

PAPER ABSTRACT

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PRESENTER:

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Title	Revisiting America's Last Frontier: Richard Proenneke's and Ernestine Hayes's "Worlds" and Ecological Sublimes		

PRESENTER'S BIO NOTE:

David Lombard is a research fellow at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research ([F.R.S.-FNRS](#)) and a Ph.D. candidate in literary studies at the ULiège and KU Leuven (joint degree), where he is an active member and researcher of the Interdisciplinary Center of Applied Poetics ([CIPA](#)), [Intersections](#), and the [English Literature Research Group](#). His main fields of interests are American (literary) studies, environmental humanities, narrative theory, rhetoric and aesthetics. He is the author of the book [Techno-Thoreau: Aesthetics, Ecology and the Capitalocene](#) (2019), which served as an extended pilot study for his broader Ph.D. project consisting in a rhetorical and narratological analysis of the sublime in contemporary U.S. literature (2020-2024). His favorite places to do research are as much the bustling centers of Liège and Leuven as the wooded south of Belgium, which both enrich his reflections on the techno-nature of the Anthropocene.

INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARLY PAPER ABSTRACT

Alaska is a *world* apart, America's "last frontier", which offers a challenging and awe-inspiring wilderness experience (Nash 2014). While its *nature* illustrates the horrid features of the Burkean sublime, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and air traffic show the presence of *technology* in a state that has been perceived as "pure" and "pristine", a view customarily associated with the natural sublime. Consequently, contemporary U.S. memoirs which include descriptions of extra-textual Alaskan landscapes constitute suitable case studies for analyzing the rhetorical affordances and limits of (1) using the concept of wilderness as *world* in the environmental humanities and of (2) the sublime for figuring modes of (non-)human materiality in the Anthropocene, in which the reality of nature can no longer be separated from humanity and its culture. While the Anthropocene and the sublime are linked to senses of excess, overwhelm, and disorientation (Purdy 2015), the memoir, as inevitably human-centered, is a privileged genre to investigate the Anthropocene sublime and related affects. Through a rhetorical and narratological—mainly informed by recent insights from econarratology (James and Morel 2020) which will help interpret emotions and affects produced by the sublime and examine readers' emotional engagement with narratives of the sublime—analysis of Sam Keith's *One Man's Wilderness* (1973) and Ernestine Hayes's *Blonde Indian* (2006), this paper will argue that the natural sublime and the concept of wilderness are still problematic, and will explore the "haptic sublime" (McNee 2016) and "stuplime" (Ngai 2005) as contributing to shaping a more participative, "ecological sublime" (Hitt 1999).