ethics from the exclusive focus on human relationships to embrace the importance of non-human others to human identity formation and ethical responsibility. I begin with the work of environmental philosophers Karen Warren (1990, 1999) and Jim Cheney (1995 [1989]) who are perhaps the most cited writers to extend care ethics to earth others in a non-gender essentializing way, and who, not coincidentally, have already been introduced because of the importance of narrative to their work. Indeed, in a retrospective article, Cheney (2005) reports that the three biggest influences on his narrative approach to environmental ethics were Gilligan, Rolston III and indigenous ways of knowing. Cheney draws on Gilligan to develop the concept of “defining relations”: “a defining relationship is a relationship with something or someone that is at least partly definitive of one’s understanding of who one is” (104). The objectives of care ethics—objectives that Cheney shares—are the nurturing of these defining relationships. Again, through Gilligan, Cheney comes to understand that the resolution of any ethical dilemma concerning defining relationships requires detailed narrative representation. Cheney extends these insights to environmental ethics through Rolston III’s concept of “storied living” and indigenous philosophy. He comes to interpret the relationship between indigenous peoples and the land as one of defining relationship. And he comes, through Rolston III, to see the importance of nurturing such defining relationships with place in all human inhabitants of the Earth.

Warren is another environmental ethicist who locates herself within care ethics traditions and utilizes narrative in her writing. As already mentioned, Warren's 1990 paper centres around a short first-person narrative on rock-climbing, which she uses to explore how her relation to a cliff transitions from the individualist arrogance of wanting

to conquer it to an intersubjective orientation of care. The transition is a narrative one. In a later piece (1999), Warren proposes that rather than put care ethics in competition with "justice approaches," we must understand that care is necessary to all ethics, that "unless one cares" there is no moral motivation or practice (137-139). The logical derivation of principles is not enough to ensure ethical behaviour; to act ethically one must also care to do so. Drawing on psychological research that finds that a balance between emotion and reason is necessary to ethical response, Warren develops a tripartite approach to ethics, which she sums up as follows:

"situated universalism' establishes the ontological and epistemological status of ethical principles as guides to theorizing; 'care sensitivity' provides a necessary condition for morality and moral reasoning; and the criterion of 'care practices' provides a necessary condition for choosing among competing moral values and ethical principles" (142).

According to Warren, the moral agent picks from a "fruit bowl" of principles the one(s) that "reflects, creates or results in care practices" (131). Care practices are defined as "practices which maintain, promote or enhance the well-being of relevant parties, or do not cause unnecessary harm to the well-being of those parties" (139-140).

Cheney also attempts to integrate, rather than separate, care ethics and justice. He proposes understanding justice as secondary to care: Care is essential to forming relationships and communities, while justice is useful in mediating between members of already existing communities. In this account, issues of care are central to extending the moral community beyond humans to include earth others. Cheney proposes that it is our ability to care that determines the extent of our moral communities and our moral actions towards others. Therefore, it is the ability to care that must be expanded if we are to expand our moral communities and act ethically as Cheney explains:

"The limits of ethical considerability are the limits of one's (or a people's) ability to care and show concern. Differences among the entities point to differences in

the ways we can *care*, not to differences in *worth*. The ways in which we can care, or care effectively, dictate differences in actions" (138).

To a certain extent proximity, both in terms of similarity and geographical distance, mediate our abilities to care. It is easier for us to care and to care more effectively for those others that are most proximate to us. Because of this, Cheney argues, care must take place within a context of trust. In caring for our own proximate watershed, for example, we must be able to trust that more distant watersheds will still flourish without our attention. As Cheney acknowledges, this is a problematic assumption in today's world. Unfortunately, Cheney does not resolve this issue. However, others who take a more politicized orientation to care ethics do provide some guideposts to overcoming the barriers of literal and metaphoric distance.

Terri Field, in her 1995 discussion of the earlier papers of Warren and Cheney, raises further spatial problems with care approaches to environmental ethics. She particularly takes issue with Cheney's assertion that environmental ethics will emerge out of lives lived by relational selves embedded in place. She argues that (1) a relational self must be understood as being in relation to artifacts (by which she means human-made objects); (2) people may even come to care about these artifacts; (3) the majority of people now live in the artifact-dominant environments of cities; and therefore (4) if ethics are to come out of storied lives embedded in place, there is every likelihood that such ethics would be more concerned with artifacts than with earth others.

In order to have place-based care ethics concerning human relations to earth others in the context of places that are dominated by artifacts Field suggests two solutions. First, she suggests that ethicists, such as Cheney, draw on unacknowledged moral discourses in deriving their environmentally-friendly place-based care ethics from lived experience. This is similar to my argument that Cheney draws on narrative resources in developing a storied residence in place and in judging the ethical goodness

of storied residences (see above). Second, she suggests that enabling people to develop environmental-friendly place-based care ethics will require political practices that bring people into genuine encounter with earth others. These enabling environmental practices would involve "actively creating conceptual, experiential, and literal 'spaces' to gradually break through our anthropocentrized world view and practices" (319). This second solution obviously builds on the first, since such practices would need to be informed by some preexisting moral orientation, if not a full-fledged ethics. A number of the ecological memoirists I discuss in the second half of this thesis do undertake such practices.

Though they do not focus on earth others in their work, Fisher and Tronto (1991) do locate their discussion within a broad conceptualization of moral community:

"On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a *species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible*. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (emphasis added, 40).

Tronto includes this quotation in her subsequent book, Moral Boundaries, and reiterates that caring does not need to be restricted to inter-human interactions but may also "include the possibility that caring occurs for objects and for the environment, as well as for others" (103).⁷⁸ In this book, besides advocating for the expansion of our understanding of our relational selves to include "the environment," Tronto articulates a politically engaged ethic of care. In this more active understanding of care ethics, care must be understood as a practice "that involves both thought and action, that thought and action are interrelated, and that they are directed toward some end" (108). Care is also other-oriented, it requires an engagement of the self with the other and the subsequent

⁷⁸This quotation also appears in Swart (2005) as part of a justification of a care approach to integrating ecocentric and animal centric ethics (257-258).

taking on of some burden. Such an engagement must strive to undertake the best possible action given what is known about the situation, the needs of the other, and the abilities of the self. In Tronto's words,

"Care as a practice involves more than simply good intentions. It requires a deep and thoughtful knowledge of the situation, and of all the actors' situations, needs and competencies" (136).

Tronto is adamant that an ethic of care also requires a political theory of care that recognizes and critiques differences in power, that acknowledges issues of justice, and that embraces open democratic discussions within society.

Jac Swart (2005), drawing on Tronto, Tronto and Fisher, as well as an earlier call for a politicized ethic of care by Curtin (1996[1991]), proposes a twofold understanding of care in relation to animals.⁷⁹ First, he outlines "specific care," in which the responsibility is to meet the specific needs of individual animals. Specific care pertains primarily, but not exclusively, to relationships with domestic animals. Second, he proposes "non-specific care," in which responsibility is towards maintaining (and conceivably improving) the living conditions of groups of earth others such as wild animals. This non-specific care relationship does not preclude the development of specific care relationships with specific wild animals in suffering or danger. Swart's discussion of non-specific care provides a way of envisioning a broader orientation to care than is normally articulated, one that takes seriously Tronto's entreaty to think beyond dyadic relationships of care, and one that enables us to care, albeit differently, for distant watersheds.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ "Wild" in the sense that Swart uses the term, and in my own usage here, should be understood as existing in a continuum with "domestic", so that when I use the term "wild animal" I am referring to minimally domesticated animals who are primarily dependent on those environments over which humans have minimal influence.

⁸⁰ Swart detracts somewhat from his arguments in his concluding remarks failing to envision the possibility of a care relationship with those animals that occupy the middle

Suzanne Michel (1998) also brings Tronto's politicization of the care ethic to the question of relationships to earth others through her empirical study of the politics of care practiced at a raptor rehabilitation centre. She undertakes her study explicitly to engage with Plumwood's project of challenging dualisms, focusing her attention on a site where people's daily practices of caring for earth others bring them to question culture/nature dualisms.

Whereas the human figures as the only real agent in Swart's (2005) relations of care—providing care or not, interfering in lived lives or not—Michel provides a more sophisticated vision of care relationships. Michel pays as much attention to human dependence for identity on their relationships to earth others as she pays to the politics of care aimed at addressing the needs of the raptors. In her study, Michel found that the daily practice of care involved in rescuing, treating, and otherwise engaging with injured and sick birds led participants to think and act in non-dualistic ways and to transgress the "nature-culture borderlands." The experience of caring led participants to reshape their identities to include their relationships to these raptors, to nurture a sense of empathy with earth others, and subsequently to engage in wider political actions, as Michel relates:

"first, daily relations with injured wildlife engender a trans-species empathy for the ever-growing animal casualties of our expanding political economies. Second, such empathy, or blurring of boundaries between humans and animals, deconstructs anthropocentric notions of self and fosters the relational identity, which entails kinship and respect for all the wildlife that inhabit the community of Ramona. Third, wildlife rehabilitators' politics of care are nature-culture borderland politics that not only engender kinship with animals, but also result in political resistance at various sites (household, community, ecosystems, and

of the wild-domestic continuum, the animals that he labels "vermin." Rather than extending his arguments of care to these "semi-domesticated mice or rat species" (261), he takes refuge in stating that "various considerations regarding the interests of animals versus those of man can overrule the principle of care" (261). Note too that his use of care makes it into a principle rather than leaving it in narrative form.

watersheds, for example) and scales (household, local, regional, even global)" (174).

To use Cheney's words, from the partial embedding of these people's lives in the place of a raptor rehabilitation centre an ethic of care for raptors and their habitats emerged. To develop Swart's (2005) terminology, by engaging in politicized practices of *specific care*, the raptor rehabilitators came to embrace *non-specific care* for earth others at various scales, thus moving beyond Cheney's caring only for the proximate.

If there is one common thread running through all of the above discussed authors it is that care ethics cannot stand alone. To raise care ethics up as a replacement for other ethical approaches would simply reverse the dualism. Instead, care ethics must itself be understood relationally and be used along with other practices, both narrative and political, and in association with other ethical orientations or principles.

3.3 From Standpoints to Pivots

As already mentioned, Tronto also emphasizes that a practice of care ethics requires that the needs of the other be competently met. In other words, care cannot be said to have been received if needs remain. In understanding the needs of earth others, as well as in responding to those needs, we humans tend to rely, at least partially, on science to inform our actions and therefore, our interactions. Feminist science studies represents another influential way in which self and earth other ethics have been approached.

Many of the references to narrative made in the networked approaches to animal and plant geographies discussed above and in the previous chapter have their origins in Donna Haraway's work. Though often lumped in with Latour and ANT, Haraway's approach is different enough to be addressed separately here. First, she engages more explicitly with ethics than Latour does (see in particular her recent book [2003] on companion species). Second, because her focus of attention has been primarily on

biology, and earlier on primatology (a discipline that awkwardly straddles the divide between biology and anthropology), she avoids the charges laid against ANT scholars, that their networks are technologically- and therefore still humanly-centred. Third, her later work specifically concerns the relationships and "significant otherness" between humans and earth others.⁸¹ All of these concepts are antithetical to the extremes of ANT scholarship on animal geographies, whose focus on hybridity in agency is paradoxically unable to deal with the ethical issues entailed in relationship. And finally, her work emphasizes narrative as a condition of living and as a hope for the future. The centrality of ethics to her work and to living is summed up by Haraway as follows:

"I believe that all ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-strong thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relation. We are not one, and being depends on getting on together. The obligation is to ask who are present and who are emergent" (2003:50).

In her early work dealing specifically with primatology, Haraway emphasized the narrative quality of the science and linked this way of looking at scientific practice to ethics:

"Primatology seems to be a science composed of stories, and the purpose of this book is to enter into contestations for their construction. ...Also, I think there is an aesthetic and an ethic built into thinking of scientific practice as story-telling, an aesthetic and ethic different from capitulation to 'progress' and belief in knowledge as passive reflection of 'the way things are,' and also different from the ironic skepticism and fascination with power so common in the social studies of science. The aesthetic and ethic latent in the examination of story-telling might be pleasure and responsibility in the weaving of tales. Stories are means to ways of living, stories are technologies for primate embodiment" (Haraway, 1989: 8).⁸²

Importantly for the purposes of this thesis, Haraway conceives of this ethic of storytelling as both a way to pleasure and a way of enacting responsibility. It is precisely because she sees scientific practice as embedded in a web of relations that makes her "argue for the

⁸¹ See in particular The Companion Species Manifesto (2003).

⁸² See also, Haraway's (1986) discussion of primatology as a narrative field.

idea of a contested narrative field, rather than for other models of construction of scientific knowledge" (179).

As she demonstrates throughout Primate Visions, the way in which non-human primates are storied (in scientific papers, biography, and memoir) is both shaped by broader discourses in society and in turn provides an important societal resource for the storying of what it means to be human. The goal of her book is to examine critically the origin stories that emerge out of the practices of primatology in order to understand "what enables and what constrains a particular kind of story-telling".⁸³ In this book, she literally engages in the deconstruction of the story of Oob and Boob, the early human hunter/killers that Ursula K. LeGuin invokes.

Because primatology straddles the border between anthropology and biology its practices are often more obviously narrative than with other sciences.⁸⁴ Through the field stories of encounter between human and earth other contained in the publications that Haraway examines, the subject/object dichotomy cannot be maintained and "The people and animals in these stories are [revealed as] actors enmeshed in history, not simply objects of knowledge, observers, or victims" (129).

The "mutuality" in Haraway's work on self-earth other relationships is condensed into two concepts: "inter-subjectivity" and "significant otherness." The subjects in Haraway's world are relational. They do not predate the web of relations through which

⁸³ "One story is not as good as another. This book is about what enables and what constrains a particular kind of story-telling practice—scientific narrative in a field of extreme boundary disputes, among many differently situated writers and readers" (Haraway, 1989: 331).

⁸⁴ This narrativity, while perhaps emphasised in primatology, is not restricted to it. Bruner (1996) emphasizes that narrative knowing has a role to play in all of scientific practice, particularly in the area of theory, which is usually visibly story-like and which cannot be invalidated in the same logical-scientific way that hypotheses can.

they become, and yet she still manages to conceptualise them as subjects in their own right, no matter how unstable their identities might be. Despite the contingent and relational nature of self and other, the actors in her world remain neither entirely separate from, nor entirely incorporated into some web-like whole.

This becomes particularly clear in her Companion Species Manifesto (2003), in which her focus is on the human-earth other relations embodied in "significant otherness." The "significant otherness" of human-dog relationships demonstrates the productive tension she maintains between separation and incorporation of self and other, and of nature and culture:

"There cannot be just one companion species, there have to be at least two to make one. It is in the syntax; it is in the flesh. Dogs are about the inescapable, contradictory story of relationships—co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all. Historical specificity and contingent mutability rule all the way down, into nature and culture, into naturecultures" (2003:12).

Here there is both whole and parts, neither pre-dating the other, but everything is contingent and mutable in the face of everything else. She challenges culture/nature dualisms but in a way that emphasizes culture as a product of its relationship to nature just as much as nature is such a product of culture.

Perhaps because of the newness of its publication, not to mention the smallness of the publishing house, The Companion Species Manifesto and its concept of "significant otherness" has yet to make its impact on the field of environmental ethics. Therefore, when environmental ethicists draw on Haraway in their work, they usually make reference to earlier ideas, such as situated knowledge.⁸⁵ King (1997), for example, uses

⁸⁵ Lynne Lee (2005), for example, draws on Haraway's concepts of situated knowledge and standpoint of the subjugated to argue for a "conscientious anthropocentrism." I critiqued this interpretation in chapter 2, suggesting anthropogenic, i.e. a view from the human rather than of the human, as a better way of using Haraway in this instance (see pages 25-26 of this thesis). Cloke and Jones (2003) also draw on situatedness,

this concept to critique biocentrism as "a 'way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally'" (quotation from Haraway, quoted on King page 213). Michel (1998) uses "situated knowledge" to argue against relations with earth others that are driven by the scientific vision of objective, distanced observation and the manipulation of natural entities (165).

Emel (1998) also draws on Haraway's Simians, Cyborgs, and Women--in particular Haraway's critique of western dualisms and the unitary self--in her historical overview of changing narratives of human-wolf relations and the often horrific results of the enactment of those stories through peoples' lived lives. In this chapter Emel traces through Roman and Native American myths, nationalist narratives, novels in the Western genre, the changing stories that science has told about wolves, the stories of individual hunters, and her own personal experiences and reflections. All of these stories are entwined with descriptions of the methods used to kill wolves and statistics on the number of wolves killed. It is a chilling account that is emotionally difficult to read because it refuses to allow any room for self-deception.

Emel ends her chapter by looking at contemporary stories of wolves that are oppositional to these master narratives of destruction and hate, providing counter-stories of wolves and human-wolf relations. Similarly to Haraway's observation that primatology is a narrative field in which scientists battle over how humans are storied, Emel demonstrates that how wolves are storied is intertwined with how we story ourselves. She ends by calling on people to bring sentiment and feeling, and even poetry, to their understandings of and relations to earth others.

emphasising in particular social, relational and contextual aspects; however as they fall more clearly within dialogical approaches their ethics are addressed below.

Castree (2003) provides an overview of contemporary approaches to environmental ethics,⁸⁶ arguing for what he terms "post-environmental ethics," which he attributes to Haraway, Latour, Whatmore, and ANT theorists. The main characteristics of this post-environmental ethics are the rejection of clear essentialised categories which distinguish between humans and non-humans, and the networked and contingent nature of agency. This "means that the relationally constituted, and situationally variable, members of any ethical constituency cannot be ontologically fixed once and for all" (10). However, in making his argument for a "post-environmental ethics", Castree creates a hierarchy of categories of ethical approaches, contrasting "post-environmental ethics" with what he terms "the ethics of environmental otherness-in-relation"—a mode of ethics that argues that while humans and non-humans are connected they are not the same and that ethical sense can only be made out of this otherness through "cognitive and non-cognitive engagements with it" (7-8).

Just as categories of human and non-human cannot be purified, nor can different approaches to ethics. The "post-environmental" and "otherness-in-relation" approaches are not as incompatible as Castree presents, at least in Haraway's thinking. Certainly she is ready to acknowledge that encounters between primates and primatologists change both categories, but that does not make them into the same, nor does it render them into some alloy of agency by which their individual, albeit relational, contributions are no longer discernible. The very mutability of identity in "post-environmental" ethics means that encounters and relations with earth others are fraught with ethical implications, because in these interactions we must take responsibility for our impact not just on the

⁸⁶ In this overview Castree (2003) uses a circumscribed definition of ethics, seeing its ultimate goal to be about who or what "has rights, deserts, and entitlements" (4). In this thesis I argue for a broader understanding of ethics.

well-being of the other but on their and our own identities.⁸⁷ My reading of Haraway is born out by Wolch and Emel (1998), who draw on Haraway's cyborg vision to argue "we can embrace kinship as well as difference and encourage the emergence of an ethic of respect and mutuality, caring and friendship" (122).

The final use of Haraway that I wish to make reference to here is Murphy's use of her concept of "standpoints" within a dialogic approach to human relations with earth others. Murphy uses Haraway and dialogics to examine literary authors who "develop philosophical pivots rather than idealist centers on which to base a nondualistic, nondichotomizing process of being-in-the-world, which is very much an ecological perspective" (1995: 111). By engaging in a reflective reading of literary stories by such authors as LeGuin and Gary Snyder through the lenses of ecology, feminism, and dialogics, Murphy believes we can develop "the inhabitation we need to learn for an environmentally ethical life practice" (97). Dialogical approaches to environmental ethics will be discussed next.

3.4 Dialogical Ethics⁸⁸ of Self and Earth Other

As already mentioned, Murphy (1995) in the field of literary studies draws on Haraway. He reads her as a dialogical thinker and brings her together with Russian dissident and literary critic Bakhtin in order to integrate the fields of ecology and feminism. Bakhtin, himself, never addressed issues of culture and nature. His dialogics was anthropocentric in perspective. However, Murphy puts him to good use in his study

⁸⁷ While not dealing explicitly with ethics, Anderson's (1998) study of zoos draws heavily on Haraway in order to study "the material production (and form) of human-animal relations at a specific site" (35).

⁸⁸ Gardiner (1996) provides a concise overview of the three key dialogical thinkers, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Mikail Bakhtin, comparing and contrasting them as well as discussing their interrelationships.

of "ecological writers" of the late twentieth century,⁸⁹ arguing for an expansion of the concept of dialogue to include energy and information exchange such as that practiced through "gene pools and cross-fertilization" (152).⁹⁰

Murphy explicitly puts forward the dialogic approach as an alternative to the dualistic thinking of modernist discourse. He is particularly enamoured with dialogics because it enables him to preserve the heterogeneity of the theories he uses and the texts he examines without resorting to either a hierarchy or a relativist position. In his own words: "Dialogics enables the differential unification of ecology and feminisms, which is to say a conjoining that does not conflate particularities or subordinate one to the other" (3). In Murphy's practice of open-ended dialogics, Haraway's standpoints are changed through acts of engagement into "pivots" from which new questions and new directions become visible. Murphy sees this orientation as crucial to the overthrow of damaging dualistic paradigms, as he outlines below:

"Coupled with the two basic pivots outlined here, ecology and feminisms, dialogics provides a method by which we may yet effect one of the paradigm shifts necessary to break down the dualistic thinking of patriarchy that perpetuates the exploitation and oppression of nature in general and women in particular. ...Ecofeminist dialogics provides a place and method by which to step and dance, but not to stand" (17).

In terms of the self and other, Bakhtin offers a way of conceiving of relationship that goes beyond the rationalist use value/exchange value "things-in-themselves/things-for-us" and instead offers the concept of "us-as-things-for-others, or mutually constitutive value" (Murphy, 1995: 22)—a state of being *for* not just being *with*. In this respect,

⁸⁹ The main "ecological writers" Murphy engages with are Ursula K. LeGuin and Gary Snyder.

⁹⁰ In this latter effort his work is similar to that of Rolston III who wants to expand narrative to include geological histories and DNA.

ethics is about *being for the other* rather than merely *being with the other*.⁹¹ Coupling this with feminism and ecology, Murphy proposes a processual vision of self and other as existing both separately and interdependently, in difference and continuity. In such a process, the "other" must be recognized as a "self-existent entity," that is, the other cannot be incorporated by the self. However, to avoid the dualistic trend of hyperseparation, this must be coupled with a further recognition of the "interrelationship and interanimation" between this self-existent other and the self.

Friskics (2001 and 2003) places dialogue between self and earth other even more centrally in his ethics. Drawing on Buber and Levinas, he writes that we are always in a position of "response-ability" to those others, including earth others, that we are constantly encountering. He writes that "Our lives are decidedly ethical affairs in which we are always and forever being called upon to respond to the claims of our fellows and the exigencies of the situations in which we find ourselves claimed" (2001:396).⁹² Not hearing the claims these others make on us for "care," "love," "respect," and "compassion" does not prove their silence, Friskics goes on to write, it merely demonstrates our failure to listen.

Dialogue requires active listening as much as speaking. Friskics insists that we are always dialogically engaged with earth others; how we participate in that dialogue is a matter of ethics. Dialogical relations to earth others is something that needs to be practiced and developed through silence, stillness, reflection, and memory (Friskics 2001 and 2003). And dialogical ethics does not end with the dialogue but must extend into an

⁹¹ Bauman (1995) draws on Bakhtin and Levinas in his work on post-modern ethics and also uses the terms "being with" and "being for" in his discussion of togetherness.

⁹² Cloke and Jones (2002) come to a similar conclusion through Bauman's contention that humans possess "innate moral capacities", arguing that "it does not seem overly controversial to claim that non-human nature is capable of generating the emotional responses in human subjects that Bauman considers fundamental to morality" (199).

active response to the encounter. Dialogue "empowers" us to respond. We must allow these dialogues to inform the way we live our lives.

Narrative is important to Friskics' ethical practice of dialogical encounter. He critiques "object knowledge"—what I have been calling "logical-scientific" knowledge—as both meaningless and directionless. We cannot analyze dialogical encounters and expect to maintain their "compelling and empowering force." However, we can share our encounters with others through testifying to the experience, and these testimonies by necessity take narrative form:

"In other words, we can tell our stories—...Necessarily particular and concrete, these personal narratives speak of the sponsoring ground of my concern, define the context of my ethical deliberations, and provide the basis for the hermeneutical work that follows. They also offer the final "litmus test" for assessing the extent to which my theoretical interpretations remain true to (or, conversely, distort or betray) the meaning of these formative and decisive encounters." (2003:11).

He, himself, uses first-person narrative testimony in both of the papers reviewed here (2001, 2003). He also examines the first-person narrative testimony in public comments made during an environmental impact assessment, demonstrating that these narratives of personal experience were central to introducing and justifying their ethical statements.

Jones (2000) is also concerned with encounters between humans and earth others, particularly the uneven geography of those encounters. Like many of the writers reviewed in this section, he takes his concept of "encounter" from the dialogical theorist Levinas.⁹³ He asserts that only when we conceive of the earth others we encounter as embodied individuals can we respond to them ethically. Unfortunately in our scientised and bureaucratised societies in the west, we tend to understand earth others as collectives

⁹³ From a biomedical perspective, see Frank's (2004) use of Levinas, as well as Morris' (2002) discussion of ethics as first philosophy, as "where philosophy begins" (210).

and populations.⁹⁴ By conceiving of earth others in the abstract, the moral impulse to respond to those earth others we encounter is radically diminished.⁹⁵

Geography plays a role in facilitating the abstraction of earth others. Jones discusses the geographies that dominate the way in which earth others are conceived and encountered. Earth other identity, from a human perspective, is largely defined by cultural and political boundaries, as well as the functional spaces they are confined to such as farm, zoo, laboratory, home, municipal park, or wilderness preserve. And these identities determine how humans relate to them. In their study of American public reactions to the animal practices of racialized human others, Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998) demonstrate that norms for what is considered appropriate are heavily dependent upon aspects of the context of those practices, including spatial context. Where animals are harmed has a large impact on whether that harm is considered cruel or acceptable.

One of the difficulties in relating ethically to earth others stems from the differences in scale and location of our lives. Jones points out that this makes some degree of physical (and temporal) segregation and lack of transparency inevitable in our ethical relations with some earth others:

"My additional concern is that (otherly embodied) lives may be positioned yet further towards the margins, or beyond, of our ethical imagination due to the very spaces that they occupy being profoundly other to the one(s) that humans generally occupy. These are lives which may be lived in spaces such as water, soil, sky, (perpetual) darkness, forest canopy, and so forth, and (again) those lived on differing scales" (286).

⁹⁴ Again in the context of biomedicine, Morris argues that Levinas' ethics of encounter is particularly important in today's bureaucratized and corporatized world with its "built-in facelessness engineered to erase or obscure personal responsibility and corporate obligation" (2002: 212).

⁹⁵ Jones (2000) acknowledges that Levinas had a hyper-separated understanding of humans and earth others and that it is not entirely clear that Levinas would have agreed with the extension of his philosophy of encounter to earth others.

In an ethics based on encounter, consideration must be given to the unevenness of the geographies of those encounters both in terms of embodiment and imagination. Jones (2000) speculates that the power of stories (in books and movies) that centre on individual and individualized earth others has the potential to interrupt these uneven geographies, "creating "ripples in the exploited spaces of the collectives from which these animals are lifted" (282).

According to Murphy in dialogical approaches to ethics interrelationship and interanimation must be understood "heterarchically" as opposed to hierarchically. To this end, Murphy proposes the concept of "anotherness" in place of the dualistically tainted concept of "otherness:"

"Anotherness proceeds from a heterarchical sense of difference, recognizing that we are not ever only one for ourselves but are also always another for others...Otherness isolated from anotherness suppresses knowledge of the ecological processes of interdependency—the ways in which humans and other entities survive, change, and learn by continuously mutually influencing each other—and denies any ethics of reciprocity" (152).

Finally, Plumwood (2002), argues that western culture's monologically rationalist relationship to the world needs to be replaced by a dialogical one in order to take us to survivable futures for all. However, in order to develop such a dialogical relationship, we must be willing to recognize earth others as potentially intentional subjects (see discussion in chapter 2). Out of this dialogical relationship to potentially intentional earth others, Plumwood envisions a "richness of mything narrative emerging" (229). She ends her 2002 book with an argument for a "narrative ethics" approach to our relationship with the world around us:

"Narrative ethics, supplying context and identity, can help us configure nature as a realm of others who are independent centres of value and need that demand from us ethical relationships and responses. As many theorists have noted, narrative is important for constituting the moral identity of actors and actions; intentional description is in turn crucial to legitimating rich narrative description

of the non-human sphere. In the interspecies as well as the intraspecies case, narrative can supply crucial information about context, and reveal the complex interplay of different ethical concepts and relationships" (188).

Narrative and dialogics are also crucial to placed ethics. In a theoretically more sophisticated reworking of Rolston III's storied residence, Plumwood argues that ethical relations to place require a "capacity to relate dialogically to the more-than-human world, since this is a very important source of narratives and narrative subjects defining the distinctiveness of place" (2002: 231). Through a combination of dialogical engagement and narrative co-construction with earth others, Plumwood proposes that a person can come to have a richer, deeper, two-way relationship to place whereby "you belong to the land as much as the land belongs to you" (230). From a more strongly narrative perspective, perhaps this can be rephrased as a person having a deeper, richer relationship to place whereby place co-constructs your self-story just as much as you co-construct the stories of that place.

To return to the quotation from Cronon with which I began this chapter, in order to story our way home to survivable futures we have to replace "killer" Hero stories, where everything is starkly black and white (hyperseparated or incorporated), with stories of mutuality, continuity, and difference in creative tension. In this chapter I introduced three, often interwoven, sometimes overlapping, contemporary approaches to environmental ethics that do manage this balance: a political approach to feminist care ethics; Haraway's standpoints and significant otherness; and dialogical encounters with earth others. I have also suggested that a commonality that runs through all three of these self-earth other relations is a concern with narrative and with narrative thinking. In the following chapter, I turn my attention to the details of the concept of narrative knowing in the following chapter.

4. Thinking About Stories

In the previous chapter I highlighted non-dualistic approaches to ethics concerning our relationships to earth others and the more-than-human world. Several of the writers examined in that chapter referred to or employed rhetoric that was specifically narrative in form. However, these authors tended to employ narrative in an unsophisticated manner, engaging with it as if the category of narrative is self evident and does not require the development of methodologies specific to its form. It is my contention that to address the ethics of our relations to earth others properly, narrative has to be addressed and it has to be addressed as narrative not as just another form of discourse. Fortunately, there are many writers who have devoted their careers to an examination of the problem of narrative. In this chapter I engage with this literature, charting a way forward towards a practice of re-storying our relationship to the more-than-human world.

4.1 Narrative Knowing

The link between story and knowledge has always existed in the English language. Narrative, the word, derives from Latin *narrare*, which means "to know" (Bleakley, 2005: 536). However, it is only very recently that the social sciences have begun to (re)conceive of narrative as a particular way of structuring knowledge. Bruner

(1996), a developmental psychologist, suggests that there are two "ways in which human beings organize and manage their knowledge of the world, indeed structure even their immediate experience: one seems more specialized for treating of physical 'things,' the other for treating of people and their plights" (39). He labels the first type of reasoning (that which is central to the practice of the natural sciences) as logical-scientific reasoning. The second mode of reasoning, and the subject of the bulk of his prolific writing, he calls the narrative way of knowing.

Despite this conceptual division, Bruner is careful to emphasize that narrative knowing and logical-scientific knowing are inextricably intertwined. In his 1996 work, The Culture of Education, he argues that narrative knowing is embedded in the pursuit of science, and even goes so far as to suggest that the theories that science works with and the processes by which theories are developed can only be understood narratively. Although testable hypotheses are derived from theories and subject to verification within the rules of logical-scientific knowing, the theories themselves are judged on the basis of their verisimilitude and cannot be tested directly. That is, they are treated like narratives.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the narrative skeleton in the closet of theory, academia tends to deny legitimacy to narrative knowing. While it is impossible to separate the twin threads of narrative and logical-scientific knowing, the utility and even existence of the former is often denied within academia in favour of portraying the business of understanding the world as one that operates on purely logical-scientific grounds. Geography is no different. This thesis seeks to bring narrative out into the open of geographical research in two ways: first, by explicitly placing self-narratives, in this case published memoirs, at the centre of geographical research; and, second, by explicitly integrating narrative knowing into the process of engaging in that work.

That narrative thinking comes more easily to people than logical-scientific thinking, when dealing with human behaviour in general, and ethics in particular, was brought home to psychology professor Blythe Clinchy (2003) when she tried to teach Piaget's theory of child development to an undergraduate class. She related to her class two anecdotes depicting children lying and then asked them to decide which child was "naughtiest" based on Piaget's framework. The students had been exposed to Piaget's logical-scientific framework already; however, they refused to use it to explain the children's behaviour. Instead, they asked questions and drew up elaborate conjectures regarding the possible motivations of the children and the possible contexts for their action. In short, they conjured up alternative stories, seeking to understand the behaviour through narrative means, rather than judge the children from detached observation.

Drawing on a large number of studies in experimental and developmental psychology, Bruner (1996) presents a case for accepting both narrative and logical-scientific knowing as innate to the human mind and as essential to human life at both individual and collective levels. He proposes that the human mind is inherently wired to structure experience narratively, and that where this narrative way of knowing is lacking severe problems ensue. For example, in discussing his research into autism, Bruner reports that autistic children—some of whom are famously good at logical-scientific reasoning—lack the ability to tell or understand stories (1996). This lack of narrative understanding has devastating consequences for them: "Without a grasp of narrative, the autistic child is cut off from one of the principal sources of knowledge about the human world around him, particularly relating to human desires, intentions, beliefs and conflicts" (Bruner, 1996: 177).

It is not much of a stretch to suggest that a social science that lacks "a grasp of narrative" is also cut off from an essential way of understanding human experiences and

actions; that by putting primacy on logical-scientific reasoning the social sciences are developing a limited and potentially destructive understanding of human being and experience. This is not to say that the social sciences have ignored narratives. Narratives, such as oral life histories and even works of literature, have been used as sources of data in the social sciences (Polkinghorne, 1988), including geography (cf. Tuan, 1991), for many decades. However, in the past narratives have tended to be treated as relatively transparent sources of data that could be mined for logical-scientific studies of human attitudes and behaviour (Polkinghorne, 1988). This contrasts with the current wave of interest in which ontological status is given to narrative ways of knowing and to narratives and which understands people's selves and even society itself as inherently storied (Somers, 1994; Maines, 1993). In line with this more contemporaneous work, I am proposing that narratives be understood as constitutive of experience and of the world, as producers of self and relationship, of time and space, of meaning and ethics.

By bringing narrative knowing explicitly into academic research, the researchers discussed here are part of a wider cross-disciplinary movement towards a more engaged, pluralistic, and dynamic interpretive social science.⁹⁶ In the words of Bochner, one of the most unabashed proponents of the narrative approach:

"The narrative turn moves away from a singular, monolithic [or monological] conception of social science toward a pluralism that promotes multiple forms of representation and research; away from facts and toward meanings; away from master narratives and toward local stories; away from idolizing categorical thought and abstracted theory and toward embracing the values of irony, emotionality, and activism; away from assuming the stance of the disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of a feeling, embodied, and vulnerable observer; away from writing essays and toward telling stories." (Bochner, 2001: 134-5)

⁹⁶ See for example, Geertz (2000 [1973]) in anthropology, White and Epston (1990) in psychology, Maines (1993) in sociology, and Pile (1991) in geography.

If we are to take narrative knowing seriously, as I and those referenced in this section contend we ought to do, then we must make room for the study of stories in our social sciences. We must acknowledge that in seeking an understanding of society and its members, stories have as much of a role to play as surveys and statistical analyses.

4.2 Defining Narrative in Context

Narrative knowing makes use of narratives. But what, exactly, is a narrative? There are about as many definitions as there are people who have bothered to define narrative. However, at its most basic, a narrative is a form of discourse with a particular structure and logic.⁹⁷ A narrative involves some set of linked episodes whose sequence implies causation (Somers, 2004; Bruner, 1996). However, Nelson (2001) emphasises that temporal sequencing alone is not enough to make a story; rather a story must represent a certain understanding of a particular set of events or of the human condition in general. In order to do this, the teller of the story must be depictive, must be selective of what she or he includes, must provide a particular interpretation of these events and the overall story, and connect the elements within the narrative to each other and to other stories. This sequencing, which is more than merely temporal, is referred to as a plot, plotline, or emplotment (Bruner, 1996; Franzosi, 1998; Nelson, 2001; Chambers, 2002).

Narratives also depend upon theme for coherence. Theme refers to the linking of events according to some common element and has to do with what the story is about: "The idea that is proposed, supposed, or speculated about" (Burroway, 2000: 305). But theme is also inherently normative, having to do with the tension between what the teller thinks the world is like and what he or she thinks it *ought* to be like. Despite its connection to morality, theme should not be confused with a moral, which is a conclusion

⁹⁷ See for example, Maines (1993), Somers (1994), Somers and Gibson (1994), Franzosi (1998), Polletta (1998).

that the reader of certain types of stories (fables) is meant to derive from reading them (Burroway, 2000). Employed throughout the narrative, theme further strengthens the connections between the episodes recounted (Somers, 1994; Bruner, 1990; Noy, 2004). Both emplotment and theme impart meaning to the narrative; and once integrated in either or both of these ways, the significance and meaning of events can only be understood in relation to the whole of the story (cf. Chambers, 2002).

Together, theme and plot form the basic elements of narrative logic, which is subject to different rules of validity than those of logical-scientific knowing. For a narrative to be perceived as valid it needs to have verisimilitude or lifelikeness, and the source or teller of the narrative must be perceived as sincere (Bruner, 1996; Carson, 1997). These rules of validity apply to fictional as well as non-fictional narratives. Carson suggests that within narratives it is the truth of understanding that matters:

"By truthful, I do not mean veracious but true to life, and that not in the sense of meeting preexisting criteria or corresponding to a predetermined pattern, but rather plausibly hanging together and imaginatively disclosing to us something about ourselves or about the human condition that we need to know, something that both 'figures' in the light of our understanding of what life is generally like and throws light on the road we've travelled and the path ahead" (1997: 233).

Such an understanding refers to meaning and requires an orientation of interpretation rather than analysis. Narrative knowing interprets events and their connections, whereas logical-scientific knowing seeks to explain events and their connections (Bruner, 1996). In this way interpreting meanings and motivations becomes the objective of narrative social science research, rather than modeling the repeatability and predictability of actions.

Almost all researchers who deal with narrative emphasize time and temporality. Even Polkinghorne—whose definition is notable in its focus on process rather than product—emphasizes time, defining narrative as "a cognitive process that organizes

human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes" (1988: 1). Narrative is both the process of plotting experiences together into some temporary whole that includes a past, present, and future (even if the latter exists only by implication), and that transient collection of events itself.

Although the structure of a story as told (or written) may involve jumps backwards and forwards in time, at some level there is an expectation of temporal progress (cf. Polkinghorne, 1988; Maines, 1992). This is in contrast to other forms of discourse that tend towards the abstraction of concepts out of their temporal relationships, such as universal moral principles. Breaches of this expectation of temporal ordering are particularly telling. For example, Frank (1995, 2002) found through studying the narratives of patients with life-threatening or debilitating illnesses that many of their stories lacked temporal organization of any kind and had, instead, descended into chaos, reflecting the mental state of their narrators.

Though time takes first billing in narrative studies, space does get mentioned on occasion. Space and place primarily find their way into some definitions of narrative via the element of setting. Maines (1992, 1993), for example, includes setting along with characterization and plot as one of the ways in which events are contextualised in a narrative. Riessman (1993), in her review of the analysis of narratives, mentions the spatial as one of the means by which storytellers orient their audiences. In both of these examples, space is but one element of many in a narrative, while time provides the overarching structure. By only bringing space in through setting, or ignoring it completely, these approaches to narrative run the risk of reducing the spatial to a stage, or a backdrop, against which the narrative unfolds over time, thereby rendering space into a static element that it is possible, but not necessary, to study.

This idea of space as separable from time and as static—as possibly limiting the plot but never producing the story—is both problematic and relatively common in modernist thought and has been challenged by many geographically inclined contemporary theorists (cf. Massey, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991). According to these theorists and others who have come after them, space is not static. It is not merely the inanimate landscape upon which personal and public narratives are played out. Space is constantly being shaped and produced by those dramas, and is in turn shaping and even producing subsequent relationships, experiences, and stories. As Doreen Massey has eloquently argued, space-time must be conceived of as a whole, and space and time—when they are examined separately—must still be understood as fundamentally intertwined (1994).

