

CONFERENCIA de APERTURA

Green Trends in International Literary Studies: Many Voices, Similar Songs

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A Few Basic Definitions of Ecocriticism (ecological literary criticism)
Cheryll Glotfelty, Introduction, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996):

... the study of the relationship between literature and the physical world.
(xviii)

David Mazel, *American Literary Environmentalism* (2000):

... the study of literature "as if the earth mattered." (1)

My Own Broad Definition

Scott Slovic, "Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practising Doctrine," *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Ed. Laurence Coupe. London: Routledge, 2000.

[Ecocriticism is] the study of **explicitly environmental texts from any scholarly approach** or, conversely, **the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text [or other artistic text]**, even texts that seem, at first glance, oblivious of the nonhuman world. (160)

The Activist Definition

Camilo Gomides, "Putting a New Definition of Ecocriticism to the Test: The Case of *The Burning Season*, a Film (Mal)Adaptation," *ISLE* 13.1 (Winter 2006): 13-23.

Ecocriticism: The field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations.
(16)

Estok's Recent Critique of "Ambivalent Openness"

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Simon Estok, "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness," *ISLE* 16.3 (Spring 2009).

The strategic openness that characterizes early ecocriticism has become to a certain degree ambivalent, garnering success for ecocriticism in its bid to gain footing and credibility in academia, but also resulting in some uncertainty about what ecocriticism does or seeks to do, some sense that "we'll work it all out as we go along," to borrow a phrase from Dr. Sarvis in Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. [10] The edge seems to have become blunted.

Three I's

Indigeneities

Attunement to **local** cultural traditions, vocabularies, environmental conditions, ...

2. Intersections

Illuminating or pursuing **connections** of various kinds, sometimes healthy and sometimes destructive

3. Interventions

Acting upon issues of particular salience or urgency to specific regions

Delivering Ideas Abroad

Receiving New Ideas Abroad (often jet-lagged, listening to lectures in languages I know well or hardly at all)

An Equal Sharing of Perspectives

What I don't have time to share with you today:

Some samples of Scandinavian ecocriticism

Toni Lahtinen and Markku Lehtimäki, eds., *Äänekäs kevät* (Finland, 2008)

Sven Lars Schulz, ed., *Ekokritik: Naturen I litteraturen* (Sweden, 2007)

There will be little focus on North American ecocritics today, such as ...

Won-Chung Kim's challenge to North American/Anglophone (and other international) ecocritics:

Why don't you cite us?

What Are the Implications of Kim's Challenge?

Perhaps partly because of language barriers (a topic which, in itself is a complicated morass of colonial histories), **we cite America, but America doesn't cite us.**

In order to truly globalize ecocriticism, it is necessary to broaden its academic sphere to encompass literatures of non-English speaking countries; and in this respect, the ecological writings of the East Asian countries including China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea deserve special attention because their culture and environments are much different from those of Western countries. **Because diverse ecologies produce diverse cultures, cultural practices, and (for our present purposes) literatures, a culturally-monolithic ecocriticism that gives mere lip-service to diversity--a mere nod to the Asian voice and presence--will not be sufficient for an ecocriticism that purports to be going further afield, extending boundaries, and glocalizing.** Certainly one way to understand each other and bridge the wide gap of cultural and ecological differences

would be to study each other's literature in which its culture is embodied. **But American indifference (and often simple inability) to read and study literary works written in languages other than English has been often pointed out as a serious academic limitation. (1-2)**

Here's One of My Own Responses

From tiNai to the Tao: Identifying Authentic East and South Asian Ecocriticisms," presented at the 5th Conference on Ecological Discourse, Tamkang University, Taiwan, December 2010.

