

Planetary gardening via female-led anthologies of women's poetry in French

cultural geographies

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Abstract

This article showcases the fruitfulness of cross-fertilizing geographical and literary methods to address the complexities of women's poems being compiled into an anthology – a process of negotiation compounded by male domination of the canon. Inspired by Gilles Clément's reflections on the 'planetary garden', we radically posit female-edited poetry anthologies as a prism for rethinking ecosystem management. Focussing on three landmark collections of French-language women's writings, we illustrate how a wide variety of cultural production is essential for a flourishing future, just as greater biodiversity enhances an ecoregion's resilience in the face of stressors like air pollution or heat shock. Within this experimental interdisciplinary framework, two main questions are explored: first, how an appreciation of anthologies through ecopoetics propels scalar thinking about issues to do with the climate crisis and social justice; second, what happens when a poem is transplanted into an anthological milieu, where a plurality of distributed agencies gives a collective sense of becoming more than just a sum of distinctive parts. Proposing an innovative model whereby a 'poem-flower' takes root in an 'anthology-garden', our article ultimately argues that paying attention to female-led anthologizations' diversifying role can enhance thinking about ecological sustainability as much as social inclusion.

Keywords

anthology-garden, Anthropocene, environmental humanities, France, gender justice, long twentieth century, poem-flower, poetic interactions, scale, women's writing

Introduction

In summer 2018, news circulated on social media that *The Paris Review* – a leading Paris-based literary magazine in English dating back to 1953 – was launching a monthly column entitled

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#FeminizeYourCanon, with the aim of shining light on ‘under-recognized’ women writers.¹ It might come as a surprise that the magazine’s editors deemed this move necessary in the wake of decades of feminist movements and educational programs in Women’s Studies around the world. Weren’t they just punching into a paper bag? In the 21st century, could there *really* be an issue of equitable representation of women’s voices in the literary canon? The award-winning editor and writer Sari Botton wholeheartedly welcomed the initiative: ‘it’s going to take a lot of work to correct history so that it includes all the great women whose lives and work have been overlooked and obliterated by the patriarchy’.² Patently, the injustices of a social system dominated by toxic masculinity still felt a long way from being righted. Botton’s reasoning came hot on the heels of hubbub in France over the national curriculum for secondary education. A teacher working in Paris’s south-eastern suburbs, Françoise Cahen, made headlines in 2016 with a petition about women’s writing having been absent from the school-leaving baccalaureate exam throughout her decades-long career, with her mentioning the strengths of Marguerite Duras, Annie Ernaux, Madame de Lafayette and Marguerite Yourcenar just for starters.³ The Minister for Education, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, responded with a commitment to give women their rightful place.⁴ After all, how could anyone be expected to understand the true scope of cultural and intellectual history without knowing about writings arising from 51% of France’s adult sex ratio?⁵

Rhyme like a woman. . . ?

Some of the foremost evidence of ‘gender discourse hav[ing] been of particular formative influence in the style of mapping canonical world literature’⁶ is to be found in French-speaking contexts, where a woman’s originality has seldom been grounds for recognition as a nationally significant writer.⁷ Often, women have been left off the map of literary history altogether. One step towards rectifying the problem of dominant power structures is to pay heed to realms of experience located at supposed ‘margins’ that are based on cultural, linguistic and locational bias.⁸ On the basis that non-belonging can be a stimulus for calling hierarchies of power into question,⁹ our article turns to female-edited anthologies of women’s poetry in French as crucial contributions to world heritage and a wellspring of insights into environmental matters. Inspired not only by ecofeminist approaches to intersectionality,¹⁰ but also by the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal about Gender Equality,¹¹ we wish to demonstrate the generativity of a diverse constellation of ways of being.