Having drawn on Massey's influential concept of space/time, it is interesting to note that she, herself, while initially giving some importance to narrative drops it as quickly as some of the narrative researchers drop space. In her delineation of the limitations of dichotomizing time and space, Massey quotes Terry Eagleton as writing that the concept of space "has proved of far less glamorous appeal to radical theorists than the apparently more dynamic, exhilarating notions of *narrative* and history" (emphasis added, Massey, 1994: 150). While Massey goes on to advocate ending the dichotomization of space and time, and geography and history, narrative is not mentioned again.⁹⁸

There are two major exceptions to the general neglect of the spatial-dimension by narrative theorists, both focussed on the concept of the narrative-self discussed in the

⁹⁸ There are a few articles that do look at the role of public narratives in shaping place (Newman and Paasi, 1998; Vila, 1999; Maines and Bridger, 1992). Geographical research pieces have also been published recently that explicitly frame their data as coming from "personal narratives" (Davis, 2004; Hall, 2004) or from "biographical narrative interviews" (Hanhorster, 2001). However, all of these pieces treat narratives as transparent, qualitative data that can be mined for information about experiences of space without any attention to the narrative as a constructed whole.

following section. Gubrium and Holstein (1999; 2001; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000) focus on the local context of storytelling and on how the material environment along with what they call the "discursive environment" shapes narratives. As well, Somers' (1994; Somers and Gibson, 1994) theory of the narrative constitution of identity emphasises the embeddedness of narrative identity in "spatio-temporal relationships" arguing that it is only through paying attention to both space and time that narrative meaning in its context can be understood.

4.3 The Narrative Self

Gubrium and Holstein, Somers, and other narratively oriented academics believe that the human self is constructed through narrative knowing.⁹⁹ They propose that people construct their selves through selectively stringing together the events of their lives into a narrative, which in turn renders these experiences meaningful. The narrating-self interprets past experiences in light of present contexts and then imaginatively projects that string of events into the future (Polkinghorne, 1988; White and Epston, 1990; Frank, 1995; Bruner, 1996).¹⁰⁰ From this perspective any residence, as lived (and therefore, experienced) residence, must be storied.

Narrative psychologists and sociologists propose that the narrative-self comes into being out of asking the question: How ought I to live? (Frank 2002, 2004; see also Nelson, 2002; Zoloth and Charon, 2002). In engaging with this question, a person is necessarily engaging with ethics (Lynn, 1998; Proctor, 1999a). It is through working out

⁹⁹ See also Bruner (1990), White and Epston (1990), Maines (1993), Polkinghorne (1988), Frank (2002), Riessman (1993), Gergen (1992), Gubrium and Holstein (1999).

¹⁰⁰ Likewise, collective narratives, "simultaneously explain and evaluate, account for the past and project a future... constituting an action-compelling collective identity as they narrated it" (Polletta, 2002: 32; see also Maines and Bridger, 1992).

solutions to this question that people give meaning to their lives. Ethics, therefore, is central to meaning, and meaning is central to identity, putting ethics at the root of narrative identity. However, if we take the insights of Cheney, Rolston, and others regarding storied residence, we must change this question slightly to "how ought I to live *here*?" For every life is lived as much in space as it is in time. In this way ethics and narratives are also tied to the meaning we give to place.

The storying of the self is not an esoteric practice. While grounded in the past, the narrated-self is forever reaching towards the future. It is through this practice of storytelling that we choose what to do (where) with the rest of our lives, the next five years, the next month, or even the next sixty seconds. This does not mean that future actions are dictated by our past. Rather, in reviewing the story of his or her past in the context of some present circumstance, a person stories his or her way towards some anticipated and/or desired future, deciding in the course of this review whether to continue along the same path or turn off in a new direction (Nelson, 2001). What this means is that the actions people take are tied to the stories they tell about who they are. Because of this relationship between behaviour and story, some sociologists go so far as to argue that all social scientific study of behaviour or the products of behaviour must take a narrative approach (Polkinghorne, 1988; Maines, 1993; Somers, 1994), or at the very least that society and its institutions must be conceived of as fundamentally storied (cf. Maines, 1993; Somers, 1994; Somers and Gibson, 1994).

The narrative-self is completely embedded in relationships and within society. Bruner (1990) insists that there is no self prior to the telling of the self and that the self cannot be told until the person has a grounding in language; therefore, the self must be conceived of as completely embedded in discourse and culture.¹⁰¹⁻¹⁰² Identity in this

¹⁰¹ See also Gergen and Gergen (1988), Forrester (1999), Polkinghorne (1988), Bruner (1990), White and Epston (1990), Maines (1993), Somers (1994), Frank (2002),

context, therefore, must be understood as something that is shaped by both the person and the immediate and broader social relations that person finds himself in. Nelson (2001) begins her chapter on the narrative construction of identity with the following quotation from Patrick O'Brian's novel, Master and Commander, which sums up this concept of identity quite nicely,

"'Identity?' said Jack, comfortably pouring out more coffee. 'Is not identity something you are born with?'

'The identity I am thinking of is something that hovers between a man and the rest of the world: a mid-point between his view of himself and theirs of him—for each, of course, affects the other continually. A reciprocal fluxion, sir. There is nothing absolute about this identity of mine.'" (69).

Narrative researchers in the social sciences conceive of identity as embedded at two scales of social organization. First, the storyteller draws on the narrative resources of their society in fashioning their narrative-self. And, second, the narrative-self is co-created in interaction between the storyteller and her or his audience (even if that audience is imaginary).

We have already seen that the narrative-self is fundamentally embedded in language and therefore in the discourses and the "master narratives"¹⁰³ of society. While this resonates with postmodern insistence that there is no prediscursive self,¹⁰⁴ this does

Riessman (1993), Gergen (1992), Gubrium and Holstein (1999), Richardson (1995), and Chase (2003).

¹⁰² This is sometimes referred to as narrative theory (cf. Maines, 1993) or ontological narrativity (cf. Somers, 1994) though most writers in this field avoid using the term "theory" altogether.

¹⁰³ The term "master narratives" is taken from Nelson (2001). She defines master narratives as "the stories found lying about in our culture that serve as summaries of socially shared understandings" (6).

¹⁰⁴ Within geography it is Judith Butler and her theory of performativity (1990) who is most commonly associated with the proposal that there is no prediscursive self. Huffer argues "that narrative is more accurately conceptualized not as performativity's oppositional other, but rather as a speech act with a particular kind of performative force" (2001:10), that is in telling one's self-narrative, one is effectively engaging in a

not mean that the self is determined by discourse. Rather, people actively construct their selves out of the discourses, stories, and experiences available to them in the spatial and temporal context in which they find themselves (Somers, 1994). This construction of the narrative-self is an active and often imaginative process; one which contains the possibility of shaping not only that self but also the discourses the self draws on (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). However, this is a circumscribed agency. Because people need to produce narrative-selves that are both intelligible and acceptable to the audience with whom they are interacting (cf. Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Bruner, 1990; Holstein and Gubrium 2000), the narrating subject remains vulnerable to discipline.¹⁰⁵

While this discussion of "narrative resources" provides a conceptualization of an individual embedded within society, it does not quite capture the relational aspects of the day-to-day storying and re-storying of the narrative-self. The narrative-self presumes at least two people: the storyteller and the audience (or more broadly the narrator and the receiver). As Frank states, "Even messages in a bottle imply a potential reader" (Frank, 1995: 3). And it is out of this implicitly dialogical context that the narrative-self is created. Huffer (2001), elaborates:

"narrative's 'performative dynamic' lies in its dialogic structure, where a subject addresses an other; in this view, narrative performs the structure of intersubjectivity itself through the relations between characters in a story, between narrator and narratee, or between author and reader. As a performative structure that both stages and narrates a dialogue between a subject and an other, this intersubjective narrative performance puts the illusory claims of the sovereign

performance of a particular subject-position. However, this is not to reduce narrativity to performativity, because performances as events are in turn incorporated into and given meaning through narratives (Cary, 2004). Neither performativity or the narrative-self can be reduced the one to the other, but instead represent different points of focus in examining identity as socially-embedded.

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, many narrative approaches draw heavily, and innovatively, on Foucault's work on discipline, power/knowledge and the microtechnologies of power (White and Epston, 1990; Gubrium and Holstein, 1999, 2000; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000).

humanist subject into question without denying subjectivity altogether. Thus narrative performance opens possibilities for rethinking the antifoundationalist claims of postmodernism together with the ethical dimensions of intersubjectivity" (10).

The concept of the narrative-self assumes that people (both researchers and researched) are capable of interpreting experiences—albeit through discourse—and thereby of giving meaning to those experiences (Maines, 1993; Bruner, 1996) and to their lives (Carson, 1997). But beyond this, it assumes that through experiences people are also capable of changing their interpretations of discourses (White and Epston, 1990).¹⁰⁶ It is through acts of interpretation that people actively—and often imaginatively—craft their narrative-selves, and through producing and performing their narrative-selves people may come to change discourses (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). These interpretive possibilities offer ways to conceive of people as "self-interpreting subjects" (Alcoff, 1996) engaging in self-reflexivity (cf. Falconer Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002). The concept of the narrative-self does not fall into the problems Rose (1997) found with what she calls "transparent reflexivity", because the narrative-self does not pre-exist acts of reflexivity; it is constituted through them. In this way, the subject of narrative inquiry is construed as able to critically engage with discourses and as capable of refusing to be subjected to them.¹⁰⁷

It is the usual state of affairs in the Western world for someone to be subjected to many different public narratives and to occupy different roles in each of them. Narrative inquiry does not deny the occurrence of moments of subjectification when a person's entire identity becomes subsumed into a particular subject-position (Nelson, 1999), such

¹⁰⁶ The applied psychology field of narrative therapy intervenes at this level, seeking to help people disentangle their selves from stories that are oppressive to them and to assist them in writing a new story to take them into a more livable future (cf. White and Epston, 1990).

¹⁰⁷ See Gubrium and Holstein (1999) for an interesting example of how by invoking discourses in the storying of their selves, people render those master narratives vulnerable to change at a number of different scales of human organization

as caregiver for an Alzheimer's patient. However, rather than placing these moments at the center of research, narrative approaches are more concerned with the meanings that are generated around these experiences, meanings that can only arise through the inclusion of these moments into repeated and ever-shifting narrations (Cary, 2004).

Despite all the abstract theorising about fragmented identities, for the most part people still seek coherence in their sense of self (Probyn, 2003; Gergen and Gergen, 1988). It is the narrative-self that enables people to negotiate these varied and often contradictory subject-positions. Through emplotment and theme, narrative provides the coherence of a life story to smooth over the disjunctures of multiple subjectivities (Polkinghorne, 1988; Somers, 1994). But again this is a temporary solution, under different circumstances these disjunctures may erupt once more, leading the person to revisit their interpretation of public narratives and to re-story their narrative-self. In the interstices and conflicts between these various identities lie the possibilities for new choices to be made and new stories to be told.

In all of these ways, identity is conceived of as fluid and unfixed and also as continually being fixed in an open and never-completable process of narrating a unique and unified self. This mutability is what makes ethics possible, for if there were no choices to be made, there would be no ethics to be had (Sack, 2003). Goldstein summarises this process nicely:

"The moral subject envisioned here is not a discovered subject. It is not a static element found in the depths of our being. It is a process, a continual re-creation of who we are, of which only part is our doing. We are storytellers and story-listeners and we sustain our ideas of the self by accepting or rejecting certain narratives presented to us during the course of our lives." (2003: 233)

While the insights discussed in this section regarding the extent to which the individual is embedded in social and dialogical relations with other people and with human discourses are important, the insights of environmental ethics would suggest that

they do not go far enough. Rather, narrative selves must also be understood as embedded within the narrative resources provided by the more-than-human world and as co-created in dialogue with earth others.

4.4 Counterstories, Moral Agency and Social Change

Our narrative-self is concerned with ethics, with what "I" ought to do, and yet it is inherently relational; its telling always implies an I-you relationship. As I have already suggested, because of this embeddedness of the narrative-self in dialogue and in the narrative resources of society, people can be disciplined into storying themselves in line with particular dominant ideas of what they ought to be doing. However, within this embeddedness also lie the possibilities for social change through narrative.

White and Epston (1990) draw heavily on Foucault's insights around power, knowledge, and discipline (Foucault, 1995) to explore how discourses can shape people's self-narratives. They assert that drawing on the narrative resources around them, as people must, is not a neutral activity. Every society has "a stock of culturally available discourses that are considered appropriate and relevant to the expression or representation of particular aspects of experience" (27). Dominant amongst these discourses are what Foucault calls the "'truth' discourses of the unitary and global knowledges" (paraphrased in White and Epston, 27-28), discourses that arose with the birth of the modern disciplines of the social sciences, discourses that position people and their bodies as things and objects. These discourses and the disciplining techniques associated with them can and often do dominate the construction of self-narratives, sometimes leading to problems for the self-narrator.

Nelson (2001), who emphasises the joint role played by society and self in narrating identity, argues that the master narratives of these discourses reduce the moral agency of certain groups in society. From Nelson's perspective, our freedom to exercise

our moral agency "depends upon the form of life we inhabit: the niche we occupy in our particular society; the practices and institutions within the society that set the possibilities for the courses of action that are open to us; the material, cultural, and imaginative resources at our disposal; the constraints arising from the moral flaws within our roles and relationships; [and] the shared moral understandings that render our actions intelligible to those around us", all of which depend upon "our own—and others'—conception of who we are" (xi). In other words, who we are and what we can do is a product of the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories others tell about us.¹⁰⁸

The situation is not completely hopeless, however. As discussed above, Gubrium and Holstein's empirical research shows that both selves *and* discourses should be understood as being (re)produced in local encounters and that through these local interactions both selves *and* discourses may be changed (Gubrium and Holstein, 1999 see also Frank, 2002). In interpreting and appropriating dominant narratives into their self-narratives, the potential exists for ordinary people to change those discourses. Gubrium and Holstein's focus on the resistive possibilities of the local bears similarity to Gibson-Graham's (1996) conclusion that "conversations can produce alternative discourses that entail new subject positions, supplementing or supplanting those that currently exist" (241). It is in the always unpredictable interactions in specific spatial-temporal contexts between complex narrative-selves—selves capable of self-reflection, interpretation, and imagination—that the possibility for social change emerges. Because these local interactions are only loosely scripted at best, the discursive resources of which they make

¹⁰⁸ Whelan (1999) provides a vivid example of a master narrative eroding her own narrative of her self as a competent teacher. When her story came into conflict with the dominant institutional story of her new school, Whelan wrote: "More and more as I am told what to do and how to do it in my profession, I find myself losing sight of who I am and what I know" (31).

use must also be conceptualised as open, unfinished, and therefore also in the process of continual change.

Frank (2002) suggests that one role for social scientists is to make personal stories more "legible" through uncovering the assumptions embedded within the culture's narrative resources, and thereby letting people know what assumptions they are subscribing to when they integrate such resources into their own stories. In relation to environmental ethics, work that deconstructs dominant representations of the environment and of the relationship that people ought to have with the environment would be pertinent to the goal of excavating assumptions underlying narratives (cf. Social-Nature approaches discussed previously). Narrative approaches go further than this, however, by recognizing that assumptions can be embedded in the narrative structure, not simply in its content.

Mary Gergen offers a good example of the way in which cultural assumptions can be embedded in the structure of self-narratives. Mary Gergen, who with Kenneth Gergen was one of the first people to propose that selves are constituted narratively (1988), in a solo paper (1992) takes issue with Campbell's monomyth of "the hero's journey" (1973[1949]), the basic plot line he claims to have found running through the myths of most of the world's cultures. Gergen believes that this monomyth is the source of the traditional narrative storyline which she outlines as "being composed of a valued end point; events relevant to this end point; the temporal ordering of these events toward the endpoint; [and] the causal linkages between events" (129). Indeed, using different language, Campbell asserts much the same thing, putting forward the monomyth as *the* essential path of psychic development (1973[1949]). Mary and Kenneth Gergen had originally sought to do a similar thing: to define some standard narrative form that is used by everyone in narrating a self. However, writing four years later in 1992, Mary Gergen

finds herself uncomfortable with this act of defining, because it privileges one particular plotline over others; a plotline that she suspects is gendered.¹⁰⁹

Through an analysis of autobiographies of several "significant" contemporary members of western culture, Mary Gergen found that different narrative forms were employed by each gender. She concludes,

"each gender acquires for personal use a repertoire of potential life stories relevant to their own gender. Understanding one's past, interpreting one's actions, evaluating future possibilities—each is filtered through these stories. Events 'make sense' as they are placed in the correct story form. If certain story forms are absent, events cannot take on the same meaning" (1992: 132).

She suggests that social structures are embedded in story lines and that they work as structures on people's lives through their uptake into self-narratives. As Gergen notes, "How does one become when no story can be found?" (131)

Which brings me to the second role for narrative social scientists: finding alternative stories and amplifying them (Frank, 2002). Richardson (1995) advocates that social scientists focus on the transformative potential of what she calls "collective stories." Such stories often emerge through collective actions, such as those associated with new social movements (including, one might presume, environmental movements), and involve some narrative transformation of self. As Richardson argues, through focussing on such collective stories, social scientists can boost the availability of such narrative resources to other people,

"Collective stories that deviate from standard cultural plots provide new narratives; hearing them legitimates a replotting of one's own life. New narratives offer the patterns for new lives. The story of the transformed life, then, becomes a part of the cultural heritage affecting future stories and lives." (1995: 213)

¹⁰⁹Nelson (2001) labels this unified plotline "the career story" and critiques those theorists who suggest that it is the only genre of emplotment available to narrative-selves.

Since self-narrating is essential to identity, providing counterstories that have hitherto been subjugated and largely absent from the narrative resources available to people provides new identities through which people can collectively organise.¹¹⁰

Empirical work on the construction and use of counterstories provides some additional insights. As would be expected, research into social movements has shown that a large part of the work that they do in challenging existing institutions and structures of meaning depends upon the development and deployment of counterstories.¹¹¹ Davis (2002) finds that it is not just the content, but the interactive act of telling and listening to a story that creates group solidarity:

"Through identification and 'cocreation' of a story, the storyteller and reader/listener create a 'we' involving some degree of affective bond and a sense of solidarity: told and retold, 'my story' becomes 'our story'" (19).

I propose that writing and reading stories of alternative ethics—alternative life stories—offers some of the same possibilities for the formation of group solidarities around collective counter stories. Indeed, this thesis strives to be part of such a process of re-storying. However, before we can engage in such a practice, we must move from thinking *about* stories to thinking *with* them, the subject of the next chapter.

¹¹⁰ The recent emergence of collective and individual identities around new diseases is particularly illustrative of the resistive role of narrative. See, for example, Barker's (2002) narrative approach to understanding the negotiation of a fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) sufferer identity.

¹¹¹ See for example, Davis (2002), Fine (2002), Polletta (1998 and 2002), Polletta and Jasper (2001), and Glover (2004a and 2004b).

5. Thinking With Stories: A Narrative Ethics of Self-Earth Other Relations

"So someone stalks you and tells a story about what happened long ago. ...All of a sudden it *hits* you! It's like an arrow, they say. Sometimes it just bounces off—it's too soft and you don't think about anything. But when it's strong it goes in deep and starts working on your mind right away. ...Then you feel weak, real weak, like you are sick. You don't want to eat or talk to anyone. That story is working on you now. You keep thinking about it. That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. That story is making you want to replace yourself. ...It's hard to keep on living right. Many things jump up at you and block your way. But you won't forget that story. You're going to see the place where it happened, maybe every day if it's nearby and close to Cibecue. If you don't see it, you're going to hear its name and see it in your mind. It doesn't matter if you get old—that place will keep on stalking you like the one who shot you with the story. Maybe that person will die. Even so, that place will keep on stalking you. It's like that person is still alive" (Western Apache elder, Nick Thompson, quoted in Basso, 1992: 38).

As Keith Basso relates in his fascinating ethnography Wisdom Sits in Places (1992) morality in Western Apache culture is completely interwoven with narrative and place.¹¹² It is from such indigenous sources of knowledge that Cheney gets his inspiration for bioregional storied residence.¹¹³ However, as I hope has been amply demonstrated in the previous chapter, while the societal influence of conscious narrative thinking may have reached an apex in some native cultures, narrative knowing is a capacity common to all peoples of all cultures.

¹¹² Godlewska (2004) makes a similar point about narrative, ethics, and place in her work on early French missionary contact with native peoples in what is now Canada. See also, Chamberlin (2003).

¹¹³ See also Linda Hogan's memoir, The Woman Who Watches Over the World.

Proponents of narrative ethics sometimes refer to indigenous North American modes of knowing as pathways into thinking with stories (Morris, 2002; Frank, 1995; Hogan, 2001). Both environmental ethicists (cf. King, 1997) and narrative ethicists (cf. Morris, 2002) cite Basso's work on what it means to think with stories in a culture that privileges narrative knowing and that still dwells in a landscape that has been quilted together from shared stories.

Unfortunately, for the most part, even those proponents of narrative ethics who draw on Basso or indigenous examples largely still ignore place in their work.¹¹⁴ Even more unfortunately, those in geography who seek to make a case for the role that place plays in ethics remain for the most part oblivious to work on narrative knowing.¹¹⁵ An important objective for this thesis, therefore, is to highlight and interweave place and narrative knowing in a narrative ethics of human relationships with earth others and the more-than-human world.

5.1 Narrative Ethics as Housekeeping in Everyday Places

In the urban centres of western industrialized nations people no longer inhabit such clearly and densely storied landscapes as the Western Apaches of Cibecue do. Yet we each have managed to assemble a life story from somewhere. Moreover, each of us can probably recall at least one story that was read or heard or watched on a screen that

¹¹⁴ Linda Hogan's work is a notable exception to this and as it is autobiographical in form it will be discussed further in Part II of this thesis.

¹¹⁵ The exceptions to this are equally telling. Curry (1999) for example makes the following remark about his own analysis: "There is, actually, missing from this account of the making of places one very important, final element, one that is shown here but not mentioned; people make places by constructing narratives, just as did the narrator of Cortez's actions" (97). However, after observing that he failed to discuss the role of narrative in his argument that place is intrinsically normative, Curry returns to ignoring it for the rest of the paper.

had a significant impact on the understanding we had of our selves and our experiences, and thus affected the choices we made regarding how we ought to live.

My own engagement with the storied more-than-human world began with Farley Mowat's autobiographical Owl's in the Family, the first "chapter book" I read on my own. The book was made all the more relevant to me because it was intertwined with my own narrative and geographical inheritance, as my very own grandmother had lived down the street from the Mowat's in Saskatoon during the time that young Farley was establishing his menagerie. I have never visited Saskatoon, but through the book and my grandmother it has become an important place in my personal geography.

Narrative knowing postulates that everyone is capable of thinking with stories. However, in readying one's self to practice narrative ethics consciously, one must first divest one's self of certain Enlightenment-induced conceptions of what constitutes ethical practice. In the course of our daily lives, we are constantly required to decide upon temporary solutions to the question of what we ought to do (Frank, 2002). Brody (2002), a bioethicist with a medical background and a penchant for narrative, likens this everyday ethics to housework: "that portion of ethical behavior that is like mopping the floor: no one will praise you for mopping the floor; everyone will blame you for failing to mop the floor; and no matter how good a job you did yesterday of mopping the floor, it still has to be done all over again, indefinitely" (208).

Brody sets up everyday narrative ethics in contrast to principlism, which he equates with theoretical-juridical ethics and the focus on the resolution of ethical dilemmas or the judgement of already undertaken actions. These approaches ignore housekeeping, and in a society where they dominate "the vast majority of day-to-day moral work, which prevents many difficult ethical dilemmas from happening at all and

which predetermines the shape many other ethical dilemmas will assume, simply flies under the radar" (208).

In the context of narrative therapy, White (M. White, 2000) also emphasises the importance of paying attention to the "little sacraments of daily living." White believes that it is in these daily sacraments that people can find experiences that challenge those narratives that dominate their lives. It is in the sacraments of daily life that alternative knowledges of living dwell. Therefore, paying attention to them will enable a person to "break from received ways of life" (132). This process is integral to the ethics that informs the transformative narrative therapy that White practices. White explicitly contrasts such an ethics with those modernist "ethics of control" that have to do with rules and codes—natural law and "human nature"—which he sees as oppressive to the storied self and the realm of personal ethics:

"While the ethic of control structures a context in which there are not many events that really count for all that much, this alternative ethic structures a context in which just so much that couldn't be acknowledged previously can be acknowledged. And, in so doing, it provides for an antidote to despair, for a sense of possibility in regard to one's life going forward, and for a broad range of options for further action" (M. White, 2000:151).

Just as LeGuin did in the quotation that opens this thesis, here White locates hope in acknowledging and honoring the ethics of everyday lives.

The metaphor of everyday ethics as housekeeping has a certain resonance with environmental ethics and the fixation, in those quarters that pay attention to the everyday, with place as home. Cheney (1999), for example, links "storied residence" to its grounding in an everyday ethics, which he calls "etiquette."¹¹⁶ According to Cheney, "world views" or ethical theories "are at best pictures, metaphors, of ethical practice" (150), which is best understood as an everyday practice. Geographically, Cronon (1995)

¹¹⁶ See also Hickory (2003).

points out that to get away from culture/nature dualisms we must also ensure that our ethics are grounded in everyday spaces rather than reserving our moral concern for special places such as "wilderness." Cloke and Jones (2003) also ground both relational agency and ethical encounter in everyday places in their study of the place agency of trees.

"Housekeeping" is a lovely metaphor in that it invokes the notion of morality as an ongoing, necessary, and often thankless task. However, as a spatial metaphor it raises questions about the reach of narrative ethics. A house is a relatively controlled intimate setting in which like minded people are welcome and different others rarely tread.¹¹⁷ As David Smith (2000) argues in his review of Moral Geographies, relational and contextual ethical approaches—and narrative ethics falls under both categories—must take care to avoid being exclusionary and must make an effort to extend the reach of moral agents to unknown distant others.

The spatial question is also raised by the local context in which the narrative-self is told. If we build personal and collective identities through telling stories to each other, then how can narrative ethics accommodate the unknown distant others that we arguably must include in our narratives given the globalized world we act in on a daily basis and the reach of our technologies and their impacts. This concern with distant others will run through the thinking with stories I engage in in this thesis, but let me offer a couple of initial thoughts here on the ways in which this issue can be included in a narrative approach to ethics. Firstly, because of the give and take between public narratives and self-narratives, narrative identities must be understood as being embedded at a number of different scales, not just the local.¹¹⁸ Many people's self-stories span many countries if

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of geographies of exclusion see Sibley (1995).

¹¹⁸ See Gubrium and Holstein (1999) for an interesting examination of scale in relation to self and public narratives and their interactions.

not continents (cf. Noy, 2004), and many other people engage in narrative self-construction on the internet with people in a range of different locations (cf. Barker, 2002). Secondly, mediated encounters with others, most especially through narrative print forms (cf. Rorty, 1995; Charon, 1997; Zoloth and Charon, 2002), bring us face to face with others we would not necessarily meet in our day to day life and thereby may serve to extend, imaginatively, our narrative ethical relationships to heretofore unknown and still distant others.¹¹⁹

Reading or listening to another's self-story raises another moral aspect of the narrative-self. We are called upon not only to answer the question of oughts for ourselves, but also to bear witness to the stories that are told to us by others. Submerging our self into the story of another makes up a large portion of the pleasure we get out of reading narrative literature. The other pleasure is to be changed by the encounter. To think with stories means to engage with stories as wholes and to engage wholly with stories. To think with stories requires opening oneself up to being changed by that involvement with an other (Connelly, 2002). Arthur W. Frank (1995), a health sociologist who has written prolifically from a narrative ethics perspective, explains what it is to think *with* stories in contrast to thinking *about* stories:

"To think about a story is to reduce it to content and then analyze that content. Thinking with stories takes the story as already complete; there is no going beyond it. To think with a story is to experience it affecting one's life and to find in that effect a certain truth of one's life" (23)

While modernist analytic approaches seek methods to widen the chasm between observer and observed—with the aim of achieving complete objectivity in order to sketch disembodied, disembodied universal generalizations—thinking with stories requires a continuing, never achievable, bridging of the divide between self and other—with the aim

¹¹⁹ I will return in more depth to this question in chapter 10.

of being changed through that encounter. Thinking *about* stories takes an analytical orientation to narratives, breaking them down into component parts or categorizing them into different types. Thinking *with* stories involves acts of interpretation and imagination, and an ongoing effort to see things from a perspective different from one's own:

"Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinker and object of thought are at least theoretically distinct. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as take the radical step back, almost a return to childhood experience, of allowing narrative to work on us" (Morris, 2002: 196).

By thinking with stories we can "try on" different narratives, extending our capacities for empathy and honing our responsiveness to others.¹²⁰ We can also "try on" different ways of being and acting in the world in order to explore potential resolutions to situations we might find ourselves in. Thinking with stories is also about encountering an other and thereby discovering one's own otherness through uncovering similarities of experience while recognizing differences. Through narrative we come to know ourselves, and through our identities we both make a case for our moral agency and decide how to make use of that agency. Narrative ethics recognizes that every story we tell has ethical implications and that these stories bind us to each other, providing meaning to our lives and actions. It is through narrative meaning that we decide how to live a good life and how to act in relation to one another.

¹²⁰ The idea that people think with stories in order to decide what they ought to do contradicts David Smith's (2000) contention that exemplars are rarely used in moral thinking in Western societies. I would contend that the reason he comes to this conclusion has to do with what he considers moral acts as entailing and who he considers as moral actors.

5.2 Avoiding Dualizing Approaches to Narratives

I am conscious that in relating the contrast narrative theorists make between thinking with and thinking about stories there is a danger of falling once again into dualistic thinking. While the narrative researchers cited above do dichotomize these two approaches in their efforts to explain what it might mean to approach story differently than has been the norm in contemporary academic work, in their practice the differences aren't quite so clearly distinguishable. Frank, for one, engages in both types of thinking in relation to stories in his work. For example in the Wounded Storyteller (Frank, 1995) he developed a typography of illness narratives: The restitution narrative, the chaos narrative, and the quest narrative. Some degree of analysis had to be involved in coming up with these groupings and then assigning different stories to them. And this thinking with stories both informs and is informed by thinking about stories. Just as science cannot be the purified domain of logical-scientific reasoning (Bruner, 1996), everyday ethics cannot be the purified domain of narrative reasoning. The crucial matter appears to be avoiding "finalizing" these stories through the use of thinking about stories. The act of finalizing a story (and thereby the self who told that story) is one of authoritatively declaring an analysis to be the final word on that story. This is a monological act. However, there is no reason why analysis cannot be conducted dialogically, in tandem with practices of thinking with stories.

Nor do these researchers propose that thinking with stories is the way to approach all problems in the social sciences, rather they emphasise thinking with stories as a way of academically emulating what they believe to be the way in which people routinely make day-to-day decisions of moral import. They believe that putting priority on thinking with stories will help academics undertake work that will be relevant to the

living of their own and their readers' lives. Thinking with stories can be an antidote to the sorts of finalizations that routinely take place in academia and within society in general. One of the objectives of many narrative researchers—an objective which is shared by this thesis—is to challenge top-down expert approaches to ethics and open up dialogue within society around the question of how we ought to live.

5.3 Practicing Narrative Ethics in Academia

But all of this discussion of narrative ways of knowing is all very vague. How can the largely unconscious, everyday practice of narrative ethics be extended into an academic practice?

One of the main barriers to extending narrative thinking within the academy is that within narrative thinking the practices of analyzing, categorizing, coding, and prescribing are de-emphasised making it difficult to describe as a process. Indeed, many academic practitioners of narrative ethics insist that their craft cannot be broken down into propositions to be encoded or steps to be followed. As Charon and Montello (2002) write in their introduction to an edited collection on narrative bioethics:

"Readers will not find a statement of the propositions of narrative ethics. Nor will they find sets of rules or "steps" for its practice. Instead, like all narratives, this book conveys what truth it knows through a constant interplay among form, content, and the experiences incurred in reading it. We bring you the thoughts and experiences of individuals in singular conversations and situations, not as precepts to be obeyed but as layers of exemplars to be absorbed" (x).

Brody (2002) is a little more forthcoming when he apologizes for having so little to say on the methods of doing narrative ethics and of testing narrative conclusions for rigour, stating that the field is still too young to have accumulated an extensive literature on the subject. Still, narrative ethicists have passed through academic fields before, and many have left signposts to point the way for fellow travelers. In this section, I review

these signposts with the aim of writing my way towards my own practice of narrative ethics.

The formal, contemporary practice of narrative ethics finds its oldest tradition in the applied field of medical bioethics where it has two roots. First, in the 1970s a few medical schools began adding English literature to their curriculum, with the thought that reading great novels would teach medical students to be more empathetic to their patients (Jones, 1997). The main philosopher within this tradition is Nussbaum who argues that reading great moral works of literature is essential to refining the reader's moral perception, and thereby enabling that reader to perform "excellently" when responding morally to others (paraphrased in Nelson, 2001).¹²¹

While he does not draw on this literature, Cheney comes to a similar conclusion about the power of literature in shaping moral sensibilities, engaging his students in re-storying their relationship to the world through the published stories of "ecological writers." In Cheney's view (writing as Hickory, 2003), in order to re-story our relationship with the world, we need to start with how we practice ethics in the classroom:

"I have my students read Aldo Leopold (1970), Gary Snyder (1990), Wendell Berry (1977), and Freeman House (1999) as stories of lives lived— lives lived within larger lives, stories within larger stories—rather than arguments in competition with one another. Stories in relationship to one another behave more like elements of ecosystems than like arguments squaring off against one another." (87)

While he does not call this pedagogical practice "narrative ethics," it clearly has some resonance with the literary approach to this practice, and adds to this body of literature

¹²¹ Rorty (1986) makes a similar case for the use of novels (and other narrative mediums) in educating people's imaginations about the sufferings of others and thereby expanding the community with whom they feel a sense of solidarity.

the insight that “thinking with stories” can have more in common with ecosystemic processes than competitive theorizing.

The second root of narrative bioethics comes from criticisms of the way in which case histories are used in making ethics decisions in the provision of healthcare. Biomedical casuistry can be characterized as a formalized practice of thinking about stories whereby the expert ethicist, acting as a detached observer, applies a set of principles to a case history, thereby arriving at an objective resolution to the ethical dilemma (Brody, 1999; Arras, 1997). Critics of this approach, often those who had been exposed to literature during their medical training, pointed out, first, that case histories are narratives and, therefore, are subject to narrative logic; second, that the way in which a case history is told, or written up, has a significant impact on the conclusions that can be derived from it using principles; and, third, that reductivist, principlist methods do not do justice to the complex relational nature of narratives (Brody, 2002).

Because of this history, discussions of narrative ethics often build on critiques of principlist approaches. Some of the milder narrative critiques of principlism point out that it is impossible to go from universal ethics to the particulars of specific cases without engaging in narrative thinking. Nelson (1997) in the introduction to a relatively early collection of papers on narrative bioethics exemplifies this argument:

"[M]oral principles are not lawlike, universal, and unyielding, but modifiable in light of the particulars of a given experience or situation. ...these particulars either naturally take a narrative form or must be given a narrative structure if they are to have moral meaning" (ix).

However, other narrative ethicists go further, arguing that although it may be possible to judge actions retrospectively through the application of principles, we cannot then assume that the person employed these principles in deciding to take that action (Brody, 2002). Rather, narrative ethicists would assume that the decision to take the

action came from a narrative understanding of the self and the situation, and that principles act secondarily, as justifications of conclusions already taken. In this way, principles themselves must be understood as shorthand for the narratives used to justify a particular action. Brody argues that it is through the telling of stories that moral concepts are developed, and that stories can be told about wrongs before the person or society understands and can articulate the concept that represents this wrong.

Narrative is embedded in space, time and relationship. Principles are extracted from these particulars so that they can lay claim to all contexts, so that they can claim to have universal status. Supporters of a narrative approach argue that through the reduction to and generalization of principles, the details of the stories and relationships that gave these principles meaning and which would motivate moral action are lost (Nelson, 1997; Davies, 1996). Principles exist in the ever-present, contextless now, whereas narratives allow us to think about how we arrived at the present situation and to conjecture a future in which the problem has been satisfactorily resolved (Nelson, 2002). The reduction of ethical knowledge to principles fails to acknowledge the moral human being as one embedded in relationships or to factor in emotional reactions to situations in which ethical decisions are called for (Fraser, 2001). Drawing on classical Greek assertions that emotions are central to the development of ethical knowledge, Morris (2002; see also Hawkins, 2002) argues that narratives are, therefore, essential to ethical deliberation because they engage emotions rather than suppress them. Finally, to take a geographical perspective, universalizing principles removes them from the places in which they developed from local narratives and allows them to be applied to other places where such principles may not make sense and may even end up marginalizing local moral agency or worse. This then is the second signpost: in thinking with stories they must be respected

as narrative wholes, and any temptation to try and derive principles from them, to reduce the story to its “moral,” must be resisted.

The one example I came across of an approach to environmental ethics that took a narrative ethics approach focused mainly on this second signpost. Liszka's (2003) took a narrative ethics approach to understanding Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac. The Sand County Almanac includes a number of autobiographical essays but ends with Leopold's famous and controversial non-narrative essay, "The Land Ethic." Liszka argues that, contrary to common practice, the essay should not be read separately from the stories. Liszka believes that it is the practice of separating the essay from the stories that has led contemporary scholars to accuse Leopold of being ecofascist and totalitarian, since the stories themselves clearly do not embody such an ethical approach. Liszka advocates, instead, that this final essay can only be understood in the context of the stories in the Almanac. Liszka writes that the Land Ethic "emerges in Leopold's very effort to narrate his, professional, personal, and practical experience with nature" (42). That is to say, Liszka, in his narrative ethics analysis of "The Land Ethic" in the context of the stories with which it was also published, finds evidence of a narrative, rather than rational logical, origin for the essay.

The reduction of stories into bits to which philosophical principles can be applied involves analysis and constitutes one particularly monological approach to thinking about stories. In contrast, narrative ethics places an emphasis on interpretation and seeks a breadth of points of view. Brody (1999), in one of the few concrete explications of what "thinking with stories" might look like in practice, proposes that people interpret the stories they hear (or read) through the filters of their own experiences, their own narrative-selves, and their emotional reactions, thus producing a uniquely inflected "virtual story." Brody, who is concerned with reforming the practice of biomedical ethics

in hospitals, goes on to argue that because interpretation depends on virtual stories, one way of practicing "thinking with stories" is to bring a variety of interpretations to the table. However, Brody warns that this does not mean that anything goes in narrative ethics. Stories need to be tested and criticized, and the way to do this is to retell the story in such a way that new possibilities are revealed that were not present in the first telling (Brody, 1999). Moreover, this process will most likely privilege the marginalized readers as their interpretations will likely differ the most from first tellings (Brody, 1999). This then is signpost three: narrative ethics works best when multiple interpretations are brought into dialogue.

Carson (1997) warns against attempts to defend one's interpretation of a narrative through recourse to "objective" standards, or principles. This, he argues, merely serves to shift the focus of discussion from the narrative being interpreted to the narrative from which these principles have been derived. Instead of resorting to the false security of supposedly universal principles, another level of generality needs to be found in order to move from the specifics of different narrative interpretations to some sort of collective action—whether that be at the level of a hospital ethics committee or in the arena of social action. Narrative ethics requires a level of generalization greater than an individual story but smaller than a universal truth (Brody, 2002). Signpost four therefore reads: For people and societies to story their way forward, there is a need to group narratives together, a need to be able to recognize when one narrative might usefully inform another, and a need to recognize some degree of pattern. In order to accommodate this signpost, some degree of thinking about stories necessarily comes in. Care must be taken, however, to avoid finalizing the stories when thinking about them.