During an August 2009 conference at Beijing University in China, Korean ecocritic Kim Won-Chung expressed frustration at the apparent one-directionality of ecocritical attention. **Scholars throughout the world have long scrutinized, quoted, and emulated the theoretical stances and analytical approaches of western ecocritics, but critics in North America, Europe, and other regions would be hard pressed to describe the specific perspectives and contributions of ecocritical scholarship from such countries as Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, and India, despite the fact that the field has been active in these regions for decades. What I would like to know is how scholars in East and South Asia would articulate their own unique approaches to the field.... For the purposes of this talk, I will interview colleagues in all of the above-mentioned countries, asking them to describe how their work (or that of their colleagues) bears distinctive cultural traits and to identify brief samples of local ecocritical thinking that might be helpful to scholars working in other parts of the world.**

No Tradition of "Nature Writing" Per Se:
Starting with Japan

The turn from American-centeredness to intrinsically Japanese texts and ideas Ken-ichi Noda, "Tradition and Modernity: Ecocriticism in Japan," presented at Eco-Philosophy and the Future of Ecocriticism, Tamkang University, Taiwan (July 2009).

Many things happened during the [1990s] as if in a rush. But some people ... came to feel something unsatisfactory, for most of these were too much focused on American literature.... No Japanese literature scholar was there at its beginning.

Let me make a comparison with ASLE-US. Nobody doubts that ASLE-US mainly deals with American literature, their own national literature. Meanwhile, ASLE-Japan's main interest was in American literature and its theoretical framework since the origin of ecocriticism comes from American literature and many critics were Americanists. **This fact made us and still makes us turn our eyes to how to deal with Japanese literature, our own one. We thought: if it's necessary for us to put an emphasis on ecocritical approach in literary studies in Japan, *our* ecocriticism is not**

possible and feasible without Japanese literature studies.

How does a Japanese Americanist “look inward”?
Ken Noda, “Tradition and Modernity”:

Traditionally, many Japanese people believe that Japanese culture’s uniqueness derives from its close intimacy with the natural environment, as typically shown in Haiku or Bonsai, and they do believe that it is historically true. But, this might be a myth, merely an idea, I think. And “Mononoke-Hime” actually broke or deconstructed this commonly cherished belief, a little bit naïve, through its broader historical perspective. The key to understanding the movie lies in the idea of wild nature, or wilderness which Miyazaki intentionally highlighted in the context of Japanese history focusing on the 15th century. This wild nature is named “Shishigami-no Mori” or the wild forest dominated by “Great Forest Spirit.” This forest correctly corresponds to the idea of wilderness something like what Henry David Thoreau, for example, repeatedly mentioned as wilderness or “pure nature” in his work *The Maine Woods* (1864), though “Mononoke-Hime” is replete with animistic overtone.

The Split in Japanese Ecocriticism

ASLE-Japan (started in 1994, www.asle-japan.org)--it is the oldest branch of ASLE outside of the United States.

***Literature and Environment* ASLE-Japan’s official journal, published annually since 1998.**

***ASLE-Japan Newsletter* issued biannually.**

***Nature: Urban, Rural, Wild* (Sairyusha, 2004) A collection of essays and articles presented at the ASLE International Symposium in Okinawa.**

Edited by YAMAZATO Katsunori, et al. (Japanese)

***A Guide to Nature Writing* (Minerva, 2000) Collecting 120 works of Japanese, American, and British nature writing. Compiled by ASLE-Japan. (Japanese)**

Noda’s outreach
efforts

Ken-ichi Noda, *Creating a Sense for the Natural World: An Introduction to Nature Writing* (Tokyo: Chikuma-Shobo, 2007).

This is an introductory book for junior and senior high students regarding nature writing in general. Especially, by taking up the topics like TV dramas, astrology, popular songs, I tried to show young readers how they daily consume the deep relationship with the natural world unconsciously. This book was printed 9000 copies, and it is often used as a source for test questions of Japanese language and literature for high school or college exams. The contents are shown below.

Section One: **Nature and the Mind**

Why Does Rain Fall?; Do You Believe in Astrology; School Anthems in

Japan; A Japanese Popular Song in the 1970s; Nature Is a Mirror of Our Mind?; Motojiro Kajii's "In the Town with a Castle" (a short story from the 1930s); Panoramic View

Section Two: **Why Look at Animals?: Transforming into, Identifying with Others**

Transforming into a Fox: Michiko Ishimure's Short Story; Encountering a Weasel: Annie Dillard's Short Story; An Enchanted Moment; Animal Others: Robert Finch's Essay; Encountering Others; Nature as Other World: Edward Abbey's Short Story; A World Unknown; Animal Time: Yukiko Kato's Short Story "Where Am I Going?"

