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Visual Scaling in Environmental Picturebooks: Ecopedagogy and Children's Literature

By

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Abstract: In his article 'Derangements of Scale' (2010), Timothy Clark raises issues of scale in relation to imaginative engagement with the environment. He highlights the shift in perspective which occurs when texts are read at a global scale, allowing the usually invisible cumulative impact of individual actions to be perceived. Looking specifically at children's literature, Alice Curry (2017) draws on Clark's work and proposes that reading at scale can allow for an assessment of the environmental agenda or "differing levels of responsibility modelled by a text". This article builds on Clark and Curry's work, focusing on the specific potential for analysis of scale in visual texts for children. The article highlights the scales which exist within the text, arguing that visual and verbal representations exist on a scale from "extreme contracted" to "extreme expanded" perspectives. I explore six contemporary picturebooks for children with environmental themes and argue that many of these texts contain a movement in scale from contracted to perspectives, enabling them to depict both the small-scale individual relationships with local environments, and the global context.

Children's books featuring environmental themes are increasingly common. A wide range of environmentally motivated texts are available for all ages, from non-fiction books focusing on teenage activist Greta Thunberg such as Jeanette Winter's *Our House is On Fire* (2019) and Valentina Camerini's *Greta's Story: The Schoolgirl Who Went on Strike to Save the Planet* (2019) to the wordless picturebooks of Jeannie Baker which depict environmental decline and restoration. Jane Suzanne Carroll has noted the rise of environmental themes as a focus of contemporary Young Adult (YA) fantasy citing novels such as Susan Cooper's *Green Boy* (2002), Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries: 2015* (2008), and Timothée de Fombelle's *Toby Alone* (2009) as examples of texts which "have responded loudly and defiantly to global climate disaster and the destruction of ecosystems"

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(2017, p. 66). Even in texts for very young readers environmental issues are increasingly popular.

In many ways these texts adhere to existing conventions within children's literature. Nina Goga et al. write:

> Representations of nature in children's texts and cultures tend to be filled with flowering gardens, exciting woods, fresh mountain air, vulnerable and courageous animals, plants and beings that are made of flesh and blood, wood, metal and different fabrics. Many have become iconic images and ideas of what an ideal or idyllic world should look like, or of how a threatening environment could be changed or restored (2018, p. 1).

Environmental literature for young readers seeks to develop on the long-established relationship between the child and nature in children's books, highlighting sustainable ways of living and engaging with environmental issues and debates. As part of their environmental ethic, many of these texts seek to foster what Val Plumwood calls "place attachment" (2002, p. 233). Plumwood suggests that in order to address the looming climate crisis it is necessary to "create an environmental culture that values and fully acknowledges the non-human sphere and our dependency on it" (p. 2). Plumwood argues that part of this process will be achieved through fostering "place attachment and place-sensitivity" (p. 233). Plumwood is among a number of ecocritics who have highlighted the "alienation from place-attachment widely shared across modern cultures" (p. 234). Alice Curry in *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Literature* (2013) describes this same sense of attachment to place as "phenomenal belonging" and argues that in dystopian YA literature, phenomenal belonging can be "a discursive strategy to interrogate […] planetary consciousness and to foster place-based attitudinal change" (2013, p. 21). Texts which model phenomenal belonging often do so by creating small-scale narratives, rooted in specific places, where the action occurs within a limited geographical range and focuses on the protagonist's relationship to their environment. It is the small scale that allows for a detailed exploration of this relationship between human or animal protagonist and the places in which they live.

This article explores a range of contemporary picturebooks for children focusing on the scale at which the narrative is depicted. The stories vary from intensely detailed narratives which focus on one individual in a specific place, to texts that include hundreds of subjects – human and animal – and depict the earth from a distance, the planet shining green and blue in a dark black universe dotted with stars and other planets. I analyse six picturebooks in detail to explore how they create a sense of phenomenal belonging through scale: Jeannie Baker's *Belonging* (2004), Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman's *Where is Home, Little Pip* (2008), Oliver Jeffers's *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* (2012), Isabella Bunnell's *Disappearing Acts* (2016), Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris's *The Lost Words: A Spell Book* (2017), and Benji Davies *Tad* (2019). Drawing on the work of Timothy Clarke and Alice Curry I will argue that these texts play with scale, creating detailed close-up imagery to depict characters and communities who display clear place-attachment, while also zooming out, in differing ways, to incorporate the larger macrocosmic scale, and that this playing with scale is part of a broader ecopedagogical ethic within the texts.

