



LITERATURES, CULTURES, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

# Wetland Cultures

Ancient, Traditional, Contemporary



Rod Giblett

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# Literatures, Cultures, and the Environment

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ISSN 2946-3157                      ISSN 2946-3165 (electronic)  
Literatures, Cultures, and the Environment  
ISBN 978-3-031-57364-4              ISBN 978-3-031-57365-1 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-57365-1>

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Cover illustration: Southern Lightscapes-Australia \ gettyimages

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*Mary Oliver, 'Crossing the Swamp' 1980*  
*Here is the endless*  
*wet thick*  
*cosmos, the center*  
*of everything—the nugget*  
*of dense sap, branching*  
*vines, the dark burred*  
*faintly belching*  
*bogs. Here*  
*is swamp, here*  
*is struggle,*  
*closure—*  
*pathless, seamless,*  
*peerless mud. My bones*  
*knock together at the pale*  
*joints, trying*  
*for foothold, fingerhold*  
*mindhold over*  
*such slick crossings, deep*  
*hipholes, hummocks*  
*that sink silently*  
*into the black, slack*  
*earthsou I feel*  
*not wet so much as*  
*painted and glittered*

*with the fat grassy  
mires, the rich  
and succulent marrows  
of earth—a poor  
dry stick given  
one more chance by the whims  
of swamp water—a bough  
that still, after all these years,  
could take root,  
sprout, branch out, bud—  
make of its life a breathing  
palace of leaves.*

*First published in The Atlantic, May 1980.*

*Republished in American Primitive (Little, Brown, 1983).*

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*Dedicated to wetlands—marginalized communities, oppressed minorities*



## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present volume had its beginnings in a number of serendipitous events. I am grateful to John Charles Ryan for drawing my attention to the term ‘paludal’ when he described swamp lovers and wetland conservationists as ‘paludal heroes.’ His and other usages of paludal are discussed in the introduction to the present volume. John also provided an electronic copy of Federico Borca’s chapter on towns and marshes (*paludes*) in ancient Rome for which I am grateful. I had already come across Borca’s article on ancient Roman wetland culture. John also pointed me to Mary Oliver’s poem ‘Crossing the Swamp’ reproduced as the epigraph to the present volume. It is gratefully reproduced with the permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

Ryan’s and Borca’s work stimulated my curiosity about the paludal in the classical Latin canon. John encouraged me to explore it more for which I am grateful too. I read for the first time Cato, Tacitus, Varro and Virgil in the bi-lingual Loeb Classical Library editions with translations in parallel text so I could pick up the paludal and its declensions in the original Latin. I discussed Pliny and Lucretius briefly in *Postmodern Wetlands* published in 1996. I also discussed Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates and Homer briefly and intermittently in *Postmodern Wetlands*. In Chap. 4 of the present volume, I draw together and develop the discussion of these ancient Greeks. For the present volume, I read more of Pliny’s work in the Loeb edition with its translation. I also read a recent translation of Lucretius. In Chap. 5 of the present volume, I elaborate on them and all the ancient Roman writers mentioned. I am not a classicist so I hope any missteps on my part are forgiven.

The present volume also had its beginnings in recent research on ongoing topics of interest. I recently read Eric Ash's histories of the draining of the English Fens and discuss them in Chap. 4. An earlier version of Chap. 5 on the culture of the Fens was first published in *Wetlands and Western Cultures: Denigration to Conservation* published in 2021. I am grateful to the publisher and copyright holder, Rowman & Littlefield, for permission to reproduce already published material with all rights reserved.

I have previously discussed American wetland cultures, especially of the Great Dismal Swamp between Virginia and North Carolina, the major North American wetland cities, Henry David Thoreau as the patron saint of swamps and Aldo Leopold as the patron saint of marshes. My attention in the present volume turns across the northern border in North America to Canada and its marshy provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. I have also previously discussed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal wetland cultures in Australia in the states of Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales. In Australia, my attention turns mainly to the state of Queensland and briefly to South Australia and elsewhere in Victoria. The present volume takes a transnational and transhistorical point of view of wetland cultures.

The wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin spanning four states, including Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales, have recently been Emily O'Gorman's focus in *Wetlands in a Dry Land: More-Than-Human Histories of Australia's Murray-Darling Basin* published in 2021. When I first read it I was surprised that the chapter on pelicans and the Coorong wetlands (where the Murray River meets the sea in South Australia) does not discuss Colin Thiele's classic *Storm Boy*, which is about both (among other things) and which has been made into a film twice. Such is the wont of environmental historians in their siloed discipline not to discuss film and literature that inform wetland cultures in the past and present and for the future. By contrast, the transdisciplinary environmental humanities in general, and wetland cultural studies in particular, embrace film, literature, history and philosophy, as well as employ feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic and post-structuralist approaches. The present volume employs these approaches and embraces these disciplines and media. Writing the present volume gave me the opportunity (for which I am grateful) to discuss Thiele's *Storm Boy* first published in 1963 and his later *Swan Song* published in 2002 about pelicans and the Coorong wetlands too (as well as a black swan).

When I Googled *palus*, ‘palustrine’ came up in the recent book *Wetlands of Queensland* published by the Queensland Museum in 2022. When I visited the Brambuk Cultural Centre in Halls Gap in western Victoria in March 2023, I came across James Morrill’s account of living among Aboriginals in the swamps of north Queensland for 17 years in the mid-nineteenth century. I remembered that Judith Wright, who lived much of her life in Queensland and is the patron saint of Australian conservation, wrote a word for wetlands. I am grateful to John Charles Ryan for drawing my attention to her poem ‘Swamp Plant.’ I also remembered Alexis Wright’s two novels, *Carpentaria* published in 2006 and *The Swan Book* published in 2013, set in the main in Queensland (and in lagoons and swamps in part, as it turned out when I read them). I am grateful to Emily Potter for recommending *The Swan Book* to me a long time ago as I had also written about black swans at the same time in *Black Swan Lake* also published in 2013. I am grateful to Judy Gunning of the Queensland Art Gallery Museum of Modern Art for drawing my attention to Mavis Ngallametta’s two paintings of Queensland lagoons or swamps held in the gallery and to the Winton wetlands sculpture walk in Victoria. I am also grateful to the gallery for permission to reproduce Conrad Martens’ painting *Coochin Run* and to the Mitchell Library of the State Library of New South Wales for Martens’ painting *Coochin 27 Nov. 1851*.

While researching the present volume, I used ‘Trove,’ the online data base of Australian libraries, entered ‘Queensland swamps’ in its search engine and found the newspaper article by ‘Mopoke,’ the chapter by J. W. Winter and Curzon-Siggers’ history of Cairns. I am grateful that the current Australian government granted special financial support to sustain ‘Trove’ when it was in danger of closing. This would have been an unmitigated disaster for researching Australian history and culture and would have meant the continued overlooking or neglecting and inaccessibility of important aspects of both, such as wetlands. I draw all these topics together about Queensland wetlands for discussion in the second chapter of the present volume

A similar approach to wetland cultures to that undertaken in the present and previous volumes remains to be undertaken in other states and the territories of Australia with further research and writing, such as the Northern Territory. While researching the present volume I came across references to a wealth of tantalising and mouth-watering materials held in

the Queensland Art Gallery relating to Aboriginal wetland cultures in the Northern Territory that would reward research and discussion. These include:

- Port Keats (wadeye) Community / Murrinh-patha people / *Rainbow serpent story* c.1962 / Watercolour on bark glued to table top / 54.5 × 15.5 cm (oval); table top: 62.4 × 23.9 × 2.9 cm / Gift of G.W. Spence 1971 / Accession No: I:1173;
- Abie Jangala / Warlpiri people c.1919 - 2002 / *Water Dreaming* 1994 / Synthetic polymer paint on canvas / 174.1 × 144.6 cm / Purchased 1995. / Accession No: 1995.075; and
- Yirrkala Community / Yolngu people, Arnhem Land / *Swamp* 1948 / Natural pigments on paper / 58.5 × 45.7 cm / Gift of the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land 1956 / Accession No: 1991.370.

Images, including thumbnails, of these artworks are not currently available on the Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art website.