Other Major Japanese Ecocritics

Significant Ex-pat: Bruce Allen's Work on Michiko Ishimure

A Special Fascination with Indigeneity and Facilitating Cooperation:
Taiwan's Role in Contemporary Ecocriticism

International Conferences on Ecological Discourse Held Every Two Years at
Tamkang University, Tamsui (near Taipei) since 2000

A Keen Focus on Local and Global Indigeneity

Yang Ming-tu, "Going Back into a Future of Simplicity: Taiwan Aborigines' Sustainable Utilization of Natural Resources," *Tamkang Review* xxxii.3-4 (Spring-Summer 2002): 149-75.

The discussion above shows that the simple way of hunting, fishing, logging, agriculture, and clothing practiced by Taiwan's aborigines can better save our environment than our modern over-consumptive lifestyle, whose vast manufacturing system, gigantic commerce and expanding towns and cities have increasingly deteriorated our planet....
(166-67)

Environmental writer Liu Kexiang, celebrating birds, stray dogs, tea, and native foods

Appreciating East Asian Traditions

Shiuh-huah Serena Chou, "Pruning the Past, Shaping the Future: David Mas Masumoto and Organic Nothingness," *MELUS* 34.2 (Summer 2009): 157-74.

The organic farming tradition described by [Japanese organic pioneer Masanobu] Fukuoka in the 1970s and celebrated in Masumoto's life and work in California since the 1990s demonstrates the intrinsic congruity between the Buddhist idea of nothingness and the practice of organic farming.

Masumoto's narratives also foreground an association between the disinheritance of ethnic heritage and the loss of traditional organic methods once employed by his ancestors. (157)

Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese Ecocritics Meet, October 2008, Tsinghua University, Beijing

2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010

Tamkang University's biennial Conferences on Ecological Discourse, seeking to bring together a wide range of scholars in the environmental

humanities from around the world, increasingly focusing on East Asia.

December 16-18, 2010: Ecocriticism in Asia: Reorienting Modernity, Reclaiming Nature?

Nature Is the Most Beautiful: China Has a Tradition of Important Environmental Thinking

Lu Shuyuan's Spiritual Ecology Group in the Chinese Department at Suzhou University (near Shanghai)

Lu Shuyuan, *The Space for Ecocriticism* (2006).

The Homosapiens Period—The Age of Ecology

Poetic Mood—The Spiritual Ecology

Cross-Disciplinary Approach—The Ecological Vision

Literary History—The Ecological Succession (Ex: “The semantic field of the Chinese character

‘风’ and the Spirit of Ancient Chinese ecological culture”)

Analyzing the “Semantic Field” of “风” [feng]

Lu Shuyuan, “Ecological Culture Spirit: Exploring the Semantic Field of Chinese Character ‘风’.”

Spirit Ecology Report (5 September 2008).

The ecological culture spirit of Chinese ancient civilization represented by the semantic field of “风” can serve as a kind of not only interesting but contributive inspiration to reconstruct the integrity between humankind and nature, to establish a harmonious human society and to promote the healthy development of human nature.

Prominent Supporters of Chinese Ecocriticism

Cheng Xiangzhan (Shandong University), and the Focus on Environmental Aesthetics

My “unique” way is to combine three factors together to form my own argument, which are traditional Chinese environmental aesthetics, Western environmental aesthetics proposed mainly by Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson, and today’s Chinese ecological aesthetics proposed mainly by Zeng Fanren. My basic argument is that the core of the term of “ecology” is “interactions and relationships between an organism and its environment.” Environmental aesthetics deals with “the aesthetic interaction and relationship between human being and the environment,” so it should be called “ecological aesthetics” to some extent.

Two Chinese Phrases for Today

“Tien ren he yi” (the harmonious oneness of the universe and man)

--Traditional Chinese philosophical concept, attributed to Zhang Zai in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.)