Questions of Scale

Issues of scale have long been the subject of ecocritical debate. Timothy Clark argues that engaging with climate crisis requires the consideration of multiple scales at once, because "what is self-evident or rational at one scale may well be destructive or unjust at another" (2012, p.150). Clark considers three scales: the individual, the local, and the global. He notes that behaviours which on a personal or local scale may have little or no impact (or even a positive personal impact) such as driving a car to facilitate family activities, can on the global scale be hugely detrimental: "the greater the number of people engaged in modern forms of consumption then the less the relative influence or responsibility of each but the worse the cumulative impact of their significance" (p.150). In his article Clark attempts to read "at scale", performing a close reading of Raymond Carver's short story 'Elephant' in order to demonstrate how reading at a global scale paints specific behaviours and attitudes in a different light, and allows the reader to see the story as part of a broader pattern of behaviours that contribute towards environmental decline and climate crisis. Clark argues:

> The larger the scale the more thing-like becomes the significance of the person registered on it (even as scale effects have given human beings the status of a geological force). Plots, characters, setting and trivia that seemed normal and harmless on the personal or national scale reappear as destructive doubles of themselves on the third scale, part of a disturbing and encroaching parallel universe, whose malign reality it is becoming impossible to deny (p. 161).

Whatever scale we perceive the world at – from the personal to the global – results in some kind of omission. Viewing behaviours on a personal scale means that the cumulative consequences of individuals' actions are obscured. One car hardly makes an impact, but 1.4billion cars being driven around the globe results in significant environmental damage. However, taking the global view can mean that we lose focus on the individual, on the impact that legislation or changes in behaviour might have on families and communities. As the individual becomes "thing-like" the small actions which might result in positive local impact are erased, the power of communities to mitigate climate change through collective action is negated, and the motivations for change are also obscured. Clark concludes stating: "In sum, reading at several scales at once cannot be just the abolition of one scale in the greater claim of another but a way of enriching, singularizing and yet also creatively deranging the text through embedding it in multiple and even contradictory frames at the same time" (p.163) .

Drawing on Clark, Curry (2017) advocates for reading at scale within children's books as a way to assess texts with an environmental agenda. Curry focuses on scale as a means of analysing the "differing levels of responsibility modelled by a text in its attempts to create some form of transformative impact" (2017, p. 72), arguing that:

> such scaling may involve an acknowledgement of the differing responsibilities, and possibilities to create change accorded to a child versus an adult, an individual versus a

> community, or a grass-roots movement versus a governing body. It may allow us to note the competing responsibilities borne by an individual or a society towards differing subjects or objects, each with some claim to their ethnical attention (p. 72).

The scales that Curry explores relate primarily to the kinds of environmental issues that texts depict for child readers and the change advocated in the text with the scale moving from "microcosmic" (personal or local) to "macrocosmic" (national or global) (p.72). Curry's terminology is significant because it allows for a comparative analysis of texts which may share an environmental ethic but take differing approaches.

Like Clarke, Curry's discussion of scale refers to movement from the personal to the global context. However, there is a second, more literal scale implicit in her analysis and evident in any literary depiction, particularly in visual texts; this is the scale at which the landscapes of a text are described or depicted, and space in which the action takes place. The visual scale from which we perceive the landscape, whether that is in illustrations within a visual text or through textual description, has an impact on how readers understand the space and the relationships depicted in that space. Representations of landscape exist on a scale from extreme contracted (close-up) to extreme expanded (distanced) perspectives.

Discussing visual depictions of the earth from space and the potential problems arising from such depictions Greta Gaard notes that "Ecofeminists have argued that NASA's whole earth image of the planet from space creates not only a physical distance, but a psychic detachment as well (Garb 264-78). In this image, we earthlings become mere observers, not participants. This whole earth image depicts earth as an object of art" (2010, p.658). Gaard asserts that these kinds of distanced whole earth views can create a sense of alienation from place, and that the God's eye view "supports the myth that we live apart from the earth, that we are not, in the most profound sense, earthlings" (p.659). Frank White in his 1998 text *The Overview Effect: Space Exploration and Human Evolution* described this large scale view of the earth as "the overview effect" while Yaakov Garb (1990) has termed it the "God's eye view" and argued that these kinds of perspectives foster problematic attitudes towards landscape where space is seen as something for humans to own and claim rather than to inhabit and belong to.

In children's literature, extreme expanded viewpoints can often be seen in quest narratives – a form that has been enduringly popular in writing for children. Texts such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) which include vast journeys moving between different territories and types of landscapes often explicitly consider questions of ownership of space. Non-fiction adventure narratives such as Random House's *Totally True Adventures* series which includes titles such as *Apollo 13: How Three Astronauts Survived a Space Disaster* (2015) and *Climbing Everest: How Two Friends Reached Earth's Highest Peak* (2015), similarly utilise expanded perspectives. This is often as part of a reproduction of the hero narrative in which the protagonist leaves the safety of home to venture into the wilderness and complete feats of endurance or skill. Here the expanded perspective helps to emphasise the protagonist's achievement and can often be supported by visual elements such as map images or illustrations. Contracted perspectives, in contrast, can be seen more frequently in texts which depict domestic scenes, such as Janet

and Allan Ahlberg's picturebook *Peepo* (1981), which shows close-up images of the protagonist's family and home, or Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* books which show detailed contracted imagery of the protagonist and the small home spaces that his family share.