South Australian wetlands require similar research and discussion too. They are briefly touched on in the first, introductory chapter of the present volume in relation to John Olsen's famous paintings of Lake Eyre-Kati Thanda and Colin Thiele's classic children's books set in the Coorong Wetlands (as already mentioned). Elsewhere I have previously discussed James Ashton's and Henry James Johnstone's paintings of South Australian wetlands, both of which are housed in the Art Gallery of South Australia. No doubt there is more to find and more to do with Australian wetland cultures in South Australia and the Northern Territory, as well as elsewhere in Australia, such as in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Marsh Arabs of Iraq have been lurking in the back of my mind for some years so I decided it was time to follow up on this, beginning with reading Wilfred Thesiger's classic *The Marsh Arabs* readily available in a recent Penguin Classics edition with an updated introduction. I had briefly referred to James Scott's discussion of Jennifer Pournelle's work on the Marsh Arabs in a previous book so I tracked down her primary text. I am grateful to Robert Thorson, the patron saint of Thoreauvian students, for drawing my attention to Scott's book. I also came across recent and very recent work on the marsh Arabs in the garden of Eden. The ducks were lining up. I am grateful to Steve Lonergan for providing a pre-publication PDF of his and Jassim Al-Asadi's book, *The Ghosts of Iraq's Marshes*

published in April 2024 that brings the story of the Marsh Arabs and their marshes right up to date with an insider's view. I do not read Arabic so I have relied on translations into English and other English language studies of the marsh Arabs and their marshes.

I am grateful to the government and taxpayers of Canada for awarding me an 'Understanding Canada' grant that enabled me to travel to and across Canada and to visit many wetlands, including in the marshy provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, aka Acadia. I am grateful to Ed and Mary Ann Sulis for their hospitality in Kentville, Nova Scotia and Ed for his guided tour of the Grand Pré dykes and marshlands. I am also grateful to Anusha Beechowa for translating Andrew Gann's chapter on Antonine Maillet's novels set in Acadia from French into English and David Elder for arranging for Anusha to do the translation. The marais Acadians of Canada are discussed in Chap. 8 of the present volume.

Ancient, traditional and contemporary wetland cultures are also present in other countries with their wetlands beside Australia, England, Ireland and Canada discussed in the present volume. These include the major wetlands of the Okavango Delta in Botswana and the Pantanal in Brazil. Both wetland cultures are outside my expertise and access to resources to research, as well as being beyond the scope and word-limit of the present volume. Wetland cultural studies similar to the present volume may have already been undertaken of these and other wetland cultures, or may remain to be undertaken.

I am not an Aboriginal person so I do not speak, nor claim to speak, with any cultural authority about Aboriginal cultures. I rely on published sources. I am just a white-fella trying to learn from, and engage in dialogue with, Aboriginal peoples via the written word and to share that learning with non-Aboriginal peoples. I am not Arabic, Acadian, British, Irish, Greek or Italian. I do not speak, nor do I claim to speak, with any cultural authority about their cultures. I rely on translations into English and studies in English. I am a wetland lover (paludiphile) and student of wetland cultures who lived by a wetland for 28 years and wrote about it in several books. I also wrote about other wetlands and their cultures in other books. I am a promoter of pro-paludal wetland cultures and paludiphilia—love of wetlands.

Melbourne, VIC, Australia  
December 2023

Rod Giblett

## Praise for *Wetland Cultures*

“With more than 50% of the human body being water, it should be expected that a visceral connection with wetlands runs deep through our diverse cultural histories. Yet much of this has been smothered by marginalising narratives. With politically sharp anthropological scholarship and the author’s personal passion, *Wetland Cultures* recalibrates our understanding of these watery environments, and at a time of ecological crisis, it provides essential reading for enthusiasts and policy-makers alike.”

—Dave Pritchard, Coordinator, *Ramsar Culture Network*, UK

“This beautifully composed and curated work is as supple and serpentine as the waterscapes it explores. The reader is taken on a wonderful immersion into the cultural practices and affiliations of a myriad of continuing planetary paludal encounters between humans and wetlands. Encompassing bodily and spiritual entanglements with these complex and dynamic ecosystems, Giblett affords us a glimpse into other worlds running parallel with our modern lives, to question our relationship with the ancients, with landscapes, with each other. A delicate and joyous watery, marshy sojourn into ways of knowing, seeing and being that questions the very essence of our collective lives together as co-connected biota.”

—Mary Gearey, *Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, School of Applied Sciences, University of Brighton*, UK

“Rod Giblett presents a fascinating, original and thought-provoking account of how wetlands have shaped people and culture throughout history. From an exploration of wetland representations in art and literature, to their environmental, spiritual and agricultural values that often reflect the colonial gaze, the book offers critical insight into this rich cultural heritage—the implications of which continue to be overlooked in the mainstream global wetlands discourse.”