“Ziran da mei” (nature is the most beautiful)

--Chuang-zi, 4th century BCE

(369-286)

Wang Nuo and the Xiamen University Ecoliterature Research Group
Scott Slovic, "Ecocriticism," *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*.
Vol. I (2009):

Using their preferred term *ecoliterature*, the Chinese ecocritics Wang Nuo and Zhang Begui have offered a prognosis for the future of the field—both literature itself and the scholarly examination of this literature. **They write that the field of ecoliterature will prosper so long as the ecological crisis is with us, and that the field will decline only when it achieves its purpose of a "reliable, sustainable, and secured environment"** (2006, page 10).

Wei Qingqi's Organizing Efforts in Nanjing

Wei Qingqi, *Towards a Green Canon: "New Period" Literature in an Ecocritical Vision*. Nanjing Normal UP, 2010 (in Chinese).

Introduction What's important about the ecological study of literature and ecocriticism?

Chapter 1 Three major discussions

Anthropocentrism; Vegetarianism; Technology

Chapter 2 The energy resources of the New Period ecological literature

Chapter 3 Textual Analysis, Visual Angle One: a general introduction of New Period ecological literature by stages

Chapter 5 Textual Analysis, Visual Angle Three: ecofeminist writing

Chapter 7 Textual Analysis, Visual Angle Five: Studies of Individual Writers

7.1 Xu Gang

7.2 Zhang Wei

7.3 Wei An

7.4 The Others

Conclusion Construct a Green Canon: Chinese ecological literature in the 21st Century

Other Prominent Chinese Ecocritics

The Mystery Woman of Chinese Ecocriticism

Cheng Hong, Capital University of Economics and Finance, author of *Return to the Wilderness*, translator of Burroughs's *Wake-Robin*, Beston's *The Outermost House*, Williams's *Refuge*, etc.

On the DMZ: Korea's Role as an East Asian Ecocritical Hub
Land of Skyscrapers and Rugged Mountains

Won-Chung Kim's Representation of Korean Environmental Literature

Won-Chung Kim, "Chiha Ki and Wonil Kim's Ecovision for the Cross-Fertilization of Ecological Discourse," presented at Peking University (August 2009).

The most prominent characteristics of Korean environmental literature can be summarized in two parts. **The first trait is its investigation of the close relationship between the division of the Korean peninsula and environmental degradation; both amount to the loss of imagined original unity and harmony that once defined Korea.** Korean people were obliged to suffer doubly, for the problems of division and environmental degradation have been occurring simultaneously.... **The second feature is the close relationship between the democratic movement and the environmental movement in Korea. Political persecution and environmental exploitation went hand in hand....** In a lot of Asian philosophy, humanity is not separate from Nature but is a significant part of it; Nature and humanity are inextricably interconnected with each other. (3)

East Asian Contributions to Environmental Thought

Dooho Shin, "Toward a Cross-Cultural Ecocriticism: Its Meanings and Implications in the New Millennium." *Dong-Seo Bigyo Moonhak Jeonal* (Journal of East-West Comparative Literature) 2 (1999): 111-31.

Without taking into consideration the political and social conditions of Korean society and its South-North divided situation, ecocriticism will be dismissed as just one of those foreign ideas that the First World foregrounds and pushes onto less powerful countries to keep them under economic and political control.

Implications of ecocriticism in Korea can also be found in the movement of the re-appreciation of traditional Korean and, more broadly, Asian religious thinking, culture, and literature. Blaming Western culture for many of the root causes of the current world-wide environmental catastrophe, scholars from both West and East began to turn to Eastern religious traditions as an alternative ecological solution, because, **unlike the West's tendency to materialize nature, Eastern traditions value the harmony between nature and humans.** (127)

The Next Generation's Quest for Indigeneity

Dong-hwan Lee, "Contemporary Trends of Korean Eco-Literature Studies: A Borderline Dweller's Perspective," presented at Peking University (August 2009).

Tons of ecological ideas introduced to academic journals, and many literary discourses soon fell into chaos due to many different translations and coinages of ecocritical jargons done by a group of scholars: life poem, eco-poetry, ecological poetry, environmental poetry, green literature, green criticism, ecologism, ecocriticism, eco-oriented criticism, eco-oriented poetry, etc. **When a scholar rearranged the headache situation into his/her own classification, another scholar criticized what his/her predecessor tried to systematize and instead proposed another revised ways to define Korean eco-literature. It appears that this "terminological warfare" surrounding Korean eco-literature is still going on....**

In my mind, ... most of the present criticisms have been closer to applying the Western eco-theories or the traditional Oriental ideas of nature mechanically to the texts. But this approach cannot cover the entire Korean eco-literature study.

