SHAKESPEARE AND ECOCRITICISM: AN ANALYSIS OF "HOME" AND "POWER" IN *KING LEAR*[1]

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Although ecocriticism has not had much impact on Shakespeare studies, it offers a vocabulary for the environmental ethics and attitudes of plays such as *King Lear* [2] and a means of moving beyond the thematicism and symbolic readings that have characterized so much of the critical work on Shakespeare's representations of Nature. The first of the terms in this vocabulary would, of course, have to be "ecocriticism" itself, since it is far from clear, even to its most vocal practitioners, what it is. The other key term that this paper proposes is "ecophobia," a word that seeks to give to the study of nature what terms such as misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism give to the study of the representations of women, race, sexuality, and Jewishness respectively.[3] At a time of unprecedented exploration when the world was getting smaller and the resulting changes in social relations were producing entirely new ideas about space, the relationship between social and spatial alienation in *King Lear* is about more than authorial deftness at writing parallels and analogies, and it is about more than the simplistic Bacon/Hobbes binary John Danby suggests. Space (and, more specifically, environment) is central to the tragedies of *King Lear* because, as I will show, without a space to which it refers, ideology cannot exist, and when Lear's control of the physical environment of his kingdom crumbles, his reign must end.

Moreover, a shrinking world can't be shrinking *and* unbounded, and because the very idea of drawing limits, controls, and boundaries is so much in question in this play, we see clearly the potentials of an unbounded world that is slipping out of control to threaten everything. Power, identity, and home stand in an irreconcilably agonistic relationship with the natural world, and the play is, in effect, an extremely conservative—indeed, reactionary—lesson about what tragedies happen when Nature goes unbounded.

Terms

Any time the word "ecocriticism" crops up, it invariably raises questions. How does ecocriticism distinguish itself from other varieties of environmentally-oriented reading? What are its goals? Methodologies? Objects of study? Where is it going? Where did it come from? And where is it now? Certainly in the primary literature on the subject,[4] ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding, firstly by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and, secondly, by its commitment to making connections. Ecocriticism may be many other things besides, but it is always at least these two. It seems, however, that in aiming for unrestricted inclusiveness, ecocriticism has generated among its practitioners a lack of consensus about its own character, goals, methodologies, and objects of study.

Until recently, most ecocritical work has been done with writing that has what Lawrence Buell calls "environmentally focused perspectives"[5] and, consequently, has relied heavily on thematic discussions. The problem here, though, is that while thematic discussions of nature in contemporary American environmental writers may very well be new (many of the writers themselves being new!), it's old hat for Shakespeare. Ecocriticism, therefore, is not simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analyzing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to

material practices in material worlds. It's a tall order, and it probably explains why ecocriticism hasn't been applied to Shakespeare yet. Unlike image-cluster-counting, ecocriticism is hard work.

There is another, perhaps less obvious, reason why ecocriticism seems, at first blush, *not* to be new and instead to be like old thematicism and nature studies when applied to Shakespeare (though not when applied to modern writers who are themselves committed in their work to changing the way people relate with the natural world): ecocritical Shakespeares require a vocabulary that critical discussions on Leslie Marmon Silko or Edward Abbey don't require. Twentieth and twenty-first century environmental writers are more explicitly political and direct in their comments about Nature and, therefore, require less of the kinds of explication Shakespeare and other non-environmental writers require, writers who clearly are not writing in an age of or in response to environmental crises in the ways that Silko or Abbey (or even Thoreau) are. But with its well-pronounced fear of jargon, ecocriticism has muzzled itself and effectively prevented its own spread, except through writers with clearly "environmentally focused perspectives."

Ecocriticism needs a vocabulary. There is, for instance, no word comparable to "misogyny" or "homophobia" or "Anti-Semitism" or "racism" in ecocritical theory, though there certainly is irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world and aspects of it. If we use a term such as "ecophobia," we are able to expand on and historicize the concept and practices it labels. The basic antinomies of a play such as *King Lear* have a long history.

Ecophobia is all about fear of a loss of agency and control to Nature. It is ecophobia that sets the Old Testament God (within the first twenty-six verses of Genesis) declaring that "man" (anatomically and generically, at this point) is to have dominion over everything. It is ecophobia that allows "man" unquestioned use of land and animals. And it is ecophobia that posits Nature as the scapegoat for social problems (such as over-crowding and the diseases that such over-crowding encourages). Control of the natural environment, understood as a god-given right in Western culture, seems to imply

ecophobia, just as the use of African slaves implies racism. Similarly, misogyny is to rape as ecophobia is to environmental looting and plundering.[6] Like racism and misogyny, with which it is often allied, ecophobia is about power.