—Alan Dixon, *Professor of Sustainable Development, University of Worcester*, UK

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rod Giblett** is the author of 30 books of fiction and facton ('non-fiction'), including recently *Middlemarsh: The Hopkins River, Kindred Wetlands and Remarkable People* and *The Way of Taoism: For Bodily, Spiritual and Environmental Health* (both Transnational Press, 2023). He lived by a wetland in Western Australia for 28 years, was active in its conservation for 25 years and wrote about it in many articles and several books. He now lives in Melbourne, Australia and wrote about its wetlands too. He is a graduate of the Universities of Western Australia and Sydney and Murdoch University. He taught and researched at three universities in Western Australia for 25 years, including travelling to Canada on study leave, visiting many of its wetlands and researching and writing about them. He is the founder of wetland cultural studies, psychoanalytic ecology, conservation counter-theology and Thoreau and Benjamin studies. He is Honorary Associate Professor of Environmental Humanities in the Writing and Literature Program at Deakin University, Australia.

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction to Wetland Cultures, Past and Present

Traditional cultures have a long and vital association with wetlands going back to ancient times and coming forward to contemporary time. They use paludicultural and aquacultural techniques to provide sustainable sustenance (rather than merely ‘subsistence’). Paludiculture comes from the Latin word ‘*palus*,’ meaning ‘mire’ or ‘marsh.’ It is in current usage to refer to the cultivation of the peatlands of England and northern Europe in the past and present and for the future (Milner and Stuart 2022; Wichtmann et al. 2016). The history of the use of peatlands in northern Europe has been researched and traced recently by Ruuskanen (2016). I use the term paludiculture more broadly to refer to the cultivation of plants for animal and human use and consumption in all types of wetlands, including bogs, lagoons, marshes and swamps. I define paludiculture as the cultivation of local, native (endemic) plants in wetlands for animal and human use and consumption, including eating and heating. Paludiculture forms the basis for the broader expression of wetland culture in artefacts (canoes, spears, sticks, nets, baskets, houses, household vessels, etc.) and the arts, including story-telling, dance, writing, painting, textiles, jewellery and basket-weaving.

‘*Palus*’ is also incorporated into the common word ‘palusplain’ where it is used to refer to a seasonally waterlogged, flat wetland. It is in current usage to describe much of the Swan Coastal Plain of south-western

Australia encompassing Perth, ‘a city of wetlands,’ including palusplains.<sup>1</sup> ‘Paludal’ has been used recently to describe swamp lovers and wetland conservationists as ‘paludal heroes,’ as Ryan and Chen (2020) call them. ‘Palustrine’ has been used recently by the Queensland Museum (2022, 7) to describe ‘primarily vegetated non-channel environments with more than 30% emergent vegetation.’ Examples of palustrine wetlands include ‘grass, herb and sedge swamp; wet heath swamps (wallum); *Melaleuca* spp. and *Eucalyptus* spp. tree swamps’ and other swamps (Queensland Museum 2022, 7). Aboriginal people have cultivated these and other wetlands in Queensland for thousands of years. More than mere ‘swamp managers’ and wetland conservationists (though they were this too) they were wetland cultivators. Paludiculture of palustrine and other types of wetlands in Queensland, such as lagoons and mangroves, is discussed in the second chapter of the present volume.

## 1.1 TRADITIONAL WETLAND CULTURES

The peoples of traditional wetland cultures regard wetlands as sacred places imbued with spiritual and ceremonial significance (Verschuuren 2018). They also provide physical sustenance and are sources of materials. These values are expressed in their artworks, artefacts, dance, song and story (Gearey and Giblett *forthcoming*). Their artefacts, such as baskets, canoes and spears, were, and still are, created from wetlands and used in wetlands to hunt and gather the food they cultivate there. For example, Aboriginal peoples practised ‘fire-sticking farming’ and used ‘digging sticks’ in the wetlands on the fertile plains of mid-western Victoria in Australia to cultivate food for themselves, such as the yam daisy in paludiculture, and to cultivate pasture of native grasses, such as kangaroo grass, for grazing mobs of native kangaroos and wallabies (what I have called pastoralism, as distinct from pastoralism, the herding of introduced sheep and cattle on drylands; see Giblett 2023, 25, 67). This material circle and seasonal cycle of sustenance sustained their livelihoods and lives for tens of thousands of years.

Aboriginal people also engineered water and stone in mid-western Victoria. Eel and fish traps and stone houses located at Lake Condah and

<sup>1</sup>For further discussion of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia, set beside the (black) Swan River and among wetlands, including palusplains, see Giblett (1996, Chap. 3; 2013, Chap. 15).