Picturebooks, perhaps more than other forms, often utilise contracted perspectives. The picturebook is also a medium which encourages and rewards the perceptive reader who is willing to spend time looking closely at the text. William Moebius writes about the "six degrees of closeness" in the picturebook experience (2016, p. 30). Moebius argues that "The injunction to look more closely is very much part of the impetus of the picture book" (p. 33). These are texts that invite physical interaction. They have panels that open and close, flaps, pull tabs, wheels and other interactive elements that allow the child to reveal hidden elements, and to physically engage with the book object, but also to further engage with the narrative being presented.

The Ahlbergs' *Peepo* is a perfect example of the instruction to the reader to look closely; a close reading of this text, and many other picturebooks, shows increasing levels of detail and provides clues about the protagonist and their family's lives. In the work of author and illustrator Anthony Browne close-looking will reveal visual jokes or show a landscape that echoes the themes of the text such as the gardens in *Voices in the Park* (1998) where trees and lamp posts take on the shape of the hat of one of the protagonists. In the work of Jan Klassen it is often *only* by close-reading the images that the full narrative is revealed as the text and images directly contradict each-other, working together to create a more complex text. David Lewis writes that "A picturebook's 'story' is never to be found in words alone, nor in the pictures, but emerges out of their mutual interanimation" (2001, p. 36). While there are different levels of interanimation, "the relationship is never entirely symmetrical":

> Roughly speaking, the words in a picturebook tend to draw attention to the parts of the pictures that we should attend to, whereas the pictures provide the words with a specificity – colour, shape and form – that they would otherwise lack (2001, p. 35).

This interanimation generally requires the reader to be attentive, to watch out for dissonance between the word and image, or additional information in the image not reflected in the text. In environmental picturebooks the existing trope of close-up imagery can be utilised by authors to create intimate pictures of the natural world and to situate characters as intrinsically connected with, and belonging to, this place. This can encourage readers to develop a similar sense of belonging to their own environment.

Here, the specificity that the images convey is often explicitly related to place, and to characters' relationships to that place. Using contracted perspectives many texts explore the experience of being in and moving through familiar landscapes. Analysing the visual scales utilised in a picture book can help to elucidate and interrogate any ecopedagogical intent in the text, specifically in relation to the place-attachment depicted in, or promoted by, the text.

Place-attachment in Picturebooks

The books explored here employ extremely contracted perspectives, or a movement from expanded viewpoints to a contracted perspective, in order to highlight the human relationship with the world in which we live, and to encourage child readers to feel a sense of phenomenal belonging to their own environments. Benji Davies *Tad* is an example of this kind of use of contracted perspective. Both the visual and textual depictions are focused on one protagonist in a specific space and over the short number of days in which she metamorphoses from a tadpole to a small frog. In close-up images individual leaves take up the full pages, while the antagonist, a large fish called Blub is shown in intense close-up across a double-page spread. There is no overt environmental messaging in Davies's text, but the characters demonstrate a clear sense of phenomenal belonging. This is a text which shows place to be essential to the development of the individual and of the community and could encourage the child reader to think about their own spaces, and certainly to reconsider previously mundane spaces like the pond which is here shown to be a hive of activity and life. Throughout the book Tad demonstrates a clear knowledge of and sense of belonging to her home place. This is a simple picturebook for very young readers which retells the classic bildungsroman story of development and change, as the protagonist moves from one stage of life to another. Yet what is also highlighted here is the relationship of this community to their surroundings, and the physical experience of being in the different spaces, of swimming underwater and leaping over rocks.

One might presume that all animal stories for children display this same kind of place-attachment, yet many texts do not seek to highlight this connection and in some texts the landscape plays a much less significant role. Chris Haughton's *A Bit Lost* (2010) would at first glance seem to be fundamentally about place – an owlet falls out of their nest and then goes on a quest to find home, yet in this text the spaces are often non-descript with the action often taking place against a blank colour-block background.

In line with Haughton's characteristic style, the landscape is largely unrealistic, with trees, plants and animals appearing as highly stylised versions of themselves. None of the colours correspond to the animals that they depict. As the owl wanders around, encountering various other animals who attempt to help it find its mother, the trees and other landscape elements variously appear or disappear. The owl attempts to describe its mother but never its home. When the family are reunited, they celebrate with tea and biscuits. There is no sense in this book of how the animals depicted really live in their forest homes. The relationship between the protagonists and their environments which is so prominent in *Tad* doesn't appear here.