Ecophobia doesn't begin with the Old Testament, however, even though we see there one of its most famous articulations. It probably has roots that reach back to the evolution of the opposable thumb, which enabled hominids to make tools and to conscript "wheat, barley, peas, lentils, donkeys, sheep, pigs, and goats about 9,000 years ago."[7] By the time of Shakespeare, obviously, there had been huge changes in humanity's relationship with the natural world, and, without a doubt, the crossing of the seas in the fifteenth century and the subsequent empire-building that developed produced the most dramatic of those historical changes up to that point.

Imperialism indirectly offered the first big push to control of the natural environment since the Neolithic Revolution. The world was becoming smaller, mappable, predictable, and less diversified. With the colonists came disease, extinctions, homogenization, and profound changes in humanity's control of the world. The romanticization of Nature as a space of simplicity, innocence, and peace that Raymond Williams notes as characteristic of "the country" no more slowed the progress of ecophobia than did the notion of "the Noble Savage" slow the genocide of colonized people.

Not far behind the crossing of the seas and the colonialism that developed forthwith was, of course, the Industrial Revolution. Here, the control of Nature was consolidated. Among the many paradigmatic shifts and lurches occasioned by the Industrial Revolution was the redefinition of Nature from participative subject and organism in an organic community to the status of pure object, a machine that ideally could be intimately and infinitely controlled and forced to spit out products in the service of an increasingly utilitarian capitalist economy.

Though we can always find diggers and levellers and pockets of resistance that challenge the ecophobic hegemony of early modern England, history hasn't been kind to green thinkers and revisionists. The antinomies between the social and the

ecological have invariably resulted in formidable triumphs of humanity over the rest of the natural world. In *King Lear*, these antinomies result in vigorous threats to identity and all of the horrors such threats imply, and effectively position the natural world as scapegoat.

Though there have been mountains of work on *King Lear*, there is nothing that makes or seeks to make ecocritical analyses of the relationships between the play's various tragedies and the natural environments the play presents.

The Ecocritical Difference

By far the most extensive study of Nature in *King Lear* is John Danby's *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, which proposes that the play offers a binary vision of nature with a third position in the middle. Danby locates Lear, Gloucester, Albany, and Kent on one side and characterizes this as the "orthodox" view in which Nature is orderly, benign (but punitive), and connected with custom, reason, and religion. On the other side are Edmund, Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan, who are associated with a Nature that is at best indifferent to social order and customs and at worst amoral and rapacious. In the middle is Cordelia, whom Danby sees as "standing for Nature herself."[8] For Danby, "Cordelia expresses the utopian intention of Shakespeare's art."[9] While such an approach is perhaps useful for understanding authorial intentionality in the play, it strikes me that there are more important things going on than what Shakespeare may or may not have intended to symbolize. Moreover, even if we use such a method of critical inquiry, the basic binary doesn't work with the play, even with the addition of the awkward third position. It just doesn't work. Although binaries can be useful in describing a lot about how the world works, the antinomies between the social and environmental in *King Lear* are better seen as points on a continuum of environmental ethics than what Danby offers—namely, awkwardly but firmly dichotomized positions buttressed and further entrenched by a focus on heavily privileged writers such as Bacon and Hobbes. As Edward Soja has argued in a discussion about space and spatial theory, binaries "tend to become so all-inclusive and powerful that

they cover all possible alternatives. This is the weakness of binary logic; it must be critically reevaluated."[10] It is the weakness of Danby's dated book.

All of the main characters in *King Lear*, to varying degrees, share a utilitarian view of Nature. It represents an object space that must be controlled; uncontrolled, it is a dangerous space of chaotic nothingness. If Cordelia is associated with Nature in the popular imagination that the play represents (or in Lear's imagination), it is certainly in this sense. Conceived of with the same ideals about silence as the natural environment (and valued analogously with it), women are for Lear a potently dangerous material, a space of poison and pollution that, like the natural environment, lacks reason, is morally inconsiderable, and must be kept silent. Cordelia isn't silent.

For Lear (and, as we will see, for Albany), women and the environment are each viciously unpredictable and dangerous, and women who communicate freely are monsters.[11] In Cordelia's "nothing," Lear hears something, and whatever her "nothing" signifies for him, whether her genitalia (as "nothing" signifies in *Hamlet*) or her status as a human subject,[12] the mere fact of her communicating *anything* is monstrous to Lear *because* she is a woman. Nowhere is his misogyny more clear than in what he reveals in his mad ravings to Edgar and the blinded Gloucester:

> Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
> Though women all above;
> But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
> Beneath is all the fiends':
> There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit—
> Burning, scalding, stench, consumption. (4.6.124–9)

Calling on natural elements and the vastness of the space of the gods, such a defamation of women makes us wonder about Cordelia's mother (notably absent from and silent within the space of the play) and what she might have had to put up with from Lear.[13]

Moreover, while it is certainly true that Nature is coded female in the early modern period in general and in the play in particular, Nature also functions as an ambivalent authority

that is called upon to sanction (or condemn, as the occasion warrants) sharply marked male-female positions that develop in the drama. Thus, Lear thinks that the hostile, demonized environment takes sides with his daughters, that the elements are "servile ministers" (3.2.21) that join "in battles 'gainst a head/ So old and white as [his]" (ll.23–4). The natural world, far from being a neutral space, is complicit in the evil threat that women with volition pose to people such as Lear. At the same time, though, the position of the natural world is always in play between the same sort of extremes that women are, between the saintly and the demonic, the silent and the cacophonous, with very little neutral space in between.