That is to say when grouping stories they must be acknowledged as remaining open to other interpretations and other lives.¹²²

The final signpost I want to discuss here is the one I began the chapter with: the reluctance of narrative ethicists to provide a set of rules of practice for those who wish to follow their example. The fundamental problem in translating narrative knowing into steps to follow is that in reducing narrative to rules, one changes from narrative ways of knowing to rationalist logical-scientific ways. Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that in trying to emulate the so-called hard-sciences, the social sciences have allowed their understanding of human thought and action to be reduced to rationalist propositions, thereby ignoring other important sources of intelligence. Flyvbjerg goes on to demonstrate that rules can only take people so far in recognizing situations and taking decisions. To become truly expert requires moving beyond rationality towards intuitive, holistic, contextualized knowing. Indeed, he takes this argument further, proposing that rules-based learning and practice "may endanger sensitivity to context, experience, and intuition" (24) and that educators need to take heed of this.

We have already seen that narrative ethics requires a holistic and contextualized approach to understanding and it seems likely that intuition is also required. Brody (2002) and Hawkins (1997) both emphasize that engaging with a narrative can result in what they call "epiphanic knowledge", "an abrupt, total insight, all of a piece and not derived from any discursive process of reasoning" (Brody, 2002: 227). If Flyvbjerg is correct in his phenomenology of human learning, it would be counterproductive to attempt to teach narrative knowing (which is holistic, contextual, and intuitive) using a rules-based approach. While they never explain the reasons behind their approach, those texts concerned with teaching narrative inquiry and narrative ethics tend to focus on

¹²² See Frank (1995) for a book length example of thinking with stories that involves some degree of thinking about stories but which does not finalize those stories.

experiences that teachers have had with different sets of exercises or projects rather than proposing a framework for students to follow (cf. Charon and Montello, 2002; Josselson et al. 2003).

To summarise, the practice of narrative ethics involves treating stories as wholes that cannot be reduced to “morals”—thinking with stories—but it also requires some level of pattern recognition both between and within stories—thinking about stories. While academia may be more familiar with and comfortable with the latter approach, treating narratives as wholes depends upon a type of thinking that is both accessible to all and codifiable by none. It requires the intuitive application of interpretive skills, and it emphasises the multiplicity of possible interpretations, all with the aim of increasing understanding. Above all, narrative ethics is an open and engaged process that seeks to increase moral agency through participating in the never-ending project of storying our personal and public lives towards the good life. It is this latter point that brings narrative ethics in line with dialogical ethics.

As has already been discussed, stories imply an audience and therefore involve at least two participants: the teller (or writer) and the listener (or reader). The second participant in the dialogue is not a passive recipient but an equal contributor to the unfolding of the story, even when this audience is only imagined by the teller. In this dialogue two identities are shaped. Contrary to Enlightenment approaches to social science, in order to fully participate in such a dialogical encounter a narrative ethicist must strive to be both fully present to the stories he or she encounters and to be changed by them. To think with stories is to open one's self up to them in a reflexive manner, as Frank (1995) explains:

"The first lesson of thinking with stories is not to move on once the story has been heard, but to continue to live in the story, *becoming* in it, reflecting on who one is

becoming, and gradually modifying the story. The problem is truly to *listen* to one's own story, just as the problem is truly to listen to others' stories." (159).

It is this openness to change that most differentiates thinking with stories from logical-scientific approaches to ethics. To return for a moment to Buttimer's criticism of academic ethicists, it is the detachment afforded by analytic styles of social scientific research and reasoning that enables theorists to derive and propose a set of ethical principles that they themselves both have no inspiration to put into practice in their own lives and no understanding of how to do so. Thinking with stories emphasizes the development of ethical sensibilities through emotional engagement and practical, contextual, richly detailed understandings of how to live.

5.4 The Narrative Ethics Approach Taken in this Thesis

In the west, the dominant stories we tell about our relationship to the non-human elements of the world around us continue to cast humans in the role of exploiters either through divine right or through our capacity for reason—through "human nature". Despite challenges from poststructuralist, feminist, and other scholars, the dominant stories we tell about ourselves as academics echo this larger dualistic story, representing us to varying degrees as separate and metaphorically above that which we study.¹²³ For the most part, the realm of ethics subscribes to this general theme, presenting itself as the province of experts who have been trained to work with logic and abstractions.

Merely critiquing these ethical theories and practices will not, on its own, get us to survivable futures for all. To return for a moment to Haraway, she warns against "the cheap trick of puritanical critique" (2003: 89) whereby we distance ourselves from the histories we are implicated within. Instead of engaging in objective critique—those ethical approaches that separate humans from the more-than-human world—she implores

¹²³ The "god's eye view" discussed in Haraway (1991 [1985]).

us to acknowledge our kinship relations to companion species, those earth others who are co-members in "a family made up in the belly of the monster of inherited histories that have to be inhabited to be transformed" (96). I would argue that to inhabit histories is to engage with them narratively.

The previous section's discussion of narrative ethics provided signposts of how a social scientist interested in aiding the transformation of society towards survivable futures for all might proceed. However, when actually coming to develop such interpretive practices for my own work, I found myself turning again and again to two specific sets of writing. First, I apprenticed myself, literally, to someone experienced with thinking with stories in the context of academic social science: Arthur W. Frank, a health sociologist. The second part of this thesis is partly modeled on his book, The Renewal of Generosity (2004), and to a lesser extent on his previous book, The Wounded Storyteller (1995). In these books, Frank engages in an explicitly dialogical practice of thinking with the published memoirs of doctors and patients around questions to do with illness, healthcare, and ethics. In this thesis I adopt Frank's goals of amplifying those moral impulses I find in the self-narratives of others, and of facilitating the thinking with stories of my own readers.

The second major influence on my own practice of thinking with stories comes from the narrative therapy literature of Michael White (along with David Epston). Unlike the academic ethicists and social scientists discussed in the previous section, White is willing to set down the concrete practices he uses in helping people to re-story their lives. Echoing Frank's goal of amplifying moral impulses, White writes of the importance of "sparkling events" in helping people to break free from dominant stories and discover new foundations of possibilities. Sparkling events are:

"those [events] that contradict the problem-saturated stories of people's lives, and the deficit-centred accounts of their identities. When taken into the story-lines of

people's lives, these events contribute to the thickening of alternative or counter-plots of their lives, and provide the foundations of new possibilities for action in relation to addressing the concerns and problems for which they seek therapy" (2000:6)

This metaphor of "thick" versus "thin" runs through much of White's writings and again has some resonance with Frank's work. White takes the term "thick" from anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2000[1973]) who seeks in his explicitly interpretive work to come to "thick descriptions" of cultures. In the context of therapy, thin descriptions are epitomized by diagnoses imposed on patients by expert clinicians. Frank (2004), following Bakhtin (1984), uses the term "finalizing" to characterize thin descriptions that pathologise people and their problems and thus reduce their options for action. Thin or finalized descriptions of people tend to be monological.

Narrative therapy seeks to help people thicken their sense of self and thereby transform their selves and their lives as White (M. White, 2000) explains:

"the practices of narrative therapy assist people to break from thin conclusions about their lives, about their identities, and about their relationships. But more than this: these narrative practices also provide people with the opportunity to engage in the thick or rich description of their lives, of their identities, and of their relationships. As people become more narratively resourced through the generation of this thick or rich description, they find that they have available to them options for action that would not have otherwise been imaginable" (M. White, 2000: 62-63)

In narrative therapy, thickening is assisted through finding events that counter dominating and limiting narratives about the self, and using these to provide alternative foundations for a diversity of sub-plots. In this way, the range of interpretive resources available to the person are increased, and he or she is better able to choose a preferred storyline. In keeping with the previous discussion, preferred storylines must be understood as local and temporary solutions to the question how ought I to live, and not as finalized identities.

It would seem that one important objective of a narratively oriented approach to environmental ethics would be a thickening of stories of how to live in relation to earth others and the more-than-human world, a thickening that can come through the excavation and amplification of counternarratives to those dominant in society. It is precisely this thickening of narratives that this thesis seeks to participate in.

5.5 Virtual Reflecting Teams

As outlined in section 5.3 above, the interpretation of a narrative is most effective when a number of points of view can be brought to bear upon it. Michael White (2000) would understand this as increasing the interpretive resources available, and Frank would see it as a means of maintaining an open orientation towards a story. Both White (2000) and Frank (2004) facilitate such a plurality of vision through the use of "reflecting teams". Reflecting team practice was first introduced in 1987 in the field of family counseling (M. White, 2000). There are no set practices for using reflecting teams (M. White 2000) and White and Frank both take slightly different approaches.

Frank (2004) brings reflecting teams metaphorically into his text by bringing a diversity of ethical and social theorists into engagement with published memoirs in a way that avoids categorizing the memoirs in any essentializing way or foreclosing on any one interpretation. His metaphor is inspired by a version of family counseling in which reflecting team members observe and comment on an unfolding session, occasionally asking questions, and sometimes even exchanging places with the people being counseled. Members of this team are all counseling professionals but are usually taken from a variety of theoretical backgrounds to maximize the insights they are able to provide. Despite having diverse, and sometimes even contradictory views on the unfolding story, the reflecting team refrains from engaging each other, because the point

of the exercise is to help the family re-story their lives, not to refine theory. Thus the reflecting team is not used to come to some absolute conclusion, but rather to open up the discussion and keep the dialogue going, preventing any “finalizing” of the identities of those selves being discussed. Frank contends that such “diagnostic finalization” would be a form of violence, whereby the person’s right to have a dynamic, everchanging, open-ended identity is taken away by someone with authority.

Following Frank, I have chosen to use a virtual reflecting team in my thesis. I have included on my reflecting team those authors whose approaches achieve a useful and creative tension between continuity and difference, and between self and other. Some of these theorists are shared with Frank, such as the dialogical ethicist Bakhtin and care ethicist Gilligan. Others are more specific to my subject matter such as Cheney, Warren, and Michel who draw on a care ethics approach specifically in relation to earth others, and Haraway whose science studies largely concerns earth others. As the narrative ethics approach used here is a novel one to both geography and environmental ethics, I have also explicitly included those who write theoretically on narrative ethics on my team. Finally, because of my interest in geography and ethics, I brought Sack (2003) and his Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good onto my team.

Frank provides a useful model of what the end result of using a virtual reflecting team in a social science project might look like. His text provides a moving window into thinking with a series of stories rather than developing an impregnable theoretical framework. However, Frank’s books do not provide quite enough instruction on how to achieve such an end result. I therefore turned to Michael White’s approach to using a reflecting team, which, while obviously practiced in a more divergent context than Frank’s in terms of my own work, is described in much greater detail.

Michael White's clinical practice of narrative therapy begins with one-on-one counseling with a person in narrative crisis. The objective of this period of counseling is to help the person identify experiences, such as "sparkling moments" and "little sacraments of everyday living", that contradict dominant narratives about the person's self. White then aids the person in stringing together these experiences into a preferred self-narrative, a self-story that encapsulates an alternative knowledge of living to that prescribed by dominant master narratives.

Because he understands the project of identity formation to be a public one, Michael White recognizes that a person undertaking a re-storying has a need for acknowledgment of this new self. It is in this context that he uses a reflecting team. White's reflecting team may include both other therapists and people who have previously undergone narrative counseling. The team is brought together in order to acknowledge and thicken the client's preferred self-narrative. White describes the process, which he labels a "definitional ceremony," as follows:

"The definitional ceremony metaphor guides the structuring of forums in which certain persons have the opportunity to engage in a telling of some of the significant stories of their lives — stories that, in one way or another, are relevant to matters of personal and relational identity. Also present in this forum is an audience or 'outsider-witness' group [reflecting team]. The members of this group listen carefully to the stories told, and ready themselves to engage in a retelling of what they have heard. When the time is right, positions are switched — the persons whose lives are at the centre of the definitional ceremony form an audience to the retellings of the outsider-witness group. These retellings encapsulate aspects of the original telling. But more than this — the retellings of the outsider-witness group routinely exceed the boundaries of the original telling in significant ways, in ways that contribute to the rich [thick] description of the personal and relational identities of the persons whose lives are at the centre of the ceremony. In part, these retellings achieve this through the linking of the stories of the lives of these persons with the stories of the lives of others, around shared themes, values, purposes and commitments" (2000, 63-64)

As with any context in which selves are being storied, White emphasizes that the definitional ceremony must be recognized as a fundamentally dialogical process. Both

the people at the centre of the ceremony and the reflecting team members should be changed by their participation, that is they should become “other than who they were” (2000: 76) through their engagement with the process. In order to facilitate this, not only are reflecting team members expected to listen attentively, but they are also asked to come to the process with open minds and no preconceived ideas about how they will respond. White asks the reflecting team not to be objective in their listening, but rather to pay attention to their physical, emotional, and imaginative responses to the teller’s stories and to be aware of any resonances with their own self stories. In this way team members bring their whole being to the encounter. To help reflecting team members maintain orientations of attentiveness and openness, White provides a couple of overlapping series of questions for them to use as guides while they are participating in a definitional ceremony (M. White, 2000: 75 and 78-79).

Most of the ecological memoirs and autobiographical essays read for this thesis can easily be interpreted as representing the preferred self-narratives of the authors at the time of their writing. My reading of them in the company of my virtual reflecting team, therefore, can be likened to a definitional ceremony—a public acknowledgement of their stories which provides a thickening of their description, and which opens up new possibilities for action. While White’s sets of questions are fairly specific to face-to-face therapeutic contexts, I did draw on them to derive questions to assist me in practicing a dialogical reading of ecological memoirs.

The first set of questions I developed in order to help me read attentively and openly in relation to my own experiences and self-narrative are as follows:

1. As I read the stories this person has written about his or her life, what captures my attention and/or my imagination?
2. What is it in particular about these events, sentiments, and/or expressions that captures my attention or imagination?

3. What images of people's lives, identities, relationships, and the world more generally are evoked by the events and expressions in the memoir?
4. To which areas of my current life do these images relate, and in what ways do they do so?
5. Are there any experiences or events in my past (personal, relational, work etc.) that resonate with these images? (This can include dialogues with other people or other texts I have encountered.) If so, in what specific ways do they resonate?
6. In what way(s) am I “becoming other than who [I was]” by re-engaging with my own life and work in dialogue with this memoir? In what way(s) is this dialogical re-engagement “taking [me] beyond the limits of what [I] would routinely think” and aiding me in developing “options for action in [my] life that would not have otherwise occurred to [me]?” (the direct quotations included in this question have been taken from M. White, 2000: 78-79).

In translating Michael White’s practices of narrative therapy into my own thinking with stories around the question of how ought we to live in relation to earth others, these questions provided a useful entry point into reflecting on my own resonances with the narratives I read. They served as constant reminders to reflect on my own life through the memoirs as well as to bring my own experiences, imagination and embodied reactions to bear on my interpretations of the published stories. The final question was particularly important in reminding me of the objectives of my practice of thinking with stories. These objectives are to open up possibilities for action in answer to questions around how I ought to live in relation to earth others and the more-than-human world, and ultimately to be changed through my engagements with others’ self-stories.

While the above questions made sense to ask of myself as a reader of life stories, they were not so useful in relation to my virtual reflecting team, since these team members were not actually present to respond. Instead, I adapted a second list of questions provided by White, a list he uses to help reflecting team members (2000: 75). The adapted questions that I used to help me bring theory and life-story into dialogue are as follows:

- 1) What ethical orientations are invoked by or resonate with the particular events of this story?
- 2) What representations of people's lives and relationships do these events evoke? What understandings of identity are implicated in these representations? Which theoretical approaches relate to these identity conclusions?
- 3) What do these events and representations touch on in the theoretical approaches of the virtual reflecting team generally?
- 4) In what ways does this "touching" affect the thick description of these theoretical approaches?
- 5) In what ways does this "touching" open up new possibilities for action for these approaches?

These questions build a relationship between the memoir and the reflecting team from the perspective of the memoir rather than theory. The first two questions provide two different ways in which a storied life might intersect with social theory. For each memoir I used these questions to determine which virtual team members to engage with for the subsequent three questions. On a collective level, those virtual team members that meaningfully resonated with a number of memoirs were the ones engaged with in writing up the chapters of Part II of this thesis. Just like the personal reflecting questions, the objectives of these virtual reflecting team questions are to thicken understandings of the theoretical approaches and to open up new possibilities for action stemming from them. Also, by engaging with the reflecting team through questions that foreground their resonances with memoirs, I was better able to resist the academic tradition of having the theories engage each other.

The whole objective of taking a thinking with stories approach to ethics is to avoid the sort of detached theorising that Buttimer so cuttingly critiqued, and to explore instead how to actually live a life around a set of ethics. As Michael White wrote, the foundation of his practice of narrative therapy is one that "concerns one's personal ethics,

that concerns the modes of being and thought that one enters one's life into, that is reflected in the care that one takes to attain success in a style of living" (132). Social and ethical theories can be useful tools in reflecting on one's own or others' styles of living. However, they must be kept as tools and not be allowed to assume the authority to finalize who people are and what they can or cannot do. Using the above set of questions not only aided me in treating social theories as tools, but they also helped me to keep those theories open to being changed.

In fact, a number of the memoirs read for this thesis provide illustrations of living storied-lives informed by, but not finalized by, ethical theory (cf. Tallmadge, 2004; Nelson, 1989, Moore, 2004). Indeed, any life story can be seen as an experiment in living lifestyles informed by specific ethical beliefs and theories whether the person storying that life consciously conceives of it that way or not. I turn now to a brief discussion of the use of memoirs before turning over this text to the stories lived in search of an answer to how we ought to live in relation to earth others and the more-than-human world.

5.6 Thinking With Ecological Memoirs

I have followed Frank in using published self-narratives. I have done this for several reasons.¹²⁴ First, I hope to inspire readers to engage in a conscious narrative ethical practice of their own beginning with, but not limited to, those stories I discuss herein that resonate with their own experiences. By using stories that are in the public domain readers have the opportunity to continue their engagement with them and develop their own "virtual narratives" of these works, thereby extending the conversation about

¹²⁴ Schauffler (2003) has also used ecological memoirs specifically. However, she does not take a narrative ethics approach but rather reads these stories analytically as examples of conversion stories, drawing on theological work to explain commitment to environmental activism.

how we ought to live. Second, I have chosen to use published memoirs because these exist somewhere in between self-narratives and public narratives, offering enlarged scope for the amplification of counter-stories. Third, because published self-stories are in the public domain, I can use detailed information from them without violating anyone's anonymity.¹²⁵ And finally, I use published memoirs because I believe the ethical relationship between writers and readers goes some way towards bridging the distances, both moral and physical, that threaten the state of our world and which geographies of morality have particularly concerned themselves with of late (cf. D. Smith, 2000).¹²⁶

Peter Sauer (1989) in his introduction to a collection of essays on nature and culture, previously published in the influential *Orion Magazine*,¹²⁷ writes that 1980 represented a pivotal year in western culture's understanding of its relationship to nature. In the terminology of narrative ethics, one might state that it was in 1980 that a critical mass of writers (and editors) began to recognize the narrative crisis of culture/nature dualisms. After this date the number of "ecological memoirs" published in North America began to grow at a rapid rate. Murphy (1995) supports this observation, writing in the late twentieth century that "[s]elf-conscious ecological writing must be defined as a phenomenon primarily of the late twentieth century, and that which precedes it as mostly protoecological" (26). If anything, the rate of publication of ecological memoirs has only increased in the new millennium. For these reasons, I have restricted the set of memoirs I have investigated to those that have been published since 1980. However, by far the bulk

¹²⁵ Requirements to protect the anonymity of respondents have prevented at least one author (Blee, 1996) from discussing the role of place in affecting the self-narratives of her respondents.

¹²⁶ This argument will be developed more fully in chapter 10.

¹²⁷ *Orion Magazine* has been instrumental in publishing those authors that are trying to re-story our relationship to the more-than-human world in non-dualistic ways. Many of the writers whose memoirs are included in this thesis got their publishing start with *Orion Magazine*.

of the memoirs consulted have been published in the last decade, simply because of the growth in this field of publishing over the last few years.

I have also restricted the memoirs to English language publications from North America. I have done this both because as a resident of North America I am particularly interested in this geographical region, and also because the publishing phenomenon of ecological memoirs appears to be particular to North American literary traditions. While a comparison of literary traditions is beyond the scope of this thesis, I conjecture that the role of wilderness in the imagined geographies of both Canada (Shields, 1992), and the US (Cronon, 1995), as well as the continued influence of earlier American nature writers such as Thoreau may account for the geographic focus of this publishing trend.

The particular ecological memoirs I thought with in this thesis were selected first because they address the question that I am interested in thinking through: How ought we to live here, such that we enhance our relationships to the more-than-human world? Second, the authors discussed in this thesis neither perceive humans as hyper-separated from the rest of nature nor incorporate nature as an extension of culture or of their individual self. Instead, many of them explicitly engage with the problem of modernity's assumed separation between humans and the rest of the world.¹²⁸ Some memoirists are even critical of what they see as a potential in postmodernism to incorporate nature within culture.¹²⁹ Of the authors who recognise both continuity and difference between self and earth other and hold these in creative tension (by far the largest number of

¹²⁸ See in particular Nelson (1989) or Moore (2004).

¹²⁹ Nabhan (1997) is critical of postmodern efforts to understand the relationship between culture and nature, particularly that of Cronon (1995). He understands these postmodern interventions as efforts to incorporate nature into culture. And while I feel he has misread Cronon, that Cronon does present earth others or the more-than-human-world as existing on their own. It is worth mentioning Nabhan here to point out that these memoirists are participating in debates that have largely been the province of academic writing.

memoirs), greater attention was given to those that resonated with other ecological memoirs as these inter-memoir resonances facilitated the uncovering of shared themes and the development of some degree of limited generalizations. Fourth, an effort was made to bring as diverse a set of perspectives and experiences within Cronon's "continuum of natural landscape" to the discussion as possible. Finally, because the interpretive practice of thinking with stories is inherently a subjective one, those memoirs given more attention in this work tended to be those which captured my attention and imagination, those with which I resonated the most, those that moved me (sometimes even bringing me to tears), and those that brought about "aha" moments of epiphanic insight.

The process of thinking with stories outlined in this chapter was an organic one that arose out of my reading of narrative literature from psychology and sociology in tandem with reading memoirs. In fact, it was in reading Arthur Frank's (2004) book The Renewal of Generosity during the same period as I was reading Alison Watt's (2002) memoir, The Last Island, that I found the inspiration for this project. While I decided almost immediately on a virtual reflecting team approach, again the literature review I undertook in part to identify virtual reflecting team members was done in tandem with reading ecological memoirs. That is, my choice of who to include on my virtual reflecting team was informed by the beginnings of my thinking with ecological memoirs. The last step in developing the formalized process of thinking with stories outlined here was the derivation of the questions listed in the previous section. Most of the memoirs discussed in this thesis had already been given an initial read by the time I finalized these lists of questions. After initially reading each memoir or essay I made notes on what had grabbed my attention, how the story related to my own self-story, what temporary answers it provided temporary answers to how a person ought to live in relation to earth

others and the more than human world, and any ways in which the narrative related to my virtual reflecting team. After developing the lists of questions I then went back and reread those works that had most strongly captured my attention and imagination. After each reread I wrote out my answers to each of the personal questions and each of the virtual reflecting team questions. I found that the questions enabled me to go deeper in my reflections on the memoirs, my own self-narrative, and the theories of the virtual reflecting team. When undertaking subsequent narrative ethics projects, I would use these questions after the first reading as well as after any subsequent readings.

5.7 Thesis as Trickster Midwife Pedagogy

Murphy (1995), who also engages dialogically with ecological writers as part of his goal of developing "the inhabitation we need to learn for an environmentally ethical life practice" (97), proposes that academics ought to take a Trickster Midwife approach to pedagogy. As a Trickster Midwife an academic seeks to help people develop and individuate through "story, paradox, and questioning" (135), and yet because the self is understood as co-created with others, such a process of individuation paradoxically is concerned to a certain degree with the weaving together of as yet unformed solidarities.¹³⁰ In order to accomplish this individuation with solidarity Murphy, drawing on Bakhtin, suggests that an important requirement for the Trickster Midwife model is that "the student recognize the teacher as guide and aid, but not as monological, monolithic authority" (135). A Trickster Midwife "serves as a guide who encourages students toward self-consciousness, self-motivation, and inquiry in search of commitment" (136). I suggest then, that a narrative ethics thesis must also take on the form of a piece of

¹³⁰ From a geographical perspective, David Smith (2000) sees solidarity as a goal of contextualised non-universalistic ethics.

Trickster Midwife pedagogy. That is, as writer of this thesis I seek to be a guide and facilitator rather than an authority or expert.

It is my goal to make reading Part II of this thesis as much a practice of "thinking with stories" as the writing of it has been. And it is my hope that the reader will maintain an open stance to the text, allowing the stories contained within it to affect the living of their own lives. I invite the reader to use the set of questions I used myself in reading the memoirs (see above) as he or she continues on through Part II. The objectives of this work are not to derive some prescriptive set of principles to inform policy, but to contribute to the growing set of narrative resources available for inspiring reflection on our ethical relationships with earth others and the more-than-human world and to inspire action and commitment towards improving the quality of those relationships. In short, this thesis strives to contribute to the re-storying of lived lives and thereby public narratives towards survivable futures for all.

In Part I of this thesis I have made an argument for approaching issues of ethics to do with our relationships to earth others and the more-than-human world from the perspective of narrative reasoning. I have also given a brief overview of the use of narrative in some approaches to environmental ethics, and I have outlined the formalized practice of thinking with stories that I have employed in the dialogical engagement with published ecological memoirs that makes up Part II of this thesis. I have also convened a virtual reflecting team of social theorists who I think will be useful in reflecting on ecological memoirs.

Part II of this thesis presents the thinking I did with these ecological memoirs using both the virtual reflecting team and my own personal narrative history. In the course of this thinking with stories I read well over a hundred book-length and essay-length memoirs (see appendix A). Obviously I could not discuss all of them within the

scope of the thesis, nevertheless, because of the dialogical nature of narrative ethics, the influences of these other memoirs—even if they did not get directly cited—must not be discounted. Because each memoir was complex and multi-faceted, as everyone’s self-narrative is, even for those memoirs I do discuss in Part II a great many of my reflections had to be left out.

With all of these caveats in mind, let me outline what has been included in the four chapters of Part II. Each of these chapters takes a slightly different approach to representing the process of thinking with stories. The first chapter (chapter 6) focuses on a single memoir of a woman in narrative crisis who is stuck on an island. By focusing more on a memoir than on a question I am able to retell that story in greater detail, which in turn allows me to model the process of having members of the virtual team, and other memoirists, reflect on a narrative. Having gone into depths with a single memoir in chapter 6, in the following chapter (7) I bring a number of different memoirs together in order to explore a common theme that arose through my reading: that of bearing witness. This chapter focuses on resonances between memoirs and between memoirs and the virtual reflecting team.

Although reflecting on and with my own self story was important to all of the thinking with stories that went into this thesis, I do not directly write up any personal reflections until chapter 8. Chapter 8 is centred around a question of strong personal relevance: how ought I to live in a city? In approaching this question I employ a number of different narrative strategies, from thinking about the settings of ecological memoirs, to thinking with memoirs about living in cities, using both my own personal reflections and those of the virtual team. I then take a short interlude to think with a readerly memoir about reading and the more-than-human world.

The final chapter of Part II revisits a number of previously discussed themes, exploring them from the perspective of relationships between writers and readers. This chapter (10) also employs a variety of different strategies for thinking with stories, with the first section focusing on just one memoir and with subsequent sections employing both my own personal reflections and those of the virtual reflecting team. Because of the nature of narrative ethics, none of these chapters arrives at definitive conclusions. Instead, the objective is to begin conversations on what it might be to live ethically in relation to earth others and the more-than-human world, to thicken interpretations of self-narratives and understandings of the social theories of the virtual reflecting team, and to open up possibilities for acting in ethical ways.

Part II
Thinking With Ecological Memoirs

6. Restorying Island Identity

6.1 The Story of an Isolated Island

I begin my thinking with ecological memoirs with Alison Watt's narrative of the two periods she worked as a research assistant on Triangle Island, a seabird refuge 45 km north of the tip of Vancouver Island. While the bulk of the last Island¹³¹ deals with her first summer there as assistant to biologist Anne Vallée in 1980, the reader can assume it has been edited for publication following her second visit in 1996 and has been shaped by events in the intervening years, including most notably the death of Anne Vallée. It is this death that frames the story and sets the bleak tone of the book. The last Island records a tragedy on a personal level and losses on an ecological level and is read, in this thesis, as a story of and in narrative crisis. In Alison's story, the discourses and practices of western modernist science are at the heart of both crises.

In this chapter I would like to begin thinking about how we ought to practice

¹³¹ The unusual capitalization of the title is taken from the book.

science, how we ought to give science and its explanations meaning, and how we ought to relate to the earth others and places involved or implicated in the practices of science. Also, because Alison spends the majority of her journal-style book in narrative crisis, I want to take the opportunity in this chapter to revisit some of the concepts of narrative therapy introduced in Part I, thickening understandings of how people move through crisis to some form of healing and some sense of wholeness.

At the time of her first stay on the island, Alison was an undergraduate biology student with one year remaining in her degree. She had “no idea what [she] would do afterward” (38). She took the assignment on Triangle Island to “find out if [she] was cut out for field work” (38). Alison’s narrative largely concerns the question of whether she *ought* to become a field biologist and, therefore, is dominated by narratives of and about science.

Anne Vallée, a graduate student with a prestigious scholarship and a contract from Canadian Wildlife Services, was Alison’s only human companion for the months she spent on Triangle Island in 1980. Anne’s scholarship and contract paid for the research, for their living expenses, and for Alison’s salary. These monies also largely defined the relationship between Anne and Alison as that of field biologist and assistant. In Alison’s narrative, Anne and field biologist merge, with her experience of one

affecting her storying of the other, until both are represented as someone who is serious, self-sufficient, reticent, sure of her role, obsessive about her research, and comfortable with isolation. The latter characteristic ties how Alison stories Anne to how she experiences and stories the island where they must live for the duration of the summer.

In Alison's narrative a field biologist is someone with a specific geography, someone who leaves culture to enter into nature, someone who makes a hero's journey to find and bring back scientific truth. The geography of Triangle Island is a dynamic part of this narrative. As an assistant field biologist, Alison describes her helicopter journey to Triangle Island as "flying off the edge of the world" (9). Though she never uses the word "wilderness" in relation to the island, as she repeatedly states throughout her narrative, the island is not a place that should, or even can, be inhabited by humans. Partly through histories of the island and partly through her own experience of its topography and climate, Alison stories it as a landscape altogether "inhospitable" (41) to her own kind.

Besides providing a setting for the performance of field biologist narratives, the isolation that the island enforces restricts the possible audiences with whom Alison can engage in the dialogical project of storying and re-storying her self. The island is located at a fair distance from the mainland and from other islands. It is also often subject to treacherous weather making it difficult to access by boat or helicopter. Moreover,

although Anne and Alison were given a radio, they are unable to get it working. Without links to the outside world, Alison can only story her self in dialogue with Anne, the place of Triangle Island, and the earth other inhabitants of the island. Unfortunately, Alison's relationship to all of these is dominated by the narrative of her as apprentice field biologist and by the broader dualistic narratives of scientific practice separating humans from nature and observing subjects from observed objects.

If Anne were interested in engaging dialogically with Alison in a multifaceted way, this isolation might not have been experienced so acutely by Alison. However, Anne performs the narrative of field biologist almost exclusively. Only four days after they arrived, well before their actual research has begun, Alison recorded that she suffered from acute loneliness, a state that could only be bridged with the sharing, in dialogue, of narrative-selves:

“Did you always live in Quebec?”

‘Yes, all my life,’ [Anne] answered, turning back to her work.

Suddenly I felt adrift, the loneliness about to close over my head---my only lifeline the sound of another voice.

‘Did you have a happy childhood?’ Anne looked at me with surprise, as if no one had ever asked her that question, as if she had never thought about it. She put down her reading.

‘Yes, of course. My sisters and my brother and I do a lot together when I am home. I guess we are’---she searched for the English term---‘a close family.’ She explained that she’d lived at home until last year. She came to Vancouver at twenty-one to begin her graduate work.

Anne picked up her paper again. Desperate to hang onto the thread of our conversation I said, ‘I moved around a lot as a kid.’

She looked at me tentatively, as if she was not used to easy confidences. *I felt a need to be known.* She listened, nodding, while I carried on, relating how

we'd moved constantly from town to town until I was ten, when my family had settled on Vancouver Island." (26, emphasis added).

This is one of the longest pieces of dialogue that Alison has recorded between herself and Anne, and is also the only occasion when we are told anything about Anne's life beyond her at times obsessive interest in and experience with biological research. This is the only glimpse the reader gets of Anne as having a self-story beyond that of field biologist.

The arrival of the puffins, flying in from the Pacific Ocean to excavate burrows on the high cliffs, marks the beginning of Anne's research "and of her career as a biologist" (40). After their arrival, Alison finds her time and her self more and more dominated by the narrative of fieldwork and her role as assistant to Anne. That is, she finds her self being finalized by Anne, by the exclusively research context of the island, and by the circumscribed practices through which she must engage with the research subjects (ie. the birds).

Alison expresses a clear sense of the loss of her self under the unrelenting dominance of this story of who she is and what she ought to be doing:

"Our work and isolation narrowed life into practical, repetitive routines. Lately I felt as though parts of me were disappearing. I needed time alone to recover them, to let my thoughts wander" (103).

As the above quotation explains, even her thoughts are restricted when she is in the presence of Anne. She has to separate herself physically from whom and what is storying

her in order to begin to recover those parts of her self that this dominant storying denies.

On her rare days off she is able to leave Anne, their research area, and their living quarters, but on a more regular basis it is during her solitary walks to and from the research plots that she is able to restory her self in snatches. Of these walks, Alison writes that her mind overflowed with memories “as if they had been dammed by a wall that was beginning to crumble under the weight of solitude” (48). As the summer continued and Alison found the narrowing of her self-story less and less tolerable, she began to escape into daydreams even while she was supposed to be paying attention to her research. In all of these ways, spatial and mental, Alison struggled to keep alive parts of her self-story that were denied by the relationships she had on and with Triangle island.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Alison chose to spend a summer on Triangle Island with Anne Vallée because she wanted to try on the self-narrative of being a field biologist. Up until this point, her narrative crisis seems to be one of being too limited in how she is storied. However, as their research progresses, Alison begins to relate experiences that cause her to question her role as field biologist.

The isolation is the first aspect that Alison experiences as contrary to her National Geographic Special-inspired romantic vision of what it would be like to be a field

biologist (Watt, 2002: 19). These media representations of female biologists, golden hair blowing in the wind, enjoy the isolation. Alison does not. Alison visually ties Anne with these representations by including a watercolour illustration in her book depicting Anne's blonde curls shining in the sun and blowing in the wind. However, as the summer progressed, beyond the isolation of field work, some of the actual practices of scientific research also began to cause Alison to question those narratives dominating her life.

The first such incident involved the work they did for the Canadian Wildlife Service collecting food samples from parent Cassin's auklets. To do this, they set up a mist net at the nesting colony and waited in the dark for the returning parent birds. Unfortunately, shortly after they set up the net, a bird flew into one of the supporting poles and died (81). Faced with the dead bird, Alison's immediate "feeling" is that this death is wrong, but she "reasons" with herself that the death was an unfortunate side-effect of a necessary scientific endeavour. She places this bird's death in the context of the extravagant damage being wrought on its species by human activities and with the popular public narrative that it is only through scientific research that threatened species will be saved. She draws on ecocentric ethical principles and heroic stories of science to narratively console herself over the death of an individual bird:

"I crouched and turned off my headlight, feeling as if I had stolen this small life. I waited in the dark for the next bird, trying to reason with myself---a few losses in the pursuit of knowledge were part of research, collecting samples would help

complete a study begun two years ago and perhaps illuminate the auklets' mysterious lives. ...The birds were drowning in miles of fishing nets and becoming fouled from oil drilling and tanker traffic; fisheries were destroying their food sources. Their world was irrevocably caught up in the nets of our world. We would need all the knowledge we could gather to conserve them" (82).

Despite placing her role as research assistant in the context of this heroic story of science as saviour, this incident marks the beginning of Alison's discomfort with the research practices she must engage in.

In the second incident, Alison recounts stuffing a rhinoceros auklet that she had found dead on the beach. She gets no pleasure from the process, recognizing it as an act of finalization: "Perhaps, I thought sadly, it had a chick in a burrow, and a mate fishing. It was a specimen now" (121). As the summer progresses, Alison withdraws her self more and more from the research even as the work intensifies and Anne becomes more deeply absorbed in it. The final detailed incident that she recounts from this research period requires some background information. This incident is an important one because it brings to a climax Alison's rebellion against the narrative she found herself almost exclusively storied by.

As part of her research, Anne needed to know what the puffin chicks were being fed by their parents. This was difficult information to obtain because parents return from fishing during the dark and deposit the food with their nestlings underground in burrows.

To solve the problem, Anne devised a muzzle that could be fixed over the nestling's beak, preventing the baby bird from eating. The researchers could then grab the food in the burrow, weigh it and identify it before removing the muzzle and allowing the nestling to eat. She and Alison took shifts watching for parents to arrive, removing, weighing and identifying food left in the burrow, then replacing the food, weighing the nestling and removing its muzzle.

In conducting this particular research, Alison again relates the sense of losing her self:

“Alone on the colony I sat in the blind, forcing myself to watch each burrow diligently for puffins arriving with food and make pencil entries in my notebook. ...But my mind wandered. It was as if the sheer space around me spun my thoughts outwards. Each day I spent more and more time thinking about less and less” (133).

Eventually Alison's withdrawal leads to fatal consequences and to a confrontation between herself and Anne:

“Hello,’ I said, cheerily, as Anne came in from her morning shift....
Anne didn't look at me, or smile.
‘The fish samples are all done,’ I said....
She glanced at them dismissively, silently unpacking her gear. Something was wrong.
‘What is it?’ I sat up and closed my journal.
‘A chick was dead this morning,’ she said flatly. ‘When I went to burrow 16 this morning, the chick still had its muzzle on.’ She finally looked at me. ‘You forgot to take it off.’

...
I thought of the parents faithfully dropping fish at the feet of the chick, starving, unable to eat. The painful death I had inflicted on the innocent bird sickened me. I imagined the parents returning to the empty nest for the next few days, before finally abandoning it and returning to the sea. It was too late in the

season for them to lay another egg.

Anne turned away, set her notebook on the table and began hanging up scales and calipers. All the information we had collected on that nest---position and length, date of laying, weekly weights of egg, date of hatching, weights and wing lengths of the chick was wasted. We had had to discard our work before---several burrows had lost eggs and chicks just around the time of hatching. Though we didn't understand them, they were natural losses. This loss would never have occurred if I weren't here.

'Look, Anne, I really am sorry.' As I spoke to her back, her shoulders stiffened.

She turned, reproachfully. 'Sometimes I think the research isn't important to you. You don't try to be careful.'

She was right; I was always daydreaming, and in a hurry to finish my work.

Resentfulness rose above self-reproach. "I *do* care about the birds. But I'm not like you.'

"You still have to try to do a good job.'" (136-137, emphasis in original)

This dialogue occurs three quarters of the way through the book (and three out of four months into their stay on Triangle Island). From a narrative dialogical perspective there are a number of important aspects to take note of in this passage. First, Anne in her anger seeks to punish Alison by not talking to her. However, her body language does communicate her feelings, and Frank and Bakhtin do emphasize that dialogue must be understood as embodied.¹³² Similarly to the first quoted dialogue, Alison has to force Anne to talk to her. When she hears what has happened, the first thing Alison thinks of is the birds, the painful death of the nestling and the parents' helpless actions. We don't

¹³² With respect to embodiment and dialogue Frank (2004) writes a good deal on embodied dialogics and quotes Bakhtin (183) as writing: "lest the emphasis on dialogue afford undue privilege to language, I note that Bakhtin writes: 'Dialogic relationships . . . are extralinguistic,' and below that, partially explaining it, 'judgements must be embodied'" (52).

know what Anne is thinking but Alison imagines that Anne is concerned about the loss of data, because she only knows Anne in terms of her role as field biologist. And, indeed Anne's words appear to corroborate Alison's assumptions.

Anne's big accusation is that the *research* is not important to Alison. In her own mind Alison concedes the truth of this accusation but in dialogue with Anne she defends herself by asserting first that she cares about the *birds*, and second that she is not like Anne. In stating explicitly that she is not like Anne, she finally rejects, through dialogue, the finalizing of her self as an apprentice Anne.