Efforts to redress the silencing of female voices have revolved around geographical matters – not least histories of colonialism – in compilations such as Nicole Brossard and Lisette Girouard’s *Anthologie de la poésie des femmes au Québec* [Anthology of Poetry by Women in Québec] from 1991/2003 or Irène Assiba d’Almeida’s *A Rain of Words: A Bilingual Anthology of Women’s Poetry in Francophone Africa* from 2009.¹² A comparably potent gendered approach is exemplified by Jeanine Moulin’s *Huit siècles de poésie féminine* [Eight Centuries of Feminine Poetry] from 1975, which built on her two-volume *La poésie féminine* [Feminine Poetry] from 1963 to 1966, while doing away with bio-bibliographical notes.¹³ Moulin drew on the anti-colonial idea of *négritude* [black consciousness] espoused by 20th-century poet-politicians like Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas when rationalizing her selection in terms of *féminitude* [female consciousness]. This type of assemblage has proven fruitful and polemical, in that anthologies of women poets exist at the intersection of literary and non-literary criteria, namely compositional form and authorial gender.¹⁴

In the spirit of reinstating women’s experiences that have slipped out of the collective memory,¹⁵ the coming pages appraise female-led anthologies using a scalar approach to how sociocultural and ecological diversity are materially and discursively entangled. Our objective is to show how the anthologization of poetry can generate understandings of ecological relation at the meso-,

macro- and microscale in terms of paratexts, links between compilations, and how poems speak to each other. The three volumes under analysis were published during the long twentieth century (1892–2010), stretching from France’s legal formalization of secondary education for adolescent women to the emergence of #FemmesEnAvant [Women to the Fore]:

- Adine Riom’s *Les femmes poètes bretonnes* [Breton Women Poets] (1892), showcasing regional voices;¹⁶
- Christine Planté’s *Femmes poètes du XIX^e siècle* [Nineteenth-Century Women Poets] (1998/2010), a benchmark in recovery work;¹⁷
- Gretchen Schultz’s *An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Women’s Poetry from France* (2008), which overlaps with Planté’s volume with respect to several primary sources in French, each accompanied by a different translator’s version in English.¹⁸

Given that women’s poetry has barely featured in anthologies of poetry in French,¹⁹ these compilations are quite exceptional. Each book contains French-speaking women poets from varied walks of life from the late 1700s to the early 1900s, when political and social revolutions in France paralleled stylistic innovations like the emergence of Romanticism and free verse.²⁰ Many of the figures in question were transformative writers but did not get their due in the public sphere.

Schultz’s volume is exemplary of bilingual collections that compound the (un)situatedness of each and every anthologized poem: its facing-page source texts in French and translations in English are an opening towards linguistic cross-fertilization. More generally, an anthology orchestrates patterns of literary circulation and moments of dwelling²¹ by way of a form that invites attention to ‘zigzagging’.²² For Emma Wagstaff and Nina Parish, reflecting on chorally selecting and translating contemporary French poetry, an anthology ends up ‘challenging the parameters of the source culture poetic system [. . .] because the process of “removing” the texts from their source systems and placing them in a new dialogue with one another is a way of freeing them from habits of categorization that have proved constraining’.²³ What’s more, the anthological format can be empowering, as Craig Santos Perez shows in the context of Indigenous Pacific Islander literatures that have been atomized in colonial discourses: anthologizing and ‘reading *anthologically*’ can foster cultural awakenings by creating networks and extolling connections between differences.²⁴