Karma Wilson's 2008 text *Where is Home, Little Pip?* illustrated by Jane Chapman follows a near-identical storyline: a young penguin, Pip, becomes separated from her parents and is lost. She then spends the rest of the book searching for her home and her family, encountering other animals who, like the animals in Haughton's book, attempt to provide guidance. Pip's constant question is "Where is Home?" to which she receives a range of responses as the animal

protagonists lovingly describe their home environments – from the top of the craggy cliffs where Antarctic sea-birds nest, to the depths of the ocean where the huge whales swim. The protagonist's attachment to her home is established from the outset with a song that the family sing:

> Our home is where the land is free
> From hill or mountain, twig or tree
> In our pebbly nest by the stormy sea
> Where Mummy and Daddy and Pip
> Makes three (2008, n.pag).

This story, which Haughton's text mirrors so closely in terms of the premise and narrative arc, differs significantly from *A Bit Lost* in relation to the specific focus on place, and on the relationship of animal communities to their home environments.

Neither *Tad* nor *Where is Home, Little Pip?* contain explicit environmental messages and therefore while they may foster the kind of place-attachment that Plumwood argues is needed as part of a broad-ranging approach to tackling climate crisis, in relation to the scales explored by Clark and Curry, these texts remain on the personal and local scale. The broader impact of fostering phenomenal belonging and how this behaviour might translate to human communities is not explored. More explicitly environmentally motivated texts, however, take this depiction of phenomenal belonging further, situating it as essential to altering attitudes towards place and creating an ethic of care towards our environment. Environmental picturebooks utilise the contracted perspectives evident in Davies's and Wilson's books but they situate this small-scale contracted narrative within the broader global scale of climate crisis. One such text is Isabella Bunnell's *Disappearing Acts* (2016). Bunnell's text contains 10 double-page spreads featuring a specific type of landscape, such as 'Endangered Grasslands' or "Endangered Ocean", and the animals who inhabit that landscape. Amongst the many animals depicted in each spread there are five endangered animals highlighted. These animals are named and illustrated individually on the far left-hand side and the child is then encouraged to find the animals among the densely illustrated landscape scene across the rest of the double-page spread. At the end of the 10 spreads there are 10 further pages where the endangered animals are once again listed, this time the illustration is smaller and underneath the image there are facts about each animal including where the animals live, the numbers of animals left in the wild, a short paragraph including facts about the animal and then a paragraph with the heading "Why they are endangered" (n.pag). Human activity is nearly always the central threat to the animals whether this is farming, poaching, habitat loss or climate change damaging ecosystems. This is a book that is focused on how animals live in their home spaces and the shared communities of animals who inhabit different environments. Throughout the text the child reader is asked to look closely, to perform their own zooming in on place, in order to find the endangered animals. A similar kind of close-reading is encouraged in the animal descriptions at the end of the book, as the child is encouraged to learn more about each animal and their habitats. The contextual information in the second half of the

book situates the contracted imagery of the largely wordless double-page spreads within the global context of climate change. These descriptions connect the threats experienced by animals all over the world through the focus on the human role in endangering the survival of these animals. There is an intentional movement between scales, from the individual to the global as the child moves through the book. The connection to the animals is established by intricately drawn portraits and the game of finding these animals in the landscape. The scale of the problem is then established by the information in the latter half of the book which lists 50 animals currently at risk of extinction due to human activity. Curry advocates for "a scaled reading of contemporary children's literature that avoids eliding environmental damage and instead acknowledges shared responsibility – towards the earth and towards each other" (2017, p. 77). Bunnell's text facilitates such a reading. The contracted perspectives of the illustrations, along with the incitement of the child reader to look closely, mean that the lived experience of animals and their dependency on specific spaces is highlighted. At the same time the broader scale environmental damage and shared responsibility that Curry highlights is made clear through the titles and the information sections at the end of the book.

In contrast to Bunnell's work, Baker's *Belonging* (2004) focuses on an urban landscape, the protagonists are human and instead of featuring landscapes from all over the world the book remains fixed in place, showing repeated images of one family's front garden from the same window. While Bunnell's book is located in the present, as the animal protagonists hover at the edge of extinction, and calls for radical changes to prevent the loss of the animals, Baker's book takes place over a period of two decades and is focused on the gradual changes which can make a significant difference in communities and their environments. Yet for all of these differences there are key similarities between the two books. Both ask the reader to look closely in order to fully understand the story that the book is telling, both feature snapshots in time, with no narration provided to guide the reader. Instead the requirement is to zoom in, to interrogate the image to find the hidden animals or to find clues about the family being depicted. Like Bunnell's, Baker's book consists of a series of double-page spreads (13 in total).

