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The Book of Red

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Summary: “The Book of Red”

Overview

A first-year PhD student in the English Department, I am working closely with Dr. Ann Fisher-Wirth, Editor of *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, on a creative writing project, “The Book of Red.” My project aims to both uncover the environmental damage wrought upon my hometown of Piscataway, New Jersey and to broaden the field of possibility surrounding ecocriticism, especially regarding fabulist literature and fairy tales. In addition to researching the ecological crises wrought upon Piscataway, I aim to examine the myriad ways fairy tales, fables, and other children’s stories have shaped and continue to shape the way our culture views the environment—specifically the forests—as well as how it treats young women. My project explores the ways magical sensibilities can help expose the ecological crises which are largely invisible.

Intellectual Merit

My work is important to the field of ecocriticism because as the dangers of climate change and environmental destruction become more urgent and apparent, it is crucial to find new ways to identify, discuss, and ultimately heal the damage. In the introduction to *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, Anna Tsing et al. question our survival in this era of indeterminate environmental damage, asking “[h]ow shall we find our way? Perhaps sensibilities from folklore and science fiction—such as monsters and ghosts—will help?” (M2). Monsters and ghosts may not initially seem like an answer to the invisible, slow violence of the Anthropocene, but these two theories share an alignment. In his groundbreaking book *Slow Violence*, Rob Nixon calls upon poet activists to practice “incessant compromise and incessant re-invention” in order to stimulate awareness and change. I believe fabulist elements and fairy tale are an important method of such re-invention.

External Opportunity

The external opportunity I am pursuing in conjunction with the GSC grant is the Ezra Jack Keats/Janina Domanska Research Fellowship. Established by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, the Janina Domanska Literary Estate, and the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi, this grant is awarded to scholars engaged in projects based substantially on the holdings of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection. My project is engaged with several versions of fairy tales held within this collection’s archives, which contain original manuscripts and illustrations of more than 1,300 authors and illustrators, dating from 1530 to the present. The application is due by October 15, 2020. This particular fellowship will not only allow me to access specific texts but also help me to illuminate the connections between age-old fairy tales and contemporary ecocriticism.