In Part I, the narrative crisis is predominantly a personal one and once Alison has verbally rejected her finalization as research assistant the research and her remaining month on the island go much more smoothly. Once she has made herself known and publicly (in the limited public of the island) reclaimed her self-story, that self is able to engage in the job she is there to perform. Though Alison might not like the physical isolation and the narrow focus on research that she perceives as inherent in being a field biologist for her own self-story, aside from a few experiences that give her pause, in Part I she still largely stories science as heroic. In this context, as a person who cares about the well-being of these birds, she will continue to do a good job of the research, which in dialogue with her journal and with Anne she subtly re-stories as a care practice. She

recovers some of her self and achieves at least a temporary sense of wholeness through directly confronting the woman who is storying her and dialogically offering a modified version of this storied-self, one which Anne seems to accept. Having moved through her own narrative crisis, in Part II it is the public narrative of science as saviour that Alison brings to a crisis point.

6.2 Returning and Restorying

When she returns to Triangle Island in the 1990s for a shorter (2 week) stint as research assistant, the tone of Alison's narrative becomes even bleaker. Part II begins with her describing how she learned about the accidental death of a researcher on Triangle Island two years after she and Anne had parted company. Somehow Anne's death seemed inevitable: "before I asked if he caught her name, I knew it was Anne" (161), she writes. Later we learn that Anne and her research assistant of that fatal summer had been measuring puffin burrows in "their usual silent companionship" (164), out of sight of each other. After a while the assistant returned to where she had last seen Anne calling her name, but received no reply. Eventually she found Anne's body. She had fallen only 25 feet but had landed, unconscious, face-down in a tide pool. In a way Anne was killed as much by a lack of connection and dialogue as by losing her footing on

Triangle Island. That is, in Alison's narrative Anne was killed by her performance of self-sufficient, reticent, confident, isolated field biologist.

The theme of Triangle Island as a hostile place carries over from Part I, with the death of Anne becoming "part of Triangle's dark lore" (161). Despite being an inhospitable place for human habitation, in Part II (1996) Triangle Island is represented as a place under siege from the human world. As Alison walks back from the research plots she finds all sorts of human detritus washed up on the beach: plastic floats, plastic ropes, bits of drift net, and even a Nike shoe. The island, more obviously connected to the human world, is now experienced as inhospitable to birds as well. This summer puffin chicks are starving to death. Alison writes: "As we move through the colony I begin to notice dead chicks everywhere, lying at burrow entrances where they emerged out of desperation" (163). Those chicks that are still alive are half the weight they should be and have not developed the flight feathers they will soon need. Alison had been drawn to the scientific discipline of field biology because of the promise that through her research the lives of the birds she cared about would be improved. However, though field research has been ongoing in the past sixteen years, the plight of the puffins has significantly worsened.

Moreover, this summer Alison experiences the field biology practices she is

expected to perform as even more problematic than during her previous sojourn. This summer, besides weighing the nestlings, she and the other researchers are expected to take blood samples. Her reaction to participating in such an invasive procedure is an embodied one. Holding down struggling chicks while someone inserts a needle and withdraws blood from them makes her queasy. She reports that none of the researchers like taking blood samples because “[i]t is hard to ignore the panic of the chick” (163). That is, it is difficult to maintain the proper orientation of separation between self as observer and the object of scientific observation. It is difficult to maintain the scientific narrative in the face of frightened young earth others.

The night after taking blood samples Alison dreams that she came upon a group of people on a dock surrounding a man who was holding a child’s face under water. She cried out to him to stop but the crowd of people told her that the man was saving the child. In her dream Alison’s senses told her that this was not true and she took action:

“I can see that she cannot breathe. I struggle out of the boat, run and grab her from him, her small body heaving and vomiting water” (164).

In narrative reasoning, causation comes through emplotment and plot depends upon both the order in which events are strung together as well as upon theme. In her dream, Alison challenged a dominant narrative that told her a child was being saved when her own senses and experience told her the opposite was true. Narratively, this dream directly

follows her discussion of the plight of the puffin chicks and her experience of pinning them down so that blood samples can be taken. At the time she had justified the blood-taking through the scientific narrative that DNA can reveal important information and the implicit assumption that scientific knowledge will help to save the dying bird children. Her dream self seems not to believe this public narrative any more.

At this point in the narrative, in 1996, Alison is a mother; however, parenting runs as an undercurrent through the entirety of the last Island, posing the possibility of a counternarrative--one that never gets fully articulated--to the dominant narratives Alison finds her self located in. Indeed, even the scientific studies she is involved in over the two summers on the island explicitly concern parenting, though they reduce that relationship to food provision and quantifiable outcomes like wingspans and weights. However, rather than let science have the last word on parenting, it is the nurturing relationship between parent and child that provides Alison with the empathetic bridge to connect, albeit briefly and only imaginatively, with birds on Triangle Island. For example, when stuffing the auklet she wonders whether there is a mate or a chick left behind who will miss it. And again, when she accidentally left the muzzle on the puffin chick, she regretted the pain inflicted on the chick, but worried even more about the impact of its death on its parents.

It is bird other as parent that inspires Alison to imaginatively step across the divide erected between human and nature and thereby challenge those narratives of science that dominate her life on Triangle Island. The most explicit example of this challenge concerns an experience of encountering a pair of eagles who continue to defend an empty nest even though their eaglet lies dead on the beach below. After this encounter Alison wrote:

“I glanced back at the two eagles, watching us from their perches. Ornithology described bird behaviour in terms of predictable responses to specific stimuli: the light of the seasons, the flash of prey, the calls and postures of territoriality and mating. ...Was there an avian form of grief? How long would it be before the eagles abandoned their empty cradle and returned to their solitary lives?” (88).

In the face of the irrational behaviour of the eagles (ie. not explainable in terms of predictable responses to specific stimuli), Alison questions the scientific story of avian behaviour that denies them feelings. However, rather than finalizing them by identifying them with human emotions, her encounter with the eagles instead opens her up to the possibilities of difference and sameness.

The narrative of parenting also provides Alison with a way of storying her relationship to the birds she is studying that is more emotionally satisfying than that of field biologist. Almost a month after the unfortunate death of one of their study chicks, Alison returns to a burrow only to find it empty. At first she despairs but then realises that the chick must have fledged during the night. Storying her self as a co-parent to the

bird, she writes:

“I thought about *my* chick paddling tirelessly since long before dawn---the unwavering determination of birds can seem like a kind of faith. I searched the empty horizon through my binoculars, silently wishing him well” (151, emphasis added).

It is this story of parenting that also finally allows Alison to reconcile her relationship with Anne. Upon awakening from the dream about the drowning child, the first thing Alison thinks of is Anne’s death by drowning. Expressing an emotional reaction to this death for the first time in the book, she writes that she was “reminded with a quick sear of pain, that Anne was someone’s child” (164). Just as she felt her self finalized as research assistant by Anne, she too finalized Anne as a field biologist. The alternate narrative of parenting allows Alison to see Anne as unfinalizable and, thereby, to finally feel some grief over her death.

6.3 Alternative Stories on Triangle Island

When Anne accuses her of not caring about the research Alison responds by stating that she cares about the birds. While at one level these two statements appear to bypass each other, to represent a failed dialogue, on another level this can be seen as Alison’s bid to subsume the research narrative within a broader narrative of care. In this raw, emotional dialogue with Anne, she finally admits that she was motivated to try on

the role of field biologist because she cares. That is to say, caring about the birds was the context in which she decided that she ought to try being a field biologist. However, as the summer progresses and she finds herself storied more and more narrowly by Anne and the research, and she begins to have more and more questions about the practices of field biology, the feelings that care evokes in her come into conflict with the narratives of fieldwork. This, then, is the heart of her personal narrative crisis: Should she, as someone who cares about birds become a field biologist when such practices put her in face-to-face dialogical relationships to birds and colleagues that force her to deny narratively that she has any capacity to care whatsoever?

To return to the dialogue Alison has with Anne about the dead nestling, in terms of care ethics approaches, she expresses a “non-specific care” (Swart, 2005) orientation to the birds. However, in her feelings of remorse and in imagining the reactions of the parents to the dead nestlings in her mind and her journal, she also expresses a “specific care” orientation. While scientific practices can accommodate non-specific care for earth others, Alison’s specific care orientations come into conflict with some of the practices she is expected to perform.

In the context of Alison’s story, the intertwining of geography and narrative become pronounced. Many theorists and researchers have proposed that proximity is

essential to ethics and that in encountering the other face-to-face we are called to respond. However, even if the encounter precedes discourse the response will necessarily require narrative understanding. For example, when the auklet died at Alison's feet she immediately felt upset by the death and knew it was a situation requiring an ethical response. However, in order to determine what that response ought to be she had to draw on resources at hand: stories about science as saviour, and on species or ecocentric ethical principles. Through these narrative resources, she concluded the best, most ethical response was to continue with the research even if it meant individuals could die. This response, while inspired by feelings arising through a face-to-face encounter, ultimately required her to deny the feelings of specific care invoked by such encounters, forcing her instead to adopt an orientation of *objective* observer. Arguably this suppression of caring threatened Alison's sense of her self, since caring about, and even for birds, was essential to her preferred self narrative. Thinking with Alison's story demonstrates that while proximity to earth others might be a factor in educating people's moral sensibilities, when encounters occur in geographical contexts where place is dominated by dualistic discourses of science (such as Triangle Island for Alison) such encounters may actually desensitize people. Rather than be desensitized, Alison chooses to withdraw her self imaginatively through her memories and daydreams and her passive resistance to being

just a field research assistant.

These reflections bring the discussion around to the notion of silences. The book is illustrated with watercolour paintings of the island and its inhabitants; however, Alison makes only one reference to painting and that is in her 1996 entries when she merely reports being frustrated in her attempt to paint puffin rock. Clearly painting has been an important way for her to relate to Triangle island and its flora and fauna, and yet she chooses to say almost nothing about this activity. Nor does she reflect on her practice of keeping a journal while on the island. The reader is informed by the author blurb on the book jacket that Alison is a painter, painting teacher, published poet, and author, as well as a naturalist and biologist. All of these different aspects of her self go into the creation of her published book; however, most of these roles are squeezed out of the narrative that is contained in that book. The reader is left wondering how Alison eventually achieved a preferred self-narrative that enabled her to maintain all these different roles, and which accommodates her feelings of care for earth others.

When Alison finally rebelled against Anne's finalizing of her self and asserted her preferred self-narrative it was caring that she emphasised. Engaging in field research is something that she re-affirms that she ought to do and ought to do well because she *cares* about the birds. Science, rather than being heroic, is therefore relegated to assisting her,

and society in general, in determining how best to care for the needs of the seabirds she encounters on Triangle Island. As Tronto has emphasised, care can only be completed with the competent meeting of the needs of that which is cared for. As Alison frequently mentions, field research has been an important part of uncovering the “stories” of earth others such as Orca whales, and thereby coming to a closer understanding of how the needs of these species might best be met. However, scientific field practices have not been developed, for the most part, from a care ethics orientation, but rather from a dualistic perspective involving objective observers and a hyper-separation between culture and nature. At the scale of a storied life, these practices can come into conflict with the care orientation that inspired their adoption. At the scale of social organization, having the knowledge of how to meet the needs of these earth others does not necessarily translate into actually meeting those needs. Indeed, as Alison experiences, the practices of scientific research and management, and the narrative resources of its discourses, may desensitize us to responding to their needs.

6.4 Other Stories of Other Islands

An island makes a good metaphor as well as context for the dualistic discourses and practices of modernist science. In the romantic narratives of National Geographic

field researchers, field work is done separately from society. In following these stories, Alison “flies off the edge of the world”. Once on the island, rather than being in some nature separate from culture, Alison finds her self and her relations to earth others dominated by the economic relations of being a paid employee and the accompanying story of field researcher’s assistant. Because of the failure of the radio technology and the distance from shore, the only other narrative resources for her self are those in her memory and imagination, so she withdraws her self, her preferred self narrative remaining unacknowledged for the bulk of her stay on Triangle Island. While there are hints of multivocality in Alison’s narrative--the identity of parent seems to provide her with a point of sameness with which partially to re-story her relationship to earth others--for the most part Alison remains in narrative crisis while on Triangle island.

Islands as metaphors and as places seem to inspire ecological memoirists to reflect on dualistic discourses. In the remainder of this chapter, in order to thicken the reflections inspired by Alison’s story, I bring other memoirs of islands and dualistic discourses into the discussion. These memoirs include Richard Nelson’s (1989) The Island Within, Kathleen Dean Moore’s (2004) The Paradox of Pine Island, and Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2003) Gathering Moss.

Richard Nelson chose to make his home on the coast of Alaska with the intention

of using a nearby island as setting for living his preferred self-narrative. Richard presents his preferred self-narrative as the ongoing experiment of a man born, raised, and educated in the dominant universal truth discourses of western society in re-storying his life using the narrative resources of the Koyukon people of Northern Alaska, with whom he lived while completing post-secondary education in anthropology. By emphasizing his orientation as student in the introduction to the book, Richard emphasises the unfinalizability of his self-story:

“I have described my efforts to incorporate these ideas into my own life as twentieth-century American. And I have recorded my experiences, not as a teacher, certainly not as a thinker, but as a learner who loves his subject as deeply as he loves life itself” (xii).

Richard constructs his preferred self-narrative around his desire for greater intimacy with earth others and the more-than-human world. He stories this desire as what led him to the discipline of anthropology and to the field work he conducted with the Koyukon people. This desire also eventually led him to abandon academia and settle on the coast of Alaska. He specifically stories himself as being raised in and living in a society that separates nature and culture. He stories these dominant discourses of western societies as the main barrier to his desired intimacy. Fortunately, during his time with the Koyukon people he learned many of their teaching stories and performed many of their practices of living and so has some limited access to these alternative knowledges of

living. He draws on these Koyukon narrative resources in his ongoing effort to re-story himself in greater intimacy to earth others and the more-than-human world. These Koyukon narrative resources story Richard in moral relationship to earth others in a very different way than western narratives do:

"According to Koyukon teachers, the tree I lean against feels me, hears what I say about it, and engages me in a moral reciprocity based on responsible use. In their tradition, the forest is both a provider and a community of spiritually empowered beings. There is no emptiness in the forest, no unwatched solitude, no wilderness where a person moves outside moral judgment and law" (13).

In this way there is no separation between nature and culture. All are part of one larger community of life, all are interrelated and all are in continuous moral relationship to each other. It is this ethical relationship that Richard strives to place at the centre of his self-narrative and at the heart of his embodied living of that narrative.

As I have already mentioned, Richard specifically chose to relocate to a town on the coast of Alaska with access to an island that is not inhabited by humans in order to live in a place supportive of his preferred self-narrative. He seeks out this island because it is relatively unfrequented by other people, is relatively untouched by human actions and is fairly abundant in earth others. The island, therefore, affords the types of experiences he requires to perform his preferred self-narrative while it also isolates him from being storied by human others. However, although he is isolated from humans on this island, through Koyukon narrative resources he understands his self as being in

constant dialogical relationship with the earth others who dwell there. That is, while going to the island might separate him from stories other humans tell about him, he is still being constantly storied in terms of the “rightness” of his actions and his intentions by the trees, the birds, the bears, and the deer of that island, even the ones he has not yet encountered.

Although Richard explicitly struggles to overcome western separations between nature and culture, through his dependence on the island for his restorying—a place that is separate from where he lives with his partner and stepson—to a certain extent he reproduces these dualisms. In his book he often laments that he has to leave his life with humans behind in order to be with nature. He blames this on being part of a dualistic culture; however, he nevertheless reproduces these separations by storying his trips to the island in this way. About halfway through his memoir he acknowledges this geographical problem and devotes an entire chapter to writing about earth others and the more-than-human world as embodied in and around his house in town.

So how does Richard’s self-narrative thicken reflections on Alison’s? First, there are several resonances between the two. The well-being of earth others is important to both Richard and Alison and they both strive to construct self-narratives at least in part around their relationships to them: Richard through Koyukon teaching stories, and Alison

through care and through science. Geographically there is also the centrality of islands to both their narratives although each island is storied differently and plays a very different role in storying the narrator. Finally, both writers grapple with how narrative resources from western scientific discourses story their selves in relation to earth others and the more than human world. These are the resonances (the continuities). The thickenings come through the different options for action that these two people come up with. The objective with narrative therapy is to open up options and excavate alternative knowledges of living. It is in the differences that possibilities open up. In sharing his own struggles to free his self from dominant dualisms, Richard's story thickens options for bringing a self story out from under the master narratives of science.

Lest this discussion risk finalizing the narratives of science as necessarily leading to separation, I want to bring in yet another ecological memoir concerning islands: Kathleen Dean Moore's (2004) The Pine Island Paradox. Kathleen, a professor of philosophy, spends time each summer with her family on Pine Island in Southern Alaska. Islands for her are not about disconnection, as is the case with Alison, or about connecting only with earth others, a story Richard is prone to slipping into. Instead, she makes use of science to restory the island metaphor and through that restoried metaphor western naturecultures of separation. She begins her collection of personal essays by

using narrative resources from geology, field science, and geography:

“Again and again, I face an island’s paradox: Not even an island is an island. Storm-washed and rain-sodden, so hard to get to, so hard to escape, Pine Island is the very symbol of isolation and exile. But any geographer will tell you that an island is in fact only a high point in the continuous skin of the planet, the small part we can see of the hidden substance that connects everything on earth. It’s a sign---a beautiful, rock-solid, bird-spattered sign--of the wholeness of being, the intricate interdependencies that link people and places” (4)

By re-storying an island, writing about the difficulties of defining where it ends and the sea begins, where culture ends and nature begins, where love for people ends and love for places begins, Kathleen explicitly challenges the dualisms and hyper-separations endemic to modernist philosophy. The goal of her collection of personal essays is “to do the ground-truthing work of environmental ethics...trying in some small way to understand who I am in this time and place, and what I ought to do” (8). For Kathleen, the time spent on the island is a time to reconnect to family, to place, and to earth others. Science provides some of the narrative resources she uses in these essays to write about her self in ethical relationship.

So, while Alison and Richard struggle to free their selves from scientific narratives of separation, Kathleen finds metaphors in certain scientific discourses that allow her to counter Enlightenment ideas of independent individuals and hyper-separation between people and earth others. In using narrative resources from science to story her self, Kathleen changes the meaning of those metanarratives. She too opens up

possibilities for islands and for living a life as part of a culture dominated by science.

Unlike Alison, Kathleen has the relative luxury of spending time on an island with her family, rather than with an employer, and of drawing on scientific narrative resources from outside of relationships determined by the practices and the political-economies of science. Still, her story is useful here in opening up the possibilities for living on islands and to show how dominant narratives can themselves be restoried through their use in personal narratives.

The final memoir I want to bring to this discussion is Robin Wall Kimmerer's collection of linked personal essays, Gathering Moss. As someone who stories herself both as a bryologist and as a Native-American, writing these essays was for Robin a practice in multivocality, a dance between scientific ways of knowing mosses and storied indigenous ways. In the preface to her collection Robin writes:

"The knowledge I have of plants has come from many sources, from the plants themselves, from my training as a scientist, and from an intuitive affinity for the traditional knowledge of my Potawatomi heritage. Long before I went to university to learn their scientific names, I regarded plants as my teachers. In college, the two perspectives on the life of plants, subject and object, spirit and matter, tangled like the two cords around my neck. The way I was taught plant science pushed my traditional knowledge of plants to the margin. Writing this book has been a process of reclaiming that understanding, of giving it its rightful place" (vii).

As she alludes to in the quotation above, Robin did not always balance these two ways of knowing. As a child she knew plants through direct experiences with them and the

teachings of her parents. At College she knew plants through the sciences of plant physiology, anatomy, and ecology, ways of knowing that consistently separated humans from earth others. It was not until she had been teaching at a university for some years that she relearned indigenous ways of knowing through her collaboration with an

Onondaga midwife:

"Walking beside her, clipping twigs of crampbark for childbirth, poplar buds for salves, I began to understand the woods in a different way. I had studied with fascination the intricate connections between plants and the rest of the ecosystem. But the web of interconnection had never before included me, except as an observer looking in" (102).

Through the midwife's practices, Robin comes to see indigenous ways of knowing plants as complementary to her scientific ways. She restores science as a practice that helps her to answer questions of how: how does this plant live in this habitat? Indigenous cultures, on the other hand, ask questions of why: why does this plant come to live in this place at this time? Moreover, the Onondaga believe that plants are agents in their own right and can be teachers to people who are attentive to their lives. In particular, plants teach people through their comings and goings. In this way Robin comes to story her self as learning about mosses and human relationships with mosses through science, indigenous ways of knowing, and through the plants themselves. Storying her self in this way opens up new possibilities for acting in the world. In particular, it leads her to write of mosses from the lived perspective of memoir.

Robin spends every summer on an island in a lake in the Adirondacks in her role as the Director of the Cranberry Lake Biological Station. The final essay in her collection is set on this island and tells the story of Robin's relationship with individuals of a species of moss named the Goblins' Gold (*Schistostega pennata*). In telling this story, Robin seamlessly intertwines scientific knowledge about the hows of the plant-- how it came to live in a shoreline cave, how it survives on nothing but a few rays of sun at sunset, how it glitters—with explanations of why it left her life. The particular colony of Goblins' Gold at the Cranberry Lake Biological Station had been shown to her by one of her professors as a gift. Robin in turn shares the Goblins' Gold, which grows in a cave along the shoreline, with her two daughters who come with her to the research station in the summers. Robin writes of the wonder it inspired in them all by watching it glitter in the dusk of sunset:

“My small daughter blows at the roots dangling in front of her face. She looks like a Goblin herself, crouched in the darkness, guarding the gold. Outside, the sun drops lower. A wide ribbon of orange light unrolls over the lake toward us. The sun is just a degree or two above the horizon now, its rim barely touching the hills on the opposite shore, sinking. The time is almost here. We're both holding our breath as the light starts to climb the walls of the cave. At last the sun drops low enough to reach the opening in the bank. Suddenly, the sun pierces the darkness like a shaft of light through a slit in an Incan temple on the dawn of the summer solstice. Timing is everything. Just for a moment, in the pause before the earth rotates us again into night, the cave is flooded with light. The near nothing of *Schistostega* erupts in a shower of sparkles, like green glitter spilled on the rug at Christmas” (159).

As her daughters grew up, they stopped visiting the cave, and as she grew busy

with other things, she too stopped going down to the shore. However, it was the year that Robin made curtains for the cabin at the station that the moss left. A slumpage along the shore destroyed the cave, burying the Goblins' Gold. She first offers a scientific explanation, a how: "the inevitable consequence of time and erosion" (160). But then she wonders whether it was her neglect of the moss that made it leave. She writes:

"The curtains were a mistake. As if the sun and the stars and a moss that glitters were not enough to make a home. Their superfluous flapping was a lapse in respect, a slap in the face to the light and the air waiting outside my window. Instead I invited in the small tyranny of things and let it make me forgetful. ...Too late, after the caves had collapsed, I threw the curtains into the woodstove and sent them up the chimney to the glittering stars" (161).

Robin does not finalize the story of the moss. She neither concludes that it died from some random scientific process nor that it chose to leave because she neglected it and failed to show it respect. Instead she wonders. However, she chooses to act as though she were in relationship to the moss; as though it mattered whether she cared or not; as though the disappearance of the moss had ethical import. She incorporates its loss into the story of her self, choosing to burn the curtains in order to reinforce her preferred self narrative of being someone who practices indigenous as well as scientific ways of knowing and as someone who is attentive to, respectful of, and therefore in dialogical relationship with the earth others around her.

Alison, Richard, Kathleen, and Robin clearly share "themes, values, purposes and

commitments" (M. White, 2000: 63-64) in terms of their relationships to earth others and the more-than-human world, and yet each of them stories their selves in relation to dominant narratives of science in very different ways. Alison's intuition is that science helps us to know the "stories" of earth others better and that in knowing their stories, collectively we will be better able to care for those others we share the more-than-human world with. But in her experience, science is not enough to ensure that these earth others are cared for. Indeed, in Alison's experience, when science is allowed to dominate a place and all the relationships with and within that place, the resulting finalization is detrimental to all.

In order to be a tool for making places and our relationships in place better in an ethical sense of the term, scientific practices need to be part of multivocal dialogues. For all of the above writers who bring narrative to their understanding of science, along with other scientists who have turned to writing ecological memoirs (cf. Nabhan, Williams, Suzuki), narrative understanding is complementary to scientific understanding. By narrating their experiences and reflections, these writers do not detract from science but rather give meaning and value to scientific findings and make important challenges to the dominance of science and its practices.

The marriage of science and narrative explored here has some resonance with

Haraway's examination of primatology (1989) and her conclusion that earth others and scientists be understood as "actors enmeshed in history" (129) rather than as hyperseparated subjects and objects. By conceiving of science as being composed of stories and of storytelling as a way of enacting responsibility, Haraway lends support to Alison's intuition that she is in a moral relationship to those birds she practices science with. Although Swart highlights domestic animals as the ones to which specific care is owed, Alison, Robin, and Haraway open up the possibilities for storied practices of science that enact ethical relationships. In this understanding, earth others involved in scientific endeavours are also owed specific care.

By drawing on alternative knowledges of living, narrative resources gleaned from dialogues with both other humans and with earth others, these memoirs all explore different means by which science can be incorporated into a healthy multivocality of the self in relationship. The words to life stories will not be found in science alone, but neither should we ignore what the narratives and practices of science can tell us. Instead we should seek to validate a multitude of different ways in which to give meaning and value to the more-than-human world and our place in it.

6.5 Writing Preferred Narratives

Near the very end of the last Island, Alison writes about the growing number of threats to the future of seabirds posed by human activities such as fishing, logging, and the drilling, transporting, and inevitable spilling of oil and gas. This listing of threats is no managerial account but rather presents a situation that Alison feels requires an ethical response. The response she imagines herself taking is to engage in dialogue with the people involved in these industries, but she is unsure of what she would say to them.

“How to defend puffins?” she asks herself. The first answers she comes up with are the scientific ones: puffins are an indicator species, and a predator species and when such species are removed from their ecosystems there are often catastrophic results. These are scientific responses, ones that implicitly draw on quantitative discourses of resource management and on bureaucratic versions of ecocentric principles. They provide answers to how the birds might relate to human instrumental goals. But these answers fail to satisfy her, perhaps because she is aware that they are arguments that have been made many times before to no avail. Instead she wonders: “Could I express my deeper conviction---that the smallest, most insignificant creatures have intrinsic worth; that imagination is impoverished in a world where the value of living things is only calculated in dollars?” (172). These are answers of a different sort; they are answers to

the question of why.

From an ethical perspective, narratives are written in present context, drawing on the past in order to determine what ought to be done in the future. Given its location at the end of the book, following a recounting of narrative crises at both personal and societal levels, expressing this conviction appears to be the conclusion Alison comes to through her writing. Since the reader is, at the very moment of reading those words, holding the book in which they are written, it appears that Alison chose to act on her conclusions. Alison's passage through narrative crisis to some sort of healing and wholeness is achieved by her expressing, first to Anne and then publicly in her memoir, a self-story in which her scientific voice is only one amongst many. Alison's intuition is that for there to be healing between nature and culture, scientific discourses must be made to share their privileges with alternative knowledges of living.

7. Bearing Witness: Relationships With Earth Others in Places

7.1 Look What You Have Done

In the opening essay, “On the Right-of-Way,” to his collection of essays Bird Songs of the Mesozoic (2005), David Hopes writes of the lives and deaths of the many earth others with whom he co-inhabits the suburban places of Asheville NC. The specific places he writes of are a highway, the “kind of wilderness” that surrounds the derelict factory where he has his painting studio, and the train tracks that run behind the factory. He writes of earth other inhabitants in these places, bringing the reader’s attention to the presence of these others in those places we commonly think of as our exclusive territories. He then brings awareness to the cost borne by those who share these spaces but whose presence is often forgotten and who do not share membership in our moral communities.

At the factory cum studio, he and the other human inhabitants—all artists of one medium or another—are aware of the earth others that live around them. To a limited degree these earth others influence their days and their art. Together, they spend procrastination time joking about painting kitsch portraits of the woodchucks¹³³ that inhabit the foundations of their factory and surrounding warehouses, and writing humorous

¹³³ David Hopes uses “woodchuck” and “groundhog” interchangeably.

limericks, haikus, and stories about them. For his own part, David grows particularly fond of the woodchuck who has taken up residence in an old pipe near the picnic table where he eats lunch.

Ruminating one day after feeding his neighbour groundhog, David imagines the kind of place that would be produced by a nation which chose the groundhog as their state animal (in contrast to eagle or lion). He imagines this nation to be “somewhere peaceful, some place that curls against the secrets of the earth, a little Belgium of the imagination, tables piled with cakes, the Sunday bells ringing (not too loudly), the light falling on rolling hillocks studded with salad greens” (15). He then moves straight into the following short narrative about another place and another groundhog:

“Years ago I was hiking beside the French Broad when I came to the roadside in time to see a mother woodchuck crossing Route 191 with her three kits. I watched as a truck, veering deliberately to hit them, wiped out the babies. It was a time when I passed that spot regularly, so I was witness to what unfolded, that day and those following. Two of the babies disappeared after the first night, perhaps taken by scavengers or dragged off the pavement by their mother. The third baby lay on the roadside, though, for four more days. Every day the mother was there, too, watching her last baby as though there were some hope for its life. She must have known it was dead. After the fourth day, the sad little body was gone, but the mother was not. For two more days she was at the roadside, lying where her baby had lain. I had thought it was grief, and surely it was, but there was something more. The mother woodchuck was bearing witness. To every driver, every boy in a pickup old as himself, to everyone who knew even a little of the story---and there must have been dozens who noticed her vigil at the roadside---her drooping sad posture broadcasting, *Look what you have done.*” (emphasis in original, Hopes, 15-16)

This incident takes the reader almost, but not quite to the end of the essay. In the final half-page section, David Hopes reports that the woodchuck who shared their factory building did not survive the summer. He was hit by a train, on the tracks running behind

the lot. David concludes by identifying his self with the mother groundhog, using her as a narrative resource to his own re-storying:

“I feel like the mother groundhog, sometimes: I follow the narrow steel slaughterhouse of the railroad tracks, kicking through the piles of bones, thin now as white hairs, whispering, *Look what you have done!*

Jack [a studio mate] says, ‘There’ll always be another chuck to take his place.’

I think it’s possible to trust too much” (16)

The mother groundhog calls David and other passersby to witness what one of their kind has done to her and her babies. David in turn calls on the reader to witness the presence of non-human animals in the places we inhabit, the toll that the pursuit of our projects in those places takes on these other inhabitants, and the moral agency undertaken by an earth other in the form of bearing witness.

In this chapter of my thesis I want to think with ecological memoirs about the question: how ought we to live in relation to earth others in the places we inhabit. The first temporary answer to the question is that we ought to bear witness to the lives of these others we share our places with and our impacts on those lives. This emphasis on bearing witness resonates with Robert Sack’s Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good, and so I will invoke Sack as the key member of the virtual reflecting team for this chapter.

Sack takes the view that the good is real and attractive to us, although it is also infinite and ineffable and therefore never completely knowable. That is to say, we can never come up with a definitive set of commandments, only processes to bring us closer to knowing what is real and good. According to this view, the largest barrier to doing good is the practice of self-deception on individual or community scales. Therefore, key

processes to doing good involve becoming more aware of what we are doing, what others are doing, and what the impacts of these actions are. It is in this drive to awareness that

Sack places our moral responsibility:

"While not trying hard enough to be aware, or even deciding not to be aware, is not in itself choosing evil, it does make our future selections more likely to be evil. It is at the point of deciding not to be aware that we are held morally responsible and my argument will be that self-deception is the principal mechanism by which we diminish awareness" (176).

Sack, a geographer, links the real and the good to place. He bills humans as the place-creating animals, that through place we bring together nature, meaning and social relations in order to achieve our goals including those of identity formation. We make places in part so that we can become who we want to become. Places are tools helping us to carry out the temporary solutions to the question what ought we to do. David's story helps to thicken our understanding of place-making to show that the construction of place is never completeable. Places can never be completed because we live in a world that is more than what we make of it. Even on a highway or train track, places created to transport humans and their possessions as efficiently as possible, earth others pursuing their own ends break in and change the meanings of those places for those open to reflecting on their self-stories and on dominant public narratives, for those people who refuse to deceive themselves.

According to Sack (2004), if the goodness of a place is not considered critically there is a danger that it could contribute to moral drift, a state in which the instrumental uses of that place are taken as its full moral measure:

"Being in places that are accepted uncritically promotes a common sense or *laissez-faire* morality---a moral drift---that does not inspire us to draw the audience and current practices into question. Rather it takes the instrumental uses

of places as the definition of moral. This allows many to believe that their individual actions are not creating evil, or doing anyone harm” (Sack, 2003: 203).

For David, through the narrative thinking that goes into bringing together the essay “On the Right-of-Way,” train tracks are recognized not just as places that enable the transportation of humans and their goods, but as places of slaughter. To use Sack’s moral geographical vocabulary, places with instrumental uses for humans come to be understood by David--while heeding the mother groundhog’s call to bear witness--as places of moral drift.

Sack argues that if we do not evaluate the places we construct on more than instrumental grounds we are not likely to create or re-create places that are better from an intrinsically moral perspective. Indeed, working in a state of denial, we run the risk of creating places that are much worse. In line with Sack, while David’s essay concerns human relations with earth others, it is place that he imagines and place that he evaluates. Early in the essay, David imagines what it was like outside his studio balcony before there was a factory there, before there was anything human-made, when that area was in a state that Sack calls space, to differentiate it from human created places. David wants to say that he would be “happier, wiser, better in some way” if that space still exists; but he is honest with himself and he admits there are benefits to living in a place and age where “[m]y car at forty miles an hour is more than a match for anything I’m likely to meet” and “[a] collision with the train fifty feet from the studio door could bring down dinosaurs” (12). But these are weak goods, purely instrumental ones, helpful only in preserving David’s safety and he recognizes this. The reference to the power of car and train resonates with the later parts of the story when animals going about their business

meet with their ends on the grills of these vehicles. The animals cannot remake human places to protect their selves from “everything [they] are likely to meet.”

The aspects of human-created place that David chooses to raise as instrumental goods at the beginning of the essay are re-storied as contributing to the intrinsically bad places of slaughter at the end. He also provides a contrast between the places of a nation that uses the eagle as national narrative resource, the places where he lives, and the imagined places of an imagined nation choosing the groundhog as emblem. Again, as the groundhog acts as moral agent on the next page, there is an intimation that the places David imagines are intrinsically better than where he finds himself. Bearing witness, David stories the difference between instrumental good and intrinsic good, serving as “moral compass” to his readers.

“On the Right of Way” is the first essay in a series, and therefore frames the rest of the book. In one sense, writing the essays is a response to the re-storying of his self narrative that happens through his encounters with the groundhogs. The essays are his acts of bearing witness. We, the readers, are to read David’s essays as acts of witnessing, as moral acts re-writing places—urban and not-so-urban—as he re-writes his self through encounters with earth others. Sack, like narrative therapists and ethicists, believes that dialogue—in Sack’s words “winnowing and sifting”—is essential to coming to awareness about reality, including the good. Sack also believes dialogue to be important to imagining and creating better places. This too resonates, albeit on a different scale, with narrative therapy’s insistence that dialogue informs the development and thickening of preferred story-lines of the self. In engaging dialogically with David’s essays we are first brought face-to-face with the bereaved groundhog and then asked, through her imagined

words and later through David's words, to collectively look at what we have done, and to engage in a reflexive examination of the stories we tell about ourselves and about what is a good place.

I wish to discuss one more essay in David's collection of essays, the second one, titled "The Anniversary". I want to think with it because it demonstrates the strength and dedication with which David pursues his moral impulse to bear witness, and because it also resonates strongly with Sack's theory. This essay follows David on a walk in a large, wooded city park on the anniversary of a young woman's murder. Because it is the anniversary of this act, which most people would readily agree was an intrinsically bad one, David's thoughts are drawn to reflect on it. He is worried that as a man walking alone he will seem suspicious to the women he encounters, and so he does his best to behave in a non-threatening manner.

David would prefer to story his self as completely different from the man who murdered Karen—and he hopes that the people he encounters on the path will also story him in that way. Yet on reflection David finds that to do so, to story his self as hyper-separate from the murderer, would be to enter into self-denial because he has in the past engaged in acts of cruelty. He recollects pulling periwinkles off beach stones and hurling them to their deaths for no reason but the pleasure of seeing them explode. He recalls trapping slugs with a bowl of milk and shrinking them to nothing with salt and a smile. He remembers ringing a colony of ants with alcohol and burning them to cinders and feeling, not like a monster, but like a god. And he recognizes a kinship between his destruction of "mollusks and myrmidons" and the murder of Karen. They are all actions that on reflection must be seen as intrinsically bad. David recognizes that he has

participated directly in killer stories and that he is more likely to do so again in the future if he stories his self in a way that denies this.

In this essay, it is Karen, the dead woman, who is his imagined audience to the telling of his self. In the face of what has happened to her, he finds that it is wrong to deceive himself. Instead, he must story his self as someone who is vigilant in bearing witness, not just to the actions of others, but to his own potential for engaging in killer narratives. Karen becomes a guardian spirit for him, “giving warning, maybe not of somebody *out there*, but of somebody *in here*” (37). Preferring not to story his self as part of killer stories, David finds he must instead story his self as one of unflinching self-examination and of refusing to deceive himself.

As Sack (2003) points out places are imaginative acts as much as they are physical ones and as we see from David’s narratives, places are also products of identity construction, of the stories we tell about our selves in place and our relations to others. Sack believes we ought to judge places in part based on the criteria of how they help us to become aware. For Sack, intrinsically good places are those that “heighten our awareness” and “share this awareness openly and publicly” (24). Through writing of his re-storying, David re-creates highways and train tracks as places of awareness-raising encounters with earth others and re-creates a wooded parkland as the place in which he can no longer deceive himself about his capacities for evil.

Laura Bowers Foreman is another writer who writes of “awakening” through her encounters with both plant and animal earth others. Her essay also illustrates that developing and attempting to live a preferred self-narrative is not necessarily easier, and

is often less comfortable, than continuing to live along the storylines of dominant narratives.

In writing her story of how she became a forest activist, “For the Maples,” Laura begins with her experience in an undergraduate class in forestry, a discipline she had enrolled in because of her general love of forests and her particular love of her childhood neighbour’s maple trees and grief at their loss to disease. Sack uses universities as examples of places that ought to be good places because they ought to be devoted to the pursuit of the real and the good. As part of this pursuit, universities ought to be relatively transparent, open to public scrutiny, and diverse. He also acknowledges that often university places fail to live up to their potential. This is Laura’s experience.

From the beginning, Laura feels out of place in the program because she is one of only a handful of women amongst hundreds of men. She enrolled in forestry because she hoped to gain more knowledge about forests and their inhabitants. Instead she finds the professors in her program are more interested in teaching how to remake forests into places evaluated only according to the instrumental value of profitability. That her professor is explicitly uninterested in either the good or the real is brought home to Laura when she screws up the courage to ask him whether the monoculture plantings he is advocating would actually be viable since they would be extremely vulnerable to disease and insect predation. The professor merely glares at her, refusing to acknowledge the question let alone answer it, and she sits down again, completely silenced.

The next episode she recounts occurs during a summer job she had marking “leave trees” in an Idaho old-growth forest scheduled for logging. Her boss demands that she only mark those trees for leaving and re-seeding that are the most profitable: the

Douglas fir. Although part of her rebels at such an instrumental valuing of trees, she does what she has been told to do until one day, while they are standing in the heart of the forest, her boss declares, “These old-growth forests are just ‘biological deserts.’ Old cedars and hemlocks block out all the light. We can’t get a thirty-year ROI [return on investment]!” (225). His solution to this “desert” is to slash and burn everything and let it be seeded by nothing but Douglas fir. In that moment, looking at the diversity of life surrounding her that her boss was blind to and which he wished to replace with a monoculture, she realized that she “could no longer deny the destructive reality of [her] work” (226). She could no longer participate in self-deception at any scale. This epiphanic moment causes her to re-story an encounter she had a few days previously with a coyote, an encounter that she may initially have deceived herself about:

“I recalled a recent afternoon when I was picking my way through the blackened bones of a recently burned clear-cut. I watched a coyote digging furiously beneath a mound of strewn logs. Catching my scent, she stopped digging and stared at me, panting heavily in the sunlight. Her fur was matted with gray scabs. She paused only briefly and then returned to her frantic burrowing. Recalling her distress, I realized that she must have returned to her den and found it buried beneath the devastation” (226).

