

# Earthsongs: Ecopoetics, Heidegger and Dwelling

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In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart,  
and soul  
Of all my moral being.

William Wordsworth<sup>1</sup>

Full of merit, yet poetically, man Dwells on this earth.

Hölderlin<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This paper discusses the notion of ecopoetics in relation to the work of Martin Heidegger and his concept of dwelling. Our aim, broadly stated, is to respond to the question: “What frame of mind could bring about sustainability — and how

might we develop it?” In the first part of the paper, we comment on Jonathan Bate’s<sup>3</sup> notion of ecopoetics and his discussion of Heidegger. Crucial here is the question of whether we can ever approach Nature in a non-ideological way or are all attempts to capture Nature, theoretically or poetically or narratively, nothing more than our own peculiar appropriation of it?<sup>4</sup> Ecopoetics might be conceived as a response to this question, although we dispute Bate’s view. In the second part of the paper, following Micheal Haar’s perceptive reading, we elaborate the four senses that Heidegger gives to Nature, and in the third section, we make some concluding comments about the notion of sustainability that might be explicated in relation to Heidegger’s four senses of Nature.

## Ecopoetics: Is it Sustainable?

Jonathan Bate’s<sup>5</sup> *The Song of the Earth*,<sup>6</sup> as he says, is a book about, “why poetry continues to matter as we enter a new millennium that will be ruled by technology.” He elaborates further: “It is a book about modern Western man’s alienation from nature. It is about the capacity of the writer to restore us to the earth which is our home.”<sup>7</sup> Restoring us to the earth is what good ecopoetry can do and ecopoetics (rather than ecocriticism) is not just the pastoral theme, which Bates asserts, following de Man, may be “in fact, the only poetic theme,” it is *poetry itself*.<sup>8</sup> Ecopoetics is more phenomenological than political and while its force does not depend upon versification or metrical form, it constitutes the most direct return to the place of dwelling. Bate<sup>9</sup> explains:

Ecopoetics asks in what respects a poem may be a making (Greek *poiesis*) of the dwelling place – the prefix *eco-* is derived from the Greek *oikos*, “the home or place of dwelling.”

And as he says elsewhere:

I think of this book as an “experiment in ecopoetics”. The experiment is this: to see what happens when we regard poems as imaginary parks in which we may breath[e] an air that is not toxic and accommodate ourselves to a mode of dwelling that is not alienated.<sup>10</sup>

When Bate uses the concept “dwelling” he is self-consciously drawing on his earlier understanding of Wordsworth<sup>11</sup> — for Wordsworth “remains the founding father for a thinking of poetry in relation to place, to our dwelling on the earth”<sup>12</sup> — and running this sense of place together with the special sense that Heidegger<sup>13</sup> gives the term in two essays based on lectures delivered in the early 1950s (“Building Dwelling Thinking,” 1950 and “Poetically Man Dwells,” 1951).

Indeed, there is a peculiar set of relationships between place, poetry, and bioregion. At school, many New Zealand children found Wordsworth fanciful, though they were forced to read and rote memorize his poetry as part of the curriculum. They did not understand his poetry because they did not appreciate the local topography and landscape of the Lake District, which is much more manicured, man-made over many generations, and “tame” compared to the relatively wild and uninhabited New Zealand land and seascapes. Clearly, the set of relationships between place, poetry, and region generates a further set of questions about the construction of the canon and the curriculum, the role and representation of Nature in the formation of national and cultural identity — in defining a people through representing their relationship to the (home)land — and pedagogy.<sup>14</sup> Within this set of relationships it is easy to see how a particular representation of Nature became mainstream. Romanticism depends upon the assumption in the west of the separation of nature and culture, for before it can contemplate any spiritual union or sacred reunification, separation is required. Thus, Romanticism, developed through a series of associations — intuition over rationality, feelings over beliefs, with a sense of mysticism and oneness with Nature — as though it was possible to overcome the alienation and reification that had emerged with capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization. Nature was often pictured by the Romantics as the garden, the landscape, the village, or the earth that conjured up an idealized pastoral space — a paradisaical Eden — which constituted the natural habitat for the soul. In the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth suggests that poetry is “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,”<sup>15</sup> but also “emotion recollected in tranquillity” leading to the creation of a new emotion in the mind.<sup>16</sup> The creative nature of poetic act is said to be the ability to be affected by “absent things as if they were present” and to express “thoughts and feelings” that arise “without immediate external excitement.”<sup>17</sup> Yet what really distinguished Wordsworth from other poets belonging to the Romantic Movement was his “view of nature as having palpable moral significance.”<sup>18</sup>