Reconceptualizing ecosystem management through poetry anthologies

A compilation of poems can be perceived in terms of sub-units similar to gardens or parcels of farmland. A key commonality between the anthological and the cultivational, in fact, is how bringing together elements for the sake of productivity in a certain setting both destroys and creates interdependencies. This can be done responsibly or not. On the one hand, privileged humans have refashioned Earth and its inhabitants to their own ends, giving rise to the Anthropocene,²⁵ otherwise intelligible as an epoch of ‘relocations of [. . .] generative units: plants, animals, microbes, people’.²⁶ On the other hand, ‘gardening *against* the Anthropocene means we need to place relations of justice at the center of our work alongside those of environmental sustainability’.²⁷ An aspiration in what follows is to show how environmental justice can be nourished through applying garden studies²⁸ to female-led anthologization, with respect to enhancing representation and diversification. There seems to be significant value in extrapolating from Gilles Clément’s postulation in *Le jardin planétaire: Réconcilier l’homme et la nature* [The Planetary Garden: Reconciling Man and Nature] of Earth being gardened by humanity²⁹ so as to envisage an anthologist as a gardener selecting cultivars based on style or theme, all without losing sight of

how the planetary garden – an unevenly produced and contested site – entails a series of tensions.

Accounting for worldmaking is a balancing act of big stories and small ones,³⁰ bound up with how ‘diverse human understandings about, and activities in, the environment are critical factors in making sense of, and responsibly inhabiting, a dynamic more-than-human-world’.³¹ When it comes to understanding place-based identities as a confluence of multiplicities,³² French cultural production from the second half of the 19th century – the era of ecology being formalized as a science of interactions between organisms and environments – has plenty to offer.³³ Work in ecopoetics at the juncture of *οἶκος* [dwelling] and *ποιεῖν* [creating] increasingly illustrates poetry’s conceptual and representational commonalities with physical geographies of de- and re-construction,³⁴ particularly how ideas of home take form.³⁵ There is much to be gained from ecopoetically exploring the extent to which the material-discursive entanglements of poetic creation approximate the work of an architect³⁶ or a gardener within a *naturalcultural* tangle of relations, thereby distinguishing a *poet(h)ics*³⁷ that takes into consideration the connectedness of all living things.³⁸

With regard to a gardening-oriented approach, an anthology is literally ‘flowers gathered in a collection’: in Ancient Greek, *ἀνθολογία* [anthology/flower-gathering] derives from *ἄνθος* [flowers] and *λέγειν* [gather]; in French, *florilège* [anthology] is based on *flōrilegium*, a recasting of the Greek word in Neo-Latin as a calque that melds *flōs* [flower] and *legere* [select/extract]. This etymology points to perceptual gains when transplanting poems from an original unitary setting to a composite environment in which juxtapositions of the canonical and non-canonical spur rethinking of a whole spectrum of notions.³⁹ Relocation stimulates varied experiences of content and form: the new context brings about alterations in meaning, including the manifestation of significations latent in the original.⁴⁰ Fundamentally, anthologies are a bunching of vivid blooms between which there is a constant back-and-forth. In short, *becoming-anthology* is more than a sum of distinctive texts – it brings a whole other dimension to the *where* of a literary text affecting how it gives a sense of *what*, *why* and *how*.⁴¹

Expanding on ecological modelling of flows of literature,⁴² it is revelatory to probe how curating an anthology is akin to manipulating an ecosystem, defined as ‘the complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space’.⁴³ This proposition about understanding anthologies and ecosystem management as two sides of the same coin can be connected to the ways in which anthologization involves negotiations around marketability, feasibility and priorities for growth that shape the end product with greater or lesser subtlety.⁴⁴ Selections are undertaken based on preferences for subject matter, genre and form,⁴⁵ all entangled in a certain positionality.⁴⁶ Interventions like prefaces or annotations play a cultivational role, with one crop of poetry being propagated through a series of presentational doings.⁴⁷ Anthologists thus shape a literary canon and cultural history⁴⁸ through a potted version of the world that is rooted in a sense of what ought to be preserved.⁴⁹