Through recognizing the self-deception in her professor, then in her boss, and finally in her own self for not acknowledging the part she was playing in remaking places and destroying the lives of earth others Laura begins to “wake up”. She begins to look for new options for action based on her new understandings of the lack of goodness in the places she is culpable in creating. She decides to spend the rest of her summer spraying all the healthy trees she encounters in the forest with the yellow paint that labels them as “leave trees”—trees more valuable left alive than cut down. In other words, she brings

an alternative vision of what the place ought to be, full of a variety of healthy trees, into her self-story and into that place.

While Laura's story concerns relations to earth others, in particular to trees and coyotes, the struggle she engages in is at the level of place. She disagrees with her professor's and her boss' idea of what the place of a forest should be, namely a profit-producing monoculture. She doubts the verisimilitude of the stories that either of them tell about such places—their descriptions do not match her experiences. By recognizing their self-deception, she comes to see that by participating in their vision of place she will only help to bring those conceptions into material reality, thereby destroying all that she values and which she believes to be intrinsically valuable.

Sack emphasises diversity in place in part because he believes that diversity will help people become more aware of the real and the good. However, material diversity is apparently not enough for everyone in overcoming self-deception. The story that “natural” forests should be replaced by monocultures appears to be so dominant in the industry and to Laura's boss personally that he is unable even to perceive the diversity surrounding them in that place, and instead makes the nonsensical assertion that having a single-species plantation would create more diversity. The diversity that is lacking in the existing forest is a diversity of stories. Because of various power-relations, Laura has been silenced. She keeps her counterstory of the existing forest as diverse and valuable to herself, except when she paints the trees yellow; however, this is an action which she admits her boss is never witness to.

Laura ends her self-narrative with a brief description of her current life, the present in which she wrote her self-narrative essay. She now lives in a diverse forest on

the Northwest Coast of the US where she works to save forests from being remade as places of profit and where she is a member of a community of women who act to preserve forests as diverse spaces of greater than instrumental value. She also reports that the period of time between beginning her process of waking up and finding a place and community that shared her values was difficult, painful, and often isolating.

Both David and Laura are made uncomfortable, at least initially, by the re-storying of their selves and yet they choose these new narratives as their preferred story-lines. Why would they re-story their selves in these ways when it would be so much easier for them to remain in denial? If we understand people to be motivated only out of instrumental values, then their choice of narratives does not seem reasonable, and might even seem restrictive since it would prevent them from doing things that they may, on another level, wish to do. However, if we understand people as storying their selves in answer to the question, what ought I to do, and we understand that “ought” as referring to what is good in an intrinsic sense—in the sense that Sack’s theory encompasses—we can better understand Laura and David’s choices. In both cases, that choice is to cease to deceive themselves and to engage in a reflective process in the re-storying of their lives, to bear witness to the moral implications of the daily sacraments of their lives.

There is much resonance between Laura’s story of encountering the mother coyote and David’s story of the mother groundhog. For both, these encounters appear to have been significant ones in the restorying of their selves, and for both there is a sense of responsibility to the earth other and of the earth other bearing witness to their culpability. David is explicit about feeling witnessed, while in Laura’s story there is an emphasis on the coyote staring at her in obvious distress. The meeting of eyes for mammals is a

particularly significant event. One that has arguably inspired a philosophical theory of morality: Levinas' theory of the face. I will return later to the idea of being witnessed and the role place plays in this; however, first, I wish to explore the resonances between stories of encounters with earth others' faces in place.

7.2 Coming Face-to-face with Food in Place

In an essay entitled "Am I Blue?" Alice Walker writes of the transformation of her self-narrative through her relationship to a horse named Blue--a white horse who lives in the field she can see from her window. Alice Walker reports that she had been raised around animals as a child but had not spent much time around them as an adult. This changes when she rents a property in the country which borders on Blue's fenced-in five-acres and finds herself in almost constant witness to his life. The relationship between Alice and Blue proves to be an important one in re-storying Alice's life. She writes of her first face-to-face meeting with Blue across the fence:

"I had forgotten the depth of feeling one could see in horses' eyes. I was therefore unprepared for the expression in Blue's. Blue was lonely. Blue was horribly lonely and bored. I was not shocked that this should be the case; five acres to tramp by yourself, endlessly, even in the most beautiful of meadows--- and his was---cannot provide many interesting events, and once rainy season turned to dry that was about it. No, I was shocked that I had forgotten that human animals and nonhuman animals can communicate quite well" (4-5).

In acknowledging Blue as an intelligible individual, Alice must question the way she has storied her self in the past, and interrogate those narrative resources that she has drawn on that enabled her to forget. She recognizes that having forgotten that human and nonhuman animals can communicate has meant that they have been left out of her moral consideration. Having seen the expression in Blue's eyes she comes to see his face; that

is, she responds to him as someone to whom a response is owed by simple means of his being the other.

Her response to coming face-to-face with Blue is to visit with him regularly and to bear witness to his life and to how he is storied by his owner, the people he boards with and the dominant public narratives that structure his life. She also reflects on her own story and on the narrative resources she has drawn on in relation to what she witnesses with Blue. To truly bear witness to an other's story is to be changed by that story and so in telling Blue's story, Alice Walker must re-tell her own story.

What she discovers through this process of reflection is resonances between her own forgetting of Blue as a "person" and those past public and individual narratives that enabled the persecution of her Indian ancestors and the enslavement of her African ancestors. By highlighting these resonances, her understanding of both those past narratives of human to human oppression and those present narratives that story human to nonhuman relationships are thickened.

A year into their sharing of a fence, another horse is "put" in the field with Blue. Blue does not visit with Alice as much anymore and when he does come to the fence, he brings his friend with him and Alice sees "a different look in his eyes. A look of independence. Of self-possession, of inalienable *horseness*" (6). Blue clearly communicates to her that all is as it should be in his world, and Blue's companion becomes visibly pregnant. Then one day the mare is gone and Alice finds herself the only witness to Blue's grief. When Blue came to the fence for apples and looked at Alice she wrote:

“It was a look so piercing, so full of grief, a look so human, I almost laughed (I felt too sad to cry) to think there are people who do not know that animals suffer. People like me who have forgotten, and daily forget, all that animals try to tell us” (7).

Soon the grief in his eyes hardens into hatred. In that hatred, Alice wrote, he finally took on “the look of a beast” (8), becoming that which his human masters have storied him to be. Because of those same dominant relationships, the ones that say Blue is owned, Alice can do nothing more than offer apples and she realizes that apples are not enough of a response. Her other response is to write Blue’s story, to bring it into broader circulation, and to show how she has re-storied her life in response to his.

Some of the actor network theory animal geographers discussed in Part I of this thesis have used empirical studies to demonstrate that there are no “natural” essentialized animal identities. These studies show that animals of the same species will act differently and will *be* different depending upon the context they are in. An elephant in a zoo, for example, will be a different elephant than one in sub-Saharan Africa. This is what Alice Walker witnesses in relation to Blue. He is a different horse in relation to his mare than he is in relation to humans and different still after the humans have destroyed his opportunity for “horseness.”

Actor network theory has also been adamant that the earth other is as much an actor in this process as are humans and objects. Again, Blue clearly is a participant in who Blue becomes. However, Alice Walker’s reflexive witnessing brings out aspects of such a co-creation that Actor Network Theory on its own is unable to encompass. She recognizes that such a co-creation is firstly one imbued with power. Clearly Blue has much less power than his owner does over his life and consequently over whom he can be

and become. Blue would much rather co-create his horseness with the mare he temporarily shared a field with than with humans, but he has no choice in this. Second, Alice Walker recognizes Blue as someone to whom a moral response is required and, therefore, her narrative reveals that the impact of the relationships Blue is embedded in must be evaluated from a moral, not simply an empirical, or instrumental, perspective. The co-creation of any self, human or nonhuman, can never be a morally neutral process. That Blue's situation demands justice is emphasized by Alice through highlighting the resonances between the narratives controlling Blue's life and those formerly dominant racist narratives that justified the enslavement of Africans and the slaughter of native Americans and which are now generally held in society to be unjust and morally wrong.

Alice Walker concludes her short narrative with a visit by a friend who has never been to her country house before. This friend looks out the window, sees the field and Blue, and remarks: "And it *would* have to be a *white* horse; the very image of freedom" (emphasis in original, 8). In this particular situation, because Alice has borne witness to Blue's story and knows it to be one painfully lacking in freedom, her friend's use of the white horse to symbolize freedom immediately strikes her as wrong. Through the contrast between her friend's remark and Alice's experiences with Blue, she becomes aware of another means by which she and society manage to maintain states of self-deception: the reduction of nonhuman animals to symbols that have nothing to do with their lived lives. Alice thinks of other animals who have been so finalized such as placid cows on milk cartons, and "bulls of integrity" selling hamburgers, and resolves never to forget again. She concludes her essay with the following change to her story of her self in relation to nonhuman animals:

“As we talked of freedom and justice one day for all, we sat down to steaks. I am eating misery, I thought, as I took the first bite, and spit it out.” (8).

Alice recognizes that in using animals as representations we forget that we can communicate with them and we forget they have faces and stories of their own.

This story of reducing an individual animal to the surface of a representation resonates with an aspect of Sack’s geographical theory of the good: his proposal that surface and depth aspects of place can be important facilitators of self-denial. That is, the surface representation of a place can disguise the real relations in that place, the depths of that place. Because she has witnessed the depths of control that humans exert over Blue’s life and the misery this has caused him, Alice knows that the image he presents, a white horse in a beautiful field—an image of freedom—is a dissemblance. This makes her think of all the other peaceful representations of animals in pastoral landscapes that circulate through society, often in the company of food products, representations that most people know to be misleading and yet which aid people in deceiving themselves anyway. Now that she knows the injustices faced by “farmanimals” in an embodied way through a tangible relationship with someone she must recognize as possessing a face, she can no longer deceive herself. Her encounter with Blue in the context of the narrative resources she has access to and her readiness to challenge her own “forgetting” leads to a re-storying of her life away from eating meat.

Other aspects of place Sack delineates as contributing to its goodness or its utility in facilitating self-denial include in and out rules and spatial interaction. In terms of the latter aspect, while Alice Walker occupied places as a child that brought her into contact with nonhuman animals, she did not have such contact as an adult and forgot that she

could communicate with them. It was only when she again came to live in proximity with Blue that she remembered that other story, the story of relationship and communication between animals and humans, the story of continuity amongst differences.

Arguably the in-out rules that pertain to animals in North American society reduced Alice's opportunities to encounter animals when she lived in the city. In-out rules are distillations of master narratives that dominate animal lives. The centrality of human in-out rules to nonhuman animal lives is highlighted by Jones' (2000) discussion of how discourses label animals according to the places where they are supposed to be. Animals are finalized by the places they are confined to, which makes them nonsensical, even unrecognizable when they are out of place. Blue is in a particular place, a paddock, and is therefore a *farm* animal (again using a term from Jones, 2000) and it is this labeling through placing (and vice versa) that determines the parameters of how people relate to Blue. He is a type rather than a unique embodied story—a surface—so his needs and desires do not need to be consulted.

Alice Walker, however, comes face-to-face with Blue and cannot go back to thinking of him as one of a type, but instead sees him as being sometimes bored and lonely, of having preferred ways of living (with his pregnant mare), and of therefore having a unique story. And yet he remains enough of a representative of *farmanimal* to her that she can no longer see other farm animals such as cows as interchangeable producers of steak, and so through his agency in expressing his self to her, he changes her solution to what she ought to do and thereby helps to co-create her self-narrative. By

seeing through surface in one place, Alice must imaginatively see through surface representations of other places where nonhuman animals are confined.

While most meat consumed in North America comes from farms, there are still some people who engage in the practice of hunting, an activity pertaining to its own set of placed animals: “wild” animals. Mary Lockwood (1998) writes of a life-shaping childhood experience with hunting involving a herd of caribou who are fatally out of place. Her epiphanic childhood tale concerns a group of migrating caribou who for their own reasons decide to travel through her community’s summer camp in the tundra and who are therefore easily hunted down. Mary witnessed most of “the magnificence of the caribou and the horror of the slaughter and noise” (47) from the window of her parents’ cabin. But when the guns stopped firing she felt the need to leave the house. Remembering “the spirit and vitality in the black globes of their eyes, so intelligent, courageous and determined” (48) she mourned the dead caribou in her “little girl way” (48). Wanting to be by herself, she “found a place where no one could see” her (48). However, her solitude is broken when a frightened young caribou comes crashing through the bush, heading towards camp. In that moment she comes face-to-face with him, writing “[s]norting with a twist of his head, gasping in great sobs, his eyes were full of dust and tears” (48). Her response to witnessing his face is to stand up, wave her hands and shout at him to scare him in another direction. He runs off just before a group of adult humans arrive, guns in hands. “Since then,” she writes, “I have been allergic to caribou meat” (48).

While both Alice and Mary come face-to-face with animals and decide they can no longer eat them, Richard Nelson, whose book The Island Inside was briefly discussed

in the previous chapter, attempts something in many ways more difficult. He tries to maintain full awareness of earth other as moral other while hunting. Richard has chosen to live in a place, Southwest Alaska, where he can partially provision his self and family from the land, from hunting and fishing, in order to practice storying his self in relation to place through the narrative resources of Koyukon teaching stories. From the perspective taken in this chapter, his book bears witness to his conscious, reflexive process of re-storying his self in place. Much of the book, and much of Richard's re-storying, centres on the "little sacraments of daily living," particularly on obtaining food. Richard returns again and again to these stories of hunting deer to feed himself and his family. As Greenspan (2003) has noted, particular attention should be paid to repeated stories, as these stories are central to a person's narrative identity.

Richard is not a man to engage in self-denial. Throughout his writing he is unflinching in reflecting on his feelings, motivations, and self-storying. The Island Within bears witness to his struggles to find temporary answers to constant questions of how he ought to live in relation to place and the earth others he shares that place with. Richard and his family live in town. He must take a boat across a strait to get to an island where he can hunt, and in bad weather he is forced to camp there. Obviously it would be easier to buy meat but he refuses too, seeing in this ease a moral danger, an opportunity for forgetting, the possibilities for moral drift.

However, taking the life of a deer while maintaining full awareness of the deer as moral other proves to be an emotionally complex and challenging practice for Richard. He writes of the aftermath of killing one buck: "Incompatible emotions clash inside me—elation and remorse, excitement and sorrow, gratitude and shame" (263). In another

hunting story he writes: “how strange it is to love so deeply what gives you life, and to feel such pleasure and such pain in taking from that source” (27). He seems to story and re-story his self in relation to prey in an effort to make sense of the experience in a way that resolves his conflicting feelings without engaging in self-deception.

It is in reflecting on this repeated, emotional experience of taking another life to sustain the lives of his self and his family that Richard breaks free of the dominant Western narrative of a separation between culture and nature, humans and earth others, and which enables him to re-story his self. The Koyukon teaching stories offer him practices he can engage in to demonstrate his respect for the slain animal. However, the practices aren't quite enough to satisfy Richard's need for meaning.

The book concludes with a hunting story: “The Gifts of Deer”. In this story Richard meets a deer face-to-face. This doe actually touches her muzzle to his hand before bounding off into the forest and Richard lets her go without even raising his gun to his shoulder. The next day he encounters another deer and again gets close, too close to kill. But it's nearing the end of hunting season and his family needs the meat, so this time when the deer leaves Richard shoots him, killing him instantly. Reflecting on both encounters with deer, Richard stories his self as being touched by both earth others and through them being touched by the place of the island. He imagines telling Ethan, his stepson about his relationship to deer and place:

“that in the course of things, he and Nita and I are all generations of deer and of the life that feeds us. Like the deer, we also come from the island, and from the earth that sustains us and gives us breath” (268).

Hunting reminds Richard that eating is a moral relationship with what is eaten and his response is to choose to live a life worthy of the gift of the deer. He also stories eating

the deer as part of deepening his relationship to place. By eating the deer who has eaten from the island, Richard takes that place into his body, he comes to embody that place. The title of the book, The Island Within, is taken from this story.

In Jones' (2000) discussion of the spatialization of animal identity he also lists wild animals as a categorization (finalization) of types of animals. Wild animals are what Western societies might expect to find on Richard Nelson's island. However, partly through having access to different narrative resources than those dominating North American society, and partly through being committed to bearing witness, Richard does not find wild animals there, in the sense of beings that are hyper-separated from him. Instead, he comes face-to-face with earth others with whom he is in moral relationship, earth others who bear witness on him, his actions and his intentions and who are the agents in the hunt, gifting their bodies to him as long as he proves to be worthy of continuing on their lives.

Bearing witness to the presence of earth others and to their lives, which are both continuous with and different from our own, to our responses (or lack of response) to them, to our interactions with them and to the impact those interactions have on their lived lives is essential to increasing our awareness and moving towards good ways of dwelling in place with them. This is no easy task because the way in which we story our selves, places, and earth others affects what we are capable of witnessing. Still, we are not alone, and encounters with earth other agents can break through into our stories, providing us with experiences that, if reflected on, could lead to the telling of alternative stories, provided we have the narrative resources to do so.

7.3 Being Witnessed

As well as bearing witness to the lives of earth others, many ecological memoirs also story those earth others as bearing witness to people. The story I opened this chapter with presents the mother groundhog as bearing witness to the atrocity committed against her family, and her act of witnessing influences David Hopes in restorying his life. However, not all storied acts of witnessing by earth others draw attention to the unethical acts of humans, some are storied as acts of care.

Kathleen Dean Moore, like Richard Nelson, writes a great deal about the loneliness of living in a culture in which humans are separate from earth others and of her longing for connection with the more-than-human world. In one of her essays, an act of witnessing by a colony of seals answers her need for such connection. In “Stalking Seals,” part of her collection of essays The Pine Island Paradox (2004), Kathleen writes of her attempts over the course of a summer stay on the island, to get near a seal colony in her kayak. Her attempts are driven by a desire for connection, but each time she approaches the seals sense her arrival and disappear. She writes:

“It is a heartache, honestly, to be so shunned. I have never understood why a creator god would go to so much trouble to separate one things from another---the light from the darkness, waters that were under the firmament from waters that were above, the seas from the dry land, and worst of all, humankind from the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air and every creeping thing” (20).

The seals never let her approach them, but one day they come to her and she is profoundly touched by their presence:

“I was floating on a slack tide around the back of the island because I wanted to be alone, and I was crying. No point in making too much of this. If you’ve spent weeks in steady rain under clouds that turn the hemlocks black, or if the rain finally stops and you’re weepy from the gift of a weak and watery sun, or for no reason: Sometimes when you’re far away from home, you cry, that’s all. So

that's what I was doing. Just sitting motionless in my kayak, eyes squeezed shut, snuffling, letting the soggy intertidal salt-weed moisture seep into my own misery. After a while, I was done. When I looked up, I found I was closely surrounded by seals. Big seals, little seals, all watched without comment, their black eyes beading water, their round heads so close they could have pressed nose-prints in the dew on my hull. Not approaching, not avoiding, the seals rose and fell gently on the swell, as I rose and fell, the soft sounds of our breathing a language we shared." (22-23)

This encounter with the seals makes her change her mind about the separation she laments and she asks instead: "What would make us human beings think we're something radically different from the other inhabitants of the natural world?" (23). Echoing Sack's pursuit of the real and the good she concludes this narrative essay by writing: "That day, it felt like a true, good thing, to float with the seals on the incoming tide, staring frankly at one another with our watery, red-rimmed eyes" (23).

Obviously such an encounter can only occur where places of human habitation (Kathleen's camp) and earth other habitation (the seal colony) are relatively proximate, relatively transparent to each other's scrutiny, and where humans cannot apply in-out rules to the earth others very effectively. These sorts of places have generally been labeled "wilderness", though to label anything is to risk finalizing it. In this case, labeling a place wilderness tends to finalize it as separate and other to culture and, therefore, to risk finalizing any encounters there as having no relevance to the self-stories of humans. It is perhaps better to think of such a place as one in which human agency is lessened and earth other agency is strengthened in terms of the co-creation of that place.

Richard Nelson occupies such a place year-round and he is aware of being constantly observed by earth others both on an earthly level and on a more spiritual one. For Richard, the Koyukon narratives that story animals as witnesses to human actions,

conversations and even intentions are also a comfort, albeit a demanding one. In these stories there is a profound and ongoing connection between humans and the rest of the more-than-human world, and Richard desires this connection above all else. In drawing on these narrative resources, Richard stories his self as existing under constant surveillance by earth others who judge his moral worthiness.

Richard uses the term prayer in relation to practices the Koyukon undertake to converse with these earth others; however, he never uses the term in relation to himself. Still, he does follow Koyukon ways of caring for and butchering deer in order to demonstrate his respect for the animal's spirit, and he does refrain from thinking or saying anything that might be taken as prideful in relation to hunting. Although he draws on Koyukon narrative resources, it is largely these imagined witnessing earth others whom he stories his self in dialogue with. Although he conceives of earth others as witnessing his thoughts, conversations, and intentions—witnessing that can happen in any place—it is on the island that he has experiences that reinforce this way of storying his self. He still needs to be able to enter a place humans have had less to do with shaping than earth others have.

Whatever else prayer might be, and theological questions are well beyond the scope of this thesis, prayer is imagined to be a dialogue. And for those who pray, it can be the most important dialogue they carry out in developing their narrative-selves. Julia Butterfly Hill (2000), the daughter of an itinerant preacher, does use the term prayer. She writes that she prays every morning and every night. Though raised a Christian, when Julia prays it is to "Creation" or the "Universal Spirit". And in her story of living in a

redwood tree in order to protect that tree from being cut down, Creation responds to her prayers.

Bedridden for months after a car accident Julia, a woman in her early 20s decides that once she is able to she will travel to spiritual places the world over to find her “sense of purpose” (5). She gets as far as the West Coast of California. As she crosses the highway and enters a forest of redwood giants she feels “something calling” (7) to her. Once amongst the trees, she is overwhelmed “by the spirit of the forest” (8). The calling she feels there contradicts the plan she had to travel the world, and so she sits down to pray for guidance as she has been taught to do. I have copied verbatim the description she gives in her memoir of prayer to illustrate both the dialogical quality of her prayer and the centrality of the practice to the construction of her self-narrative:

“When I pray, I ask for guidance in my life to be the best person I can be, to learn what I need to learn, and to grow from what I learn. Always when I pray, I ask to let go. Letting go is the hardest part.

‘Universal Spirit, I wanted to go around the world,’ I prayed. “I’ve been wanting to travel ever since I can remember. I finally have the chance, and yet I’m suddenly feeling compelled not to go. Please show me the way.’

I believe in prayer, but ultimately the biggest power in prayer for me comes from the willingness to accept the answers. So I added, ‘If I’m truly meant to come back and fight for these forests out here, please help me know what I’m meant to do, and use me as a vessel.’

I sat very still for quite some time. After a while, I began to feel completely peaceful about the idea of abandoning my travels in favor of my newly perceived mission” (9-10).

In effect, Julia asks to do what is right in the sense of intrinsically good rather than what may only be instrumentally right.

Julia is quite clear on the broader plotline she prefers for her life. She is committed “to give all I’ve got to ensure a healthy and loving legacy for those still to come, and especially those with no voice” (3). Her prayers tend to be requests for

Creation to help her know how to live along this plotline. In other words, through this practice of prayer she tells and retells her preferred storyline—in which she does what is intrinsically good—to all of creation.

Having prayed and received an answer, Julia abandons her travel plans and sets about finding out how she can help to save the old growth forests of California. By following the answer to her prayer, Julia ends up living on a small platform high up an ancient tree named Luna. This is an action that brings her into physical peril from storms and from the intimidation tactics of the forestry company. But it is also an action that brings sustained public attention to the plight of old growth forests. Throughout her time in the tree she continues to pray on a daily basis for guidance in determining temporary and everyday answers to the question of what she ought to do.

By believing the universe is there to bear witness to her life and to support her in living it as best she can, as long as she lives as close to the good as she can, she reinforces that preferred self-narrative. She also reminds her self, through prayer, to bear witness to her own life and to whether her actions are in accord with what she would like to say about her self. To use Michael White's language of narrative therapy, twice a day, if not more, Julia organizes an outsider-witness group to serve as audience for the telling of her preferred self-narrative. The reinforcement of her narrative-self that she receives from these prayer sessions is what gives her "the strength to continue" through two-years of living in a tree (198).

For Julia, prayer is part of a practice of seeing through to the real and the good. She emphasizes that the most difficult aspect of her practice is letting go of things that

she might want but which are not necessarily the most true or the most good. The practice of letting go stops her from deceiving her self.

In terms of place, her practice of prayer locates her self within all of creation or the universe and so she is always in that place. By locating her self within a witnessing, compassionate universe, Julia is able to have the fortitude to defy in-out rules on a smaller scale and enter into a place, a forest company's logging plot, and bear witness to what is going on there. The practice of prayer also helps her to stay in the tree for two years, despite many people on all sides of the forestry issue who tried to re-story her in such a way that she would be compelled to come down. Her prolonged stay and her location high up a tree gave her a depth of understanding of the surrounding forest and clear-cuts that even the loggers did not have. By sticking with her preferred story-line despite the hostility from many different camps, while garnering the attention of the media, Julia Butterfly Hill managed to break through the opacity of a particular place and challenge its surface representations, enabling the public to see through to what was really happening there.

7.4 Bearing Witness as Provisional Answer to Living With Others in Place

In this chapter I have explored "bearing witness" as a practice of bridging narrative ethics and Sack's geographical ethics of place. To bear witness is to open one's self to the other, and through reflection on that encounter and on one's life and the narrative resources one has at hand, to become other than who one was. As the ecological memoirs discussed in this chapter demonstrate, the dialogical process of storying the self does not require verbal communication. The self can be re-storied in

communication with groundhog, coyote, horse, deer, hawk, maple, and even creation itself.

In thinking through the question how ought we to live in relation to earth others in the places we inhabit using these ecological memoirs, there is no overarching material answer. Instead my provisional answer is a processual one: We ought to bear witness to those earth others we encounter and be open to re-storying our selves, our public narratives, and our places in light of those encounters. We ought also to keep in mind that we are not alone in these places, that earth others also bear witness to the performances of our selves.

Some geographers and environmental ethicists have expressed concern that approaches to ethics dependent upon encounters with earth others will fail to have an effect in North American societies because so many people live in urban areas and are surrounded by the artifacts of human cultures. Sack's geographical theory of ethics also gives cause for concern in this regard. Sack discusses the use and misuse of spatial interaction, in-out rules, and elements of surface and depth to either facilitate a process of awakening or to further self-deception. It would seem that in-out rules that label animals--other than "pets"--as largely out of place in cities do reduce spatial interaction between people and many earth others.

Certainly cities could be better in terms of enabling more interaction between people and nonhuman earth others. However, we must ask ourselves how much of the lack of proximity to earth others is perceptual rather than material? How much of this assertion that we live in places created by humans filled only with the products of human creation is just a story we tell ourselves? To a certain extent in many urban and suburban

areas it is not proximity that is lacking, but rather that the surfaces of places abet self-deception. In this instance I mean surface in terms of representations, conceptions, and stories more than in the strictly sensorial sense, though as the next chapter will explore, one type of surface can influence others.

While most urban places could clearly be better from an ethical perspective in terms of our relationships with earth others, there are still many opportunities in urban places for encounters with earth others as David Hopes' memoir attests. However, earth others in these spaces are often perceived as being "out of place," to use Jones' (2000) term, and so the moral nature of human relations with them remains ignored, until the agency of one of them calls for us to bear witness to their presence, and to story them as as in rather than out of place. Beyond moral responsibility, representing urban places as being human places and representing earth others as largely out of place can even make people blind to their presence there. David Hopes first narrative takes place in locations most people believe to be the exclusive venues for humans and their activities: highway, factory lot, train tracks. Indeed, one of the important impacts of David's narrative is that it bears witness to the presence of earth others in these places, re-storying these places as shared spaces and spaces of encounter.

Re-storying her self as being in moral relationship to nonhuman animals, and re-storying animals as intelligible leads to a change in Alice Walker's experience of places. In her later essay "The Universe Responds" Alice writes of returning to the city (a place of which she previously wrote as somewhere that she had little contact with nonhuman animals) and having a runaway dog walk nonchalantly into her house, recognizing her as

someone who will respond to him, someone able to see his face. In Alice Walker's story, encountering the face of one animal led to encountering many others.

There is one important caveat to all this, however. While the real and the good of spatial interaction might be somewhat hidden by the surfaces of places, there are those earth others who live in spaces and on spatial and temporal scales so completely alien to our experiences that very few people, if any, will ever encounter them face-to-face. The best we can hope for in opening ourselves to our moral relationships with these others is that by bearing witness to those earth others we do share places with we can better project our imaginations into other spaces and temporal scales, thereby extending our moral community to those whom we impact through the daily sacraments of our storied lives even though we never encounter them.

Although I have emphasized bearing witness in this chapter, this practice must be understood as an engaged and active process that extends well beyond simple observation. To truly bear witness in narrative therapy means to go beyond the limits of what you routinely think and to develop and perform options for action in your life that would not have otherwise occurred to you (M. White, 2000: 76). In the reflexive moral process of storying your self, actions must fit the story just as the narrative must fit the experiences. It is here in the interstices between experience, story, and action that bearing witness relates so strongly to narrative ethics. I would like to end this chapter with a little snippet from a collection of essays by Linda Hogan that poignantly expresses this relationship between bearing witness and taking action. Writing of an occasion when she and a friend came across a loon on an ocean beach who was covered with oil Linda asks her self and the reader:

“What kind of people would we have been if we had walked on? What then would be our own creaturehood? What then could we have called ourselves?”
(28).

8. Opening up Possibilities for Living and Writing in the City: Thinking About and Thinking With Ecological Memoirs in Urban Places

8.1 Storying my own urban self

When I told people that my thesis work concerned ecological memoirs, I often found my self being storied as a rural geographer, a narrative that runs counter to how I prefer to story my self. There are concrete ramifications to how one is storied. If institutional gate-keepers¹³⁴ storied me as a rural geographer, I might be prevented from performing my preferred plotline. For example, if a hiring committee storied me in this way, then I could be prevented from applying for jobs pertaining to other sub-disciplines of geography such as urban geography. If referees and editors read my work as resonating only with rural geography, then my papers might not get published in the collections I consider them relevant to, and therefore might get left out of some of the conversations I would like to participate in.¹³⁵ One set of conversations which I believe to be of critical importance not only to my self—as an almost exclusively urban-dweller—

¹³⁴ See Holstein and Gubrium (2000) and Marvasti (2003) for some discussion of institutional narratives and gatekeepers or “editors”.

¹³⁵ While general issues of being storied by dominant narratives that stifle the living of preferred narratives have been discussed in detail in this thesis, some interesting work on “stories to live by” specifically in the teaching professions has been compiled by Connelly and Clandinin (1999: 131).

but also to finding the words to life stories that will enable our societies to story their way through narrative crisis, are the conversations concerning urban naturecultures.

In this chapter, I challenge some of the finalizing stories that are told about nature writing, opening up the category of ecological writers to include urban ecological writers, and I open up narrative environmental ethics to the possibilities of an urban practice. To do this, I will take a slightly different approach. While this chapter will follow previous ones in enlisting the help of my virtual reflecting team in thickening my thinking, I will also conduct some thinking *about* urban ecological memoirs, and I will bring my own personal self-story as an urban dweller into the conversation, exploring what it has meant to me to practice narrative ethics at home.

In sections 8.2 and 8.3 I *think about* ecological memoirs and cities, exploring both the continuities and differences between ecological memoirs set at least partly in urban places. In these sections I look at urban ecological memoirs as a category, I examine different sub-categories of urban ecological memoirs, and then I unfinalize all categories by exploring divergences between ecological memoirs of city places. My first objective in these sections is to restory ecological memoirs to include places all along Cronon's continuum. My second objective is to problematize any notion of a stabilized, finalized category of urban ecological memoir, thereby keeping open the possibilities for writing and reading memoirs.

Sections 8.4, 8.5, and 8.6 take a *thinking with* approach to ecological memoirs and cities. While I bring the virtual reflecting team back into the thesis at this point, I have also included more reflections of my own. My personal reflections on my own life have been present between the lines of previous chapters but have not been brought out on

paper for several reasons. First, I felt that using social theory to think with ecological memoirs would be more easily accessible to readers, as it echoes more established modes of writing within an academic context. Second, I concentrated on the virtual reflecting team in order to facilitate the forming of connections between my own academic work and the work of others who draw on the same theorists. Third, with the constraints of page space, I needed to keep each chapter tightly focused, and the focus of the previous two chapters respectively has been to introduce a narrative therapy reflecting team approach to reading a memoir (chapter 6) and to introduce one way of bringing memoirs into dialogue around a particular theme in a narrative ethics context (chapter 7). But now, having laid the groundwork in these first two chapters of Part II, I will also bring my own reflections further into the foreground of the text, thereby taking the next step in bringing narrative-selves into academic discussions of environmental ethics.

While I purposefully covered engagements with a wide variety of earth others in the previous chapter on witnessing (groundhogs, coyotes, maple trees, mosses, arthropods and red woods, to name a few) in this chapter I have chosen to focus on one type of place, the place where I dwell, and where I have dwelt for most of my life: the city. Of course the usual caveats apply to my use of the term “the city,” caveats that have threaded their way through this thesis. No type of place, indeed no place, can be conceived of as hyperseparated from other places as Cronon (1995) so nicely lays out. Cities must be understood as places continuous with other places and as continuous with the pastoral and wilderness, both in terms of proximity and topography, and also in terms of characteristics. As well, every city must be understood as both continuous with other cities and as different from them. To categorize places exclusively as cities is to finalize

those places, and as discussed through Sack in the previous chapter, what is needed to facilitate ethics is an opening up of places and a diversifying of them and of what they encompass. Such an ethics of place moves away from finalizing and towards facilitating conversations that sift through to the true and the good.

As discussed in Part I of this thesis, place as anything more than backdrop to the co-creation of self-narratives, or as setting for the narratives themselves, has been generally neglected by narrative practitioners in the social sciences.¹³⁶ Further, to the best of my knowledge, the impact that the place of reading has on the narrative reflecting process has been entirely ignored. And yet the place we reflect in must matter since we are embodied beings living in specific space-times and even reading must be understood to be an embodied practice. So, part of what I want to do by bringing in my personal reflections is to make a small venture into exploring the role of place in thinking with stories.

8.2 Thinking about the Urban in Ecological Memoirs

Part of why I have been storied as a rural geographer comes from the conception people continue to hold of “nature writing,” a conception firmly rooted in the continued public dominance of the meta-narrative that nature and culture are hyperseparated. To be fair, this is a dominant narrative that many nature writers in the past were eager to uphold through their own narratives. It is for this reason that Schauffler (2003) coined the term “ecological writer” to highlight the trend that she perceived in many contemporary

¹³⁶ Also as discussed in Part I, there are exceptions to this general neglect. Margaret Somers is particularly notable in this regard.

memoirs away from this traditional hyperseparation. My reading of the memoirs referred to in this thesis matches Schauffler's. These contemporary writers challenge hyperseparation by writing the self in relationship to cultures and natures and naturecultures. True, many of these memoirs are still written in rural areas--the pastoral, as Cronon calls that particular range in the continuum. A few writers even spend time in those places naturecultures set aside and manage and label as wilderness. However, a growing number of ecological memoirists are also writing about their lives in relation to earth others and place while living in cities. And so, along with re-storying my self, this chapter also furthers the re-storying of ecological memoirs, begun by people like Schauffler, in order to highlight the urban as a place of connection with the more-than-human world. Therefore, before getting into my personal reflections I need first to challenge ideas about contemporary nature writing by doing a little *thinking about* the memoirs I read. By thinking about them, I want to begin to challenge dominant assumptions that memoirs concerning nature necessarily involve lives lived outside of cities.

My thinking about ecological memoirs and cities begins with three recently published books that declare their urban affinities on their covers: John Tallmadge's (2004) The Cincinnati Arch: Learning from Nature in the City, Lisa Couturier's (2005) The Hopes of Snakes: & Other Tales from the Urban Landscape, and a collection edited by Terrell F. Dixon (2002) titled City Wilds: Essays and Stories about Urban Nature. The two book-length memoirs are both stories of seeking out and finding earth others in cities. Because of this, they can both be read as quest stories. However, they differ from traditional quests in which the hero must journey elsewhere to find what he is looking for,

a journey that is therefore dependent upon a sense of separation. Rather than taking them somewhere else, Lisa's and John's quests bring them to a deeper awareness of the places where they dwell. They can be read as quests to heal the hyperseparation between culture and nature that still dominates the society they live in.

John Tallmadge admits that he once subscribed to the narrative that placed nature in the wilderness and culture in town. His memoir begins with his being fired from his job teaching environment and literature in a small college town, and his subsequent move with his pregnant wife to Cincinnati where he takes a new job as a dean at a campus-less college. This new job involves neither teaching, nor literature, nor wilderness travel, and requires him to spend his weekdays in an office in a tower downtown. Having storied his life according to nature/culture separations and finding himself forced to move to a big city by circumstances beyond his control, he is heartbroken because he can no longer story himself as being in nature. His book stories his way out of this narrative crisis. Slowly, chapter by chapter, he re-stories Cincinnati into a place continuous with nature, as he learns to perceive nature in urban places. This re-storying enables him to hang onto his preferred plotline of living in and writing about nature.

As she stories her self, Lisa Couturier has always lived in some of the most densely humanly populated parts of North America and yet she too experienced something of a narrative crisis moving from the grassy-lawned suburbs of Washington D.C. to the urban canyons of Manhattan. She moved to Manhattan to become a magazine writer, believing that in doing so she would have to sacrifice her connections with the more-than-human world, connections central to her self-identity. Though she chose this move, she still finds herself in narrative crisis, a crisis that she can only resolve through challenging the

story of Manhattan as a place without earth others. Of this crisis and its resolution she writes: “For someone like me who has desired little except a closeness to animals, and who craved this so strongly that without them I often felt fractured and lost, then the creatures of New York City, once discovered, became healers in a way” (xii). Her collection of autobiographical essays of encounters with non-human creatures in urban areas publicly expresses, and thereby reinforces, her preferred self-narrative as a woman connected to earth others. Through this storying of her self, Manhattan and Washington D.C. are also re-storied as places in which meaningful encounters with earth others are possible.

Even more explicit in its book-cover challenge to urban-wilderness hyperseparation is the edited collection, City Wilds (Dixon 2002). Of the collection, Dixon writes in his introduction that the pieces “were chosen because urban nature and the environment feature prominently in them; they treat urban nature not merely as setting, background, or casual reference point but as a central subject” (xvi). He also states that he has striven to provide a representative and diverse collection of cities and authors. One of his objectives in bringing these pieces together is to demonstrate that, while there is not as full a body of literature on urban nature as on rural or wilderness nature, “there is, in fact, enough breadth and depth in existing material...to illuminate the subject” (xvi). Everything that has been included in his edited collection has been published elsewhere. The first essay, for example, is by Lisa Couturier and also appears in her book.

To these three books that are explicitly represented on their covers as concerned with undoing the urban nature divide—as well as the books that are excerpted in City Wild—I would also add Terry Tempest Williams’ Refuge (2001[1991]), which takes place in and

around Salt Lake City, and David Hopes' Bird Songs of the Mesozoic (2005), which was introduced in the previous chapter. Both of these books are not only set in cities but are explicitly concerned with nature. In the introduction to Bird Songs, David Hopes writes of the continuity of nature in the city with nature in locations that are commonly storied as wilderness. His words sum up the key theme of all the books I've thought about so far in this section:

“The closest I've come in recent times to expeditions into the wilderness are day hikes off the Blue Ridge Parkway or hours of stealth on the heronry banks of Beaver Lake, a ten-minute walk from my front door [in Asheville]. Some day I will wander to Antarctica or the jungles of Brazil, though I expect what I will have to say then will not vary materially from what I have to say now...Wilderness finds us where we are” (5).

All of these books challenge the idea of nature as something outside of urban borders and will attract readers who are interested in narrative resources for their own citted lives, readers like me. When it came to writing this chapter, these are the books that immediately sprang to my mind as relevant. However, when I sat down to give a thorough revisit to the list of memoirs I have read (see Appendix A), I discovered that over thirty works covered some part of the writer's life when he or she lived in an urban area.