Recognizing Local Historical Contexts

Dong-hwan Lee:

Because the mood of the poem is dominated by the tragedy of an depersonalized living thing, the main topic delivers a sense of critical choice and impending peril like standing on a sharp razor-edge. **It seems that Ji Ha Kim's engagement with anti-totalitarian protests in the 1970s and his realistic criticisms of the gloomy Korean society are transmitted to his ecological awareness.** The death of a "youngling" can be interpreted either as the oppressed lower class or as precious life in itself. Beyond a doubt, critical comments on environmental issues, expressed in the verse form, have provided writers with an effective way to avoiding the watchful eyes of incumbent political powers. Due to its elusiveness, the poetic diction works as a safe guard from censorship when it comes to conveying strong political messages.... A strong sense of historicity may lead writers not to entirely depend on Western eco-theories.

Significant Ex-pat: Simon Estok's Canadian-Korean Ecocritical Theorizing ("ecophobia," "ambivalent openness")

Tradition:

Food and Medicine, Same Origin

"tiNai" as One of Many Indian Approaches to Ecocriticism

"tiNai": indigenous Tamil ecology, a quasi-Confucian system of relationships and expected behaviors

Nirmal Selvamony, "*tiNai* in Primal and Stratified Societies," *The Indian Journal of Ecocriticism* 1 (August 2008): 38-48.

***tiNai* is a type of land-based society which includes all organisms including the humans. (38)**

Now, why did Tamil poets flout *tiNai* conventions to such an extent that resulted in the loss of the tradition itself? The state society emerges by annihilating the diversity of the pre-state society. Earlier, there were diverse ways of worship; now there is only one predominant cult enjoying state patronage.... ***tiNai* is inalienably bound up with the pre-state society. (47)**

A Sample of *tiNai*-based Ecocritical Analysis

An "ancient Tamil poem":

Stupid, surely, are those large-stemmed Laburnam trees
that mistook the unseasonal rains
and put out, on their branches, lush, pendulous racemes

even before the monsoon he spoke of
when setting out on stony arid paths. (koovattanaar, *kuRuntokai* 66)
The dwelling together in the poem involves two things, the trees (*karu*) and
the waiting wife (*uripporuL*). Since the trees are of the scrubland, wifely
waiting is the appropriate action of *mullai* (*akattiNai*). There is no explicit
mention of land, but we know that the location of the wife is the scrubland
from the mention of the trees.

Are not the trees a part of the land, even as a bird or an animal? Yes,
they are; but it is possible to tell which part of the land performs the function of
karu. If *karu* is an element, natural or cultural, that causes feelings and
thoughts in humans and probably in other organisms as well, then it might
imply that all feelings and thoughts in humans and other beings are caused by
one external object or the other which could be regarded as *karu*....

**If we historicize the concept of *karu*, we might even presume
that all our knowledge is a product of what we learnt from the other
animals in particular and nature in general. (42-43)**

Varieties of “Geographical Determinism” Down Under

Bridging Asia, Europe, Africa, ...:

Turkish Ecocriticism Emerges

Ufuk’s Thumbnail Sketch of Turkish Ecocriticism

Ufuk Özdag (23 March 2010):

Fascination with biodiversity in Turkey—Turkish landscape a “new land”
that emerged from tectonic activities of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Turkish
literature tends to highlight rich flora and fauna.

Shamanic values—the sacredness of nature. Turks were pagans until the
11th century when there was a conversion to Islam. Shamanic values still very
much alive and traceable in Turkish literature.

Animal studies directly relevant to Turkish literature. Anthropomorphizing
is natural in Turkish culture, not a fault, not something to be condemned.

Poverty and economic considerations. Many novels on disillusionment
about destruction of the Turkish land, loss of wetlands, and wilderness.

Mass immigration from rural areas to urban areas due to destruction of
rural landscape.

**How can environmental education be introduced into the elementary
and secondary curricula?** There is a great need for anthologies and
textbooks.