Yet, as David S. Miall<sup>19</sup> argues, historicist readings of “Tintern Abbey” focusing on the precise locations of the poem, reveal that Wordsworth strategically suppressed an awareness of aspects of the Wye Valley that contaminated his idealized view of Nature, including scenes of industrial activity (iron furnaces), the busy river traffic, and the beggars lurking in the ruins. These historicist readings confirm our postmodern sensibilities of the social and ideological construction of our own representations. Miall quotes Anthony Easthope<sup>20</sup> “Nature exists as we appropriate it.” As Miall himself argues, “Nature can never be known directly” and “Thus Wordsworth is deceiving himself (and his readers) in claiming that here he felt a spirit that rolls through everything.” Miall himself goes on to argue that the precise location for the poem is central to Wordsworth’s intentions and makes a specific contribution to Wordsworth’s view of our community with nature.<sup>21</sup>

Bate,<sup>22</sup> as a latter-day green Romantic, explains that what he calls the “greening of culture” has lagged behind the other cultural revolutions that occurred since the late 1960s, including the growth of feminism and of women’s, gay and ethnic rights. While we have feminist history, philosophy, and literary theory, there is no equivalence promoting environmentalism, no ecocriticism or ecopoetics. In the 1970s and 1980s there was no text of ecological literary criticism and certainly nothing resembling a tradition. And he argues the case for theory (against activism alone) by suggesting that, “Before you can change policies, you must change attitudes.”<sup>23</sup> He writes: “a green reading of history — and literary history and philosophy and every other humanistic field — is a necessary precondition for a deeper understanding of our environmental crisis.”<sup>24</sup>

Green cultural studies were slow to develop because “environmentalism does not conform to the model of “identity politics.” In other words, “The ecocritical project always involves *speaking for* its subject rather than *speaking as* its subject: a critic may speak as a woman or as a person of colour, but cannot speak as a tree.”<sup>25</sup> Environmentalists must speak on behalf of the non-human Other, of which we are part. While Bate<sup>26</sup> criticises the “postmodern self-indulgence of the Parisian gurus” against the grounded work of Raymond Williams and others, nevertheless, he turns to Heidegger (we might say, one of the forefathers of poststructuralism) to explicate the claim that “Poetry is the song of the earth.”<sup>27</sup> In this regard he traces the interconnections between three questions that occupied Heidegger in his later years: What are poets for? What does it mean to dwell upon the earth? and, What is the essence of technology?

Bate proceeds to give an account, somewhat truncated but largely accurate, of Heidegger’s view of technology as a mode of revealing and the distinctive form it takes in the modern era, where “enframing” conceals the truth of things. Referring to Heidegger’s discussion of original Greek sense of *techne*, and *poiesis* as a bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful, Bate arrives at the proposition that “poetry is our way of stepping outside the frame of the technological, of reawakening the momentary wonder of unconcealment.”<sup>28</sup> Poetry, when we allow it to act on us, can “conjure up conditions such as dwelling and alienation *in their very essence*, not just in their linguistic particulars.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, “Poetry is the original admission of dwelling”<sup>30</sup> and dwelling is an authentic form of being, which avoids Cartesian dualism and subjective idealism. These are the conceptual connections that Bate makes in order to arrive at his conception of ecopoetics.

In Bate’s terms, ecopoetics is experiential rather than descriptive, based as it is on the poet’s articulation of the relations between the environment and humankind. A green poem is a revelation of dwelling rather than a narrative of dwelling; it is “phenomenological before it is political.”<sup>31</sup> Ecopoetics is pre-political in the sense that it is “a Rousseauesque story about imagining a state of nature prior to the fall into property, into inequality and into the city.”<sup>32</sup> For this reason, “ecopoetics must concern itself with consciousness,” and when

it comes to politics or practice we have to speak in other discourses.<sup>33</sup> Bate argues, “The dilemma of Green reading is that it must, yet it cannot, separate ecopoetics from ecopolitics” — the very problem that besets Martin Heidegger himself, and typifies the connections between deep ecology and fascism. One cannot consistently derive a Green politics from ecopoetics, just as one cannot derive a Green politics from scientific ecology. Bate consolidates this position by arguing: “Green has no place in the traditional political spectrum  $\hat{A}$ ”<sup>34</sup> and, “Nature is so various that no consistent political principles can be derived from it.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, for Bate: “the very conception of a ‘politics of nature’ is self-contradictory: politics is what you get when you fall from nature. That is the point of Rousseau’s second *Discourse*.”<sup>36</sup>