Overall, these essays and books cover twenty-one cities which differ greatly one from the other in terms of the size of human population (see Table 1) and land covered, ranging from the small cities of Corvallis, Oregon, and Missoula, Montana, to large sprawling mega-cities such as New York, Miami, Boston, Washington, and Chicago. These cities also differ in their location in relation to regions and even political boundaries, from Vancouver in Canada's British Columbia, to Boston in the Eastern

Seaboard of the U.S., to Bloomington in the American Midwest. They cover a range of geological, ecological, and climatological regions, from the desert cities of Tucson and Salt Lake City, to the temperate rainforest cities of Vancouver, Seattle, and Corvallis, to the high altitudes of Boulder, the steaming bayous of New Orleans and cities of the prairies, such as Edmonton. However, rather than thinking about these memoirs along the above planes of difference—population size, area, political region and ecological zone—for the purposes of this chapter I want to think about them on the more intimate scale of how urban naturecultures are storied in them.

As already discussed, the memoirs of Lisa Couturier, John Tallmadge, and David Hopes explicitly story nature and the wild as present in cities. Essays by Emily Hiestand (2002 [1998]) and Kathleen Dean Moore (2004) can also be read as direct challenges to urban nature dualisms. In all these works, authors specifically aim to draw readers' attention to the presence of the wild in a city place. This then is my first loose, non-finalizing, merely raised for the purposes of discussion, grouping of ecological memoirs having to do with the urban.

However, most of the other memoirs I have included in Table 1 do not tackle the urban nature divide in such a head-on manner. Indeed, some memoirists seem to subscribe to this divide even while writing their selves in relationship with earth others and the more-than-human world in ways that bridge culture-nature divides when they are outside of cities (Whitson, 2003; Shulman 1995; Nichols, 2001). In this second loose grouping of memoirs, the narrators never seem to encounter earth others when they are in city spaces. Rather cities are storied as places of encounter solely with people and human-made objects. Some memoirists even write of needing to leave cities in order to

connect with nature. For example, although Alix Kates Shulman wrote of having an epiphanic moment on a New York subway when she experienced being part of some cosmic whole, she goes out of the city to a cabin on an isolated island in Maine to restory her self in light of this epiphany. At least in this grouping of memoirs, the city-wilderness or city-rural divide appears to be more deeply embedded in people's self-stories than other modernist master narratives that divide humans from the rest of the world.

Dixon (2002) suggests that this persistent ignoring of nature in cities arises from intellectual and literary traditions of American nature writing, as well as from the political economy of urban land values. In terms of literary traditions, Dixon cites Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as "America's most influential nature writers" (xii), both of whom Dixon reads as having an aversion to the city acquired from the intellectual tradition of Romanticism. Cronon (1995) similarly decries the influence of Romanticism in his essay on the American cult of wilderness. As for the ever-increasing value of urban land, Dixon sees this as both a threat to continued encounters with earth others in cities, as well as a barrier to alternate valuing of urban places outside of their immediate instrumental value as human-owned property.

The final grouping of writers I want to think about here—and the largest—includes those who take for granted the presence of earth others where they live, writing about their experiences of and in small scale places like back-yards, gardens and parks, rivers and bird sanctuaries, homes, apartments, offices and highways, without explicitly labeling these places as urban. Although these works do not directly confront dominant narratives of what belongs in a city and what belongs outside, by storying their selves in

relation to nature within city boundaries, these writers are also contributing to the re-storying of urban naturecultures and ecological memoirs. Terry Tempest Williams' Refuge falls under this category. In this book she never addresses questions of nature in the city and yet she lives in Salt Lake City, spends most of her textual time in Salt Lake City, and writes consistently of her encounters with earth others in a way that dissolves human non-human dualisms. In her writings, boundaries between city and desert, urban and rural aren't so much overcome as completely unknown. She moves through all these types of places fluidly, encountering earth others and nature everywhere, including in her own body. That Terry sees her work, at least in retrospect, as part of the challenge to urban nature divides is revealed in the following quotation taken from the note to the reader included as an afterword to the tenth anniversary edition of her book:

“I hold onto the vision of long-billed curlews foraging on the grasslands of Antelope Island, their haunting cries rising above the traffic of the Salt Lake City International Airport. As long as the world we live in can support these delicate shorebirds, year after year, my belief in wildness existing alongside a metropolis remains” (311).

While Terry Tempest Williams mentions the name of the city in which she dwells fairly frequently, Scott Russell Sanders rarely mentions the name Bloomington, IN, where he has spent most of his adult life and where most of his memoirs have been written. Indeed, his many memoirs might be misrecognized as exclusively rural because he began his life in rural locales, which he identifies explicitly as such, and because he frequently refers to Bloomington as a “town” (cf. 1995). Besides, when he writes of moments and encounters in “town” they are usually at a very intimate scale of place: the kitchen of his home (1995), a mulberry tree in a park (1995), or his backyard (1993). That these places are difficult to recognize as urban demonstrates the continuities

between different types of places and the diversity of city-life. If we only think of urban in terms of concrete canyons and suburban lawns, then those are the types of places that will come to dominate cityscapes, and diversity will be lost.

In thinking with memoirs in this section, I have first demonstrated that many books and narrative essays do take place at least partially in urban settings. However, this sort of thinking with memoirs has also revealed that some of those writers who can be considered to be ecological in the way they write of their selves in relation to earth others and in their appreciation of naturecultures outside of cities, may still draw on the modernist conceptual schism between cities and nature in storying their lives in urban places. Memoirs that touch on the urban may be loosely and temporarily grouped as follows: some seem to be written specifically to challenge the urban nature divide, some are written as though the divide never existed, and some seem to draw on the dominant narrative that places nature outside of cities. Of course these groupings cannot be seen as exclusive or final ones. As the quotation from the afterword to Terry Tempest Williams' book shows, though she did not explicitly story her self as seeking to overcome some hyperseparation between nature and cities, she was aware of the counter-narrative potential of her work in this regard.

Table 1 Population Estimates for Urban Centres Where Memoirs Have Been Located

MSA/CMA	State/Province	Population ^{137,138}	Memoir
New York MA	NY-NJ-PA	18,747,320	Couturier (2005), Siebert (1998), Pollan (1991), Shulman (1995)
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet	IL-IN-WI	9,443,356	Nabhan (2004, 1997, 1994)
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach	FL	5,422,200	Hilbert (2002)
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria	DC-VA-MD-WV	5,214,666	Couturier (2005)
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy	MA-NH	4,411,835	Hiestand (1998), Brende (2004), Mitchell (1990, 2002), Steingraber (1997)
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont	CA	4,152,688	Walker (1989, 1997), Grover (1997)
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue	WA	3,203,314	Shepherd (2001)
Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington	MN-WI	3,142,779	Grover (1997)
St. Louis	MO-IL	2,778,518	Brende (2004)
Denver-Aurora	CO	2,359,994	Pyle (2002)
Cincinnati-Middletown	OH-KY-IN	2,070,441	Tallmadge (2004)
Vancouver CMA	BC	1,986,965	Suzuki (2002)
Austin-Round Rock	TX	1,452,529	Harrigan (2002)
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner	LA	1,319,367	St. Germain (2003)
Salt Lake City	UT	1,034,484	Williams (2001[1991])
Edmonton	AB	937,845	Whitson (2003)
Tucson	AZ	924,786	Deming (2001, 2002)
Asheville	NC	392,831	Hopes (2005)
Boulder	CO	280,440	Shulman (1995)
Bloomington	IN	177,709	Sanders (1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000)
Missoula	MT	100,086	Kittredge (1999), Smith (1995), Condon (2004)
Corvallis	OR	78,640	Moore (2004)

¹³⁷ These are population estimates for the U.S. Census Bureau: Annual Estimates of the Population of Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005 (CBSA-EST2005-01)

¹³⁸ From Population and Dwelling Counts, for Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2001 and 1996 Censuses - 100% Data, Statistics Canada. Accessed on-line March 13, 2007 at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/popdwell/Table-CMA-N.cfm>

8.3 Dismantling the Category of Urban Ecological Memoir

Having thought about these memoirs in terms of how they relate to naturecultures, I now want to think about them in terms of their relations to places. As we shall see, in thinking about them in this way, any finalized category of urban ecological memoir or any finalization of authors as urban writers is disrupted.

In compiling my list of memoirs for this chapter, I came across only one book-length memoirist who storied his self exclusively in urban spaces (Mitchell, 1990). People's identities are rarely formed through being in just one place, particularly in our contemporary era of mobility, so it is not surprising to find memoirs traversing different places of different types. However, this observation does render problematic any project of identifying a piece as an "urban ecological memoir".

I have already mentioned the grouping of memoirists who seem to subscribe to modernist hyperseparations, fleeing the city to be in nature. Obviously these narratives cover lives lived in different places. However, even the two flagship memoirs of urban naturecultures, that of Lisa Couturier and that of John Tallmadge, each contain chapters that take place outside of urban areas. Lisa writes of housesitting in an isolated, rural area of New York state, while John writes of a piece of rural land that's part of his family history and of taking an adult learners' class to the Escalante Canyons of Southern Utah.

People story their movements in and out of cities in different ways. John Tallmadge stories his sojourns into wilderness as essential to his ability to continue what he calls his "practice of the wild" in Cincinnati. For John, these "pilgrimages" to wilderness places are important to his re-storying of the city as continuous with the wild. By immersing himself in places on one extreme of Cronon's continuum, he is better able to perceive the

continuities between urban and wilderness. Other people take sojourns out of cities not so much to be in nature as to find the solitude they require to escape dominant narratives and find their preferred self-narrative. For example, both Alix Shulman (1995) and Charles Siebert (1998) leave New York City to live alone in cabins: Alix in a cabin on an island off the coast of Maine, and Charles in a cabin in the woods outside of Montreal. The motivations of these writers are not so much to get back to the land, but rather to find new and healthier self-stories to live by in the context of disintegrating relationships with a spouse (Shulman) and a girlfriend (Siebert). In withdrawing into relative isolation from other people and even from mass media, these two writers are better able to separate themselves out from dominating narratives. Both writers take books with them and write and receive letters, and sometimes even guests, so they are not completely cut off from co-creative “conversations” with human others. However, because their most continuous and visceral relationships are with earth others and with places in which earth others have increased agency, much of the re-storying of their selves is done through their experiences with earth others using the more-than-human world as an important narrative resource.

Others leave cities specifically in search of narrative resources. After “burning out” from years of caring for dying AIDS patients in San Francisco, Jan Zita Grover (1997) moved to a cabin in the north woods of Minnesota not to get away to some unspoilt nature but to learn to live in and love a landscape ravaged by humans as part of her own healing process. In this place she sought experiences of the resiliency of life with which to story her way back from emotional numbness.

Still others move out of cities for practical reasons. Stephanie Mills (2002) married someone who made his life in a rural area. When they divorced she chose to stay. John Nichols (2001) left Manhattan for rural New Mexico largely for financial reasons, having decided to live on \$12,000 USD a year so that he could work fulltime as a writer. Similarly, at 40 years of age, Bill Holm (1996), broke, unemployed, divorced, and unpublished, moved back to the town he grew up in for the cheaper cost of living he could find there.

There are also those who have moved from rural areas to cities, also often for practical reasons, particularly for employment. William Kittredge (1999), makes his life in Missoula, MN, though he was raised on a ranch in Oregon. His story is one that spans the industrialization of ranching, a process that throws him into a narrative crisis that he resolves by becoming a writer. He supports his writing self by teaching at a College in the small city of Missoula, Montana. Phil Condon (2004) and Annick Smith (1995) also now live in Missoula, or on its outskirts, though they too write of other places--urban, pastoral, wilderness--important to the shaping of their self-stories.

Most of the books and essays I read for this thesis spanned only a portion of the writer's life-story. Some of these memoirs, though taking place entirely outside of cities, were written by people whose lives are predominantly lived in cities. Surely these too must be understood on some level as urban memoirs since they tell the stories of predominantly urban-located selves. There are city dwellers who write about trips taken in wilderness and rural areas, such as Kathleen Dean Moore of whom I wrote in chapter 6 and Paul Gruchow (1997). Even though Paul's memoir only covers time spent out of cities, since he himself spends most of his life in urban space, is it not somehow also an

urban memoir? In retrospect, Eric Brende's (2004) account of his year living with his new bride in a rural Amish community becomes an urban memoir. In the afterward to his book, Eric relates the struggle he and his wife have gone through since that year in finding a place where they could continue to live minimally as they had learned to do with the Amish. They settle in a downtown neighbourhood in the city of St. Louis where they are finally able to live out the preferred self-narratives they developed in a rural context.

As mentioned above, of all the book-length memoirs I read in the course of this thesis, the only one that takes place exclusively within urban boundaries is, paradoxically, John Hanson Mitchell's (1990) account of living for a year in a cabin in the woods with no electricity or running water. I use the word "paradoxical" because on the surface John Hanson Mitchell's story is about as close as contemporary nature writing comes to the traditional Romantically-influenced literature of such writers as Thoreau. Indeed, John intertwines his life with a retelling of Thoreau's. Nonetheless, all of the events in his memoir, Living at the End of Time, take place within the boundaries of metropolitan Boston. In fact Dixon lists it as one of the first urban nature memoirs that he drew on in teaching his classes on the subject (2002: xv). However, to assure myself that John Hanson Mitchell's memoir was an urban one I had to get out a map and look at where Concord is actually located. He does write about freeways and plays and coffee shops and a Digital Computers office building, but he also writes of greenmen and bears and wild woods and neighbours who are subsistence farmers. Coming to this memoir with my own expectations of what urban places consist of, it was not immediately obvious to me that all of these encounters and experiences occurred within urban

boundaries. My expectations can be understood as a form of self-deception. Such self-deceptions about the urban can impact how we perceive and experience places. On the collective level and over time, if we expect urban places to be a certain way (ie. to be without woods and cabins and bears) then we will end up creating cities that exclude such things. In effect, such self-deceptive stories about cities will lead to the creation of places that are less diverse and, therefore, less helpful in aiding those who dwell there in seeing through to the real and the good.

My objective in these discussions about ecological memoirs that touch on urban places has been to open up the possibilities for nature writing and the urban. First, I outlined a continuity through many of the memoirs I read: an at least partial setting in a city. Such a continuity challenges limiting conceptions about nature writing that consign it to places outside of urban areas. However, lest urban nature writing become a finalized category of its own I have also outlined the many ways in which these memoirs differ from one another, from the characteristics of the cities involved, to their approaches to urban naturecultures. In this section, following Sack's insistence that identity depends upon a wide range of places, I have examined self-stories as covering a variety of places, some urban some not. Given that people seem to depend on a range of places for their self-stories, none of the memoirs discussed here should be finalized as exclusively urban memoirs. The one exception to this is also one of the most effective pieces in terms of opening up the category of what constitutes an urban place. In tracing through continuities and differences, creating categories and then tearing them down, I hope to have opened up the possibilities for thinking about self-stories, naturecultures, and urban places.

Despite my caveats about not finalizing urban nature memoirs, I do support Dixon's overall goal in promoting urban nature literature—which he does through his edited collection (2002) and his teaching at a large urban university. Dixon promotes urban nature literature because he wants to help protect nature in all places, a protection which he believes is dependent upon people becoming aware of and engaged with nature where they live, which is increasingly in cities. He believes that reading such literature can help people to notice and value nature in cities and that urban places will become better as a result:

“Although we seem to have discovered only recently this nature that has always been a part of our cities, we are now at a crucial point in our relationship to urban nature. If our growing awareness of urban nature recedes or if we fail to translate this awareness into protection for the open spaces and other places for urban nature that now exist, the attainment of more open space and nature access in urban areas, and place-based urban environmental education for city children, the future looks bleak. We could easily fall into the accelerating downward spiral in environmental concern that happens when each successive generation has diminished access to and, thus, diminished regard for nature. ...My hope is that the stories and essays collected in *City Wilds* will work against [this extinction of experience], that the explorations of urban nature in them will help us learn to see and cherish nature in the urban places where most of us now live” (xviii).

How we story our selves in relation to the urban places where most of us in North America now live impacts not only on our own self-narratives but also on what we will do in those places, and ultimately how we will shape those places. The gift of many of the memoirs discussed above is in storying urban places as existing within the more-than-human world. However, if memoirs are going to open the eyes of city dwellers to the nature around them, it is going to be through *thinking with* those narratives rather than *about* them.

8.4 Reflecting on The Hopes of Snakes: Opening up Possibilities for Acting in Urban Naturecultures

What do all these different ways of *thinking about* ecological memoirs and the urban mean in terms of *thinking with* ecological memoirs around the question of how I ought to live in cities? Certainly John Tallmadge's and Lisa Couturier's memoirs provide useful examples for storying one's way through the narrative crisis--both individual and collective--of believing nature to be something that is only encountered outside of cities. They would certainly be near the top of my list of narrative resources for restorying my relationship to earth others and the more-than-human world in a city, and I did certainly feel a great deal of resonance with them at least in part because of the urban setting. However, as with any memoir there are both continuities and differences between my storied life and theirs. The cities covered by these works were in many ways as different from Ottawa as a town might be. Manhattan and Washington D.C. are massive cities of millions of people, even Cincinnati at over 2 million must be considered in a different league from Ottawa. Of course, these two places are also located in a different country from where I live. There are also differences between John, Lisa, and I in terms of gender, age, and class background in one case and occupation in both cases, not to mention differences in family background and life experiences. In particular, both of these memoirists have children who feature prominently in the process of restorying their urban places and I do not.

In terms of continuities, as already stated, while there are differences, a shared urban context also provides some resonances in experiences. One of these resonances was around the earth others encountered. Cincinnati, Manhattan, and Washington DC are

not far from Ottawa climatologically and locationally within North America and so the flora and fauna, although not identical, certainly are similar. These similarities are also in part facilitated by which species tend to flourish in urban areas. Whereas with some memoirs, such as those written by Alison Watt and Kathleen Dean Moore, I can only imagine, somewhat enviously, what it might be like to encounter nesting puffins or playful seals, with those by Lisa Couturier and John Tallmadge I actually routinely shared their experiences of encountering Canada geese and squirrels, herons and crows. These are the sorts of earth others with whom I too share the places that I dwell in and routinely travel through. In focusing on these encounters and thereby giving them prominence in their life-stories, these memoirists give meaning and importance to these everyday experiences. They provide examples of how a life can be meaningfully impacted by urban-dwelling earth-others. They provide narrative resources for storylines of being part of and valuing nature and the more-than-human world even in cities.

In the previous chapter I discussed David Hopes' essay about encountering a groundhog, bearing witness to the slaughter of her children, and choosing to follow her example by storying his own life around bearing witness to the slaughter of other animals in those places where human instrumental values rule. Lisa Couturier's memoir is also one of bearing witness. As already outlined above, in moving to Manhattan Lisa anticipated being cut off from animals which put her in narrative crisis because encounters with animals are important experiences in storying her self. Faced with the choice of restorying her self as someone for whom encounters with earth others are not important or restorying the place where she lives as home to humans and earth others, Lisa chose the latter strategy, and set out to find wild animals in her new environment.

What follows in her book is a series of essays bearing witness to encounters with a variety of animals in unexpected but always urban places from New York to Washington DC and its suburbs.¹³⁹

By way of entering into dialogue with Lisa's memoir, let me begin with a re-telling of the story of her first essay. I will then pick up themes from this essay and follow them through the rest of her book. In "Reversing the Tides" she writes of volunteering with the Harbor Herons Project in the Arthur Kill, a tidal straight in the Hudson River Estuary within the boundaries of New York City. Of this straight she writes: "The history of the Arthur Kill, like that of the East River, should render it essentially lifeless from centuries of oil spills, raw sewage, and chemical spills" (6). As she walks across the sand along the Kill, oil pools in her footprints, and yet thousands of birds of many different species nest here: "great egrets, snowy egrets, cattle egrets, little blue herons, black-crowned night herons, green-backed herons, yellow-crowned night herons, and glossy ibis" (5) along with Canada geese and seagulls. Similarly to Alison Watt, her job is to count eggs, weigh hatchlings and record the number that fledge. Unlike Alison's relatively isolated research setting, Lisa works within view of the storage tanks and smokestacks of some of the largest oil and chemical companies in the world and she is surrounded by a "veritable Wal-Mart of used plastic products" (6) that have fallen off garbage barges. Of watching a seagull chick hatch in a nest on a beach dotted with fragments of children's plastic dolls, Lisa writes:

"I realize that after traveling through the Arthur Kill for two summers, I have given up trying to hate it. It both stuns and offends me. I cannot describe the

¹³⁹ The exception, of course, is the essay mentioned in the section above in which she housesits in a rural area.

chick's place of birth as ugly or beautiful: such labels seem too simple. I walk away from the chick knowing only that I feel deeply for this wasteland, where through the births of birds I've witnessed a kind of magic" (7).

In the end she realizes that she has come to love the Arthur Kill because of the resiliency of life she witnesses there and the birds both familiar and exotic who call the Kill home. She writes: "I can't accept the injuries new Yorkers have caused this estuary, but I feel there is a need to cherish what is left" (8).

In striving to keep her preferred self-narrative as a woman for whom encounters with earth others are of central importance, Lisa had to come up with new options for action while living in Manhattan. The encounters with birds and with place in this first essay come about through Lisa's volunteer work with an organization dedicated to studying and conserving a population of urban earth others. This theme of making a conscious effort to put herself in places and situations where she might encounter earth others carries through her book. Working "unofficially" as graduate student assistant to the supervisor of wildlife studies at the New York City Department of Environmental Protection brings her into close proximity with peregrine falcons nesting on highrises in Manhattan. Volunteering as an assistant to a man reintroducing reptiles and amphibians to an abandoned airstrip in Brooklyn brings her into contact with turtles and snakes. Working at a wildlife rehabilitation centre brings her into relationship with a fatally injured Canada goose. Even joining a rowing team that practices on the Potomac River in Washington D.C. is storied by Lisa as an opportunity to encounter earth others in urban settings: a great blue heron, a beaver, a cormorant, and even the invisible trails of foxes that had come down the river one night to take up residence in a downtown golf course. Lisa also organizes expeditions of her own, such as a trip to a mall to discover

where the crows have moved their roost to, a stealthy invasion of the golf course to watch fox kits, and an evening outing with an ecologist to search for suburban coyotes.

This then is one of the first things that reading Lisa Couturier's book has contributed to in terms of the re-storying of my own life: it has opened up the possibilities for actions to take in a city in order to seek out the companionship of earth others. Moreover, many of these actions not only bring Lisa's self into closer contact with earth others, but they are part of larger projects to increase the populations of these earth others in urban areas. These projects aim to increase the diversity of urban places and thereby increase the opportunities that others will have to encounter earth others.

The second theme I want to highlight in Lisa's essays is the inclusion of both somewhat exotic and everyday earth others. In her essay about the Arthur Kill, for example, though she lists a number of birds that are relatively rare, and which most New Yorkers would probably not expect to find within their borders, it is the much more mundane seagull chick she focusses her attention on. The one essay in her collection that deals entirely with incidental encounters concerns her and societies' relations to an assortment of wildlife that are often considered vermin: subway mice, pigeons and their people, and even cockroaches. By not giving preference to exotic others, Lisa makes meaningful encounters with all of these animals, bearing witness both to the presence of animals most people do not even imagine living alongside them in cities, and bearing witness to the wildness of everyday city creatures.

Because of the inclusion of encounters with everyday urban earth others, I was able to recall many events from my own life that resonated strongly with her experiences. Through thinking with Lisa's essays, I was able to thicken the meaning attributed to my

experiences. By paying attention to everyday and exotic earth others, Lisa offers her story of the presence and value of animals in our urban midst. Her story can be used by other urban dwellers, like myself, as a narrative resource to counter master narratives of cities as places where human instrumental uses ought to dominate.

This brings me to the third theme I want to discuss, which is Lisa's bearing witness to the state of the marginalized spaces in which many of these urban earth others have been forced to live, reproduce, and raise their young. Her descriptions of the oil and garbage that characterize the Arthur Kill are shocking. She likens the Arthur Kill to a vision of "humanity's damaged future" (7). She quite clearly believes it is a place that could be made better, and yet she interacts with the place and its threatened inhabitants out of care rather than loathing. She writes that she cannot hate the place because she has been witness there not only to the garbage and toxic waste but also to the miracle of birth and the companionship of many birds struggling to raise their families. To hate the place, to represent it as nothing but a wasteland, would be to practice a form of self-deception for there is still much life there and much potential for it to become a better place; a place more supportive of a diversity of lives; a place that might provide a vision of a healed future for all. Of the birds that she encounters there, Lisa writes that she "quite simply, love[s] them" (7). Of the Arthur Kill she writes that she loves it "for its magic" and because it is still "managing to give life" (8) despite all the damage that has been wrought to it. She cares about the place because the place is an agent in caring for its inhabitants in the sense of giving life to them. Her work there is aimed at helping to restore the place, again opening up actions that can be taken in such places to make them better rather than foreclosing on their future by finalizing them as sacrifice zones.

In terms of her relationship to the urban places where she dwells, Lisa's narratives open up a number of possibilities for action to bring the self and others into contact with earth others in urban areas and to deepen one's understanding of urban places as part of the more-than-human world. These practices deepen her relationship to place, bringing her into proximity to both unexpected and expected earth others. This deepening understanding of place challenges the surface representations of New York and Washington D.C. as places without wildlife and as places distant from nature. These actions also point to ways to make places better in terms of the good. To declare places beyond repair is to render them into "sacrifice zones". To see the life still struggling to survive there is to see at least a little way through to the real and the good and to do away with the comforts of self-deception. Finally, Lisa's story emphasizes the importance of such encounters with earth others to the preferred self-narratives of some people who are themselves city-dwellers.

8.5 Reflecting on the Cincinnati Arch: Going deep into urban naturecultures

I want to move now to thinking with John Tallmadge's book, a memoir with which I also resonated strongly despite the differences between us in age, gender, class-background and life experiences. Tallmadge's memoir is written as a quest to find nature in the city and therefore to heal the hyperseparation between city and wilderness. He undertakes this quest for the most personal reasons of wanting to restore his own preferred story-line. Indeed, although he does not use the language of narrative therapy, John is one of the few memoirists who writes explicitly on stories as an essential part of living and as guides to living rightly.

His quest is one of deepening his understanding of and his relationship with the places he finds himself in. While Lisa's options for action were usually taken at the scale of the entire city, John does not go out of his way to witness earth others in urban places but rather engages in "practices" to help him get deeper into those places he already frequents. He explicitly lists "witnessing" as an integral part of his practice of living rightly in cities but only as one of several equally important components. Moreover, whereas Lisa is mostly focused on engaging with earth others, John is concerned primarily with his relationship to place. John's goal, the desired future he stories himself towards, is that of "becoming native to a place" (216)—a storyline he seems to borrow mostly from American bioregional writers. I begin my dialogue with John's memoir in the final pages of his book where he sums up the themes with which he has re-storied his self through the quest he took to get to know the naturecultures of Cincinnati:

"I never wanted to die in Cincinnati, Ohio. But what difference would it make? The important thing is not where we die but how we live. Becoming native to a place is a labor of love and a life's work. It means stitching your life to that of a place with a thread spun from mindfulness, attentiveness, husbandry, pilgrimage and witness. Stories knit these components of practice together. Flung outward, they clothe our relationships; flung inward, they map the soul. Stories enable us to enter and dwell attentively in a place; they enable us to travel and return, then eventually to leave for good" (216).

In seeking to become native to place, John emphasizes actions that help bring him closer to knowing the real and the good of that place: attentiveness, mindfulness, witness, and pilgrimage. For example, in the chapter that deals most expressly with witnessing, John sets out to see an unknown part of the city by taking a tour of Mill Creek as it passes through Cincinnati. In both the tour's organization and John's response to it, this essay resonates with many of Lisa's essays. The tour was organized by the Sierra Club and

The Mill Creek Restoration Project, and on this tour John witnesses both the dumping of sewage and industrial waste into the creek as well as the continued survival of many different species of earth others, most notably one of only two known nesting colonies of black-crowned night herons in all of Ohio (201). Like Lisa, John is both disgusted at the treatment this place has received by the human inhabitants of Cincinnati and struck by the resiliency of the river, which manages to continue to support life despite the multiple insults it continues to incur.

But his place-related desires do not end with knowledge. In resonance with Sack's characterization of humans as place-makers, John is interested in seeing through to the real and the good because he wants to make places better. In fact, the very last words of his memoir concern not his own self, but his vision of what the places of America should be like:

“I dream of being able to walk anywhere in America without losing the spoor of wildness. I dream of a black-crowned night heron that drinks from the same creek as the human child. I dream of a sky unstained by the haze of enterprise and a night as dark and clear as the mind of God, where anyone on earth can glimpse the love that burns in the heart of the sun and other stars” (217).

This is not a dream to do away with cities. John has come too far on his quest to revert to such a narrative. It is rather a dream to open up cities to the wild, to make them places of greater diversity, welcoming of and supporting to lives other than human ones. Through witnessing, mindfulness, and attentiveness to the places he lives in, John knows that this representation is far from what exists today. However, also through his deepening awareness of Cincinnati, John knows that the potential exists for these places to be moved closer to his vision of a good place, a vision that is fed by his acts of pilgrimage to

wilder places. It is through his practices of husbandry that he stories himself as helping to bring this vision of place into being.

But all of this is the self-story that John comes to as he resolves his narrative crisis. For me, as an urban dweller, one of the most useful aspects of the memoir is the storied process of how John came through narrative crisis to the self quoted above. In his memoir, it is the city itself that begins to wake him up. Even though he sinks into daydreams about wilderness travel while walking from parking lot to office tower each morning, he cannot help noticing that “moss was growing in pavement cracks” and “[g]rasses bristled among paving bricks in alleys” (23). Through the agency of these and other urban earth others he begins to become aware of nature in the city and to question “the practice of the wild” he had storied himself by previously—a practice based on a separate wilderness and on actions of “asceticism” and “adventure” (23). Following quick on the tail of John’s initial intimation that it might be possible to learn “from nature in the city” (23) comes the birth of his first daughter. The shock of perceiving the wildness in his wife’s body in the throes of childbirth is storied as an epiphanic moment for John. Realizing that wildness can be found not just in the city but in the human organism as well, he begins his quest:

“There was more to this matter of wildness than I had ever imagined, and more to its practice than travel into remote and savage places. Before I had always gone out in search of it. Now, it seemed, I would have to start going in” (35).

It is in reflecting on this experience that John finally abandons his self-story as wilderness adventurer and decides to build a self-story based on the concept of husbandry instead.

John’s daughter is born only thirty-five pages into this memoir. What follows in the rest

of the book is John's development of a practice of the wild in the city and of a self-story that gives this practice meaning.

Having made the leap to understanding nature and culture as interpenetrating and the wild as present in the city, John finds himself to be staggeringly ignorant of the creatures with whom he shares his space. Upon taking his first walk after the birth of his daughter he writes:

“I recognized perhaps a half-dozen species in all and realized that my ignorance of their life ways was complete. It was as if I had been sleepwalking, blind and deaf to the other lives going on all around. Except for a few moments of intense encounter in the wilderness, I had lived this way all of my life” (37).

John's use of the term “sleepwalking” resonates with other authors who story their selves as being “woken up” by acts of witnessing (for example, Laura Bowers Foreman characterization of her epiphany in the woods, 2001). John's adoption of orientations of “attentiveness” and “mindfulness” are specifically aimed at counteracting this state of sleepwalking.

I have already mentioned that John stories both the place of Cincinnati and its earth other inhabitants, as well as his experience of childbirth, as helping him to wake up. However, in developing an understanding of how to stay awake to the wildness around him, John turns to narrative resources provided by other writers. He credits Richard Nelson's memoir (1989), *The Island Within*, which has already been discussed in this thesis, as one of his main sources for learning attentiveness to place. As already discussed, Richard Nelson in turn has drawn on Koyukon narrative resources. In this way the subjugated alternative knowledges of living of the Koyukon people are amplified, reworked and given wider circulation.

Other narrative resources that John Tallmadge draws on include Gary Snyder, a Buddhist, one of the key voices of the bioregional movement in the US, as well as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, and St. Thomas Aquinas. These narrative resources are then filtered through the experiences and reflections of John Tallmadge in the storying of his life. Just as I have now taken and assimilated some of John's story into the living of my life.

For John, this practice of attentiveness (married to the other components of his urban practice of the wild) is one of learning the stories of the landscape in which he lives--the geological, biological, and human histories--and of simply paying attention to the earth others he encounters both in terms of recognizing them from an I-thou perspective (he specifically cites Buber as a narrative resource) and in terms of an engaged observing of the lives of these others. Finally, alluding to Buddhist teachings, he claims to learn from his children some of the "beginner's mind" needed for such attentiveness.

The final component of John's memoir that I want to discuss is his idea of pilgrimage. Much as he embraces urban nature, he never quite relinquishes the story of himself in wilderness places. Instead, he recasts such journeys as practices of pilgrimage. Resonant with Sack's insistence that the good attracts us, John Tallmadge insists that the wild also attracts us. For John, who is explicitly interested not only in existing urban nature but also in making urban places better, periodic pilgrimages to places where the wild at least gives the impression of dominating (places which are sometimes referred to as "wilderness" or "old-growth") are necessary. John goes to these places to have experiences that will help him both to hone his abilities to be attentive to nature within

and without city boundaries and to rekindle his desire to encounter the more-than-human world wherever he finds himself. He feels such strong doses of the wild are essential to preventing himself from slipping into blindness and complacency. From these pilgrimages he reports: “a new capability or way of seeing, perhaps a deeper capacity for empathy or faith, like a new chamber in the heart” (114).

John places himself and these pilgrimages within public narratives of restoration ecology, which he characterizes as gardening little local wildernesses. That is, his pilgrimages are essential to knowing how to change places for the better. To reflect on this idea of pilgrimage from the perspective of Sack’s geographical guide and narrative therapy, visiting a diversity of places enhances John’s ability to see through to the real and good in all of them. It also opens up the possibilities for action that John can imagine in terms of transforming urban places into wilder places.

This idea of John Tallmadge’s, that a diversity of places is important to honing perception and imagination and to seeing through to the good and the real and the wild, challenges assumptions that the best stories for thinking about how one ought to live in cities must necessarily be set in cities. John addresses this directly by writing:

“authentic stories, stories that bear witness to lived truth, inspire people to undertake journeys of pilgrimage to good, wild, and sacred places. Therophilia, our innate love of the wild, moves them to seek insight and transformation, leads them by still or moving water for the restoration of their souls, and stories make maps for them to follow” (114).

By using narrative resources from writers not situated in urban areas, John Tallmadge models the use of memoirs written elsewhere in storying one’s way to the real and the good in cities, and to temporary solutions to the question of what should I do and how should I live wherever that happens to be.

There are certain continuities and certain differences between my life and the published storied lives of Lisa Couturier and John Tallmadge. One of the continuities is that all three of us live in places that would be characterized as urban along Cronon's continuum. Such stories are important in giving meaning and value to the oft-times damaged places within urban areas, and for highlighting the diversity that is already present there and which can possibly be coaxed to flourish. However, perhaps the most important continuity between us is our shared "themes, values, purposes and commitments" (M. White, 2000: 63-64).

We three share the theme of actively seeking to determine how we ought to live in urban environments. In terms of values all of us recognize the intrinsic value of earth others and the more-than-human world, and we are committed to seeing through to the real and the good even if what we find might impede some of our instrumental goals. Finally, I think we all share the same purpose in writing and reading, which is to help ourselves and others re-story our lives in ways that aid us in seeing through to the real and the good.

That stated, there is a great deal of continuity along these latter lines between myself and most of the authors read for this thesis, regardless of where the places they dwell fall along Cronon's continuum. No reader is restricted to thinking only with those stories written by nearly-identical people in nearly-identical places. My experience of doing the reading for this thesis has been that memoirs from all kinds of places helped me to think about how I ought to live here in Ottawa.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, the theme of witnessing as a way in which people ought to live with earth others in the more-than-human world has been

touched on by a number of authors in a range of places. As for attentiveness and mindfulness, highlighted in my discussion of John Tallmadge's memoir, that has also been a theme running through a large number of ecological memoirs, from Sharon Butala on a ranch in rural Saskatchewan (1996, 2000, 2002), to Scott Russell Sanders in Bloomington, IN (1993, 1995, 2000), to Stephanie Kaza on a commune on the West Coast of the US (1996), to Peri McQuay on a nature reserve in Ontario (1993), to Jan Zita Grover in Minneapolis (2002), to Beth Powning on a farm in New Brunswick (1996, 1999), to Joseph Bruchac in a house at the end of a road in the Adirondacks (2002), to Robin Kimmerer on her lake island research station (2003), to Kathleen Norris in a small town in the western Dakotas (2001), to Rick Bass in the Yaak Valley (1999), and to Alison Hawthorne Deming in a whale watching boat off the Magdalen Islands (2001). These and many other ecological memoirists bring the ethical practice of mindfulness (Jones and Cloke, 2002) to life, demonstrating how it might be integrated into a lived life, giving meaning to it through integrating it into the story of their own lives.

8.6 Reflecting on my Own Urban Life Through Ecological Memoirs

During the period of reading memoirs I lived in the same house in Ottawa I lived in before, I took walks in the same parks I walked in before, and yet I saw these places in different ways and encountered earth-others I hadn't encountered there before. I believe I did learn witnessing and attentiveness in part from my reading, but I have no way of tracing these new skills and practices to specific memoirs, especially since such a great many of them addressed these themes. However, there were instances when an experience I had in the city immediately brought to mind a memoir I had read, and in so

doing changed the meaning I ascribed to that event and even the actions I subsequently took. This final section of my narrative ethics engagement with ecological memoirs and urban places focuses on my experiences, large and small, of re-storying myself through reading and reflecting.

One summer day I read a passage in Stephanie Mills Epicurean Simplicity (2002) in which she comes across a dying porcupine in the woods behind her rurally-located house. Her response to the injured animal is a Levinasian one: she sees his face and feels required to act in some way. The difficulty comes in deciding what action might meet his needs for care. At first she imagines her presence as a comfort to the dying creature but then decides, reluctantly and sadly, that her being there is probably a stress and that the best she can do is leave him alone. A few days later, while walking my dog, I came across a dying chipmunk in a park we regularly cross. I too found myself torn between wanting to be a comfort to a creature in pain and realizing that I couldn't be. Having a narrative resource for the incident opened up my options for action and thickened the meaning I attributed to the encounter even though in the end I walked on as I probably would have done before I read Stephanie's memoir.

In another park near a busy intersection on another day my dog and I found the remains of a fox. All that was left of a once vibrant animal was faded hair and some bones, all of which were sunk deep into the grass in a way that maintained the outline of the fox reclined in death. I came across these remains many months after reading David Hopes collection and yet the first thing that sprang to my mind was his essay about bearing witness to highways and train tracks as places of slaughter. Through this encounter and his words I have now come to story the road next to where I found the

dead fox as one of Hopes' linear places of slaughter. However, this was the first time I had ever seen traces of foxes in my urban landscape, and so the incident also conjured up Lisa Couturier's city tales in which she takes pleasure in watching fox kits play in a downtown golf course and imagines the journey their parents must have taken through the city to get there. I wondered about this dead fox's story, how he or she had managed to get so far into the city, and whether he or she had died alone. Between the experience and the two conjured memoirs I began to have a deeper understanding of the complexity of life in the city I call home, and I began to wonder how these urban landscapes could be made better, how I and the city I call home could be storied towards survivable futures for all.

Of these first few recounted events, I can conclude that reading ecological memoirs thickened the meaning I gave to them and got me to start questioning those narratives dominant in my life and over the places I move through. However, I can also recall situations in which I took actions that I would never even have thought of taking were it not for the narrative resources I have had the pleasure of visiting and revisiting over these past few years. For example, when I witnessed on a bike ride through yet another Ottawa park, that two venerable, huge, and much beloved willow trees had been felled by a windstorm, I thought of Linda Hogan's tale (1995) of coming across a dead porcupine whom she recognized as a neighbour of some years and an elder of the local area. Of this incident Linda wrote:

"I have a choice between honoring that dark life I've seen so many years moving in the junipers, or of walking away and going on with my own human busyness. There is always that choice for humans." (145)

In Linda's mind there is always that choice, but in my own life prior to reading that passage I would not have recognized a choice. I would have only thought of going on with my busyness. Confronted with the death of these *salix* elders and using the narrative resources Linda had provided me with, I decided to honor their passing. I placed a poem about trees and life and death along with a few flowers from my garden in the broken hollow of the largest tree. It was important to leave words, because it was words that had opened up for me the possibility of honoring the passing of an earth elder.