A Passion for Protection

Ufuk Özdag, “Reading Yasar Kemal’s *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman* in the Year of
the Dolphin,” *Concentric* 34.1 (March 2008): 45-74. Special issue on water.

**Environmental literature has a crucial function to play in raising
environmental consciousness, for such literature inculcates ecocentric
values to public consciousness through heartfelt narratives of lived
tragedies in “particular places” across the globe. One fine example
belongs to Turkey’s most influential living author, Yasar Kemal; his**

novel *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman* (1978), with its setting of Istanbul and its environs, takes up the issue of large-scale dolphin hunts in Turkish coastal waters in the early 1950s, a tragedy that was banned in 1983 but is still continuing in many coastal waters around the world. [I]t is crucial to read Kemal's [novel], for it is both a plea and a strong voice to bring about transformation in our value systems that will lead to increased protection of the environment, including the world's oceans. (45)

Culture Traditions and West African Ecocriticism

What Would We, in Other Parts of the World, Like to Know?

E-mail to Augustine Nchoujie, 10 March 2010:

Just remember, because of where you grew up, you probably understand certain subtleties of Achebe's text that people like me (and your audience at York University) would not appreciate--we simply don't have the proper background to give us access to these subtleties of symbols, rituals/sacrifices, farming methods, seasonal meaning, indigenous approaches to environmental protection, and traditional stories. Obviously, you are not from the same community in Nigeria that Achebe is describing in his fiction, but because you are from a nearby African region, you can still speak with some authority about your own AFRICAN insights into the important text. **I guess what I am saying to you is that I hope you will have confidence in your West African experience as a source of important scholarly insight. This is what your listeners and readers in North America would love to hear you talk about.**

Toward a West African Ecocriticism

Augustine Nchoujie, Ph.D. candidate, University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon:

African ecocriticism seeks to study and establish the relationship between man and the natural environment in literary works. **In order to convey this eco-friendly dimension of African letters, African writers use a variety of narrative and analytical strategies some of which include: symbolism, sacrifices and rituals at the beginning and at the end of planting seasons, landscape imagery, anecdotes, delineation of farming methods (fallowing, horizontal ridging in hilly slopes, and seasonal-change songs), and a more detailed description/portrayal of the relationship between man and other forces of the biosphere, especially animals.**

African ecocriticism's objectives are:

to create awareness of the dangers facing the environment and the need to protect it

to revisit the relationship between man and other members of the biotic community in order to ensure an ecological balance and survival of all species

to contribute to the global green movement and literary criticism

A West African Sample

Augustine Nchoujie, "*Things Fall Apart*. Fifty Years After, an Ecocritical Reading." *Things Fall Apart But the Centre Holds*. Ed. Joseph Ushie and

Denja Abdullahi. Lagos, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2008.

The Feast of the New Yam is a great communal feast which assembles a people to celebrate what the soil can do for mankind. We are told that this annual feast was/is an occasion that brings people together as “men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New yam Festival because it began the season of plenty—the New Year” (33). Yams are products of the soil, and they do not only act as food but they also guarantee one’s social position in society. That is why Okonkwo will do everything within his powers to get yams since he could not inherit any from his lazy and titleless father, Unoka. Okonkwo’s compound is in a festive mood as all cooking pots, calabashes, and wooden bowls are scrubbed, especially the wooden mortar in which yam is pounded. The environment is seen here as a great contributor to a people’s nutritional needs, bringing people together and ensuring harmonious existence.” Further, it acts as a character, exposing the greatness of a man or his worthlessness in the case where he cannot produce/farm this king crop. This ties in with my contention here that the environment is the person and the person is the environment in *Things Fall Apart*. (11)

How Would a Bushman Practice Ecocriticism? Some Samples from Southern Africa

The Ecology of Southern African Literary Studies, Goedgedacht Farm, South Africa, October 2009—reaching toward diversity and a sense of belonging
Postcolonial Ecologies and the Gaze of Animals

Wendy Woodward, *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives*. Johannesburg, S.A.: Wits UP, 2008.

This book is about looking—the ways an animal looks at a human and how a human responds to such a gaze....