He allegedly avoids “Heidegger’s dilemma” (if we can use this shorthand to stand for the problem of whether Heidegger’s Nazism arises out of his philosophy) by insisting on the radical separation of discourses — theoretical/practical, poetic/political — and by suggesting that while “[h]istories, theories, political systems are all *enframings*,”<sup>37</sup> “[e]copoetics renounces the mastery of enframing knowledge and listens instead to the voice of art.”<sup>38</sup> As he suggests: “To read ecopoetically is  $\hat{A}$  to find ‘clearings’ or ‘unconcealments.’”<sup>39</sup> This enables him the Heideggerian parting conclusion:

If mortals dwell in that they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, then poetry is the place where we save the earth.<sup>40</sup>

To read Heidegger this way (non-ecopoetically!) is to seal off what Heidegger had to say about poetry and technology from the expression of his Nazi politics; it is also, from Bate’s viewpoint, to be able [to] borrow Heidegger’s ecophilosophy without his ecopolitics. Yet, clearly, this will not do. It will not do for a variety of reasons to which we now turn briefly. First, Bate’s account is dependent on a theory of language as discourse that neatly and exclusively seals off one language-game from another, for example, poetry from politics and from narrative. Yet there is no logic prescribing genres or literary forms or discourses; they are simply contingent developments which are open to change and individual forms may yet come into existence, mutate, or disappear. Is there no politics of ecopoetics or poetics of ecopolitics? Second, to insist on the separation, especially in relation to Heidegger, is to ignore the organicity (a good ecological concept) of his thought and its relationship to its environment. In particular, it is to ignore the “ideas environment” that accounts for Heidegger’s politics and the reactionary side of his ecology and to misunderstand the sources of his anti-modernism.<sup>41</sup> Third, Bate’s account misunderstands the nature of politics and the politics of nature: he bases a spurious separation on Rousseau and the essence of the *polis* (of the city). Yet we may talk of “first nature,” “second nature,” and “third nature” (see Mackenzie Wark), and, clearly, there is a sense wherein we can talk unambiguously of a politics of nature that comes into

being at the point when human beings become aware, simultaneously, of the adverse ecoeffects of industrial and capitalist practices and, *j*/*i*/*l* collectively, of their power to reverse these effects. Fourth, it is to take Heidegger on trust, so to speak, accepting his ontology and the postulations of essences, rather than say, with Foucault, naturalizing or, better, historicizing questions of ontology.<sup>42</sup>

## Four Senses of Nature

There is a sense that we are already moving on from the question of sustainability. Arguably, it has already become integral to the enframing of technology, and is no longer a notion on the fringe of politics and radical consciousness.

The question of how to change people's consciousness in regard to sustainability is almost an historical issue. It has always had an element of historical reckoning. The question invoked by Heidegger and his Earthsong commentators — Bate and Haar — is whether there has been, or can be, any agency involved, or if the change in public awareness arises “of its own accord.”?

In any regard, the projection of sustainability into the future may have some surprising directions. Obviously, sustainability has been made an issue of consumerism and a topic that capitalism must address. Many people have relied rather lazily upon the possibility of the technological fix to environmental problems. Indeed technology may fix sustainability, not heal it, but rather fix in the sense of make static, retain, position, conserve, regenerate, and nourish the resource base of capitalism. This is the eschatological trajectory of technological enframing. The “end of history” with the calculable technicity of supreme rationality and the relegation of Earth to a recyclable, renewable, and, ultimately, replaceable resource. It is no longer an issue of how to convince people to accept and promote sustainability, but of whether human control, often in the guise of liberal rationalism, will ever again ascertain an earthly wonder last promoted by the Romantics. Or, if the demise of romanticism in the proliferation of corny paintings and films of the last frontier, will only be refound in new frontiers, new planets, new solar systems to terra-form in exchange for the homely, if exhausted, ground of this one.