Another deliberate choice I made was to move my reading outside (at least in the summer months). This choice was not made because I had read someone else's story about reading outside, but rather came out of a frustration I began to feel over being stuck inside reading people's stories of the wonders of the great outdoors, urban or otherwise. Some writers (Bass 1999, McQuay 1996) have expressed a fear that "nature writing" in providing representations of earth others will facilitate the demise of wilder places and the extinction of more species. The idea being that in providing a simulacra, any desire for the real thing will be sated. As my almost physical need to read outdoors attests, my experience was quite the opposite. Just as Dixon hoped in the quotation in section 8.3 above, reading ecological memoirs set in all kinds of places both rekindled my desire to connect with nature in my local places and helped me to perceive it in the city around me.

The effect of moving my reading practice outside was to deepen my connection to the more-than-human world in general and to my neighbourhood in particular. I remember reading about the wildness of wind in one book--a book that I ended up not discussing in this thesis because it was primarily theoretical with only the smallest dressing of autobiography (Abram, 1996)—and feeling the wind on my face and realizing

that I had never even given much thought to wind. Being on my front porch day in, day out I began to recognize the rhythms of my neighbourhood. Seeing the same pedestrians, dog-walkers, scooters, and bicycles go by at the same time everyday I began to anticipate them and even to get to know them. Knowing the rhythms of where I lived was given thickened meaning from reading books like Beth Powning's (1996) Home which incorporates such rhythms in its very structure and language.

I learned more about which birds frequented which plants in my garden. I spent a happy half hour watching a pair of goldfinches tear a dried thistle blossom into fluff, and I have not weeded out a thistle since, knowing from my own storied experience that they are a delicacy for these lovely little birds. Again, the value given to such encounters with earth others in the memoirs I read reinforced for me the value in having these birds visit my garden.

The most significant moment in my own lifetime of getting to know nature in the city happened because of this commitment to reading on my front porch. One day in mid-summer, some sound made me look up in time to see a young deer walk down the sidewalk ten metres from where I sat. I watched quietly as she continued past my house and turned into my neighbour's yard. When I peeked around the hedge she had disappeared. I would have written off this experience as a figment of an imagination overly-saturated by nature writing except that a pedestrian came along at that moment shaking his head and saying, "only in Ottawa". Later it occurred to me that I should have responded to him, "no, its not only in Ottawa. People in cities all over the continent witness events like this. I know because I've experienced them too, vicariously, through

reading ecological memoirs.” The incident left me wondering how much I miss when I’m sitting inside.

My life changed in other ways as I read and thought and wrote this thesis. I found myself settling in to my house more, even managing to take some pleasure out of home improvement chores after reading some of Sanders’ odes to handywork (1995). I put up birdfeeders and birdhouses as an attempt to make the urban space of my yard a more welcoming place for the diversity of earth others who also live in the city. After reading Eric Brende’s memoir of Amish life I was inspired to clear out a great deal of my material possessions, feeling suddenly that I wanted to be freed of some of the burden of owning things.

Other memoirs such as those by Julia Butterfly Hill (2000), Alice Walker (1989), Laura Bowers Foreman (2001), Janisse Ray (1999), and even Alison Watt (2002) reminded me of the impact my everyday choices have on distant places and distant others. I found it difficult to maintain any self-deception regarding the destructive results of North American consumerism, my own included, after reading memoirs that brought me vicariously face-to-face with earth others and places that have suffered because of master narratives about what is good and valued in our society. I could no longer ignore the reach of every dollar I spend. The impact of reading these memoirs was reinforced by my own practice of engaging with them in which I went through the list of personal reflection questions listed near the end of chapter 5. After answering the fourth question, “to which areas of your current life do these images relate and in what ways do they do so?” for each memoir, it became literally impossible to deceive myself about how my own actions impact on earth others even in distant places. Now in making decisions

concerning the daily sacraments of living, such as cooking, eating, cleaning, and getting myself from A to B, I have a library of narrative resources to draw on. These narrative resources help me to envision the possible implications of my choices on the place where I live, on earth others everywhere including the human ones, and on the more-than-human world in general. This has had very concrete impacts on how I live my life. For example, with my extended family I instituted a “thing-free” Christmas; at the beginning of winter my partner and I sold our car with no intention of replacing it, and I have put in volunteer time on various monitoring and restoration projects along the Rideau River.

Finally, on the subtlest of levels, thinking with these stories and opening myself up to new possibilities, I have also begun to perceive the world differently. I have noticed myself being more attentive to the places I live in, work in, and pass through, and I have been encountering earth others more often, mostly because I’ve been noticing them where before I was blind to their presence. Just as some writers remark that their practices of writing keep them attentive to place and the lives of earth others (cf. Sanders 1995, Deming 2001) I have noticed that on days when I’ve been reading ecological memoirs my attention to my own place is that much stronger. For me, reading ecological memoirs has been a practice of learning attentiveness and being present to witness the lives of those who also dwell in the urban places I call home.

I certainly already shared many of the “themes, values, purposes and commitments” (M. White, 2000: 63-64) highlighted in the ecological memoirs I read. And yet I do feel the process has helped me to become other than who I was before and opened up options for action in my life.

So, could I be storied as an urban geographer? Yes. Almost all of my storying and re-storying of my self happens in cities, through experiences I have in cities, through encounters with earth others in cities, and through reflecting on narrative resources in cities. All of the reading and reflecting that form the core of this thesis were conducted in a city and in relation to my own urban experiences, as was the writing of it. Some, though by no means all of the memoirs I read took place at least partially in cities. Moreover, that many of the memoirs I read, reflected on, and included pertained to the storying of lives lived outside of urban areas does not render them irrelevant to lives lived in cities, neither identity, nor geography is as simple and categorical as that.

Before moving on to think with ecological memoirs about reading, the subject of the next, short, interlude chapter, I want to finish this chapter with a quotation from an essay by Kathleen Dean Moore (who lives in the small city of Corvallis, OR), in which she engages in an imaginary dialogue with other prospective urban nature writers:

“Fight for the close-in places as you fight for what is wild and good. Show your faithful readers that it’s possible to connect deeply and meaningfully to the land, without living by the pond. Show them it’s possible to suck the marrow out of life in the dry, brittle bones of the towns. Isn’t this also a worthy calling?---to learn to live deliberately in neighborhoods while there are still a few essential facts left. And to remember, when we come to die, that in whatever place we have lived, we have lived in the natural world” (136).

9. Interlude: Reading Writers on Reading

“Thoreau was not the first to live apart in order to delve into the heart of things, but he became the prototype for those who followed him. One does not live alone in a cabin in the woods and escape comparison with this man; and the longer I lived in my little Gothic cottage, the more I noticed that I too was under his influence. The trouble with Henry Thoreau is that, in so many ways he got there first. ...I found myself following a pattern that recalled Henry's.” (John Hanson Mitchell, 1990:34-35)

I introduced John Hanson Mitchell in the previous chapter as the writer of the one memoir that takes place entirely within urban boundaries. John's memoir is also one of the most reflexively readerly one's I've come across, so in this short interlude I return to it in order to begin a dialogue on the narrative ethics of reading. As in chapter 6, I will think mainly with one memoir, bringing others in only as they resonate with John Hanson Mitchell's. In the following final chapter of this thesis, I will continue the conversation on the ethics of reading and writing while returning to each of the themes discussed in the previous chapters of Part II.

It would be a mistake to believe that Thoreau, or any ecological memoirist, has the last word on what it is to live in relation to the more-than-human world. If it were true that Thoreau had somehow finalized the story of what it is to live ethically in relation to place and earth-others there would be only two options: to merge totally with Thoreau's story in all its details of cabin life; or to totally dissociate from Thoreau's

story, as one that can never be repeated. Either understanding would be a thin one. When John Tallmadge (2004) wonders what urban and non-urban places would look like if Thoreau had chosen to write about the more-than-human world from home rather than go off into a cabin in the woods, he is writing about a misguided notion that Thoreau's story of living deliberately be copied in the geography of solitary immersion in a "wilderness". That is, he finds that too many lovers of the wild seek to merge with Thoreau's story, rather than use it to reflect upon where they find themselves. In drawing in part on Thoreau for his practice of the wild in the city, John Tallmadge demonstrates that Thoreau can be used as a narrative resource in a variety of places and in relation to a variety of experiences.

Instead of merging with or denying any current relevance of a work like Thoreau's, the approach advocated here would have the reader undertake a dialogue with written self-narratives as John Hanson Mitchell explicitly does in his memoir of a year spent living in a cabin in the woods a few miles from Walden Pond. It is only in dialogue that both continuity and difference can be maintained between Thoreau and his readers. And it is through dialogue that counter-stories can thicken, grow, and spread until they too become public narratives of influence.

John Hanson Mitchell insists that it was circumstances that led him to build his own little cabin in the woods and live there for a number of years, not a deliberate choice, not an homage to Thoreau whose life encompassed much of the same territory as John's though they lived in very different landscapes. But then John himself invites the comparison, bringing a set of Thoreau's published journals with him to read at the cabin. John retells Thoreau's life story, as well as those of his own relatives as he reads their

journals and writes in his own. His memoir can therefore be read as a dialogue between his self and these others.

As with many dialogues between people open to being changed through their engagement with an other, John begins his memoir and his reading of Thoreau by emphasizing the differences between them and writes his way towards a greater sense of similarity. It is geographical placement more than anything else that invites comparison between John and Thoreau. First, John's placement in a small cabin in the woods, close to family and friends yet at a far enough remove to facilitate solitary exploration of self and the more-than-human world, resonates with Thoreau's time at Walden Pond. On a different scale of spatial organization, the placement of John's cottage in relatively close proximity to Walden Pond and to Concord, where Thoreau lived most of his life, also invites comparison. The contexts in which John and Thoreau decide to move to the woods, however, are sources of difference:

“Thoreau went to the woods because he wished to live deliberately and confront only the essential things in life. I went there because my wife and I had separated and the woods were the only place I could find affordable housing” (6).

At the beginning of the memoir, John's story is one of being the victim of circumstance, unable to story his self as he would perhaps prefer to, while he reads Thoreau's as one of deliberate choice.

The continuities might have remained at the level of geographic coincidence, overwhelmed by a sense of difference, if John had ended the conversation there. But instead, he takes Thoreau with him to the cabin in the woods and comes to recover his own story partly through Thoreau's voice. Without Thoreau's story to draw on, John's story might have been a sad one of a failed marriage and a life of poverty in a tiny house

without electricity or running water. However, drawing on Thoreau's story (and the stories of friends, neighbours, and family members), John's memoir becomes one of discovering and celebrating the joys of a simple life lived near nature, one of living deliberately in contact with the "essential things in life."

In giving meaning to his experiences of living in his cabin, his community, and the more-than-human world through engaging with the self-stories of Thoreau and others, John comes to shape temporary and ever-changing solutions to how he ought to conduct himself in his new living arrangement. By living in relation to reading the self-narratives of others, John also thickens his understanding of these stories and of the options for action that can come out of treating them as narrative resources. As winter approaches, John writes:

"Beyond the house the world grew somber as winter advanced. Inside it was warm and softly lit with the golden glow of the oil lamps. Over the stove I hung bunches of herbs I had grown that summer in the garden. I put flannel sheets on the beds, unpacked wool blankets, split wood by day, and listened to the high bark of passing wild geese by night. I imagined that I could give away all my money and live happily on nothing, and I began to suspect, as I had all along, that this Henry Thoreau, for all his nasty griping at the world of human affairs, was right" (84).

John also includes dialogues with other people for whom Thoreau is an important narrative resource. John visits the site of Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond where he encounters other pilgrims whose lives have been storied, at least partially, in reference to Thoreau's writings. These include a Tibetan monk, a lawyer, a libertarian activist, a Catholic priest, and a Native American man. In conversation with John, these pilgrims construct their own versions of Thoreau's story, as they have come to know him through their own lives. In these retellings Thoreau was a Buddhist, the "patron saint of

libertarianism,” a catholic, a Native American. In re-telling Thoreau’s story in dialogue with John, these pilgrims re-story their own selves. Through all of these retellings, the meaning of Thoreau in their own lives and in society in general is thickened, and possibilities for action are opened up.

John Hanson Mitchell’s memoir is not simply about his self but, like most ecological memoirs, it is a narrative of his self in place and as such it also concerns questions of how places ought to be. His dialogical relationship with Thoreau regarding a place where they both have lived, though at different times, becomes an important way for him to reflect on the true and the good of changing places. John considers the undeveloped ridge where he lives to be a good place because it affords opportunities to get lost in the more-than-human world, to encounter earth others, and to share stories with neighbours. The goodness of this place and of John’s relationship to that place is partially understood through Thoreau’s writings about his own ethical relationship to a place not that far away.

However, similarities of place are not necessary for a dialogical engagement with Thoreau, or any other writer, to be a fruitful one. As already mentioned, John Tallmadge also draws on Thoreau while trying to live a good life in a city. Highlighting both continuity and difference between his placed life and Thoreau’s, John Tallmadge reworks Thoreau’s famous phrase, thickening its meaning and opening up possibilities for action in cities: “Thoreau chose to live deliberately, but here [in the city] one must—that is, if one aspires to make peace with nature” (123). It is in this engagement, this imaginative leap into another’s story in order to reflect on one’s own, in order to recognize sameness

and difference, continuity and disjunction between self and other, that the ethical relationship between reader and writer lies.

Thus far, I have centred my discussion around John Hanson Mitchell's memoir because it explicitly focuses on reading as part of an ethical engagement with the more-than-human world. However, John Hanson Mitchell is not an anomaly in thinking through the question "how ought I to live in place" in dialogue with books. Many other memoirists make passing reference to reading autobiographical and semi-autobiographical texts. Drawing on narrative philosophy, we can assume that reading these stories has influenced how they story their own lives. In particular, contemporary ecological memoirists reference such classics as Thoreau's Walden Pond (cf. Gruchow, 1997; Tallmadge, 2004; Bass, 1999; Ray, 1999; Daniel, 2002), Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac (cf. Grover, 1997, Daniel 2002), and Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (cf. Steingraber, 1997; Kittredge, 1999; Hogan, 2001; Deming, 2001). Moreover, many ecological memoirs are written by professors in English departments whose teaching and research focus on "environmental literature" (cf. Deming, 2001; Sanders, 1993, 1995, 1999; Condon, 2004). In this capacity, these writers must have read the stories of other writers and have been influenced in their own self-narratives by their reading, although they do not comment on this explicitly.

A great deal of emphasis has been put on the ethical injunction against finalizing an other through resorting to monologue. One form of monologue that is particularly decried by Arthur Frank (2004) is talking *about* someone rather than talking *to* them. Considering that Thoreau is long dead, how can I assert that John Hanson Mitchell's use of Thoreau is dialogical rather than monological? In the language of narrative social

sciences, to talk *about* someone's self-narrative is to analyze it from an assumed objective perspective rather than interpret it from an acknowledged subjective one. To analyze a story is to claim with some authority that the story belongs definitively in a category, and thereby to restrict the possibilities for action in and from that story, and thereby to finalize it. In contrast, John Hanson Mitchell is personally engaged in an interpretation of Thoreau. He retells the story in order to think through his own experiences and thereby opens up Thoreau's story to further possibilities rather than closing him off. Indeed, by sharing how the diverse pilgrims he meets at Walden Pond story Thoreau, John Hanson Mitchell radically opens up Thoreau's narrative to a myriad of possible interpretations. By including his retellings of a number of other people's lives in his memoir, John Hanson Mitchell achieves a truly dialogical narrative of learning to live a good life. The dialogical aspects of reading and writing are also highlighted by Scott Russell Sanders who jumps scale by describing both practices as means of participating in "the great conversation of culture" (1995:175).¹⁴⁰

Having introduced the relationship between reader and writer through an engagement with John Hanson Mitchell's memoir, in the next chapter I extend this conversation to reflect on how writing and reading can be a practice of storying the self and society towards wholeness and healing, how writing and reading can bring people into a greater state of attentiveness to the more-than-human world around them, and of how reading and writing can be important forms of witnessing.

¹⁴⁰ In this particular quotation he is referring to writing; however he uses a similar phrase in another book, describing reading as "an even grander conversation" (2000: 58).

10. Writing and Reading Our Way to a Better Place in the More-than-human World

We are each of us born into a world already populated with stories: stories of place, stories of selves, stories of society, stories that circulate through society. More than this, we become selves through the stories others tell about us in words and through embodied practices (Frank on Bakhtin, 2004; and also Nelson, 2001). And yet we cannot be finalized by what others, what institutions, or even what societies' discourses tell us about ourselves and about what we ought to do, because even as the stories others tell about us may come to dominate our lives, there is always the possibility that we might do something contradictory. Sack (2003) has emphasized the importance of assuming at least some degree of free will in order for there to be the possibility for ethics. In this thesis I have focused on our ability to reflect imaginatively on experiences in our lives and on the stories we come across as the locus of that free will.

This thesis has concerned not simply how we ought to live in general, but how we ought to live in place given that all places are located within a more-than-human world. In this final chapter of the thesis I want to follow on from the interlude to look at the practices of reading and writing, and the relationships that are formed between readers and writers, in order to examine how these practices and relationships contribute to a

“winnowing and sifting” (Sack, 2003) through to the real and the good, and thereby contribute to the creation of better places--in the ethical sense of the term. We come to understand our selves and give meaning to our lives through actively reflecting on experiences we have in specific places in light of those narrative resources at our disposal. In incorporating these public narratives into our self-stories, these narratives are also revealed as unfinalized and open to interpretation. Thoreau may have “got there first” but his story isn’t finished. It lives on in the lives of those who have read his books and who story their lives in part through the narrative resources those texts provide.

10.1 Writing Towards Healing

In the introduction to this thesis, I framed contemporary North American societies as being in narrative crisis and suggested that, collectively, we need to find the words to life stories in order to narrate our way to survivable futures for all. This thesis has been constructed around a dialogical engagement with ecological memoirs as part of a search for words to life stories. In some of these ecological memoirs, authors story their way through narrative crises. In all of them, a preferred self-narrative of relationship to the more-than-human world is presented.

Counter to their preferred self-narratives, people often find themselves storied by others or by society in dominating ways that restrict and even finalize their selves, that deny aspects of their experience, and that foreclose on a range of possible futures. Such dominant narratives are monological, which in contrast to desired dialogical wholeness results in a fracturing of the self into that which is acceptable and that which can have no meaning and therefore no place in social life. The approach taken in this thesis has been

inspired by the formalized practices of clinical narrative therapy which assists people in identifying experiences that contradict these dominant stories, imaginatively excavating subjugated alternative knowledges of living. As narrative therapists White and Epston (1990) point out, dominant public narratives often are the products of power-knowledges that support unitary truth discourses, and so any challenge to a dominated self-story can have ramifications for those truth discourses in wider society.

To the best of my knowledge, none of the memoirists I engaged with underwent narrative therapy and yet they were able to story their way out of deep crises to preferred self-narratives that challenge dominant public narratives. In this section I think with some ecological memoirs about writing as a practice towards narrative healing and wholeness on the scales of both individuals and of naturecultures.

Alison Watt's story, with which I opened Part II of this thesis, begins in narrative crisis and ends by moving her self from being dominated by relations determined by economics and science, to being a writer who shares her faith in the intrinsic value of earth others. Writing itself is essential to this process. Through writing in her journals, Alison is able to acknowledge those feelings and representations of place and earth other that she is unable to express through her actions or dialogue with Anne, the field biologist, on the island. This practice of journal writing enables Alison to continue to narratively cultivate those parts of her self that receive no public acknowledgement. In my interpretation of her memoir, it is the writing and publishing of the book that ultimately bring her to a polyvocal wholeness, to an integration of the self who recognizes alterity in birds and her scientist self. Publishing her journals as a book answers her question "Could I express my deeper conviction--that the smallest, most

insignificant creatures have intrinsic worth; that imagination is impoverished in a world where the value of living things is only calculated in dollars?" (172). In publicly declaring and acting on her new preferred self-narrative through publishing her journals, Alison's story also challenges dominant stories of heroic science. Her narrative, therefore, is not just about her own need for healing but also concerns the need for dialogical naturecultures and a healing of societies' relationships with the more-than-human world.

Other writers have addressed the practice of writing as a means to healing a self in crisis more explicitly than Alison has. Scott Russell Sanders began writing when he was an undergraduate studying physics at Brown University. For many reasons to do with class and geography, he felt like an outsider at Brown (1999). In order to deal with these feelings he began keeping a journal. During this time he also maintained a steady correspondence in letters with the woman who eventually became his wife. Altogether, during his undergraduate years, Scott wrote approximately ten pages a day. Through these pages he maintained some sense of control over the way he was storied and therefore over his life:

"In this time of great confusion I began keeping a journal. I strung out sentences like guy wires to hold myself upright in the winds of uncertainty. In those creamy pages, I wrote as though my life depended on it---and in a sense it did. Gradually I found the words to address the inescapable questions: "Who am I? What sense do I make of this inner tumult? How should I live?...What is true, and how can we know?" (1995: 173).

These are explicitly questions to do with ethics. For Scott Russell Sanders writing and searching for an answer to how he ought to live became one and the same thing: "I refuse

to separate my search for a way of writing from my search for a way of living" (Sanders, 1995: 164). Writing can be a way to the true and the good.

These are also questions Scott had first written down in high school, when he lived on the damaged landscape of the Armoury, "a wilderness...laced with poison and bombs" (38) and faced the uncertainty of living in America during the Cuban missile crisis. Thinking about these questions through the grand conversation of reading and writing rescued Scott's life from hopelessness and meaninglessness:

"Lying there beside the creek, gazing up through the scarlet haze of maples, I thought about what I should do with my life, however long or short it might be, whatever my talents might be. And I decided I would try to build things up instead of tearing them down; I would try to make discoveries and bring useful gifts into the world, instead of consuming what was already here; I would work against cruelty and suffering; I would help make peace.

It was a teenager's vow, earnest and idealistic. ...And yet, although I've often broken that vow, I've never renounced it. Without a sense of purpose, my life back then would have been hollow, and my life now would be aimless and idle. So I make stories, small gifts in return for the great gift of life" (49)

While these questions concern Scott's own storied life, they clearly also extend outwards to challenge public narratives of the place of humans in the more-than-human world.

William Kittredge also stories writing as having saved his life. In one of his memoirs (1999) he relates the damage to self and place that he experienced through the arrival of capitalist, industrial agricultural discourses and their practices. By draining and ploughing and poisoning lands on his family ranch his positive relationships to earth others and to place were eroded. He read Silent Spring in 1964 and came to know his practices as betrayals of all he cared about. But he could not see any way out from under those dominant narratives so he worked on, although his "days were semi-unendurable"

(25). William Kittredge captures this loss of self and place in a poignant and visceral description:

“There was an afternoon on a ditchbank with a dented bucket of orange carrot slices marinated in strychnine, poisoning badgers, when I dreaded every moment I could foresee. All things seemed equally unreal, my hand in the rubber glove, holding the slice of carrot, which was almost luminous, clouds over Bidwell Mountain, the sound of my breathing. I would have to move soon if I was ever going to get home. I was numb with dread, sorrowing for myself because I felt nothing but terror. This had to be craziness. There is no metaphor for that condition; it is precisely like nothing” (25-26).

Finding his self and his life reduced to an unpleasant state of nothing, William can think of only one way out, to write:

“Convinced that ranching was meaningless, I was frantic with anxiety, unable to catch my breath or think I could think. In order to save myself, I started trying to write” (28).

William Kittredge eventually quit ranching to become a full-time writer, teacher, and mentor to aspiring ecological memoirists.

Terry Tempest Williams, whose memoir covers a span of a few short years in which she lost her mother and both grandmothers to cancer and a beloved wild bird refuge to the flooding of Great Salt Lake, is also upfront about her use of storytelling as a route to healing:

“Perhaps I am telling this story in an attempt to heal myself, to confront what I do not know, to create a path for myself with the idea that ‘memory is the only way home.’

I have been in retreat. This story is my return.” (2001[1991]:4)

I interpret the retreat as the dissolution of her self in the face of the deaths of many people important to her and the destruction of a place close to her heart. In storying her way through these losses she reclaims a self and a desirable future.

Just as Alison's story moves from a personal narrative crisis to challenging public narratives of science as hero, Terry in her narrative healing moves outward in a spiral¹⁴¹ from self and genetic family to the wider world and public narratives. Writing the memoir was a process of healing for her self, of storying her way to a preferred plotline in which she breaks with Mormon tradition and speaks out as someone who belongs to communities, which include earth others, and which are suffering because of how the American military-industrial complex stories the place where they dwell. Near the end of her memoir, Terry has one of her recurring dreams about seeing a bright light on the horizon. She tells her father about this dream and he responds that it is actually a memory, that the whole family had witnessed a nuclear test one night as they were driving through the desert. Terry reflects that while it can never be proven that cancers in her family were related to nuclear testing, it can never be disproven either. "When the Atomic Energy Commission described the country north of the Nevada Test Site as 'virtually uninhabited desert terrain,' my family and the birds at Great Salt Lake were some of the 'virtual uninhabitants,'" (287) she writes. Her story bears witness to the lives and heroic deaths of some of these "uninhabitants," challenging the dominant story of an empty place. In writing her way back, she also winnows and sifts through to the real and the good of the place where she lives, restorying Salt Lake City and the deserts of Utah to a greater wholeness.

Terry realizes, through storying her self, that she cannot be made whole unless the rent between humans and the more-than-human world is healed, and so her healing

¹⁴¹ The spiral metaphor is one she explicitly uses in relation to her self-narrative in "A Note to the Reader" at the back of the 10-year anniversary edition of *Refuge*.

process moves from self and family to earth others, the earth as a living being and to political action that challenges public narratives. Her writing is one of these actions. Through being published, her story enters into the grand conversation of naturecultures, becoming a resource for others in re-storying their lives.

The final memoir I want to think with in this section is Linda Hogan's, The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir. This memoir, more than any other ecological memoir I read, stories the narrator's self in the context of history and social relations. Linda Hogan's story is a brutally frank narrative of fracture and unhappiness. As a child she was so painfully shy she couldn't speak. As a young woman she drank "suicidally." Hers is a story that continues on from the "unbearable" "dark ungoing history" of America (53) in which her people, the Chippewa were exiled from their homes and were decimated in number and spirit by European settlers. Linda Hogan narrates her self as carrying the stories of her people in her body and in her life. Therefore, her healing requires healing on the level of society and public narratives. She can only find the words to a life story once the public narratives that deny the atrocities committed against native people in North America have been overthrown. This is a situation in which her experiences and her histories do not match those narratives that dominate the spaces in which she dwells, and so she calls society into narrative crisis.

At first, this disjuncture between what she knows of the real and the good of the place called America and the dominant narratives of that place silence her. This silencing is so profound that not only is she denied a preferred self-narrative, but she is left without any self at all. Looking back on her youth, she writes:

“As a young person coming from silences of both family and history, I had little of the language I needed to put a human life together. I was inarticulate to voice it, therefore to know it, even from within” (56).

Fortunately for Linda, she eventually finds words and begins the healing of her self through writing:

“One day the words came. I was an adult. I went to school after work. I read. I wrote. Words came, anchored to the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature. There was, in this, a fall, this time to a holy ground of a different order, a present magic, a light-bearing, soul-saving presence that illuminated my heart and mind and altered my destiny. Without it, who would guess what, as a human being, I might have become” (57).

In echoing the words of a previous chapter in which she wonders who she would have been if she had not stopped to help the oil-covered loon, Linda ties the finding of words with moral actions. She stories communicating, including writing, as an important ethical action:

“Perhaps in smaller ways than death, we lose the soul, a piece at a time, as when we turn away from what needs our help, remain silent when words are necessary, or take something from the world that can’t be replaced—a plant, an animal, a love” (189-190).

We can only come to know ourselves through storied actions, and we can only come to know what to do in asking the only question that matters: What shall we do and how shall we live? (Frank, 2002: 3). The question that Linda opens up here in all of these interconnected references to the same event is: would she have stopped to help the loon if she had not healed herself through words? Much depends upon each of us dialogically re-storying ourselves and our relationships towards wholeness and healing.

Again Linda’s memoir seems to story its way towards its own publication. Near the end of the book, lying in a hospital bed after an accident that brought her close to dying, Linda writes of the urgency she feels in breaking through still more silences:

“I asked the unaskable questions, broke through the silences of all the previously unspeakable things in our family. I entered the country of the past so the future would hold healing” (178).

Coming, as it does, near the end of her memoir, I cannot help but read this as the “why” of the writing of the book. Linda Hogan writes through the silences of her past and the past of her people so that all of us living in North America might find the words to life stories and survivable futures for all. Linda writes to heal herself and she writes because she must write: it is her ethical duty in order to help readers see through to the real and the good and restory our place in the more-than-human world.

All of these authors open up the possibility of writing as an action that can be taken to restory the self and society, an action with ethical significance. In sharing their own journey from silence and pain to wholeness and healing, these writers generously provide readers with storylines of resolving narrative crises in a variety of contexts. In incorporating periods of dissolution and despair into stories with happy endings, they also give meaning to these emotions, placing them in plotlines towards better futures. Their stories provide narrative resources for storying hopeful lives even in damaged places. In bearing witness to their pain and to threats to their beloved places with attentive reading, and sometimes tears of our own, we readers practice being moral selves.

10.2 Writing and Reading as Practices of Attentiveness

In the above section, I drew on Scott Russell Sanders’ memoirs to discuss writing as a potential practice towards healing. In this section I want to draw on his work again to introduce the theme of writing and reading as practices of attention and attentiveness. In an essay (1995) concerning an everyday walk in an everyday piece of wilderness

easily accessible from his urban home, Scott attempts to practice attentiveness to the more-than-human world around him:

"I draw a deep breath, and smell the rank, green luxuriance. I suddenly hear, behind the buzz alarm cries, a glee of birds wooing mates, staking out turf, rehearsing old melodies, their voices oblivious to me.

It is a small awakening, to surface from thoughts of myself and my kind and to rise up into the blooming, darting, singing world. The experience is ordinary, yet each time the waking feels fresh, as though I never quite believe that the creation keeps dancing while I sleep. As I move on, I resolve to stay alert, knowing I will fail, knowing the resolve itself will cloud the windows of perception and shut me up once again inside the house of thought" (55).

In this same essay he also discusses writing as a form of attention and of that attention as necessary to restorying the naturecultures in which we dwell:

"All good writing, everywhere and always, is an act of attention. What most needs our attention now, I believe, is the great community of land---air and water and soil and rock, along with all the creatures, human and otherwise, that share the place. We need to imagine the country anew, no longer as enemy or property or warehouse or launching pad, no longer as a lost homeland to be recalled from a distance, but as our present and future home, a dwelling place to be cared for on behalf of all beings for all time" (51).

In this section, I want to thicken Scott's experience of writing as an act of attention and attentiveness through reflecting on other writers who resonate with his observation as well as by reflecting on my own experience of reading.

Scott is concerned with places becoming zones of sacrifice and with people being discounted because of where they come from, because he has experienced the effects of both of these types of finalizing narratives. He stories his career in writing as a sustained attempt to counter these types of master narratives. In particular, he wants to contribute to a literature of "inhabitation" of the American Midwest, where he has spent most of his life. Such a literature is essential in bringing attention to the Midwest, to re-imagining

the Midwest and its people, and to restor(y)ing human relationships to place and to earth others.

In his writings, Scott returns over and over again to the farm his family was forced to leave when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decided to flood the valley it was located in. The experience of losing a place that had been home is fundamental to Scott's self-story in which he attributes high importance to "Staying Put" (the title of his 1993 book). Of the flooding of this valley of his youth he writes:

"If enough people had spoken for the river, we might have saved it. If enough people had believed that our scarred country was worth defending, we might have dug in our heels and fought. Our attachments to the land were all private. We had no shared lore, no literature, no art to root us there, to give us courage, to help us stand our ground" (5).

Scott chooses to devote his life to bringing attention to the neglected Midwest through contributing to its published stories. Through participating in the grand conversations of literature, Scott hopes that his memoirs will help the public see through the surfaces of those dominant narratives of Cartesian Space (Lefebvre, 1991), which conceive of land as open space to be altered at will, to the real and the good of valued lives lived there.

Janisse Ray also stories herself as a writer of neglected places and disappearing species. In her memoir, Ecology of a Cracker Childhood, she stories her self from growing up poor in a strictly religious household in South Georgia, to being a writer of the self in naturecultures. One epiphanic moment in this tale concerns poetry saving the life of a tree. Soon after arriving at College, Janisse found out that the administration was planning on cutting down an old tree that many of the students loved. In an effort to bring attention to the plight of this tree, someone attached a poem to it. Reading the poem on the tree and reflecting on this instance of activist poetry--an act that assumed

words could save something in the material world--Janisse's life was turned upside down. She wrote: "One simple act turned my thinking, made me wish I knew myself better and wasn't gripped with fear when I spoke" (263). This narrative crisis was eventually resolved when she found the courage to bring out her own words and to become a writer herself. As a writer, she has devoted her words to bringing attention to the plight of the naturecultures of the longleaf pine ecosystem of her home territory.

Other writers have used the attention that writing brings as part of broader activist strategies (cf. Hill 2000, Williams 2001[1991], Bass 2000, Walker 1997, Foreman 2001, Mills 2002, Suzuki 2002, Nichols 2001, Nabhan 2004, Deming 2001, Bass 1999). Editors have also seen the value of first-person narrative writing in bringing attention to threatened places. Recently such collections as The Book of the Tongass (Servid and Snow, 1999) and Arctic Refuge, a Circle of Testimony (Lentfer and Servid, 2001) have been published specifically for this reason.

But science, political activism, academic writing, and journalism can also draw attention to a place. What does creative narrative writing contribute that these other forms do not? Ecological memoirs do not just bring attention to places, they bring attention to relations to places, relations within places, and to the diversity of meanings and values that are given to these places. The poem attached to the tree brought attention to the tree, but more importantly it brought attention to the embedding of that tree in relationships with students and to the importance those relationships had to students' self-stories and lives. The poem testified to someone caring enough about the tree to give it words and meaning.

Most of what I have reflected on so far has concerned the products of writing. I want to turn now to look at writing as a practice in relation to attentiveness. Alison Hawthorne Deming (2001) writes that the practice of taking notes in preparation for writing: “forces a kind of attention that makes the experience richer” (7). Scott Russell Sanders also writes about writing as facilitating attentiveness using a spatial metaphor that is strangely resonant with some of Sack’s writing:

“By making up stories, I can’t halt the erosive flow of time, I can’t protect what I cherish from the machinery of death, but I can enclose a small, orderly space, within which, for however brief a spell, meaning and beauty might endure... Since childhood, I’ve responded to the prospect of annihilation by writing down what I think, what I feel, what I take in through my senses, what I remember and imagine. I enter the country of language not to escape the chancy world that precedes and surrounds all language, but to ponder that world, to hold up portions of it for examination, to decipher its patterns and celebrate its wonders” (1997: 86).

Scott’s imagery resonates with Robert Sack’s discussions of the occasional need for some degree of opacity and separation of places in order to accomplish projects that will increase the overall diversity of reality. According to Sack, hiving off a place and removing it from public scrutiny for a time enables people to focus on a project. Scott stories his practice of writing along similar lines, with his project being that of practicing attentiveness in relation to the daily sacraments of living.

Through attentiveness, Scott Russell Sanders and other ecological memoirists break through surface representations to a deeper engagement with place, and thereby give meaning to and/or change the meaning of places, activities in those places, and lives lived there. By being attentive, a person is more likely to have experiences that contradict dominant and finalizing stories about place such as private property, or woodlot, or highway, or urban, or wilderness. These surface representations of places

prevent people from perceiving contradictory aspects and uses of the place unless something cuts through finalizing categorizations, such as the face of a bereaved groundhog or a bored horse. However, rather than wait for something extraordinary to break through surface representations, ethics demands that we continually strive to overcome our self-deceptions. To return to a quotation from Haraway (2003), cited in chapter 3, "I believe that all ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-strong thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relation" (50). We must be attentive in our relationships to earth others so as to be guided by the good.

In any storytelling, whether published or told, only some experiences can be included, the rest must be left out of the telling and remain bereft of meaning. Bruner proposes that those experiences that are not storied are less likely to be remembered at a later date (1990: 56). Experiences that are not given meaning may not even register with us as White and Epston (1990), following Bateson elaborate: "Not only...is the interpretation of an event determined by its receiving context but those events that cannot be 'patterned' are not selected for survival; such events will not exist for us as facts" (2).

The practice of being attentive, advocated by ecological memoirists, can be understood as a state of being in which all experiences are assumed to be meaningful. Scott, in taking an experience such as baking bread (1995: 65-85) and writing about it in intimate detail and reflecting on it as one might reflect on a momentous occasion renders that ordinary, daily event into a momentous experience, an experience to story a life around. In stringing together a number of these extraordinary ordinary events, like baking bread (Sanders, 1995), or watching bluejays build their nest (Hiestand, 1998), these ecological memoirs of the everyday present the reader with a set of narrative

resources enabling them to give meaning to the daily sacraments of living and to story them as valuable. As ordinary as they may seem, collectively this literature of being attentive to everyday activities and interactions provides a compelling counter narrative to the dominant plotlines of North American lives, plotlines particularly associated with the masculine life course (Gergen 1992), plotlines that emphasize career ambitions and the more-than-human world as resource and which downplay relationship and daily living. This then is the final contribution of ecological memoirs to attentiveness, in the words of Alison Deming (2001): “Art can serve activism by teaching an attentiveness to existence and by enriching the culture in which our roots are set down” (68).

In my experience, reading ecological memoirs has helped me to change the way I not only conceive of the more-than-human world—meanings and representations---but has also helped to change the way I perceive it. On those days when I have been deep into someone’s story of living attentively in whatever place they might be, the world around me becomes more vivid, I notice the birds singing in the trees, the squirrels chasing each other along the back fence, the quality of light streaming in through the kitchen window, the buds on the branches of the trees I cut last fall. Of the importance of his storied practice of attentiveness, Scott Russell Sanders writes: “We treat with care what we love, and we love only what we have truly learned to see, with all our senses alert” (1999: 24). Writing and reading can be means of learning to see beneath the surface representations of places provided by dominant public narratives, and to open ourselves up to everyday experiences that might both challenge those dominant narratives and provide the bases for alternative knowledges of living.

10.3 Writing and Reading as Witnessing

My experience of reading ecological memoirs resonates with a passage from Arthur Frank's book The Renewal of Generosity which is also a practice of thinking with published memoirs in an academic context. This passage, quoted in full below, is one of the few sections in his book in which Frank reflects explicitly on the relationship between writer and reader. It emphasizes some of the same themes I explored in chapter 7 of this thesis:

“If the stories I tell in this book need a label, I call them moral nonfiction, a category best described by Levinas: ‘it makes a demand on me.’ The written text shows the reader a face that ‘looks at me and calls to me. It lays claim to me. What does it ask? Not to leave it alone. An answer: here I am.’ The moral moment is when the text calls on the reader---on me---just as the patient calls on those who offer care. The here-I-am of the writer is a generous offering of the self as witness. This generosity calls for a response of here-I-am from the reader. Levinas says that the face of the other obligates me not to abandon them. In turn, a reader may be obligated not to allow a story to end there. The dialogue of author and reader is the beginning of other dialogues” (77)

In this section, following Frank, I want to return to the concept of writing as witnessing. And to add to that discussion, I want to think about the reader as also bearing witness, a proposal that will necessitate some reflection on the dialogical ethics of reading and writing.

There is a great deal of overlap between witnessing and drawing attention to a place or the plight of an earth other. For example, I could easily recharacterise Scott Russell Sanders' intuition that his valley might have been saved had people spoken collectively on its behalf through the concept of bearing witness. These categories of attention and bearing witness are not finished or exclusive categories; they are merely devices enabling me to focus my discussion in different ways, to extend the dialogue

between my self and these memoirs, and to open up possibilities for action. For the sake of the discussion in this thesis, I have used attention and attentiveness as actions and orientations concerned with the everyday, while witnessing tends to be used in conjunction with the exceptional and with epiphanic moments. Moreover, as already discussed above, practicing attentiveness can challenge the very categories of everyday and exceptional.