Condah Swamp in the country of the Gunditjmarra people date back over 4000 years. These structures are older than Stonehenge (Gunditjmarra People with Wettenhall 2010). The traps are ‘the world’s oldest and largest aquaculture system’ (Langton 2021, 15, 65–66). The Budj Bim site in the wetlands of Lake Condah (Gunditjmarra People 2010), was gazetted as National Historic Landscape of Australia in 2004 (Cahir et al. 2018, 283) and is now a World Heritage Site (AAP 2019; Langton 2021, 13–17, 409). More than intensive hunters, gatherers, fishers and foragers, the Gunditjmarra people of mid-western Victoria around Lake Condah were designers and builders of eel and fish traps (or ‘engineers of aquaculture’; Gunditjmarra People 2010, 16–22) and cultivators of wetland plants (Gunditjmarra People 2010, 7, 13–16, 67), or practitioners of paludiculture. These people practised architecture with the construction of stone houses, agriculture with the cultivation of native grasses and cereals, aquaculture with the building of stone traps and weaving of baskets to catch eels and fish, aquaorniculture (from the Latin *aqua* for water and the Greek *orni* for bird) with the weaving of nets to snare water birds and paludiculture with the cultivation of edible wetland plants. More than mere ‘swamp managers’ and swamp farmers for the engineering of water in aquaculture and in irrigation for the cultivation and harvesting of edible plants and animals in paludiculture, they were also paludiphiles, lovers of wetlands.

These practices were the basis and indicators of Aboriginal civilization as they involved ‘making improvements’ to use John Stuart Mill’s definition of civilization (cited by Giblett 2023, 25). Aboriginal people also demonstrated ownership of the land as they ‘mixed their labor with nature’ to use John Locke’s definition (cited by Giblett 2023, 26). Applying these definitions of civilization and land ownership to Aboriginal peoples demolishes the doctrine of *terra nullius*, meaning ‘nobody’s land,’ and so land legally uninhabited. It was applied most famously to Australia by Captain James Cook who could then claim and proclaim British royal sovereignty with impunity. It denies the work of Aboriginal hunter-gatherers, nomads, architects of stone houses, engineers of aquaculture, pyrotechnicians of the bush, cultivators of grasslands and wetlands, graziers of pastoralism and so farmers of agriculture, paludiculture and aquaorniculture. In all of these practices, they mixed their labour with nature, demonstrated their ownership and inhabitation of the land, expressed their civilization in it and proclaimed their sovereignty over it. Australia ‘always was, always will be’ Aboriginal country.

Many aspects of traditional wetlands cultures are contemporary in the sense that they endure in wetland Aboriginals', Marsh Arabs', Fen Britons', bog Irish and marais Acadians' appreciation of wetlands as sacred places of spiritual significance and as vital ecosystems, food sources and habitats for human and more-than-human life on earth. All of these people practise paludiculture, the cultivation of wetlands. Their cultures are pro-paludal, for wetlands. Traditional attitudes to wetlands also endure in writing and artworks created over the past two centuries in Aboriginal wetland peoples' portrayal of swamps and the depiction of the British Fens. A traditional wetland culture also persists among the Marsh Arabs of southern Iraq, despite decades of destruction and genocide. Traditional Irish attitudes to bogs as the source of peat and as the landscape of national identity endure in twentieth-century writing about them. Traditional French attitudes to marshes as good grazing land with managed water flows persist and are visible in Acadia (French Canada) and in writing about them.

## 1.2 ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURES

By contrast, ancient Greek and Roman cultures denigrated (literally and figuratively 'blackened') wetlands as places of disease, terror, horror, the hellish and the monstrous. These attitudes are anti-paludal and placist in that they ascribe pejorative human qualities to a place.<sup>2</sup> These attitudes inform mainstream western culture that denigrates wetlands and marginalizes wetland communities. Traces of the ancient Greek attitude to wetlands persist today in the association with wetlands of physical and mental illnesses, such as malaria and melancholy, and with monsters and the monstrous. Traces of the ancient Roman attitude to wetlands persist in the association with wetlands of terror, horror, hell, monsters, barbarians and primitives. The history and role of marshes in ancient Roman culture has been researched and traced by Borca (1997, 2000).