Ecocriticism looks at the significance of associations; thematic studies have, for the most part, looked at them as matters of academic interest, without an eye to changing the way people think. If it is the goal of feminist critical theory to do so, it is no less the goal of ecocriticism. And the most basic and scantly discussed association in this play is the mutually interdependent relationship between misogyny and ecophobia.

Ecofeminism and Ecocriticism

> ...the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing.[14]

Granting that there are ecofeminisms and ecocriticisms, we might venture some broad generalizations about the two spheres of investigation.[15] Often, they do very much the same work, but they are not synonymous terms. Why no scholars have taken the time and effort to explain the differences at any length is, perhaps, a matter for some speculation, but we may be certain that there are very real consequences that we need to be aware of when we do make the time and effort to look at the differences. One of these consequences is that in drawing a distinction between ecocriticism and ecofeminism, we immediately seem to establish an agonistic discourse that sets ecofeminism and ecocriticism at each other's throats as competing voices, perhaps even as a sort of gender war writ small in the rarefied airs of competing theoretical discourses. It is not an argument worth getting into, since it is far less

productive than building on the strengths of each approach, looking at ways that they complement each other, and working toward defining more fully what each approach envisions. Another problem is that differentiating between ecofeminism and ecocriticism lands us in a bit of a catch-22: in choosing ecofeminist approaches, we privilege the social; in choosing ecocritical approaches, we subordinate feminism and make *it* a topic for inclusion rather than a primary topic. Nevertheless, there remain unexamined differences between the two approaches.

When Ynestra King argues that "in ecofeminism, nature is the central category of analysis,"[16] she is surely mistaken. Mary Mellor has recently explained that "although ecofeminists may differ in their focus, sex/gender differences are *at the centre* of their analysis."[17] Most ecofeminist scholars agree in the primacy of sex/gender differences over having "nature...the central category of analysis." It is more the case that *nature* is *included* in the discussion. King, in spite of her priorizing nature in ecofeminism, seems to agree with this less priorizing stand when she argues that "ecofeminist movement politics and culture must show the connection between all forms of domination, *including* the domination of nonhuman nature"[18]—including, but not beginning with it. As Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy observe, this *inclusionary* view has been "generally embraced as a sound orientation."[19]

So even though "eco" comes first in both of the terms, in "ecofeminism" it is the second part of the term that has ontological priority. This means that ecofeminism is first a social theory, a human-centered approach; to some degree, ecocriticism tries to be something else, to move away from anthropocentric models.[20] I would also propose that ecocriticism is always a feminist issue: as Warren argues, "what makes something a feminist issue is that an understanding of it contributes in some important way to an understanding of the subordination of women."[21] Ecocriticism that does not look at the relationship between the domination of women and the domination of the natural environment quite simply fails in its mandate to "make connections" and is quite simply *not* ecocriticism. What Patrick Murphy calls "nonfeminist

ecological criticism"[22] is simply that: nonfeminist ecological criticism. It isn't ecocriticism, and the distinction needs to be made and maintained.

Positionings

The positioning of women and the natural world into object status is a thematic and structural issue in *King Lear*, but it is also a feminist and ecocritical issue. Much of Lear's inability to tolerate voice and volition grows out of his anxieties about his own masculine voice and identity, each of which are relentlessly assaulted not only by his daughters (directly and indirectly) but by the natural environment. And while that environment is certainly feminized thematically and symbolically, it is feminized, more importantly, theoretically.

The uncoded and unmapped spaces of nature have everything to do with "nothing" in this play. They denote absence of culture, society, and control and are dangerous because their very presence is an affirmation of resistance to domesticated and vigorously controlled spaces. All that is of value is in and consists of such controlled spaces. Nothing, by its very nature, is pure threat. Women are discursively, politically, and materially analogous with Nature in the play, not simply on the level of imagined genital nothingness, but on the level of their ideological function. Effectively voiceless (except as imagined menace and threat), an object of masculine desires for control, and a resource to be husbanded and managed, the natural environment and women are each potentially a profound threat to masculine control when things go awry. And things certainly do go awry in *King Lear*. Moreover, such threats have no place in Lear's world. Literally no place. They are irreconcilable with Lear's spaces of control.