The text begins with an image of a large wooden window frame in a baby's room which takes up the majority of the image. Immediately outside is the family's garden. It is a concrete square with corrugated iron dividing it from the road and from its neighbour. In the garden a man and a woman stand, the woman holds a baby and the man has his arm around her. The only greenery in the garden are some weeds which have emerged through cracks in the concrete. Across the street a young boy on a skateboard has knocked over a woman whose shopping lies on the street as she holds her head. Behind her there are rusted cars in a yard. The building opposite the family's home looks run down and is daubed in graffiti. Cars, trucks and bikes pass by. The overall impression of this opening image is one of neglect; the exception is the family's neighbour whose garden is filled with greenery and the first image shows the neighbour planting in newly tilled soil. Through the following twelve spreads this scene repeats with small changes, first the family lay grass, then other plants. We watch as they become friends with their neighbour, we see their own garden thrive, they take down the fence separating

their garden from their neighbours' and their children play together. Slowly the changes spread through the street, a sign on a building reads "From Little Things Big Things Grow" (2004, n.pag) and we see the neighbour planting in the yard opposite their houses. By the sixth double-page spread the community have taken over the street, blocking cars. Their improvised blockade becomes formalised and their road is pedestrianised. Each double-page spread shows the gradual growth of a community which expands as the trees that were planted shoot upwards and spread out. In the final image the wooden window has become a door which opens to a balcony. The doors are open, a dragon fly darts into the room and ivy creeps onto the balcony floor. The family's garden is full of plants. A community garden occupies the former car lot, and it is filled with people and vegetation. Children play in a wooden boat. Plants cover the roofs of buildings and are in every window. Businesses which were vacant are filled with people. The greenery which began in the neighbour's garden has spread to many of the local buildings; businesses and homes are dotted or covered with green. The overwhelming impression of this final image is plant and animal life thriving, and a community who are living together and sharing their space. *Belonging* is an example of the kind of place-centred literature that Annette Lucksinger argues encourages children to "begin to contemplate the uniqueness of their local environs and their relationships to them. Pondering their position within this world and the extent of their power to create change, an environmental consciousness thus awakens" (2014, p. 355).

The only text in *Belonging* (apart from text within the images such as the Graffiti or signage) is in the form of a concluding author's note:

> Throughout the world, most people live in cities or urban communities and don't feel a strong connection with the land on which they live. Often people think they own the land – that it belongs to them as a thing, a possession. But at the same time, we depend completely on the land to feed us and support us and inspire us. And so we can see that it is the other way around: we belong to the land. If we keep it healthy it will sustain the web of life on which we depend. In some cities, communities are working to bring back the variety of local native plants and animals that once lived there. People are discovering the need to nurture and be nurtured by the unique character of the place where they live (2004, n.pag).

While the theme of phenomenal belonging is clear throughout the entire text it is made overt in this closing note. This text, like Bunnell's, requires perceptive reading, and asks readers to contract their viewpoint, to zoom into the details of the intricately drawn images. The perspective of the text is equally contracted, showing only this same vista on repeating pages, the changes take place in time rather than across different landscapes. Like Bunnell, Baker tells a story on a small-scale but places this within a global context through her author's note and through the non-distinct urban scene which could represent many major urban centres. Clark argues that "to move from a large to small scale or vice versa implies a calculable shift of resolution" and that "the larger the scale the more thing-like becomes the significance of the person" (2012, p. 148; p.161). Through creating an intimate story from a contracted perspective but then setting this within the global scale Baker manages to avoid rendering the human "thing-like", instead the possibility for small-scale action and the potentially positive impact of individuals and

communities is highlighted, with the implication being that, taken cumulatively, these kinds of actions can have a broader impact on the national and global scale.

Another text in which the movement between scales is even more overt is Oliver Jeffers's *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* (2017). The book begins with an extreme expanded perspective. "Our solar system" (2017, n.pag) is depicted with an arrow pointing towards the earth. Accompanying text reads: "Well hello. Welcome to this planet. We call it Earth. It is the big globe, floating in space, on which we live" (n.pag). The majority of the text takes expanded perspectives of various distances, sometimes zooming in to show a closer view of the land or the sea. Over a series of double-page spreads Jeffers introduces different types of spaces: "land", "sea" and "sky". He then introduces humans: "On our planet, there are people. One people is a person. You are a person. You have a body. Look after it" (n.pag). The following images shows dozens of different people against a blank background, the people are from a range of ages, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and professions. The reader is then introduced to animals with an injunction "to be nice to them" (n.pag). Again, a wide range of animals are shown against a blank background. The environmental message becomes clearer in double-page spread featuring a whole earth image with the message "It looks big, Earth. But there are lots of us on here (7,327,450,667 and counting) so be kind. There is enough for everyone" (n.pag).

The double-page spread that follows this is another whole earth image, this time the earth is farther from view, a small blue sphere with rockets and satellites circling it. The text reads: ""Well, that is Planet Earth. Make sure you look after it, as it's all we've got" (n.pag). The perspective then contracts dramatically. A man is shown holding a sleeping baby. The concluding message is that "You're never alone on Earth" (n.pag), which accompanies an image of a long line of people willing to help the baby/family. Gaard argues that whole earth imagery runs the risk of positioning humans as "mere observers, not participants" (2010, p.658). Through the process of moving from extreme expanded perspectives to more contracted imagery Jeffers attempts to show how the observer is also the participant – taking the child reader from the perspective of observer viewing the world from without, to the nursery which has been located within this globe. Yet the expanded perspective, the persistent global scale, means that the text never really establishes the kind of place-attachment displayed in the texts explored above. While dozens of people and animals are shown, their relationships to the spaces in which they live aren't explored.