Ancient Greek and Roman cultures were syncretized with Judeo-Christian theology by Dante Alighieri in the Italian Middle Ages and by John Milton in the English Renaissance and Reformation to produce the mainstream western cultural denigration of wetlands as evil places and demonization of their inhabitants as monstrous. Also in the seventeenth century, Robert Burton philosophized the melancholy marshes, John Bunyan mapped 'the slough of despond' in the allegorical progress

<sup>2</sup>For further discussion of placism, see Giblett (2018, 12–13, 33).



of Christian and William Dugdale legitimated drainage as divine work by misquoting the biblical creation story. The old English elegiac long poem *Beowulf* had already added a quasi-biblical and Germanic twist to the mix with its marsh monsters and evil dragon. Judeo-Christian theology contributed its own take on watery monsters, with Leviathan (variously a crocodile or a whale) and dragons, culminating in the legend of St George killing a dragon.

All of these facets contributed to the construction of the Christian and mainstream western denigration of wetlands. Instead of the ancient and traditional view of wetland cultures that wetlands are sacred places imbued with spiritual and ceremonial significance, the mainstream western view regarded wetlands as slimy sloughs of despond where monsters such as Satan and dragons live. Mainstream is an appropriate figure for encapsulating western cultures' anti-paludalism, obsessed as they are with streams of flowing water in rivers, creeks and oceanic flows (the Gulf Stream) and their disparagement of stagnant, non-flowing water in some wetlands.

The Gulf Stream off the eastern coast of the United States is vital for life in the region. Wetlands are also vital for life on earth. The leading inter-governmental agency on wetlands states that:

they are among the world's most productive environments; cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival. Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" that they provide humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate change mitigation. Yet study after study demonstrates that wetland area[s] and [their] quality continue to decline in most regions of the world. As a result, the ecosystem services that wetlands provide to people are compromised. (Ramsar Convention Bureau [n.d.](#))

The Ramsar Convention Bureau website provides a wealth of information, including the global policy context around wetlands. Its 2018 'Global Wetland Outlook' pointed out that wetlands are one of the most rapidly declining ecosystems in the world and addressing 'human dimensions' is at the core of conserving them. Studies of wetland cultures, such as the present volume, more specifically critique denigratory views and destructive practices and promote affirmation and conservation of wetlands locally and transnationally.

### 1.3 WETLANDS ARE NON-BINARY, QUEER BODIES OF WATER

Wetlands punch way above their weight as they cover about 6% of the surface of the earth. They are in the minority and they are an oppressed minority and a marginalized community of plants and animals (humans and more-than-humans). This radical political slant on the context for wetland conservation has not been taken up in global policy on wetlands, hence the need for the present volume and its dedication in these terms. Their identity and very existence are under threat from the majority of lands (drylands) and waters (rivers, seas and oceans) and from centralized communities of plants and animals (humans and more-than-humans), including towns and cities. With more humans now living in cities, and with cities generally inimical to wetlands, these threats are exacerbated. Wetlands once were where cities are now; where wetlands are now on the margins of cities, the suburbs will be soon. Where a city now is, a swamp once was.

Such is the case with the city of Cairns in far north Queensland that famously arose ‘out of the swamp’ and went from ‘a struggling village in the mangroves to a thriving tropical city,’ as Curzon-Siggers (1996) puts it in his book of this title and subtitle. A similar history could be probably be related with other cities in Queensland, such as the coastal city of Mackay set in mangroves, though there is no mention of this by Emily Emma Brown (2023). A similar history can be related with many cities elsewhere in Australia set in or beside wetlands (such as Perth, Sydney and Melbourne) and around the world, including all the iconic cities of modernity founded in ancient or modern times (London, Paris, Venice, St Petersburg, Berlin, Hamburg, Boston, New Orleans, New York, Toronto, Washington and Chicago).<sup>3</sup> None of these cities is recognized as a Global Wetlands City under the UN’s Convention on Wetlands. In November

<sup>3</sup>For further discussion of cities set in, or beside, swamps, marshes, etc., including Tenochtitlan (the fabled floating city of the Aztecs largely destroyed by the Spanish, but remnants of which survive in Mexico City to this day), and all the iconic cities of modernity founded in ancient or modern times in Europe and North America (London, Paris, Venice, St Petersburg, Berlin, Hamburg, Boston, New Orleans, New York, Toronto, Washington and Chicago), see Giblett (2016). For further discussion of Australian cities in similar settings, such as: Melbourne, a city of ghost swamps, see Giblett (2020b, part I; 2020c, Chap. 8; 2021, Chap. 8); Sydney, a swamp and sandstone city, see Giblett (2021, Chap. 7); and Perth, the black swamp/swan city, see n1 above.