Cordelia's silence, her artless "nothing," is something "which nor our nature nor our *place* can bear" (1.1.171—emphasis added). Subversion of authority, be it filial or political (and the two are difficult to distinguish at times), is, for Lear, something that both Nature and space repel, as the positive end of a magnet repels the negative. Because Lear wants control, and "nothing" denies him access to control, the "nothing" of

Cordelia's speech and the similar absence of unquestioning support in Kent are negatives that go against Nature for Lear. They are monstrosities and cannot be allowed to abide within the ideological framework that structures the home space of Lear's thinking.

On a very basic level in the classroom, these are among the first issues that come up from students: what's going on with the play's obsession with space? Is there not something lacking from the seemingly endless discussions that have already been made about "nothing" in the play? If ecocriticism is a new source of insight here, then how can we calibrate relationships between the play's very present hostile natural environment and the omnipresent nothingness that initiates the tragic action, runs through the play, and dominates so much of the *Lear* critical commentary?

One of the things an ecocritical reading brings out is that the question of control in *King Lear* has very broad social and environmental implications and that the dependence of identity on environmental control presupposes the complete obsolescence of any of the kind of holism or holistic thinking that characterized more feudal economies than Elizabeth's England.

Danby is certainly correct in singling out Edmund as The New Man, the individualist arrogantly seeking profit and self-advancement in a quickly evolving capitalist economy, but Lear is no less the single figure fighting alone against the world. Significantly, much of that world that he is fighting against is Nature, and, of course, the other big difference is that, unlike Edmund, Lear loses—from start to finish. At least Edmund enjoys some small victories.

Lear, controlled by rather than in control of everything—especially (and most dramatically) the natural environment—loses his identity when he loses his ability to control spatial worth. Lear's dispossessing himself of his lands, his giving away of space, is a dispossession of masculine identity. As he loses his voice and identity, he becomes more unseated, more unhoused, and less distinguishable from the undomesticated spaces that wildly threaten civilization. Without his land, Lear becomes frenetic in his questions about his identity. In Act 1,

scene 4 alone, he asks three separate times about his identity in a crescendo of increasing frenziedness, first with a simple "Dost thou know me?" (l.26), then "Who am I?" (l.78), and finally, in desperation:

> Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
> Either his notion weakens, or his discernings
> Are lethargied—Ha! waking? 'Tis not so.
> Who is it that can tell me who I am? (ll.226–30)

The vehemence of Nature's assaults hastens this old man's decline. This is the least of it, though. It is in the storm where we see him completely lose touch.

In the worst of the storm, the strongest example of an extremely obtrusive and hostile environment in the play, Lear sees homelessness as being the plight of other people in other places and not of himself where he is.[23] Alhough he tastes and smells the sulphurous air, hears the crack and spill of thunder, is blinded and burned by the lightning, drenched by the rains, and cooled by the winds;[24] although again and again and again, he is with the "houseless heads" (3.4.30) that are pummeled, buffeted, and pilloried by the hostile environment—yet he remains unable to see accurately. He is unable to see that home has become an impossibility for him. The ability to control space is what enables the possession of home. As Mary Douglas has argued, "home starts by bringing some space under control."[25] Lear is not in control. He hasn't the foggiest idea about who or where he is–his identity or the space he occupies. He is still pointing with third persons at other people: "Is man no more than this?" (3.4.102–3), he asks, pitying the miserable state of Tom. Even his grand existentialism is a failure to perceive his own identity accurately: "unaccom-/ modated man is no more but such a poor, bare, fork'd/ animal as thou art" (ll.106–8), he howls, tearing off his clothes as if to act the part that he already embodies and that he perceives as reality in Tom's "counterfeiting" (3.6.61). At Dover, unwilling to relinquish his voice, he blathers on and on in delusionary terms that he is what he was, claiming "I am the King himself/...Ay, every inch

a king!/...I am a king" (4.6.83–4, 107, 199). If he is a king in anything but name, at this point, he is a sorry king indeed and is certainly not above the art he disparages: a coin would undoubtedly look better than the "side-piercing sight" (l.85) he presents. He is deluded about his identity. He's a mess, inside and out. He's a madman (SD.l.80), not a king.[26] If a house falls apart in a storm, we don't call the broken pieces a house: we call them broken pieces, debris, remains, or rubble. It can no longer be identified as a house: it has lost that identity. Lear, though he may still call himself a king, is a king in name only. The sad wretch who stares at the rubble and says "there's my house" is deluded. So is Lear. Kings don't get beat up and battered around in storms. Kings don't lose their home. Lear's space, home, power—his voice as an effective, functional king—are gone. Like Nixon's pondering of his fate without his bodyguards on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, the horror in *Lear* is one of displacement-specifically, displacement into a world very far from home: the natural world.

Clearly, the tragedies of the play depend vitally on the hostility of the natural world, and Lear loses his identities of kingship, male authority and privilege, and power to what threatens him most insistently: his daughters and the natural spaces into which they finally thrust him.