Here We Are clearly attempts to incorporate the global scale, and to make this vast expanse understandable for the child reader. Yet while the desire may be to depict a whole world community – peoples connected by our humanity and our shared basic needs and experiences – the end result in this text is, as Clark describes, "always 'outside'" (2012, p. 160); the protagonists have no definable characteristics and the relationship between the people and the places they inhabit is opaque. Any sense of how we are truly to comprehend the planet that is persistently depicted is unclear. The command to take care of the earth is stated but what this means, in practical terms, is left unaddressed. The reader is offered no

sense of how the hundreds of characters depicted live in their environments, and whether this kind of behaviour is being advocated or chastised.

In his interrogation of scales Clark argues that the "liberal tradition" provides a problematic basis for approaches to climate crisis because "the founding conceptions of the liberal tradition emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (2012, p. 153). He specifically cites John Locke and argues that in Locke's work there is the presumption "that there will be enough, that the goodness of things provides so that taking by one group does not deprive the others" (Ross cited in Clark, p.153). Jeffers's assertion that "There is enough for everyone" (2017, n.pag), seems to echo this position. This is written as part of an advocation of kindness and a rejection of greed, but in the context of the environmental crisis that the text implicitly engages with it is problematic, particularly given that the more explicit environmental messaging such as the statement "Well, that is Planet Earth. Make sure you look after it, as it's all we've got" (n.pag) is so vague and includes no sense of what it might mean to 'look after' Planet Earth.

Certainly, reducing consumption doesn't seem to be one of the methods Jeffers would suggest given the claim that there are requisite resources for everyone. *Here We Are* seems to contrast sharply with Jeffers's other environmentally themed texts such as *This Moose Belongs to Me* which challenges the idea of human ownership of animals, particularly wild animals, or *The Fate of Fausto* which criticises the colonialist approach to claiming ownership of space while highlighting the agency that exists within nature. Where these texts are clear in their environmental messaging, *Here We Are* presents a vague and at times contradictory message. Perhaps unintentionally, the text demonstrates how expanded viewpoints and the God's Eye view can engender a sense of dislocation from our environment as it creates a story filled with hundreds of animals and people while giving little sense of how any of these people or animals exist in their spaces or their relationships to their physical environments.

Where Jeffers offers a succession of overview images Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, in contrast, provide a series of highly contracted images of specific animals and the spaces that they inhabit in their book *The Lost Words* (2017). The format is unusually large with each page almost A3 in size allowing for large-scale, close-up illustrations and text. Just as Baker includes an author's note which highlights the environmental ethic of her work, the preface of *The Lost Words* provides the context in which readers are intended to understand the following pages. Macfarlane writes:

> Once upon a time, words began to vanish from the language of children. […] The words were those that children used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker – gone! Fern, heather, kingfisher, otter, raven, willow, wren … all of them gone! […] You hold in your hands a spellbook for conjuring back these lost words. To read it you will need to seek, find and speak. It deals in things that are missing and things that are hidden, in absences and in appearances (n.pag).

Macfarlane associates a loss of knowledge about the environment with a loss of care for the world in which we live. Children are positioned as important custodians of knowledge and investment in what he calls "the natural world". This preface elucidates the authors' goal of fostering place-attachment. Macfarlane

makes it clear that their method for achieving this will be through requiring the reader "to seek, find, and speak." Like in the other texts explored here assiduous readers will be rewarded. The short poems or "spells" are told on a number of scales, requiring increasingly close reading of the images and the words. The text is made up of a series of sets of pages, the sets begin with a double-page spread with letters interspersed amongst close up images of plants or animals against a white background. A perceptive reader will see here that some letters are a different shade to others, and that together these letters spell out the word which will be the title of the poem on the following page. The next double-page spread contains the poem/spell on the left hand side while the facing page shows a detailed drawing of the plant or animal (such as acorns, bluebells, adders, and magpies) that are the subject of the poems. The poems speak to the nature of the subject. The opening poem focuses on the acorn and the final line reads: "as / Near is to far, as wind is to weather, as feather is to flight, as light is to star, as kindness is to good, so acorn is to wood" (2017, n.pag). This first poem sets up the theme that will run throughout the text which is of the relationships between different animals, humans, and the plants, trees, and other living things that make up our world. The final page of each set contains a double-page image, presenting the subject of the poem/spell in even closer detail, in the first set leaves and acorns are rendered huge across the page, sitting in the foreground of the image while an owl sits in the crook of a tree in the background in front of an undulating landscape with green fields and a blue sky.