## Earth

The Earth has been traditionally associated with the physiological source or substructure of the human animal; biology as the substratum upon which human animals build a superstructure of social relations, knowledges, politics, and technology.

## Equipment

In Heidegger's text, *Being and Time*, the substrata of Nature is not exactly inverted, but his concept of being in-the-world places primary emphasis on equipment rather than physiology. The initial relationship between humanity and environment is in relationships of utility and potential resource. Nature is instrumentalized. The forest is a place to exercise and a reserve of building materials and paper, rather than an autonomous sublime landscape.

In fact, he argues that the presence of "pure nature" is derived as an abstraction from the ready-at-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) of the relational field of equipment. Present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) is a secondary concept rather than a metaphysical ground.

Both of these relationships with nature are oblivious to its raw power or autonomous force. The (romantic) nature "which overwhelms us and enthrals us as landscape"<sup>43</sup> is neither derivative nor reducible to *Zuhandenheit* or *Vorhandenheit*. This hidden aspect of nature is present but unexplored in early Heidegger.

Heidegger is interested in where the Idealist separation of subjectivity from nature is imposed and if, where, and how it is transgressed. The "world" is a network of interdependent relations at a variety of levels; equipment, politics, morality, and so forth. The "world" of relations conceptualized in human terms limits our ability to comprehend natural earthliness. Or put in Heidegger's words, "All that we will ever be able to say, or think or experience of supposedly natural phenomena is necessarily situated within the world." Somehow, despite his notion of humans "being-in-the-world," dissolving the separation between subject and object that was posed by Descartes, Heidegger retains a sense of the Idealist separation between nature and humanity. The "world" is a different conceptual space to the "earth."

## Physis and aletheia

During the 1930s, Heidegger's thought took an acclaimed turn when he developed another approach to nature. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* and *The Origin of the Work of Art*, he rejuvenated two related Greek terms, *physis* and *aletheia*. This new conceptualization reinstates the independence of nature, "(What does "physis" mean? It means that which arises *on its own*)"<sup>44</sup> but it also struggles to transgress the rupture posed by idealism. "The world is founded on the Earth and the Earth thrusts up in the world."<sup>45</sup>

*Physis* began to stand in sometimes for Earth, sometimes for Nature, and sometimes for Being. In a variety of texts, Heidegger wrote: "This appearing and arising itself and on the whole was early on called *physis* by the Greeks. In a

single stroke, this name clarifies that upon which and in which man grounds his abode. We name it *Earth*.”<sup>46</sup> “*Physis* is Being itself”<sup>47</sup> and also “The inaugural arising of what is present in all being, but also falls askew, even falls into oblivion: Nature (*physis*).”<sup>48</sup>

There arises a complex set of relations and important distinctions between Being, *aletheia*, *physis*, and Earth. While at times *Physis* takes the title of Earth or Nature or Being, each of these is different. Haar “Â if the Earth appears, manifests itself in the world, it must enter into being. But it does not *stem* from Being; it does not identify with Being. If the Earth is neither the appearance of Being nor, as Heidegger will make clear, the name of its withdrawal, then does not its proper, autonomous power remain unthought?”<sup>49</sup>

Crucially, *physis* does not rely on the materiality of the planet, but rather on its dynamic of obscurity and emergence into the light of truth, *aletheia*. *Physis* is, at once, aspects of the earth coming forth and at the same time, necessarily, retaining a hidden element. “More precisely,” Haar explains, “Earth belongs to the dimension of withdrawal, of concealing (*lethe*) which holds sway in unconcealment, in *a-letheia*.”<sup>50</sup> Earth is not exclusively a secret, or a hiddenness, or even the “unthought.” It is always *both*: impenetrable, hiding elements of itself *and* allowing aspects of its being to show forth. Dissecting the flower and mapping its veins, cells, and photo-chemical processes in minute detail cannot ascertain the texture, delicacy, smell, or imperfections of its floweriness. The flower *is*. Heidegger explains, “Earth is the spontaneous arising of what is continually self-secluding.” To comprehend the Being of the flower we are better served by poetry than rationality. *Aletheia* is the process of *physis*. The concealing or revealing is directed towards an audience — they who care, *Dasein*.