The Horrors

Horror is inseparable from and constitutive of the tragedies in *King Lear*. Quite apart from the graphic horror of blood and death in the play are the horrors of ontological unfixing and loss that Nature poses. As Linda Woodbridge recently observed,

> In *Lear*'s England we lose our geographic bearings–for much of the play we do not know what kingdom we are in—and this radical de-centering after the opening in a recognizable center, the court, reproduces the loss of *social* place of those who become homeless...Who we are is bound up in where Home is. Those who become homeless are strangers to themselves.[27]

It is like looking into the mirror and seeing someone else's eyes instead of our own. Such is the horror of *Lear*, and it is resolutely environmental.

Even worse, the horrors of "out there" are brought home, as it were, in the play. The socially self-consuming monstrosity implicit in the many metaphors of cannibalism in *Lear* reiterates the spatial and environmental dimensions of the developing tragedy. Cannibalism, always implicitly an environmental matter, voiced within an "out there" framework, is domestic in this play.

The play posits domestic disharmony both as monstrosity and as a form of cannibalism. The clearest articulation linking filial ingratitude, monstrosity, and cannibalism comes from the mouth of Albany, who maintains that if "these vild offenses" continue, "Humanity must perforce prey on itself,/ Like monsters of the deep" (4.2.47, 49–50). Such, perhaps, is all well and fine in the vast expanses of the wilderness of seas and the rest of the natural world, but within the confined and carefully policed space of human society, it is a dangerous thing.

There are many images of cannibalism in the play. We hear of a monstrosity that "to gorge his appetite" (1.1.118), as Lear complains, "makes his generation messes" (1.1.117). At another point, the Fool comments that "'The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,/ That it had it head bit off by it young'" (1.4.215–6). In addition, when Goneril displeases Lear, he tells Regan that her sister "hath tied/ Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, [pointing to his heart] here" (2.4.134–5). Out on the heath, Lear tells Kent that "'twas this flesh begot/ Those pelican daughters" (3.4.74–5). The pelican, as the gloss in the 1997 *Riverside* edition explains, "was believed to feed upon its mother's blood" (1324). At another time, Lear commands that Goneril and Regan "digest the third" dower (1.1.128). At least at the level at which the metaphor works, Lear is guilty of commanding the very things that he has only just finished condemning, and the unnaturalness of the consumption he describes rankles our sense of justice. Certainly, Nature is inextricable from all of this, and the discourse of cannibalism both reiterates and confirms the unwelcome intrusion of Nature into the domestic spaces of the play, spaces which

quickly dissolve and lose all traces of domesticity. Moreover, the self-consumption, logically, must result in a space of emptiness, nothingness—at best, an absence of culture and civilization; at its ecophobic worst, the horrors of an invasive and hostile Nature.

If the discourse of cannibalism unsettles the spatial relationships between Nature and home in disconcerting ways, Lear's calling Cordelia a stranger (1.1.115) is no less a spatial and environmental matter, one conceptually removing Cordelia from the space Lear identifies as home.[28] It goes against Nature, in Lear's way of thinking, to have a child who is hostile to the domestic spaces he imagines, a child as obstinate, silent, and inexpressive as Cordelia, or as thankless as Goneril. The play as a whole seems to share Lear's view.

Edmund, too, for instance, is an unnatural thing, hostile to and divorced from the domestic spaces that the play imagines. He is decisively associated with Nature and the nonhuman and expresses his allegiance (albeit, disingenuously) in terms of religious adoration: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess, to thy law/ My services are bound" (1.2.1–2), he proclaims. Having been born a bastard, he falls outside the ideologically sanctioned space of home, outside of marriage, and, banished from the privileges of property, he wants back in: he is after his brother's land. He wants the space from which, at least in terms of inheritance, he has been banished. He calls on Nature as the authority for his actions. In Lear's world, Edmund represents disorder, the chaos and horror of a world not in synch, where Nature does not reflect and confirm human culture and society.

Through Edmund, we see the analogical thinking, of which a decreasing majority in early modern English society was so heavily enamored, intensely disputed. Whereas Gloucester maintains that the "late eclipses in the sun and moon/ portend no good to us" (1.2.103–4), Edmund's thinking is of a different hue:

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour-we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools

> by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! (1.2.118–28).

And yet, the fury of the elements that accompany the banished King implicitly maintains the validity of precisely the analogical thinking that so much else in the play unsettles. A King getting locked out by his daughters is not an everyday thing, and the storm that accompanies Lear on this strange night is equally unusual: "Since I was man," Kent exclaims,

> Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
> Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
> Remember to have heard. (3.2.45–8)[29]

Even so, Lear cannot find "any cause in nature/ That make these [Goneril's and Regan's] hard hearts" (3.5.77–8).[30] There is none.