The following sets follow this pattern, the poems vary in length but they share a focus on how the animal or plant exists in the world; the adder "basks" in the "late hot sun", the bluebell "Billows blue so deep"; the bramble "is on the march again, / Rolling and arching along the hedges" (n.pag). In Moebius's article about the "six degrees of closeness" in picturebooks, he argues that sometimes, "In this up-close encounter, we face something grotesque" (2016, p. 37). Yet *The Lost Words* demonstrates not the grotesque but the beauty in the mundane: individual blades of grass, the seeds of the dandelion loosed from the bud flying out into the air, the individual feathers on the back of a magpie, shining blue, purple and black. Detail so often overlooked in images of the landscape as backdrop are here highlighted as subject.

While Morris's illustrations focus solely on the animal and plant subjects of the poems and the landscapes in which they are found, Macfarlane brings the human world into focus at times, subtly expanding the perspective, introducing the "cabinet-maker" who will work with the wood from the great Chestnut tree but who cannot create the conker "Only one thing can conjure / conker – and that thing is tree" (2017, n.pag). Some poems are directed at a human reader who is encouraged to "Hold a heartful of heather" (n.pag), while others are from the perspective of a human who is watching the world go by. While Macfarlane's poems show the connections between humans, animals and plant life, Morris depicts familiar landscapes in intricate detail, the individual portraits of the subjects show the glinting blues and greens of a magpie's feathers, or the dusky pink of mountain heather.

There is an implicit connection between the home environment of the featured animals and 'our' home, given that many of the animals are common in urban and

rural landscapes in Great Britain and Ireland. Zoe Jacques argues that despite the long-standing interest in telling stories about animals in children's literature "it is surprising how little attention children's literature research has paid to the place of the animal *as animal*" (2017, p. 46, emphasis added). She argues that the animal is mostly presumed to be a stand-in for the human child, and stories about animals as allegories for human interactions. The texts explored here, particularly *Disappearing Acts* and *The Lost Words* are interested in the animals *as animals* and in exploring the relationships between these animals and their home environments.

The endpapers of *The Lost Words* further underline the environmental ethic of the text through a declaration that "A proportion of the royalties from each copy of *The Lost Words* will be donated for Action to Conservation, a charity dedicated to inspiring young people to take action for the natural world and to the next generation of conservationists" (2017, n.pag). A link to the charity's work is included as well as a link to a free guide for children and teachers for use with the text which aims to help build "lifelong passions for nature" (John, 2017, p. 4). The explicit 'call-to-action' for child readers which is absent in the text is contained here in the "Explorers' Guide" which encourages children to build on what they have learnt from *The Lost Words*, to look closely at their surroundings, and to help support the animals and habitats they have learnt about in the book. There is a clear ecopedagogical intent here and the connection to Action for Conservation along with the activity guide shows that the text is invested in praxis as well as theory. Gaard describes praxis as one of the "six boundary conditions for an ecopedagogy of children's environmental literature" (2009, p. 332).

She argues that "If the root of the ecojustice problem is alienation, the separate self, and the severing of connections, then ecopedagogy argues that the solutions must come in restoring these connections, between theory and practice, reading subjects and actions, narrative and print alike" (p. 333). *The Lost Words* and several of the other texts here attempt to create the link between reading and action. Baker's text models small-scale community actions that can create significant change on the local level.

The activities of one garden spread and help reshape an entire community, changing the way that they live in their spaces, creating space for plant-life in the previously grey concrete landscape, and building connections between neighbours as they work together and enjoy the benefits of 'greening' their environment. Bunnell's text highlights negative behaviours and encourages the child reader to become involved in conservations movements, as well as encouraging greater knowledge of and connection with the animals depicted in the text. Macfarlane and Morris take this connection between reading and action further by encouraging children to join a specific conservation charity, and through providing an accompanying activities book that draws on the primary text in order to embed some of the more abstract concepts from their book to inform practical action.

Conclusion

Texts like *The Lost Words* echo models of nature writing that can be traced back to Victorian children's literature. Suzanne Rahn (1995) notes the Victorian

fascination with nature and argues that children were enthusiastic participants. Rahn writes:

> Awakened by Romanticism to nature as a source of poetic and spiritual inspiration, [Victorians] lived at a time when exploration and scientific discovery were opening up new realms of nature on an unprecedented scale. Bitten en masse by the bug of nature study, they eagerly collected ferns, shells, birds' eggs, and butterflies, sketched wild flowers, and examined algae under microscopes. Children, too, enjoyed these activities, both in the family circle and, increasingly, in the classroom (1995, p. 151).

She cites magazines like *St Nicholas* as an example of literature for children which focused on natural history subjects. The magazine featured articles about animals and wildlife which were "often beautifully illustrated" (p. 151). Rahn includes an example of one of the engravings from *St Nicholas*; the image shows a close-up view of a fish emerging from the water. The fish is drawn in painstaking detail with individual scales visible, while the surrounding plants and water are depicted with similar levels of specificity.