Three scales for the anthology-garden

Heeding landscape ecology, wherein ‘a landscape is a mosaic of connected and interacting ecosystems’,⁵⁰ the world of anthologies corresponds to planetary gardening in a variety of ways. Given that ‘the scale at which one reads a text, and the scale effects implicated, drastically alter the kinds of significance attached to elements of it’,⁵¹ it is worth exploring three levels in particular: (1) the mesoscale of an assembler’s paratexts; (2) the macroscale of correspondences between compilations across centuries; and (3) the microscale of an anthologized poem. Each of these qualities is bound up with reading as an act of ‘living-in-an-environment [. . .] which fully incorporates ecologies of all kinds, and [. . .] all kinds of perceptual/conceptual contact’.⁵² One

micro-level example to be discussed here is how something unique results from the juxtaposition of two authors' similarly rhythmical and rhymed stanzas that respectively depict a trembling deer and an almond tree's transient pale-pink flowers in the era of the subversion of traditional forms like the 12-syllable alexandrine.⁵³

Regarding paratexts as articulations of a main poetic text, bio-bibliographical notes and their 'parasitic'⁵⁴ ilk constitute a 'soil effect'⁵⁵ whereby stating or omitting certain information can be productive or constrictive by turns. Such frameworks run counter to free relations association and inevitably bias a reading, especially when they appear before a poem-flower. The difference between a tone of approval or contempt in an introduction, for instance, can result in stanzas withering or blossoming in a reader's eyes. On this basis, a number of anthologists have made a point of allowing primary texts to germinate organically by placing contextualizing statements and notes at the end of volumes or even going without an extensive critical apparatus. This oft overlooked scale has a huge impact on the overall ecosystem, influencing not only the macro level to do with which poem-flowers end up being transplanted and surviving across time, but also the micro level to do with which poem-flowers get to flourish through closer appreciation – a considerable part of our analysis shall shine a spotlight on this site of contrasting peculiarities.

As far as connections between anthology-gardens are concerned, preferences for certain poem-flowers have transcended centuries, continents and languages. This recurrence/replanting among many editors propagates favoured genera and classes, thus expanding pollination pathways and the boundaries of feedback loops between primary texts. That said, transplantational tastes – shaped by structural factors like a prevailing political climate – can lead to a reduction in biodiversity and polymorphism unless a breadth of types is valued as a prerequisite. The transplanting of a poem-flower into an anthology-garden entails cross-pollination with diverse texts, opening up relations ranging from individual words to line rhythms. In what follows, we undertake meso-/macro-/micro-analysis of female-led anthologization so as to show how looking at this process can enhance thinking about ecological sustainability as much as social inclusion.

Meso: an anthologist's paratext – Adine Riom and Alphonse Séché

The impact of a prejudiced perspective comes across starkly when comparing the framing of female poets between anthologies produced by women and men around the turn of the 20th century.⁵⁶ Adine Riom's *Les femmes poètes bretonnes* [Breton Women Poets] from 1892, printed just 500 times, is a remarkable volume emerging from the highly specialized Society of Breton Bibliophiles in one of Brittany's most vibrant centres, Nantes, where Riom held a successful literary salon.⁵⁷ Her assemblage of neglected authors provides an alternative to the status quo of 'Parisianism',⁵⁸ in keeping with several local anthologies from a period in which ideas of poetry and Breton exceptionalism went hand in hand, set against the backdrop of the French nation-building drive.⁵⁹ Riom's preface eloquently portrays Breton women as creative agents rather than objects/muses: 'la femme bretonne est essentiellement poète; toute sa vie est remplie par les rêves divins' [the Breton woman is essentially a poet; her whole life is filled with divine dreams].⁶⁰ Her unprejudiced appreciation of poems by women in their own right stands in stark contrast to most contemporaneous perceptions of this literary production, as exemplified by the widely read two-volume *Les muses françaises* [French Muses] from 1908 by the Paris-based journalist and literary critic Alphonse Séché (1876–1964), born in Nantes within a renowned literary family.⁶¹ This compilation contributed to diversifying a national tradition in which female, provincial and working-class poets were marginalized, but Séché's bio-bibliographical notes tend to give a sexist view of women's ability to rhyme 'properly', intimated in the passive terminology of 'muses', used to define women poets along the lines of

objectified figures in male-authored poetry. By contrast, Riom's descriptive title is a meso-level affirmation of women's poetic agency that establishes a garden in which poem-flowers can prosper from the get-go.