While both Lear and Edmund believe that Nature patterns and reflects human behaviour, Edmund challenges the terms through which this patterning is negotiated; Lear does not offer such challenges and, moreover, wants the analogical relationships to remain intact. Edmund's "excellent foppery" speech is a direct challenge, unequivocally verbalized, and it reflects the erosion of analogical thinking under the early modern winds of mechanistic change. Though dealing with a different matter entirely, Paul Delany's argument about "the struggle between the old order and the new" is useful here. Delany explains that Edmund, Goneril, and Regan stand at one end of the spectrum, while Lear and his party stand at the other, and that this opposition conveys "a social meaning that derives from the contemporary historical situation as Shakespeare understood it."[31] The triumph of the new is sheer horror to the old, and a large part of the horror resides in the new relationship between humanity and the natural environment, a relationship no longer of organicism but of competition and reciprocal conflict.

The two camps Delany speaks of entertain quite different notions, therefore, about the relationship between Nature and domesticity. For Edmund, Nature condones filial competition;[32] for Lear, Nature condemns it. Whereas Edmund may pray to Nature, his goddess, whatever the gravity (or lack) of such an expression of devotion, Lear, on the other hand, a king singularly without control, in a masochistic ranting to the storming skies, commands that (not prays to) the elements to do what they are doing anyway. He is, however, no Prospero, and he has, as he well knows, no control over the environment: "you owe me no subscription," he says, continuing "...Here I stand your slave" (3.2.18,19).[33]

Pawns

If we understand that power is defined at least in part in this play in terms of the natural environment, with the tragedies developing when Lear stands subject not only to his daughters but to Nature, then a lot of things start to fall into place.

What Stephen Greenblatt defines as an exorcism for Edgar, for instance, is also a movement away from Nature, away from marginality, and closer to the center and to the domestic. The disguise Edgar has assumed, like so much else in this play, is a compellingly ecocritical matter in which questions about power are integral. As Tom, Edgar has taken "the basest and most poorest shape/ That ever penury, in contempt of man,/ Brought near to beast" (2.3.7–9), and in his "nakedness" (l.11), he is as he perceives Bedlam beggars to be, as Lear himself, long before he tears off his clothes (SD3.4.109), comes to be–unaccommodated, homeless, banished from the community of humans into the wilderness of the feared environment, into "the winds and persecutions of the sky" (2.3.12)–and, essentially, without power. The natural environment is a space of pollution that stands in stark contrast to the clean environment of the community of enfranchised people. It is a space in which Edgar will "grime with filth" (l.9) his face, knot his hair, and stick himself with "pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary" (l.16) the better to blend undifferentiated, a "horrible object" (l.17), into this space of banishment. He becomes a part of this environment, a thing devoid of human

identity, and complains "Edgar I nothing am" (1.21). The natural environment, so full of so many fearful things, is, we have seen before, ironically a space of nothing that disempowers and "make[s] nothing of" (3.1.9) those banished within it.

Edgar is able to begin shedding the assumed identity (of essential nothingness) that defined and shook him in the storm (though he still wears his disguise) only when he is no longer a pawn to circumstances that control him. It is roughly when he is in control, less tormented and more the master of his moves, that he is able to lead his father, though shakily, to the presumed cliff. Still, he doesn't have his identity, which, ultimately, is bound up with the control of his inheritance, the geographical space Edmund took from him: "Know," he tells the Herald, "my name is lost, / By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit,/ Yet I am noble" (5.3.121–3).

His father is less able to extract himself and regain the world he has lost. At Dover Cliff, Gloucester, deep in the guts of Nature, is virtually consumed by his circumstances, and, like any consumed thing, lacks the power and autonomy of the consuming predator who can digest third dowers. Deep, deep in the guts of Nature, he is totally without control, self-understanding, and identity. Pondering the great nothingness of death that waits beyond the edge of the imagined precipice, he is as far from home as he can be. Leading up to the cliff scene, Cornwall is acutely aware of the relationship between power/control and possession of home in his talk about "our power/...which men/ May blame, but not control" (3.7.25–7), but poor, naïve Gloucester still thinks Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril his guests: "You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends./...I am your host" (3.7.31, 39). He never comes to understand his loss of space and the implications it has for his suffering.

Nor does Lear seem to understand very much by the end of the play. He is able to begin to resume, shakily, his identity, and with it new clothes, when more in control of himself physically, less at the mercy of the elements over which he has no control, the space and circumstances that completely control him. He is able then to talk without delusions about

the uncertainty of his state and identity: "Would I were assur'd/ Of my condition" (4.7.55–6), he laments. And the first questions he asks are about space: "Where have I been? Where am I?" (l.51). But he remains a pawn to circumstances and spaces and shows little change as a person. He knows Cordelia no better by the end of the play than in the First Act; he merely knows his other two daughters better. He continues not to know Cordelia and to think that she hates him, though now he has revised his opinion about the cause of this hatred:

> I know you do not love me, for your sisters
> Have (as I do remember) done me wrong:
> You have some cause, they have not. (4.7.72–4)