These "beautiful, meticulous engravings" are, Rahn writes, "suggestive of the Victorian fascination with nature and its creatures" (p. 152). In many ways, works like *The Lost Words* and *Tad* are reminiscent of these Victorian nature texts. Like the Victorian texts *The Lost Words* uses detailed realistic illustrations to capture the child reader's attention and to create an emotional connection with the animal protagonists. It is a text that is centrally about place-attachment: how these animals live in their home places, and their wider relationships to other animal communities, whether these are peaceful or predatory.

There is nothing in Morris's illustrations or Macfarlane's text that situates the poems in the contemporary world, instead there is a timeless quality to the poetry and the illustrations. The images in particular are reminiscent of the *St Nicholas* engravings: highly detailed with contracted perspectives, showing small animals or plant-life in close-up illustrations. Rahn demonstrates that *St Nicholas* magazine supported "fledgling attempts at wildlife conservation" and encouraged young readers to become defenders of nature, however, she notes that the Victorian interest in nature "was often bound up in a desire to control it or even exert dominance over it" (p. 154). The contemporary picturebooks for children retain the same close-look, and the desire to inculcate an environmental consciousness but here rather than describing nature in order to support human dominance over it, human fallibility is foregrounded as Baker highlights the neglect that leads to urban decline, Bunnell cites the numerous human activities that have damaged and endangered animal populations, or Macfarlane describes our loss of knowledge and care for other animals and wider world. In all of these texts the injunction to look closely is accompanied by the implication that we, as humans, have been purposefully looking away, disregarding the impact of human activity on the world around us, ignoring the animals and plant-life that depend on environments we so wantonly damage.

There is a movement between scales at work in all of these texts as the authors and illustrators utilise scale in their attempt to convey an environmental message. Jeffers employs an expanded perspective and a movement between expanded and contracted views with illustrations that range from distanced visions of the solar

system to images of a man holding a sleeping child. The stated message here is that we need to take care of our planet in a text that stresses our shared humanity and suggests a similar subjectivity in the animals depicted. What is perhaps missing from Jeffers's text is the sense of place-attachment that other authors and illustrators create in their picturebooks. The connection between reading and praxis, which Gaard and other ecocritics have deemed so important, is not clear here, as despite statements encouraging the child readers to "take care" of the planet, the text doesn't model any practical interventions which might empower the child reader to act. While *Tad* and *Where is Home, Little Pip* seem to clearly evoke the kind of place-attachment advocated by Plumwood, they too contain no direct call-to-action, or connection with praxis for the child reader and so their ecopedagogical potential is perhaps limited in this way.

Texts such as Baker's *Belonging*, Bunnell's *Disappearing Acts*, and Macfarlane and Morris's *The Lost Words* utilise contracted perspectives as part of clear ecopedagogical ethic. These texts focus on specific communities, human and animal, and demonstrate the close relationship between subjects and their environments. In different ways the texts all depict how environments can support individuals and help communities survive and thrive, while also demonstrating the negative impacts of environmental decline, whether that is in urban landscapes or in rainforests. In this way these texts work to counter the "resonant detachment" pervasive within western cultures (Gaard, 2010, p. 658).

The authors/illustrators all tell a specific, small-scale story which allows them to demonstrate the phenomenal belonging exhibited by the protagonists, but then work to situate these stories within the global scale of climate crisis. It is this movement between scales that allows for the ecopedagogical potential of the stories to be fully realised as the small-scale supports the development of place-attachment and allows for small-scale replicable actions to be modelled while the larger scale contextualises actions and events, and provides the urgency that is so needed in any environmental discussion.

Curry raises the question: "should children's books with an environmental agenda force a reading at a scale that encompasses large-scale environmental reappraisal even at the expense or comfort of the individual human agent?" (2017, p. 76). Through moving between the personal and the global, and from contracted to expanded perspectives, these texts manage to focus on the individual while situating the individual human agent within the context of the large-scale environmental reappraisal which the current crisis requires. An examination of scales – both the scales of responsibility foregrounded by Curry, and the visual perspective presented in the text – enables an interrogation of how texts situate protagonists in relation to their environment: if and how the texts model or encourage place-attachment, and how texts manage to convey the cumulative impact of individual action in order to encourage sustainable lifestyles.

Picturebooks are uniquely positioned to play with scale in this way. They have multiple modes through which to communicate and so while text might work to situate the narrative in a wider scale, illustrations can provide the closer-look, or vice versa. They enable a playing with scale even in relatively short or apparently simple narratives such as Baker's *Belonging*. There is broad consensus among

ecocritics about the importance of addressing the "severing of connections" (Gaard, 2009, p.333) between the human and the other animals and the environments in which we live. Fostering place-attachment or phenomenal belonging has been positioned as a means of addressing this issue. The potential of picturebooks to model this kind of attachment to place both visually and through written text, while simultaneously addressing global scale environmental issues, makes them a powerful ecopedagogical tool to support young readers early engagement with environmental issues.

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