Despite Riom being a key figure on the 19th-century poetic scene, Séché's stance on her is damning. According to his male gaze, 'elle pêche surtout par la forme. Il est rare qu'on trouve dans son œuvre, ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler "un beau vers"' [she really fails in terms of form. In her work, it is rare to find what is generally termed 'a beautiful line'].⁶² Her sincerity and passion – qualities considered unthreatening by the majority of male critics when judging poets who were women, provincial or working-class – result in the conclusion that 'elle n'est pas artiste, mais elle est bien femme' [she is not artful but she is indeed a woman].⁶³ Riom, by her own account, discerns something similar to spontaneity in women's poetry, but with unmatched weight as a form of understanding: 'la femme bretonne comprend la Nature, non à la manière des savants qui sans cesse cherchent à la dévoiler; mais elle la comprend avec sa propre intuition' [the Breton woman understands Nature, but not in the manner of scholars who insist on unveiling it; she understands it through her own intuition].⁶⁴ Where Séché sees something downgrading, Riom perceives a poetic superpower. Due to such enrichment at the meso level, coursing through a series of supportive observations about women's artistry, the chances of the poem-flower thriving are heightened.

Riom's low-key dismantling of prejudices against women poets is most perceptible in instances of notes about poets whom both Riom and Séché include within their anthology-gardens. A case in point is Léocadie Hersent (1817–89), dubbed Mrs Auguste Penquer in surrender to her husband.⁶⁵ Séché rounds on her for reasons common to practically every female poet within his biased purview, namely that her output 'témoigne d'une inspiration élevée et, surtout, d'une passion débordante et qui s'exprime avec une sincérité remarquable. [. . .] Mais, *la forme*, n'est-ce pas le point faible de presque toutes les femmes poètes?' [displays a high level of inspiration and, above all, overflowing passion, which is expressed with remarkable sincerity. But isn't *form* the weak point of almost all women poets?].⁶⁶ Moreover, a poetic effort is frequently subjected to 'validation' in the light of a famous male poet, with a supposedly flattering association tending to diminish female agency and merits – the accounts by Séché and Riom diverge drastically in this respect. Riom attests that 'le magnifique poème de *Velléda* [1869] est véritablement une révélation; il émane d'une nature supérieure. Il faudrait tout citer; car tout y reste à la même hauteur' [the magnificent poem *Velléda* (1869) is truly a revelation; it springs from a higher nature. Every part of it should be quoted because every part is at the highest possible level].⁶⁷ The male anthologist deems the poem in question outstanding, then gives pride of place to an aristocratic male contemporary: 'pourquoi n'avoir pas choisi un sujet qui fut bien sien, au lieu d'aller prendre celui que Chateaubriand avait illustré?' [why did she not choose a subject that was truly hers, rather than taking up one depicted by Chateaubriand?].⁶⁸ The female anthologist instead gives pride of place to Hersent's own words: 'la poésie, c'est [. . .] la vibration du son divin dans la voix humaine; c'est la suprême harmonie, c'est l'art incréé et éternel!' [poetry is the divine vibrating in the human voice; it's the supreme harmony, an eternal art in the making!].⁶⁹