We would be overstating the case to say that *aletheia* and *physis* seals the rupture of idealism. Earth is arising into the world, and this projection constitutes an upheaval that is never satisfactory. Movement is not quite the right word, but Haar is on to something when he writes, because the Earth keeps its own depths hidden, “Being essentially this movement of again taking up and going back into itself, it makes this covering rise up and visibly appear in the very midst of the world.”<sup>51</sup> The Earth exudes with fundamental familiarity, something that is undiscoverable and incalculable in rational, or even worldly terms. But Heidegger wants to say something further, and that is that the “Earth cannot renounce the Open of the world if it is itself to appear as Earth.”<sup>52</sup>

Poetry is one of the best ways that people have to bring the Earthly into language. This does not occur through an apparent representation but through a truth factor that is irreducible to the calculus of science or governmentality. Poetry is not a-political but a principle of politics. This means it might be held and contested by a variety of political spectrums. What gets argued is, for example, whether sustaining capitalism is authentic eco-politics and ultimately true to ecopoesis.



Heidegger puts together nature, truth and human agency in an integral whole:

Earth cannot do without the Open of the world if it is itself to appear as Earth in the free thrust of its self-concealing. On the other hand, the world cannot soar above the Earth if, as the prevailing breadth and course of all that has the essential character of the *Geschick*, it is to be grounded on something decisive.<sup>53</sup>

The decision — this is the point of interest to educators! The decision is the principle of action. It is the guide and reference point to all our interactions, both with each other and in relation to nature. The decision is what political activism is motivated by, and what it works to change. It is what teaching is aimed at. Green consciousness is a decision.

The concepts of *physis* and *aletheia* radically challenge metaphysics and the guiding principles of modernity and the Enlightenment. Truth and knowledge are not a superlative add-on to the fundamental structure of material physiology but are essential to nature itself. Understanding Nature via a first premise such as equipment or instrumentality is no longer the initial focus.

## Animalness: the status of humanity

*Physis* and *aletheia* integrate the human need to seek truth in the ground of Being. Poetry is a potent force for surmounting the Idealist principles that have separated human society from Nature. Earthsongs promoted by Bate and Haar lead to a post-modern principle that dissolves modern and Enlightenment distinctions between subject and object and should democratize the Great Chain of Being. But when it comes to the status of humanity in relation to other forms of life, Heidegger retains the prejudices of his times. Although nobody wants to associate with his politics, this prejudice based on the Christian hierarchy is accepted by most Heideggerians, including Bate and Haar. Humans are superior because they are capable of poetic insights. Animals on the other hand, are restricted to unreflective absorption in their environment.

Animals are unable to discern beings as beings. They are totally engrossed in their form of environment.<sup>54</sup> One might say — although Heidegger never would — that animals are completely engrossed in their world of equipment “only as non-isolable elements of its environment.”<sup>55</sup>

Heidegger is happy to acknowledge that humanity has little insight into the essence of life itself. It “does not mean that life is of less value or of an inferior degree compared to human existence. Rather, life is a domain which possesses a rich openness (*Offensein*) the likes of which the human world perhaps knows nothing.”<sup>56</sup>

Animals are not seen in honourable terms of alternative worlds, which we have little access to, but in terms of an *impoverished* world.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, to envisage a rich animal world is anthropocentric. Haar agrees with Heidegger's stance, "We much too quickly shift animals into a genuine world, forgetting that an animal lives in the limited space of an environment."<sup>58</sup> Animals are firstly organisms, from which the root word organ, which describes the physiological means of carrying out the will of the faculties, that is, a tool.

Heidegger also makes a distinction between animal *behaviour* and human *conduct*. Behaviour is limited to operating in an environment in an absorbed and self-referential manner. The utter absorption in the lived environment (often called instinct) is a compulsion that excludes awareness and agency. Heidegger regards it as closed and captured by existence. Conduct, on the other hand, is the openness to the manifest experience of things in the "Open of the world." Although, of course, on a larger scale Heidegger's notion of the epoch and the Enframing of technology is just such a finite and totalizing system and subsumes agency in a similar manner.