I opened chapter 7 with my retelling of David Hope's decision to theme his life around the concept of bearing witness. A decision that I read as leading to the writing of the essay "Right of Way" and possibly to the writing and publishing of the entire collection Bird Songs of the Mesozoic. The type of witnessing contained in the ecological memoirs of David and other authors is expressly engaged, relational, and subjective. True, these memoirs do record specific, concrete events: the death of groundhog kits, the cutting down of trees, a coyote digging, a horse gaining and then losing an equine companion. By bearing witness to these events, writers help readers see through to the real of places and of human relationships with the more-than-human world. But what is significant in narrative accounts is not the event, but the meaning given to the event. What the reader witnesses through the face of the writer is the emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, narrative, and ethical responses of that person to the event. It is through these less tangible aspects of the real, of the self in relationship, that these memoirs aid the writer and reader in seeing through to the good. David Hopes sees the face of the mother groundhog and reacts to it. I, as the reader, see David Hopes' face and by staying with him, witness the impact that this act of witnessing has on him. In effect I am witness to his seeing through to the good.

But do all writers show their faces? Do all readers engage with writers' texts dialogically? Is the relationship between writers and readers necessarily dialogical? Theorists like Frank and Bakhtin, along with Val Plumwood, contrast dialogical to monological forms of interaction such as merging with the other or projecting the self onto the other. However, this difference is a dynamic rather than categorical one. Dialogue is a balancing act on the boundary between conceiving of the self as self-sufficient and merging with the self of the other (Frank, 2004). Empathy is one of the main facilitators of this balance. While empathy enables dialogue to happen through bringing the self out of the deception of isolated individuality, too much empathy will cause one party to identify too closely with the other. Reading as an ethical dialogical practice entails such a balancing act.

Not every author is open to a dialogical relationship, just as not every reader is. Some autobiographical works, such as those reviewed by Gergen (1992), ignore relationships and story the self as achieving goals independent of help from others or from social structures. Autobiographical works that tend more towards the polemical expression of opinion as fact and of living in the abstract, offering little detail about personal experience, are also difficult to engage with dialogically. Only one of the memoirs I read for this thesis seemed to lose its balance towards this side of monological relationship: John Nichols *An American Child Supreme* (2001).

As for the risk of merging, writers fall into this type of monologue when they write what they think readers will want to read rather than attempting to be true to the real and the good as they witness it. Writers must be sincere in their writing (Bruner 1990, Sanders 1995). Editors and publishers must also take some responsibility in

relation to facilitating dialogue between writers and readers since they are gatekeepers, choosing to move some autobiographical writing into public circulation and restricting others. If they choose to publish only what is similar to what has already sold well, they will reduce the diversity of dialogues possible between writers and readers.

By taking a dialogical approach to their subject matter—highlighting relationships with other people, earth others, and the more-than-human world—and taking a non-finalizing approach to sharing the meanings and interpretations they ascribe to their experiences, writers in turn provide openings for readers to engage with their texts dialogically. More than this, writers need to write vividly, evocatively, and sincerely so that their face can be apprehended, even in absentia, through their words.

As for readers, if the writer has created a memoir that is available for dialogical engagement, the reader must take care to avoid extremes of merging with the writer or projecting themselves too much into the text. This is tricky since the act of reading narrative requires a bit of both in order for the story to come alive and the face of the writer to be known. Reading narrative dialogically is a balancing act between projecting and merging, facilitated by empathy and imagination. The reader must take on the voice of the writer to a certain extent, bringing that voice into their polyphonic self in order to facilitate a dialogue with an absent other.¹⁴² This requires empathy, imagination, and a certain degree of merging.

¹⁴² Frank (2004) touches on something similar to this in writing about a doctor who after the death of a difficult patient writes of hearing this person's voice in his and feeling this patient's hands on him when he is examining patients. Frank sees this as an act of generosity on the part of the physician in continuing the dialogue with the patient even though the patient is no longer there.

Readers want writers to bring them into their places and take them vicariously through experiences, that is part of why readers read. However, if the reader merges with the author for the duration of the book and then leaves the voice of the author behind when he or she puts it down again, there is no dialogue either, just escapism.

Paradoxically, in order to make sense of the words in the text, the reader must also project his or her own storied experiences onto the words in order to animate them and make sense out of them. If readers merely skim the book, staying on the surface of their own expectations and experiences, they fail to engage dialogically with the text.

Remaining attentive to the text helps prevent readers from falling into projection style monologues as they will inevitably come across storied details that differ from their own experience.

Finally, to engage in dialogical reading is to carry stories you have read around with you in your everyday life and to think with them in storying your own experiences. The process used in developing this thesis (outlined in chapter 5) represents a formalization of the dialogical process of thinking with stories that ethically inclined readers engage in unselfconsciously.

In my own experience of reading for this thesis, those memoirs I thought with the most tended to be those I most vividly experienced through the skills of storytelling and writing as well as through the depth of the feelings writers communicated. I even experienced physical-emotional reactions to reading some passages. Terry Tempest Williams' memoir left me in tears on many occasions. And when I first read of Laura Bowers' epiphany, of the moment she fully realized her culpability in the destruction of the place she loved and remembered the coyote scabbling for her kits, I felt the impact of

her horrified dismay in the pit of my stomach. In those moments I was merged with the author, witnessing with them, learning their voice in my body as well as my mind. While reading those memoirs in which strong emotions were recounted by the author and invoked in me, the reader, I often had to pause and look up from the page, to remove myself for a while from the discomfort of the self of the other. During such pauses, when the vicarious experience was still strong in my memory but I was no longer merged with the writer's narrative, I did much of my most effective thinking with stories. Reflecting on Laura's story made me face up to my own culpability in that scene both through my generally thoughtless (in the sense of rarely giving it any thought) consumption of wood products and through not taking political action to stop such practices. In effect, I both witnessed the destruction through merging temporarily with Laura's story, and witnessed the impact the epiphany had on Laura.

Other writers forced me to witness the impact of my choices on other places and other earth others. Alison Watt's witnessing of the impacts of scientific research as well as global shipping, consumer culture, overfishing and silence on even relatively isolated colonies of seabirds made me think of how I act in all of these respects. Through Julia Butterfly Hill I witnessed the destruction that overuse, including my own, of wood and pulp products wreaks on distant places. And Alice Walker and Blue made me witness the sequestered lives of domesticated animals and caused me to question my meat eating practices. Those stories that brought out the strongest emotions in me continue to be the ones I think with the most, the ones that have entered into the polyphony of my self and which I continue to dialogue with well after I have replaced them on my shelf.

In his narrative work with Holocaust survivors, Greenspan (2003) contrasts tragedy and atrocity, concluding that people can only really respond to tragedy and not to atrocity. Atrocity is so big it has to be told in statistics. It is faceless in literal and Levinasian senses of the term. Tragedies, on the other hand, are narratives told that carry the moral obligation of being listened to, or in the case of this thesis, read. Tragedies characterize the self-narratives of people who have lived through atrocities. Greenspan emphasizes that while it is important to respond to individual tragedies, these tragedies should not be mistaken for the full extent of the atrocity.

All of the books and essays read in this thesis are contextualized more or less explicitly within broader contexts of historical and projected future losses: losses of habitat, losses of ways of life for earth others including humans, losses of species, losses of or damage to places, even the potential for the loss of all life. Some memoirists attempt to bear witness to the full scope of these incomprehensible losses. The stories they tell or their own losses are tragedies. However, they ask readers to keep in mind that their tragedies are part of larger atrocities and must be understood on both the personal scale as well as on larger community and ecosystem scales.

Janisse Ray (1999), for example, writes of the destruction of the longleaf pine ecosystem indigenous to Georgia where she grew up using the word “apocalyptic” (15), reporting that 99 percent of natural stands of the pine have been cut down. She then lists some of the many species of that ecosystem that are threatened with extinction: “*Meadow beauty. Liatris. Greeneyes. Summer farewell. Bracken fern. Golden aster. Sandhill blazing star. Goat’s rue. Yellow-eyed grass. Purple balduina. Beautiful pawpaw. Pineland hoary pea. Wireleaf dropseed. Hair grass. Little bluestem. Lopside Indian*

grass. Toothache grass..." (67). This sort of witnessing is practiced in other memoirs as well. Sandra Steingraber details the species of shellfish, water fowl and fish that have disappeared from the Illinois River in the relatively short period of time since her parents were young (1997: 190-191). The losses of these animals are continuous in this memoir with cancer statistics in communities along the river, and with Sandra's diagnosis with bladder cancer. David Hopes also makes a list in his memoir, storying this practice as a way to save what is threatened. In the following passage he explicitly links atrocity and tragedy and the role of the writer in bearing witness:

"What was lost in the past, though, need not be lost again. Not this time. No. That's why I became a writer. Nothing will be lost. I will write down everything--red oak, pin oak, hemlock, spicebush, gray squirrel--hoping that my lists remain the part that children skip in years to come, a finical bore rather than a sad necrology.

I can't explain why I am in love with minute particularity. Maybe just my bad eyes. Maybe my conviction that, though masses and categories remain, it is the particular that can be tragically lost." (2005: 77).

However, in order to thicken the meanings surrounding these lists the reader must be returned back down to the scale of tragedy, to the scale of the personal narratives of people for whom these losses are losses to their own sense of self and a foreclosing on possibilities for being and acting. To return to Janice Ray (1999), most of the longleaf pine stands of her home were removed before she was born. She resents this loss, storying it as a narrowing of the possibilities of what she can do and who she can be. Her list of threatened species are words that previous generations of Georgians could use in storying their lives. Never having had a personal relationship with these earth others, she no longer has access to the narrative possibilities that might have come out of such encounters.

Robert Michael Pyle (2002) has called this loss of relationship “the extinction of experience”.¹⁴³ Since self-narratives are sets of experiences strung together, then the extinction of experience limits how people can story their selves. Extinction, a permanent absence of relationship, is a difficult experience to convey other than in the before and after stories of (formerly) everyday encounters, a movement from lists and statistics to smaller, more personal, and therefore more meaningful tragedies.

Personal tragedies storied in the public realm can help to overcome deceptions at the societal level, such as surface representations of places that justify the committing of atrocities both against places and within them. For example, in showing the reader her face and telling the reader her story of loss, Terry Tempest Williams makes the reader witness to her life in Utah. No matter what actual physical distance separates the writer and reader, once the reader has imaginatively spent two-hundred and ninety pages witnessing Terry grieve, love, and live with a range of people and earth others, the reader can never be convinced again that Utah is “virtually uninhabited.” Reading Refuge provides readers with an experience that challenges the dominant narrative that creates Utah as a “sacrifice zone”.

Following White and Epston (1990), once one contradictory experience has been identified it becomes that much easier for people to identify further challenges to dominant narratives. Having challenged the dominant narrative about one place, through witnessing Terry’s story—a story that itself bears witness to many tragedies including her

¹⁴³ Gary Paul Nabhan (2004) Nabhan and Trimble (1994) and Russell Scott Sanders (1999) also use this term, following Pyle.

own---the reader may ask what other places must also be cared for, thereby challenging individual and societal self-deceptions in relation to other places near and far.

Linda Hogan's story was one of the most difficult for me to read, not because of the writing, which is clear and beautifully evocative, but because in showing her face and bearing witness to her own life in relationship, she forced me to stand witness with her to depths of the place where I live that I had not wanted to perceive. Linda writes: "Truth is a form of freedom. Truth is a form of love. And love requires honesty" (178). In Linda's narrative, only when words are found to fill all the silences can the alternative words be found for life stories. This resonates with Sack's insistence on seeing through to the real in order to find our way to the good.

At one scale, I live in the same place as Linda Hogan: I live in North America. And yet she and I experience that place very differently. If I follow her example and begin my story well back before I was born, my ancestors were the ones who bound the land into private property and displaced those who had lived there before, those whom Linda includes in her self-narrative. I have inherited my privilege from my ancestors and their stories, just as much as Linda has inherited her pain and dislocation from hers. These stories are written into place as well as into lives, if people only make the effort to look below the surface. Linda makes the reader look even if it makes them uncomfortable, even if it renders problematic some of the daily sacraments of living.

My experience of reading Linda Hogan's memoir was one of becoming aware of my ongoing self-deception with regards to my relationship to place and through place my relationship to the ongoing tragedies of others. This involved seeing through the surface of contemporary North American private property law to the depths of the atrocities such

ownership is based on. Linda's generosity was in showing me, the reader, her face in all its raw pain and emotion. My only possible response was to stick with her through to the end of her book and to try and imagine things from her perspective.

Following Frank, through publishing stories that reflectively bear witness to their lives, memoirists provide examples to readers of taking seriously the question how ought I to live even under the most challenging of circumstances (2004: 9). While all the writers engaged with in the course of this thesis do provide such a model, many of them also explicitly story their selves as witnesses to the plight of earth others and places. In reading these narrative accounts of encounters, I too felt myself to be a witness to those events, however vicariously. I believe this vicarious witnessing to be one of the important ethical contributions of reading ecological memoirs.

10.4 Breaking Open Places and Selves

In practicing a dialogical ethics of reading memoirs and thinking with them, I found myself being broken open again and again. I was broken open by sharing the embodied witnessing of ecological memoirists, feeling and perceiving what they felt through the momentary empathy both necessitated by and facilitated through thinking with stories. I was broken open by coming face-to-face with memoirists who were suffering or who were privy to moments of grace. I was broken open by those moments of redemptive connection afforded by a practice of attentiveness to the more-than-human world.

The phrase "breaking open" came spontaneously out of my pen one day as I was reflecting on my experience of thinking with stories. It is a metaphoric phrase and yet it

is not a disembodied one. There were emotional, physical and mental sensations involved in being broken open. The process of engaging dialogically with memoirs was not an easy one, as my self and my life were implicated in the project. Any project of seeing through to the real and the good bears the potential to change the perceiver. It is only through maintaining strict boundaries in the mind that a person can see through to the real and the good and remain unchanged (Sack 2003).

Objectivity is one way in which researchers have attempted to maintain such mental boundaries. This thesis was explicitly an exercise in repairing such dualistic schisms as objectivity and subjectivity, and part of repairing this schism was making my self available to be changed. Indeed, there is no other way of entering dialogically into relationship with a text. Such is the nature of dialogue. The metaphor “breaking open” describes my experience of witnessing places, encounters, and events I had never witnessed before. It also describes my experience of having my mental boundaries torn down through memoirists’ and my own reflections on these events. Finally, opening up describes the increased possibilities for action that come out of reflectively thinking with stories.

The phrase “opening up” resonates with Sack’s geographic guide to the true and the good, which explicitly links mental and spatial compartmentalization:

“The boundary of place can connect and disconnect, making us a part of, and apart from the world. ...I will refer to this geographical boundedness as compartmentalization because the term is also used to describe building boundaries in our minds. The point is that psychological and geographical compartmentalization are interrelated” (193).

While Sack’s book emphasizes the role of spatial compartmentalization in facilitating mental compartmentalization. Conversely, a narrative ethics of the more-than-human

world demonstrates that through breaking down mental compartmentalizations, places can also be opened up. Reading stories of deforestation such as those of Julia Butterfly Hill (2000) and of Laura Bowers Foreman (2001), forced me to witness the devastation wreaked on distant places and earth others by the kinds of everyday activities I thoughtlessly engage in. I know deforestation is a problem worldwide. I know that paper products are made out of trees. And yet most of the time I manage to keep paper and deforestation in different compartments of my mind. Julia and Laura have changed this. Now, when faced with a paper purchase choice—whether that be the paper drafts of this thesis were printed on or a box of tissues¹⁴⁴—I have a mental, physical, and emotional memory of a coyote in the woods and a beloved Giant Redwood tree as well as the “face” of Laura and Julia to remind me of the ethical implications of such seemingly mundane decisions.

If these memoirs merely forced me to bear witness to all the mundane evils I participate in, reading them would have been a depressing affair in the literal sense of removing my options for action. However, most writers do not end with bearing witness to their own or others culpability, but also live their lives as conscious attempts to answer the question what ought I to do in relation to what has been witnessed. Most of the ecological memoirs, therefore, also offer the reader resources for new narratives of the self.

Just as these memoirs can help readers tear down those mental compartments that facilitate self-deception, they can also help to overcome spatial barriers by bringing the

¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the final thesis could not be printed on recycled stock because of university regulations.

reader through words, story, and imagination to a place they have never been. This is a fairly literal (if you'll excuse the pun) overcoming of distance and boundaries. For example, someone who has never had the chance to visit with a "farmanimal" can be brought face-to-face with that animal and become vicarious witness to that animal's life through the medium of another person's self-narrative. This break down of spatial compartmentalization applies even to those locations that are shared by the histories of writer and reader. Grover emphasizes the impossibility of ever returning to a place because places change over time and, therefore, a person can only become native to a particular place-time.

This applies equally to selves. The place that one person occupies is necessarily different from the place anyone else occupies. To read an ecological memoir of a place you've been to makes this clear. Though you might resonate with some of the descriptions and experiences, they are not the same descriptions you would make or experiences you may have had. Seeing a place, one familiar or not, from the perspective of another's self-story helps to open up possibilities for perceiving and acting differently in the places you yourself traverse. These vicarious experiences, therefore, help readers to avoid finalizing the places they live in and the places they visit.

If we take the term "finalization" to mean the closing off of options and the reduction of something or someone to a few static attributes, we can see some resonances with the concept of compartmentalization. By thinking we know the whole of the story of a place, the whole of its value, the whole of its possibilities we finalize that place. By reading ecological memoirs that are attentive to the everyday sacraments of living in place and which bear witness to the depths of places, not only are readers aided in seeing

through to the real and the good, but the stories of these and other places are also opened up to new possibilities of becoming.

Writing and reading can bring people into ethical relationship with each other and with places as long as both parties are willing to enter into dialogue with each other and to approach the places where they dwell attentively and with an eye to witnessing its true depths. While many different forms of research and communication can help individuals and societies to see through to the real, the sharing of narrative-selves is particularly useful in helping us to see through to the good in places both near and far from where we live. In focusing their attention on the everyday sacraments of living, writers of ecological memoirs participate in the search for the words to life stories. In reading these memoirs readers also participate in this grand conversation aimed at finding our way to survivable futures for all.

11. Temporary Solutions, or Keeping the Dialogue Going

11.1 Reflecting on the Thesis

To return to the practical metaphor behind the thinking with stories undertaken in this thesis—narrative therapy—my role has been that of an outsider-witness. That is, my role was both to acknowledge publicly the writers' preferred self-narratives, and also to retell them from my own perspective, using my own set of reflecting team members so that interpretations of their stories were thickened, and the possibilities for action stemming from them were opened up.

Although I was not required to file an ethics committee application for this research, because the documents I worked with were in the public domain, nevertheless there have been certain ethical obligations in this work that I have striven to uphold. According to White and Epston (1990), narrative therapists and outsider-witnesses are ethically obligated to remain vigilant in ensuring that their practices do not impose “truth’ discourses of the unitary and global knowledges” (27-28) on their clients. Furthermore,

White and Epston call on researchers to oppose objectification and “challenge the scientism of the human sciences” (29). This resonates with Frank’s (2004) insistence, following Bakhtin (1984), that it is ethically bad to “finalize” someone by assuming authority in relation to their self-story, and by writing definitively and categorically about them. Such an orientation to an other is a monological one of projecting theoretical frameworks onto their storied life. Frank advocates taking a dialogical approach instead. An approach in which the alterity of the other is respected and responded to, and both teller and listener are understood as co-creators of ever evolving stories in which the selves might change through the encounter.

Listening attentively to the stories others tell of their lives is an ethical obligation of participants in dialogue (Greenspan, 2003). However, it is one thing to intend to take a dialogical, non-finalizing approach to the other in the social sciences and quite another to undertake such a practice, most particularly because there are so few examples detailing how it might be done. Again, it was Michael White’s writing on narrative therapy (2000), writings also informed by dialogical ethics, that provided me with the most help in this regard. The modified outsider-witness questions I presented in chapter 5 served me well in maintaining an attentive and dialogical orientation to the memoirs. This method also helped me to bring theoretical perspectives into the discussion without

finalizing the authors' narrative-selves.

In the process of writing this thesis, some of the reflecting team members I had thought would be important to the questions I was addressing remained silent in the face of the memoirs, while some that I had not anticipated bringing to the discussion resonated so strongly with what I was reading that I had to let them join in. Allowing my reading of the memoirs to determine, to a certain extent, what theories were used was yet another way in which I attempted to place my dialogical relationship with the authors' self-narratives at the centre of my work, rather than letting theory dictate who I would use and for what purpose.

I have consciously avoided any refinement of the social theories that were used so as to keep the memoirs at the focus of the work. The key reasons for using these theories to reflect on the narratives I read was to thicken understandings of the implications of the stories and to widen the possibilities for actions coming out of them. The virtual reflecting team approach enabled me to look in detail at some of the ways in which theories of who we are and what we ought to do resonate with the stories people tell about who they are, what they did, and what they intend to do later. However, stories and theories resonate together so in using the virtual team to reflect on the stories, understandings of those theories were thickened and their possibilities for action were

expanded as well.

There are several thickenings of social theory to be mentioned here, as I close this intervention into conversations of and about naturecultures. In relation to the theories and practices of narrative ethics, this thesis has opened up possibilities for action both in terms of applying these ideas to issues of environmental ethics and also in bringing more complexity to how place is dealt with in narrative practices. The stories of the memoirists also testify to the agency of earth others and places in providing experiences that can lead to the questioning of dominant narratives and the development or excavation of alternative knowledges of living. Some memoirists also derive narrative resources directly from their encounters with earth others, thus thickening understandings of narrative-selves as embedded in the more-than-human world. Finally, in developing a mode of engaging with published memoirs, I hope to have made thinking with stories more easily accessible to others. The methods and questions that were outlined in chapter 5 of this thesis should not be taken as a finalization of how to practice narrative ethics. Rather, they provide a formalization of practices that helped me to read attentively, to engage dialogically with the texts and to keep my own self open to becoming other than who I was through the process. These methods represent options of actions to take. Readers may find these methods more or less helpful.

In relation to other social theorists brought into this thesis, by sharing stories of people who have apprehended the faces of earth others, felt their responsibilities, and taken action I have thickened understandings of Levinasian-derived dialogical ethics. This has expanded possibilities by demonstrating that people are able to be called by the faces of earth others. By thinking with these memoirs, I have also demonstrated the role narrative thinking plays in deciding what response to take following the pre-discursive witnessing of the face of an other.

Care ethics have also been explored in this thesis in relation to earth others and to place, thereby thickening understandings of care orientations and expanding possibilities for action stemming from such ethical sentiments. In particular, Alison Watt's experience that care can inform and be informed by science opens up possibilities both for the practices of care ethics and science.

Finally, my engagement with these ecological memoirs also helps to thicken understandings of place and ethics and to open up new possibilities of practice for seeing through to the real and the good in and of places. Attentiveness and bearing witness were explored in relation to breaking through self-deceptions and seeing through surface representations of places. The practices of writing and reading were also explored as possibilities for actions in aid of attentiveness and in bearing witness to events both near

and far. Collectively, these reflections thicken Sack's "geographical guide to the real and the good."

Despite the utility of these thickenings and increased possibilities for action in relation to the theories of the virtual reflecting team, the focus of this thesis remains on the memoirs themselves. The autobiographies I read and discussed were selected because they dealt with the themes and commitments of ecological memoirs; that is they addressed questions of how we ought to live in relation to the more-than-human world. Beyond this, however, certain other inter-related commonalities arose as I thought through these stories, commonalities that are worth rehearsing here.

First, these memoirs were unanimous in the need to engage with earth others and the more-than-human-world in a non-objective way, allowing our engagements to change our ways of living and to enable us to become other than who we were. This need to go beyond the limits of science in our interactions with non-human others and places was particularly notable among the self-narratives of scientists. Thinking with the experiences of these and other writers, I have advocated in this thesis that rather than finalize earth others, the possibilities for dialogical relations with animals, plants and even places needs to be recognized.

Second, and related to the first shared theme, there were many stories of powerful

epiphanic experiences brought about by encounters with earth others who broke through self-deceptions of authors. In these ways, earth others were agents in the re-storying of people's lives. However, there appeared to be two factors important to facilitating an author's re-storying in the face of earth others: 1) willingness to reflect on the experience; and 2) having access to narrative resources able to accommodate such experiences.

Third, attentiveness was advocated by a number of ecological memoirists as an essential practice for overcoming self-deception and increasing the likelihood of witnessing moments of wonder and connection. Finally, through the memoirs and my own experiences, I explored how writing and reading aids people in re-storying their lives into preferred narratives that enable them to move forward into desirable futures. Reading and writing were also explored as potential practices for bringing attentiveness to everyday events and for witnessing how extraordinary such encounters with the more-than-human world can be.

The writer and reader of ecological memoirs are engaged in an ethical relationship, which requires of the writer that they take seriously the reflective examination of their experiences, and requires from the reader that they read attentively. The ultimate goal of this ethical relationship is the never completely achievable but

always desirable' goal of seeing through to the real and the good. It is this goal that provides the demand on writer and reader to engage with each other ethically. It is also this goal that requires everyone's participation. To quote again from Robert Sack (2003):

"Seeing the world clearly can never be an isolated project. We cannot sift and winnow without conversation and sharing of knowledge." (161)

The dialogical, narrative approach proposed and modeled in this thesis provides one possible means for engaging in such a conversation. A narrative ethics based on dialogue makes it possible to walk forward between the paired pitfalls of situatedness and relativism towards survivable futures for all. It does this by never standing still but conceiving of the standpoints of writers and readers as pivots from which to jump off towards new possibilities for being and acting in the world (Murphy, 1995).

Collectively, we will not be able to find the words to life stories until we learn to hear (or read) more clearly the words to each others' preferred storylines. Of course, we will not be able to hear these preferred stories until people have learned to tell them. By struggling towards their own preferred storylines on paper, published ecological memoirists provide both examples of how to go about resolving narrative crises and narrative resources for such revised self-stories. This is their gift to the reader. The reader's gift to the writer is his or her careful and reflexive reading of the story and his or her openness to be changed by it.

In this thesis, while I've borrowed the stories, and sometimes the words, of writers, I too am a writer in relation to you the reader. Moreover, as an academic I am not only literate in the "truth' discourses of the unitary and global knowledges" (White and Epston, 1990: 28) but to a certain extent I am expected to mouth the words to them.

In view of this final point of discussion I want to return to the quotation from Anne Buttimer that I introduced in chapter two:

"the social scientist's role is neither to choose or decide for people, nor even to formulate the alternatives for choice but rather, through the models of his discipline, to enlarge their horizons of consciousness to the point where both the articulation of alternatives and the choice of direction could be theirs" (Buttimer, 1974: 29)

By engaging dialogically with published ecological memoirs I hope that I have enlarged the horizons of consciousness for you, the reader, and opened up possibilities for you to pursue in the practice of the mundane sacraments of daily living inside and outside of the academy. Because of the nature of this work, there are no clear substantive conclusions to outline here, but rather a number of conversations that have begun and which I would propose are essential ones to continue if we are going to find the words for life stories.

I hope that in modeling a new approach to ethics in geography that the thesis itself has increased the possibilities for action that geographers have at their disposal and thickened understandings of a small group of social theories. Secondly, and of greater

importance, I hope to have engaged you, the reader, through my retellings of the memoirs, as well as bits of my own life, in reflecting on your own storied-life as it is lived in the more-than-human world. I hope, to paraphrase Scott Russell Sanders, that this thesis contributes in some small way to the grand conversations of naturecultures. For it is only in these grand but also mundane conversations, conversations waged between writers and readers, between people and place, between all earth others including the human ones, that the words to the other story, the life story, will be found and re-found, imagined and re-imagined, lived and re-lived.

11.2 Furthering the Dialogue

The experience of engaging in an academic process of thinking with published ecological memoirs has opened up many more questions than I have been able to explore within the parameters of this thesis, so before wrapping up I want to outline some possible future directions for my work. These fall roughly into four categories. The first category is a fairly simple extension of the work contained in this thesis. That is, there are sets of memoirs sharing similar themes that I did not get to engage with here (see appendix A for assorted lists of memoirs). I would like to think with these other memoirs about other questions using the methods outlined in the thesis. For example, I would like

to examine the use of Native American stories as narrative resources in ecological memoirs as one possible model of how indigenous knowledge can inform social scientific practice. There are also a number of writers who write specifically about learning to live in and love places that they conceive of as damaged. I would like to explore ideas of damaged landscapes and the narrative ethics of living in and with such places. In particular, I would like to work with the question: How can learning to live better in damaged landscapes contribute to making those places better in an ethical geographical sense of the term? I would also like to take the time to follow up on Ingold's (2000) concept of dwelling that I was introduced to by Jones and Cloke in their book Tree Cultures (2002). I would like to look at how dwelling is expressed in memoirs as well as how published ecological memoirs contribute to dwelling in place. Then there is the minor theme of gratitude, which ran through many of the memoirs. Through ecological memoirs, I would like to think about gratitude in terms of human ethical relationships to the more-than-human world and to earth others and also to think about published memoirs as gifts.

Still within this general category of extending my work on thinking with published memoirs, there are also some aspects of the process I laid out that I did not get a chance to examine and which I would like to take the time to explore at a later date. I

found myself moved to tears by much of what I read, and I would like to explore the practice of thinking with memoirs from the perspective of the newly emerging field of emotional geography (cf. Davidson, Bondi and Smith, 2005). In particular, I would like to examine the role that emotional responses play in the dialogical ethical relationship between reader and writer, as well as the ways in which emotions can both aid and block people in seeing through to the good and the real. In discussing these questions, I may also want to bring in some of the work done around moral sensibilities (cf. Bennet, 2001). Finally, in relation to continued engagements with published memoirs, I am interested in exploring the concept of inspiration in relation to the dialogical ethics of writer-reader interactions. There has been little written on inspiration in the social sciences but my sense is that it is an essential part of the re-storying of selves towards desirable futures.¹⁴⁵

The second category of narrative geographical work I would like to pursue concerns the socio-cultural-spatial context in which ecological memoirs are published and distributed. I would like to do research on how the counter-narratives embodied in the physical objects of the published books come to be circulated through broader society. This work might involve interviews with informants in the publishing industry and possibly even a global ethnography (Burawoy et al., 2000) with Milkweed Editions,

¹⁴⁵ A few of the papers concerning inspiration that I have come across in the social sciences include Lucas (1999), Kerfoot (2001) and Gill (2003) in management studies and Drake (2003) in geography.

the publisher upon whose books I drew on repeatedly in my own thinking with stories.¹⁴⁶

Such a study would not only be useful in terms of exploring the facilitators and barriers to the jumping of scales of self-narratives to public narratives, but would also provide me with the opportunity to develop and practice a narrative face-to-face human geography.

In developing such methods I might begin by drawing on Holstein and Jurgen's narrative ethnographical work (Gubrium and Holstein, 1999 and 2001 and Holstein and Gubrium, 2000); narrative interviewing practices from psychology (cf. Josselson et al., 2003); Nelson's (2001) work in philosophy on dominant narratives, counternarratives and identity; Somers' (1994) work on scales of narratives in society; as well as work in social movement research on narratives (cf. Polletta, 2002; Glover 2004b; Davis 2002).

Engaging in such research would also allow me to study aspects of power in relation to the circulation of both dominant and counter-narratives in society.

The third category of research questions that I am interested in investigating centres on critically exploring norms around what constitutes a legitimate product of academic geography. A number of the memoirs examined here were written by academics, though not in modes easily recognizable—at least from the perspective of geography—as academic. In geography the accepted forms of writing tend to be

¹⁴⁶ Milkweed editions engaged with in this thesis include Bass (1999), Deming (2001), Nabhan (2004), Ray (1999), Hopes (2005), Servid (1999), Lentfer and Servid (2001), Gruchow (1997).

academic journal papers, academic books, and secondarily reports. This has implications in terms of who is conceived of as the appropriate audience for geographical research: academics, governments and NGOs. If we are to follow Buttimer in her admonishment of geographers to open up possibilities for the general public, then different forms of publishing need to be explored as relevant, and indeed necessary, to the practice of geography including the possibility of publishing memoirs. Tuan is the only geographer to my knowledge who has published in this genre (1999).¹⁴⁷ This work will involve critical reflection on the practice of geography specifically and on scientism in the social sciences in general. It may also include attempting to publish, myself, in the genre of ecological autobiographical essays.

The fourth category of narrative work I would like to pursue concerns pedagogy, an area which combines my research interests with the practice of teaching. There is a rich literature on narrative in education studies that has been mostly neglected in this thesis because it was not directly relevant to what I was trying to do here (cf. Connolly and Clandinin 1999; Clandinin and Connolly 2000). I have also come across at least one paper on geographical pedagogy that takes an explicitly narrative approach (Cameron, 2003). Through both research and teaching I would like to explore the role of universities

¹⁴⁷ Pamela Moss includes a bit of autobiographical narrative in an article that urges geographers of health to take an autobiographical approach. However, this piece is still in the vein of academic writing, not creative non-fiction memoir.

in helping students to participate in the grand conversations of naturecultures, to break through some of their self-deceptions, and to hone their skills in seeing through to the real and the good. I am interested in research into pedagogy, not just at the university level, but also in terms of the role narrative approaches to place, earth others, and the more-than-human-world might have in public education at all levels including continuing education as well as in organizational development practices. In particular, I would like to do work with the Storycatcher Movement (www.storycatcher.net), a group centred on Christina Baldwin's (2005) book, Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story. The book and the movement aim to use the dialogical exchange of oral and written self-narratives in order to achieve positive social change. The goals and the methods of this group are poetically outlined in the following quotation taken from Baldwin's book:

"(Let us) make our own story in the world. (May) our grandchildren say about us that there was a time when many things looked dark, when people felt separated from each other ... and people were distracted and busy, driven along in the deterioration of many things they held dearly. But then, in the nick of time, something that no one could see, and no one could stop began to restore hope and instill them with wisdom and action: people began to remember the sweetness of story" (23).¹⁴⁸

An engagement with such narratively-centred social-change organizations as the Storycatcher movement from a geographical perspective might begin by drawing on

¹⁴⁸ The same quotation also appears on her website at http://storycatcher.net/storycatcher_network.html.

Stefanovic (2000) who advocates the use of storytelling as a means of connecting people to place and Gibson-Graham (2003).

In all of these various ways I would like to further my participation in those conversations in which the words to life stories are being searched for and amplified.

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Appendix A

Groupings of Memoirs and Autobiographical Essays that Were Read for this Thesis

Ecological Memoirs that Draw on Native North American Narrative Resources

Bruchac, Joseph (2002)
Butala, Sharon (2000)
Hogan, Linda (1995, 1998, 2001)
Kimmerer, Robin Wall (2003)
Lockwood, Mary (1998)
Nabhan, Gary Paul (2004)
Nelson, Richard K. (1989)
Owens, Louis (2002)
Power, Susan (2002)
Woody, Elizabeth (1998)

Ecological Memoirs explicitly dealing with attachment to “damaged”¹⁴⁷ landscapes

Bass, Rick (1999)
Couturier, Lisa (2005)
Grover, Jan Zita (1997)
Mills, Stephanie (2002)
Peterson, Brenda (2001)
Ray, Janisse (1999, 2003)
Smith, Annick (2001)
Steingraber, Sandra (1997)
Terry Tempest Williams (2001[1991])

¹⁴⁷ These landscapes are considered “damaged” by the memoirists. Other memoirs have dealt with landscapes which I, personally, would have categorized as damaged but which have not been labeled as such by the memoirists, these have not been included.

Ecological Memoirs Storying an Ethic of Gratitude

Daniel, John (2002)
 Deming, Alison Hawthorne (2001)
 Grover, Jan Zita (1997)
 Hogan, Linda (2001)
 Mills, Stephanie (2002)
 Nelson, Richard (1989)
 Moore, Kathleen Dean (2004)
 Hill, Julia Butterfly (2000)

Ecological Memoirs of Scientists Dealing with Science and the More-than-human World

Foreman, Laura Bowers (2001)
 Kimmerer, Robin Wall (2003)
 Morton, Alexandra (1998)
 Nabhan, Gary Paul (1994, 1997, 2004)
 Saulitis, Eva (1998)
 Suzuki, David (2002)
 Watt, Alison (2002)
 Williams, Terry Tempest (2001[1991])

Ecological Memoirs set in Pastoral Landscapes

Antonetta, Susanne (2001)
 Bass, Rick (1999, 2002)
 Berry, Wendell (1999)
 Brant, Beth (1998)
 Brende, Eric (2004)
 Bruchac, Joseph (2002)
 Daniel, John (2002)
 Daum, Ann (2001)
 Hogan, Linda (1995, 2001)
 Holm, Bill (1996)
 hooks, bell (2002)
 Kaza, Stephanie (1996)
 Kittredge, William (1997, 1999)
 Masumoto, David Mas (2002)
 McQuay, Peri (1993)
 Nelson, Richard (1989)
 Norris, Kathleen (2001)
 Pollan, Michael (1991)
 Powning, Beth (1996, 1999, 2002)
 Pyle, Robert Michael (2002)
 Quammen, David (2002)
 Ray, Janisse (1999, 2003)

Reid, Catherine (2004)
 Sanders, Scott Russell (1993, 1995, 1999, 2000)
 Sharon Butala (2000, 2002)
 Shepherd, Linda Jean (2001)
 Shulman, Alix Kates (1995)
 Siebert, Charles (1998)
 Smith, Annick (1995)
 Smith, Annick (2001)
 Straley, John (1999)
 Suzuki, David (2002)
 Walker, Alice (1989, 1997)

Ecological Memoirs set in Urban Landscapes

Ackerman, Diane (2002)
 Brende, Eric (2004)
 Condon, Phil (2004)
 Couturier, Lisa (2005)
 Deming, Alison Hawthorne (2001, 2002)
 Grover, Jan Zita (1997, 2002)
 Harrigan, Stephen (2002)
 Hiestand, Emily (1998)
 Hilbert, Betsy (2002)
 Hopes, David Brendan (2005)
 Kittredge, William (1999)
 Mitchell, John Hanson (1990, 2002)
 Moore, Kathleen Dean (2004)
 Nabhan, Gary Paul (1994, 1997, 2004)
 Pollan, Michael (1991)
 Pyle, Robert Michael (2002)
 Sanders, Scott Russell (1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000)
 Shepherd, Linda Jean (2001)
 Shulman, Alix Kates (1995)
 Siebert, Charles (1998)
 Smith, Annick (1995)
 St. Germain, Sheryl (2003)
 Steingraber, Sandra (1997)
 Suzuki, David (2002)
 Tallmadge, John (2004)
 Walker, Alice (1989, 1997)
 Whitson, Audrey J. (2003)
 Williams, Terry Tempest (2001[1991])

Ecological Memoirs set in Remote and/or Wilderness Landscapes

Bruchac, Joseph (2002)
 Daniel, John (2002)
 Foreman, Laura Bowers (2001)
 Grover, Jan Zita (1997)
 Gruchow, Paul (1997)
 Hill, Julia Butterfly (2000)
 Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki (2002)
 McKibben, Bill (2002)
 Moore, Kathleen Dean (2004)
 Morton, Alexandra (1998)
 Nelson, Richard (1989)
 Owens, Louis (2002)
 Peterson, Brenda (2001)
 Sanders, Scott Russell (1997)
 Smith, Annick (1995)
 Suzuki, David (2002)
 Tallmadge, John (2004)
 Watt, Alison (2002)
 Whitson, Audrey (2003)

Ecological Memoirs of Activists

Bass, Rick (1999, 2002)
 Cerulean, Susan (1998)
 Foreman, Laura Bowers (2001)
 Grover, Jan Zita (1997, 2002)
 Hill, Julia Butterfly (2000)
 Krawczyk, Betty (2002)
 McQuay, Peri (1996 [1994])
 Mills, Stephanie (2002)
 Nabhan, Gary Paul (1997, 2004)
 Nichols, John (2001)
 Servid, Caroline (2000)
 Shulman, Alix Kates (1995)
 Steingraber, Sandra (1997)
 Suzuki, David (2002)
 Walker, Alice (1989, 1997)

Ecological Memoirs Dealing with Mobility

Daniel, John (2002)
 Deming, Alison Hawthorne (2001)
 Sanders, Scott Russell (1995) in so far as he is against mobility
 Servid, Carolyn (2000)

Ecological Memoirs and Walking

Bass, Rick (1999)
Berry, Wendell (1999 [1981])
Butala, Sharon (2000, 2002)
Daniel, John (2002)
Grover, Jan Zita (2002)
Gruchow, Paul (1997)
Hopes, David Brendan (2005)
Kimmerer, Robin Wall (2003)
Nelson, Richard (1989)
Norris, Kathleen (2001)
Sanders, Scott Russell (1995)
Tallmadge, John (2004)