As a general rule, Riom showcases not merely women's poetry but also their views on their craft, whereas Séché's two volumes see nearly every complimentary note tempered to some degree, including his account of the first poetic collection of Louisa Siefert (1845–77), *Rayons perdus* [Lost Sunbeams] from 1868. Exceptionally, Séché praises Siefert for her formal abilities: 'la jeune femme était maîtresse de sa forme, une forme sévère et vraiment belle, et elle s'affirmait poète de haute inspiration' [the young woman mastered her form, a form that was austere and truly beautiful, and established herself as a highly inspired poet].⁷⁰ Yet, in the same breath, this skill is attributed to male handling: 'le véritable maître de Louisa Siefert fut Charles Asselineau, auquel elle soumettait tous ses écrits' [Louisa Siefert's real mentor was Charles Asselineau, to whom she

submitted all her writings].⁷¹ It should not be forgotten that the widespread perception of a skilful woman as an exception to the norm is the starting point for Asselineau's comments at the beginning of the second edition of *Rayons perdus* (1869), which serve as a provocative epigraph in Planté's *Femmes poètes du XIX^e siècle*: 'en France, constatons-le, la Poésie est un art d'hommes' [in France, let's be honest, Poetry is a man's art].⁷² Séché's double-edged notes are a sign of the times regarding misogynistic and moralizing tendencies, which are nowhere more blatant than in his remarks on Louise Colet (1810–76), who published *Fleurs du Midi* [Flowers of Southern France] in 1836. The pillorying of this 'irascible poétesse' [irascible poetess] for being 'vindictive et vaniteuse' [vindictive and vain] entails Séché backing up his prejudices with chauvinistic quotations from prominent male contemporaries,⁷³ such as the much-quoted critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve deeming that Colet's poetry 'a un faux air du beau. [. . .] C'est comme la dame elle-même [. . .], elle a l'air d'être belle' [has a false air of beauty. It's like the lady herself, she *appears* beautiful].⁷⁴ This is light-years from Riom's appreciation of women's poetic calling, as epitomized by her introduction's very last sentence: 'l'âme de la femme bretonne est conduite par la lueur victorieuse de la Vérité: elle voit, car elle croit' [the Breton woman's soul is led by Truth's triumphant light: she can see because she believes].⁷⁵ In short, the differences between the commentaries of Séché and Riom exemplify how the meso level of ecosystem management substantially determines the extent to which flourishing is possible.

Macro: interactions between anthologies – Christine Planté and Gretchen Schultz

Planté's introduction to *Femmes poètes du XIX^e siècle* from 1998 acknowledges the volumes compiled by Séché and Moulin as rich troves of information 'en dépit du caractère daté de leur approche' [despite their approach being dated].⁷⁶ The foreword to Planté's second edition (demand had far exceeded supply by 2010) identifies a flurry of publications from the start of the millennium, a number of which were spurred by her enterprise, especially among Anglosphere-based authorities on poetry in French like Alison Finch, Sonya Stephens, Aimée Boutin and Adrianna Paliyenko⁷⁷ – Schultz's anthology from 2008 expresses regret about Planté's 'excellent anthology' being out of print.⁷⁸ For Planté in 2010, 'la poésie française n'apparaît plus comme un grand désert de femmes' [French poetry no longer appears to be largely void of women], in contrast to her lament in 1998 regarding poetry being left out of feminist analysis in France.⁷⁹ The respective anthologies are in fact a paradigm of distributed agency, since numerous female and male collaborators provided notes/translations in a choral endeavour epitomizing how transplanting poetry has to do with being both 'inhabited' by the selected poets and 'haunted' by readings/conversations with significant others.⁸⁰

In common between the volumes of Planté and Schultz are a dozen poem-flowers: two by Colet, two by Siefert, one by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786–1859), one by Amable Tastu (1798–1885), one by Delphine Gay (1804–55), three by Louise Ackermann (1813–90), one by Malvina Blanchecotte (1830–97), one by Louise Michel (1830–1905), two by Marie Krysinska (1857–1908) and three by Marie de Heredia in the guise of Gérard d'Houville (1875–1963). Both anthology-gardens are more vibrant than Séché's, with Schultz conspicuously positioning Colet in a section on 'Romanticism: Revolutions and Interiority' and Siefert in 'Reaction and Rebellion: Parnassianism, War, and the Fall of Empire' – her prefatory notes evoke the success of *Fleurs du Midi* and *Rayons perdus* as first collections, triumphing against the odds of critics' prejudices concerning women poets.⁸¹ Such are the recalibrations at the macro scale whenever a poem-flower is transplanted into a new garden. Its blossoming in a new environment sheds light on its previous situation and constitutes an anchor-point for future transplantations, stabilizing or disturbing relations.