The third vital difference that Heidegger wants to posit between humans and animals is their differing attitudes towards death. Anxiety towards death is a crucial part of Heidegger's philosophy in *Being and Time*. It forms the framework for his concept of time and history. Humans always conceive of their lives as finite and thus it is possible for the blink of the present moment to contain the entirety of the past and a projection in the knowledge of this inevitable future endpoint. Holding this entirety together lends a perspective on the life we lead that is, he would argue, unavailable to animals. He writes:

And thus, just as it remains questionable to speak of an organism as a historical (*geschichtlich*) or even historiological being, it is questionable whether death for man and death for an animal are the same, even though physio-chemical, physiological correlations can be ascertained.<sup>59</sup>

## History

Again harking back to the tradition of philosophy which assumes that a teleological process guides history, Heidegger posits that there are underlying laws and a telos or destiny to history. Haar regards Heidegger's theory as an inversion of the telos of Hegelianism. Although Haar is not arguing that the destiny of Being is in any way a dialectical process. Destiny (*Geschick*) holds within it all the potential possibilities of history. Resonating, not with Hegel we would argue, but with Aristotle's notion of the essence as a seed that defines the potential pattern of growth. This is why the "commencement" is so important to Heidegger. The sending of destiny (*Geschick*) is held in its commencement. We

merely note aspects of the essence that has already unfolded.

Heidegger's teleology does not reach towards a heavenly otherworldliness, or a technological and social utopia. He pessimistically characterises the evolution of the world as an ever-increasing fall from grace. "The History of Being is the history of the increasing oblivion of Being."<sup>60</sup> This process is not a logical inevitability, nor does it follow a law of causality that, to some extent following Nietzsche, Heidegger rejects. He explains that, "Between the epochal metamorphoses of being & the withdrawal one can perceive a relation, which nevertheless has nothing to do with a relation of causality. One can say that the further away one is from the dawn of western thinking and from *aletheia*, the greater is the oblivion into which it falls, the clearer is the manner in which knowledge and consciousness break into the open, and the manner in which being thus withdraws."<sup>61</sup>

Heidegger believes each epochal manifestation of Being has a finitude that excludes it from being able to comprehend dimensions other than its own disclosure. The destiny of Being has reached its closure with the technological apprehension of everything as resource. But Haar says:

Final totalization does not mean that History is a total unveiling. What could the term *Geschick* mean if not that being gives itself, "sends itself" (*schicken*), gathers itself at each moment into a domain of unity (*Ge-*)? This unity is that of an epoch. But each epoch is completely closed and blind to what does not enter into it. There is a radical finitude to an epoch and to all epochs. Every epoch of History is *epoché*, which means a "holding itself back," "self-suspension," or "withdrawal," of being which goes hand in hand with its manifestation. The epochal or historical as such is deployed on the basis of a free emergence closed in itself.<sup>62</sup>

The (unlooked for) defining principles make an enclosed, finite epochal period, and the inhabitants of any epoch are not in the position to be able to activate pathways or even see outside it. The enclosure or Enframing; in our case of Technology, limits the field of agency.

Openness to beings as Being, the role of agency, creative conscience, and responsibility seem to form the critical differences between animals and humans, between existence and *Dasein*. Our world of equipment is more encompassing, and has with it a greater responsibility for damage control. The epoch, though, is a peculiarly human example of worldliness, and while we imagine that it is superior to the worlds of other animals or beings, we will be incapable of calling forth, in poetry or otherwise, a decision to care (which is the very motif of *Dasein*) in a manner that will guide politics and science from mere calculative rationality to a honouring and revealing of Being in its primary form.

Associated with his epistemic turn in the 1930s, Heidegger began to think that technology was both the danger in terms of human obliviousness to Being and also the saving power. The destiny of Being has metamorphosed into an epoch inescapably enframed by technology. The spark of life that is humanity is beginning to envisage itself more positively than as the polluter of the Earth. In Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy, terraforming other planets was both the possibility and the result of the political and ecological mess produced by consumer capitalism and technology. In Sam Neil's televised series on astronomy, terra-forming is imagined because the solar system will age and gradually heat up, making Earth unearthy. Technological creativity makes it possible to take *all* life elsewhere in a fast forward version of evolution. The spark of life, Neil states, quite possibly only exists on this planet, in the billions of stars and solar systems of the universe. Safe-guarding, nurturing, and regenerating it is the potential and responsibility of technology and humanity.