But the kind of animal gaze examined and explored in this book is different [not superficially aestheticized]. It has more substance and significance. It is a gaze, initiated by the animal, meditative in its quietness and stillness and which compels a response on the part of the human, as it contradicts any assumed superiority of the human race over the nonhuman animal. (1)

A Southern African Ecocritical Challenge: What Can Be Known of Bushman Mindsets?

Dan Wylie, “//Kabbo’s Challenge: Transculturation and the Question of a South African Ecocriticism,” *Journal of Literary Studies* 23.3 (September 2007): 252-70.

The presence of the “Bushman” in southern African literature and media is pervasive; it is arguably an ineradicable part of our regional identity. Literature derived from San or Bushman testimony provides both an opportunity and a problem for an ecologically orientated critic.

This article focuses on Alan James's versions of the testimony of //Kabbo, in the Bleek-Lloyd archive, to explore the question of whether any articulations of the "Bushman" world view might provide a localised basis for a regionally-specific "ecocriticism." (252)

Cautions and Caveats

Dan Wylie:

I am uncomfortable, however, with the term "ecocriticism" to the extent that it implies a cohesive school of thought. There is, so far as I can see, little such cohesion. In the South African context, this may be a good thing; it may allow for a flexibility in methodology which could accommodate dramatic cultural differences while eluding the charge of being just another imperialistic or neocolonial imposition....

I approach Bushman cultural productions...--as I guess do most outside observers—largely with a baffled fascination. What can I truly know of "Bushman mindsets"? What can I firmly learn of, or from, "their" attitude towards the natural world about how best to manage and sustain our common and dwindling environmental inheritance?... (256)

A Tentative Sensing of the Other's View

Wylie:

Perhaps nowhere do we sense the "essence" of "the Bushman" view of human-natural relations than in those stories dealing with a primordial time when animals were people, and spoke the same languages. Hence, in connecting with animals in a manner which invokes that relatedness, //Kabbo can ... "sing the animals"....:

The little snake
The little snake
The little snake
The little snake
The little snake

The very little snake
The little coloured snake
The small coloured snake
The small snake (263)

Phoning in from Bath—Greg Garrard Skypes Goedgedacht
Contemplating Complex, Intermixed Traditions

Julia Martin, *A Millimetre of Dust: Visiting Ancestral Sites*. Cape Town, S.A.: Kwela Books, 2008.

So each day, after driving to the university in my car, I read about stones and arrows, about talking stars and talking flowers, stories of husbands, wives, fathers, mothers and grandparents, and cautionary tales for children. There are stories of hunting and the preparation of meat, stories of a time when animals were people and people were animals,

stories about water and waterholes, rain and rain's things, about the use of ochre and specularite. **And running a track of blood through the notebooks are stories about farmers and Boers and commandos and cruelty and dispossession.** In the pages I read, the telling tends to be repetitive, the syntax incantatory....

I need to remind myself that neither the /Xam stories nor their silences can really be Stone Age words speaking to the Age of Iron and Steel.... (32)

"Have you heard of *La geocritique*?" : French Ecocriticism Takes a Step Forward
Voilà! *La geocritique*

(2007 book by Bertrand Westphal, University of Limoges, France)

Professor Westphal's Sketch of Geocriticism

Bertrand Westphal (e-mail 16 March 2010, see also Wikipedia article):

As for geocriticism, here you have some very short sentences:

"Geocriticism is in line with up to now three fundamental concepts: **spatio-temporality** (no space analysis may avoid a temporal concern); **transgressivity** (no representation is stable; on the contrary, as in Deleuze's deterritorialization process, permanent fluidity is the characteristic of representations and, consequently, of identities); and **referentiality** (any representation has a link with the referential world). Obviously, geocriticism enables a study of fluid representation of spaces. It seems to be quite compatible with ecocriticism".

Palgrave Macmillan confirmed that the contract would be sent in the next days for the American translation. Great! So it should be ready for 2011.

Ecocriticism Is Now Taking Off in France: From the Research Team in Toulouse to the Conferences Organized by the ENS in Lyon

Many Voices, Similar Songs—

There's a world of ecocriticism waiting to be explored ... and invented. **What are the special features of ecocriticism in Argentina?**