Micro: the anthologized poem – Louise Colet and Louisa Siefert

The final pages of Colet's *Fleurs du Midi* feature three quatrains entitled 'Ma poésie' [My Poetry], designated as rooted in 'Paris, 1835':

Il est dans le Midi des fleurs d'un rose pâle
 Dont le soleil d'hiver couronne l'amandier;
 On dirait des flocons de neige virginal
 Rougis par les rayons d'un soleil printanier.
 Mais pour flétrir les fleurs qui forment ce beau voile,
 Si la rosée est froide, il suffit d'une nuit;
 L'arbre alors de son front voit tomber chaque étoile,
 Et quand vient le printemps il n'a pas un seul fruit.
 Ainsi mourront les chants qu'abandonne ma lyre
 Au monde indifférent qui va les oublier;
 Heureuse, si parfois une âme triste aspire
 Le parfum passager de ces fleurs d'amandier.
 [In the Midi pale-pink flowers grow,
 Crowning the almond tree in the winter sun;
 You could say flakes like virginal snow
 Reddened by the springtime sun.
 But to wither the flowers that form this fine veil,
 If the dew is cold, you need but one night;
 Then from its brow the tree sees each star fall,
 And when spring comes not one fruit is left.
 In an indifferent world, abandoned by my lyre,
 My songs will thus die and be forgotten;
 Happy if at times a despondent soul breathes in
 The fleeting scent of the almond flower.]⁸²

A regional environment has pride of place right from the start, thanks to the evocation of the almond tree that undergoes shifts in identity along with the year's transitional phases. The double mention of the sun in the first stanza is suggestive not only of photosynthetic activity based on the season, but also of the poet's role in breathing life into the narrative. Solar energy has a ruddy effect, counterpoising the fragility and sort of purity underscored by the muted colour palette of the pallid rose and snow, which is magnified by the freezing weather in the second stanza. Shock is central to the conceptual interplay between the cold-crippled tree and the poet's failure in the third stanza, with a moment of harshness leading to total desolation. In a well trodden anthropocentric gesture, the plant shorn of fruit is deemed as worthless as an underappreciated poem – a rhetorical effort to secure goodwill is apparent in the allusion to the reader's capacity to save the modest output from oblivion in the face of critics' barbs. Overall, this poem-flower displays a striking range of emotive and sensorial stimuli in the context of transience.

Siefert's *Rayons perdus* are prefaced by a two-sonnet pairing. The second in the sequence (lines 15–28) sees the poet take on an animal guise to express a sense of fragility not unlike the state of Colet's poem-flower 30 years earlier:

Je suis comme la biche indécise & tremblante
 Devant le taillis vert au gazon savoureux;
 Un désir insensé prend mon cœur douloureux
 D'échapper à tout prix à ma vie accablante.
 Sous le lourd poids du sort je me sens chancelante;
 Mes rêves, succombant comme de vaillants preux,
 Gisent là, devant moi, couchés en rangs nombreux,
 Et l'espérance fuit, à revenir si lente!
 Oh! je veux m'en aller à la gloire, là-bas! . . .
 Mais pour l'atteindre, il faut aussi franchir la route
 Où tous les préjugés font le guet l'arme au bras.
 Je les sais sans pitié, j'ai peur, je les redoute,
 Le trouble où je me vois accroît encore mon doute,
 Le danger est certain. . . Si je n'arrivais pas! . . .
 [I am like the uncertain and trembling doe
 Before the thicket's savoury grass;
 A wild desire seizes my paining heart
 To escape come what may my life's morass.
 Beneath fate's heavy weight I feel myself staggering;
 My dreams, succumbing like valiant worthies,
 Lie before me, laid low in numberless ranks,
 And hope flees, so slow in returning!
 Oh, to glory, yonder, I so want to go! . . .
 But to reach it, the road too must be crossed
 Where every prejudice lies in wait, weapons posed.
 Each and all pitiless, frightened I am, full of dread,
 The turmoil I feel heightens further my doubt,
 Danger is certain. . . What if I did not succeed! . . .]⁸³