He is aware of having made a mistake and asks forgiveness for this: "I'll kneel down/," he says, "And ask of thee forgiveness" (5.3.10–1), thus re-enacting the bizarrely carnivalesque inversion of power relations that have come to characterize him. In so kneeling, effectively prostrating and disempowering himself, however, he makes no gains on himself: he is the same stupid old man that he was and is no more able to accept the terms of Cordelia's love now than he was at the beginning of the play. The image he paints in his bizarre fantasy of them in prison is of lovers, not of a father and a daughter, and such is not what she offers: "We two alone will sing like birds i'th'cage,/..." he says

> So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
> And take upon 's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
> In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
> That ebb and flow by th' moon. (ll.9,11–19)

It is his final fantasy, and it has everything to do with space, environment, and identity. He fantasizes about the natural world and seems blissfully unaware that his idealizations of the

natural world simply do not match up with his experiences of that world. The reality within the play is that the natural world is about as far from idyllic as we can get. It is a harsh world. Moreover, Lear fantasizes that he will finally have a daughter within a bounded space who will give him undivided love, of the sort about which Goneril and Regan spoke, and that he deserves such love. For all that he has been and will be punished, however, Lear hasn't changed the behaviors that brought on the punishment he has received. And for all the pity that he has shown, Lear is still a spiteful old man and doesn't "forget and forgive" (4.7.83), as he pleads for Cordelia to do; rather, spite-filled, bitter, and again deprived of his fantasy, he kills the person who hanged his youngest and, as Dollimore correctly interprets,[34] *boasts* about it (5.3.275).

From start to finish, the limits of Lear's identity and growth are staked out in spatial and environmental terms. It has been a struggle with boundaries, and we move from the very grand scale of nation and maps to the very personal scale of madness and an imagined prison. In between, Nature triumphs and pretty much wipes Lear's slate clean of his eminently human pursuits: he loses power, identity, and home as much to Nature as to his daughters and their ilk.

Full Circle

By the end of the play, Edmund is right in claiming that "The wheel has come full circle" (5.3.175), and Edgar is able to speak without dissembling, to say "My name is Edgar" (l.170), and to assume all the rights of domesticity and the privileges of property and identity with which he began in the play; but there is a tragic truth in what Edmund says of which no one in the play seems aware: there has been no resolution of the questions about speech and silence that the play has raised, and we are more or less back where we began. The wheel has come full circle, when, at the close of the play, Edgar says that we should "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (l.325), the only philosophical difference being that Edgar subscribes to the opposite side of the question than that with which Lear began the play. In between, there are numerous positions that advocate, for various reasons, limits to the unbridled self-

expression Edgar commends.[35] Things did not go well for Cordelia, but they most surely would not have gone any better if she had fully expressed what was on her mind with the egotism implicit in Edgar's final words.

The horrifying specters of unhousing and alienation, the loss of identity and voice, and the almost apocalyptic chaos, all guarantied by Cordelia's "nothing," evince a textual ecophobia as palpable as any of the characters on the stage or meteorological assaults on the heath. *Lear* may well be "about power, property, and inheritance," an argument Jonathan Dollimore makes,[36] but it is no less about the natural world.

NOTES

1 This paper was supported by Konkuk University in 2005.

2 All quotations of Shakespeare in this essay are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, second edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

3 I first used the term "ecophobia" in "Environmental Implications of the Writing and Policing of the Early Modern Body: Dismemberment and Monstrosity in Shakespearean Drama," *Shakespeare Review* 33 (1998), 135 and explain it in detail below. Briefly, though, "ecophobia" describes irrational (often hysterical) and groundless hatred of the natural world, or aspects of it. Such fear of the agency of nature plays out in many spheres. The personal hygiene industry relies on it, since capital-driven notions about personal cleanliness assign us preference for perfumes (for some more than others) over natural bodily odors; the cosmetic industry (in its passion for covering up nature's "flaws" and "blemishes") uses it; beauticians and barbers (in their military passion for cutting back natural growths) are sustained by it; city sanitation boards display it in their demands that residents keep grass short to prevent the introduction of "vermin" and "pests" into urban areas; landscaped gardens, trimmed poodles–anything that amputates or seeks to amputate the agency of nature and to assert a human order on a system that follows different orders is, in essence, ecophobic. Ecophobia is a subtle thing that takes many forms.

4 The best and most well-maintained bibliography of ecocritical materials can be found at http: //www.english.ohio-state.edu/organizations/asle/.

[5] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 430 n20.