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## Endnotes

1. Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a tour, July, 1798, *The Works of William Wordsworth*, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1994: p. 207.
2. As cited in “Poetically Man Dwells ” (Heidegger 1975).
3. Bate 2000.
4. Of course, the capitalization of Nature is, in itself, part of this appropriation.
5. Bate 2000
6. Bate attributes the phrase “song of the earth” to Heidegger. Michael Haar (1992) in his book on Heidegger attributes it to Heraclitus.
7. Bate 2000, ix
8. Ibid., 75
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid. p. 64
11. See Bate’s *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, 1991.
12. Bate 2000, p. 205.
13. Heidegger 1975
14. We based this remark on the experience of one of the authors (Michael Peters) who taught English in New Zealand secondary schools for seven years. This was also his experience of reading and being forced to read Wordsworth as a New Zealand pupil, although on his first visit to the Lake District earlier this year this reading prejudice fell away after visiting Ryal Mount and Dove Cottage, listening to some of the recorded poems spoken aloud, reading some of his letters, and viewing portraits of Wordsworth and his family, and landscapes paintings of the Lake District. More importantly, walking through Wordsworth’s gardens and travelling through the Lake District, motivated him to re-read Wordsworth’s poetry and to appreciate it for the first time as an effect of place or location. In visiting the Lake District, he would like to acknowledge the kindness and

hospitality of Professor Maria Slowey.

15. Wordsworth and Coleridge 1798, 143.

16. Ibid. 151

17. Ibid. 147

18. Till 1994, vi (our emphasis). The moral significance of nature is evident in many of Wordsworth's poems. As he says, condensing his moral philosophy of Nature into a single stanza:  
One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good  
Than all the sages can.  
The relationship between humankind and Nature, conceived of as "the land," "the trees" or "forests," "the sea," and "the sky," is often imbued with moral significance in religious mythologies of native peoples (as it is, for instance, with Maori — native peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand) and taken up later by poets and artists (as it is, for example, by the modernist New Zealand painter, Colin McCann).

19. Maill 2000.

20. Maill 1993, 13.

21. Maill investigates three representative interpretive issues raised by the poem (Wordsworth's style of landscape description, his relation to the picturesque tradition, and the iconic role of landscape and human figures in the poem), before suggesting a precise location at Symonds Yat, where the particular configuration of landscape ("the river unites both the pastoral farms and the cliffs and cataract") forced on Wordsworth "a trope for what is natural in the human mind." As he writes: "A green reading of 'Tintern Abbey' argues that the mind is rooted in and shaped by the same underlying processes that can be

identified in nature.”

22. Bate 2001, 25 – 26.

23. Bate 2001, 26.

24. Ibid.

25. Bate 2000, 72.

26. Bate 2001, 27.

27. Bate 2000, 251.

28. Bate 2000, 258.

29. Ibid., p. 260.

30. Heidegger, cited by Bate 2000, 261.

31. Bate 2000, 266.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 267.

35. Ibid., p. 266 – 67.

36. Ibid. 267.

37. Ibid. 268.

38. Ibid. 269.

39. Ibid. 268.

40. Ibid. 283.

41. Peters (2002)

42. Peters (2001), in a separate paper inspired by the same seminar question, investigates Guattari’s ecosophical approach as a means to understand the recent



so-called anti-globalization protests.

43. Heidegger 1962, 70.
44. Heidegger, in Haar, 1993: 11
45. Heidegger *Holzwege*, 1979: 37 in Haar, 1993: 13
46. Heidegger *Holzwege*, 1979: 31 in Haar, 1993: 11
47. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 1953: 11 in Haar, 1993: 11.
48. Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 1951: 64-65 in Haar, 1993: 12.
49. Haar 1993: 12.
50. Haar 1993: 57.
51. *ibid*
52. Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 1951: 38 in Haar, 1993: 57.
53. Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 1951: 38 in Haar, 1993: 8.
54. [add] cf. R. Irwin, 2002, "Nietzsche and Heidegger; Nihilism and the Question of Value in relation to education" in *Heidegger, Modernity and Education*, M.A. Peters (ed.).
55. Haar, 1993: 25.
56. Heidegger, *The Ground of Metaphysics*, 1975: 371-372 in Haar, 1993: 26.
57. Heidegger, *The Ground of Metaphysics*, 1975: 274-275 in Haar, 1993: 12.
58. Haar 1993, 26. Furthermore, Heidegger believes that there is an abyss between humans and animals deeper than that between us and the divine. Cf. "Humanismusbrief" from p. 313.
59. Heidegger, *The Ground of Metaphysics*, 1975: 388 in Haar, 1993: 8.
61. *What is Called Thinking?* 1969: 56 in Haar, 1993: 73.
62. Haar, 1993: 2.
63. Haar 1993, 2.