The quatrains articulate female identity on a spectrum between human and deer, the latter being the protagonist of the first prefatory sonnet. An anthropocentric perception of trepidation about over-exposure is the basis of the interspecies connection revolving around herbivorous feeding behaviour, though human feelings quickly exceed the doe's perspective. By the middle of the second stanza, the environment has taken on the air of a battlefield, with the poet on the losing side of a conflict reminiscent of mid-century revolutionary stirrings across Europe. Such hyperbole about the let-downs of a creative enterprise persists in the tercets, where the scene shifts again to something resembling a bandit-filled highway from an adventure novel. A prospective torrent of

criticism appears to suppress any glimmer of hope and the closing lines are very much in the spirit of the deer's defencelessness intimated prior to the volta. It is a short step, then, from this poem-flower to the ways in which the planetary garden is beset by threats that beggar belief. By reading across spacetime in such ways, perhaps beyond the poet's awareness, there is an opportunity to intuit an affective resonance between emerging climate anxieties and the fears expressed in the text. This is precisely what the process of anthologization nurtures: a continuous renewal of the poem-flower in a given garden.

Conclusion

This article set out to highlight the strengths of female-led poetry anthologies' plurality beyond a mere sum of women's writings. Shuttleing between human geography and the environmental humanities in relation to Gilles Clément's model of the planetary garden in particular, we were concerned with interchanges and frictions: first, the meso level of an anthologist's paratext (Adine Riom and Alphonse Séché); second, the macro level of interactions between anthologies (Christine Planté and Gretchen Schultz); third, the micro level of the anthologized poem (Louise Colet and Louisa Siefert). Little besides the disparities between the editorial approaches of Séché and Riom – rarely considered as a kind of worldmaking – should be necessary as an exemplar of the value of female-led volumes for bringing balance to scenarios where bias like Séché's could go some way to stunting growth rates, no matter the degree to which women are well versed in rhyme and much besides.

It is to be hoped that thinking about ecosystem management through female-led anthologies will continue to nourish radical responses to longstanding debates around how the cultural landscape should look/sound/feel, thereby moving the goalposts of the Anthropocene in the direction of a future defined by environmental justice, not socioecological crisis. In view of the gap between the cries of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* in 1789 and the enduring inequalities faced by women since that revolution, the anthologization of poetry by 19th-century French-speaking women under discussion here is just one example of blindspots and shortcomings in the 'project of modernity'.⁸⁴ There is plenty of scope for charting ecopoetic resonances in female-authored works belonging to other centuries, geographies and media beyond paper, including sound poetry and Instapoetry.⁸⁵ Much like greater biodiversity enhances an ecoregion's resilience in the face of stressors like air pollution or heat shock, an increasingly diverse array of cultural coordinates serves as an anti-extinction movement at many levels, not least providing a niche for presences prone to falling off the map because of the butterfly effect of human (in)action.

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Contributions

1. Women's inputs to the cultural landscape deserve to be more widely known
2. Models from human geography and the environmental humanities provide opportunities for deep insights into literary forms and concerns, including the complexities of canon formation
3. Anthologization generates temporal, geographical and linguistic knowledge via an enriching series of micro-, meso- and macro-scale correspondences
4. There are parallels between enhancing biodiversity and diversifying a literary tradition

5. Female-edited anthologies of women's poetry are an underappreciated key to globally significant debates around the Anthropocene and humans as planetary gardeners

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