[6] Rape, as an example of misogyny, has more to do with violence than sexuality. Sexualization of landscapes of the sort we see at the time of Shakespeare in the visual art of Jan van der Straet and Theodor de Bry, for instance, similarly suggests that it is more the visualizing of power and indifference than the allegorizing sexuality or desire that compelled the eroticism of the art. Describing much later experiences of the early American landscape, Annette Kolodny argues that such experiences are variously expressed through an entire range of images, each of which details one of the many elements of that experience, including eroticism, penetration, raping, embrace, enclosure, and nurture, to cite only a few (150). In theory, there are links between women and the land; in practice, men rape and butcher women and tear up the land. A culture that sanctions commodification of women as environmental and spatial commodities certainly does not balk at victimizing women in the manner that it does the natural world.

[7] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 21.

[8] John Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), 20.

[9] Danby 126.

[10] Edward Soja, "Lessons in Spatial Justice," *Hunch* 1 (1999), 102

[11] Monsters threaten the category of the human. They threaten to bring the chaos that an "untamed" natural environment constantly poses, the dark and tenacious nature that always lurks waiting to reclaim "the human." They crowd the early modern stage and are essential to delineating the reach of the natural, as well as the moral and ethical limits of the human.

[12] I would argue against the psychoanalytic tradition that reduces sexism to genital bias. In the early modern period, the patriarchal idea that the vagina is nothing is part of a much larger issue: misogyny. It is not confined to the genitals. It is not merely vaginophobia; misogyny is contempt for the whole woman, the whole body. In much of Shakespeare, as in much of early modern thinking, it is not merely vaginae that men count as nothing: it is also the rest of the woman who possesses the vagina that doesn't count, is nothing, is irrelevant, and is outside of the rights and privileges men enjoy. Even to a fine

chap such as Edgar, women's will is an "indistinguish'd space" (4.6.271), a space of virtual nothingness, but a space of boundless danger like the wilderness of the natural environment. The ease with which literature deploys bestializing metaphors and environmental metaphors against women speaks to a set of material practices that is at once ecophobic and misogynist.

[13] Steven M. Cahn argues in support of Lear's misogyny on an entirely groundless claim that Lear's wife was a "baneful influence" and "an iniquitous women [*sic*]," and that Lear "had been duped by the wiles of a women [*sic*]." He asks "Have we any clue to the sort of person she was? We do if we make the ordinary assumption that the personality of the children reflects the personality of at least one of their parents. Such is the case with Cordelia and Lear. Both are proud, both are stubborn, both are capable of fidelity and love. Indeed, their very likeness leads them into conflict at beginning [*sic*] of the play and into reconciliation at the end. But Goneril and Regan have nothing in common with their father. These daughters are capable of treachery and cruelty that lie beyond his comprehension. Who was the model for the [*sic*] their malevolence? The obvious answer is: their mother." Steven M. Cahn, "The Wife of Lear," in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* 38 [199–200] (1988), 51.) Cordelia, younger than Goneril and Regan, managed to avoid this baneful maternal influence, in Cahn's argument. The problem with Cahn's short piece (problems with "women" and articles aside) is that it is pure speculation into the life of an imaginary character who has not been written, except as a dead person described with a mere three words: "thy mother's tomb" (2.4.131). Cahn's argument is absurd. Moreover, it blames the woman for the man's misogyny. Cahn's argument vilifies a woman about whom we know nothing–except that she is dead. We do not know, cannot know, about Lear's wife; we *do* know, should know, that Lear is a misogynist. Based on Lear's remarks, his misogyny is a fact; any critical comment on his wife (except that she is dead) is spurious speculation.

[14] Ynestra King, "Toward an Ecological Feminism and a Feminist Ecology," in *Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology*, ed. Joan Rothschild (New York: Pergamon, 1983), 118

[15] While we must, of course, be wary of making any kind of generalization, we also do well to consider arguments Jean Howard puts forward that "an almost obsessive fear of falling prey to a reductive 'master narrative' has severely inhibited the

range and character of narrative being written about the [early modern] period" ["Material Shakespeare/ Materialist Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 33]. Howard goes on to maintain that a narrative of interconnections is not necessarily a "master narrative," in the sense of aspiring to universal truth claims of the sort discredited by critiques of Enlightenment epistemologies. Rather, narratives of interconnection can be offered as alternatives to local and topical analyses, but alternatives whose usefulness can be judged only in terms of their greater explanatory power and fidelity to the facts as they are known than in terms of their absolute, supra-historical truth claims (33). This kind of argument can apply to discussions about methods of inquiry as much as to discussions about historical periods, at least in its disavowal of aspirations to reductivism and totalizing explanations. My purpose is to provide the partial and provisional comments Howard discusses, but for two general theoretical camps: ecofeminism and ecocriticism.

16 Ynestra King, "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/ Culture Dualism," in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990), 117.

17 Mary Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology* (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1997), 69—emphasis added.

18 King, "Toward" 119—emphasis added.

19 Greta Gaard and Partick Murphy, "Introduction," in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, ed. Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 3.

20 Leo Marx contends that this anthropocentric/ecocentric binary constitutes the central debate about ecocriticism's undefined character and that we can't help confronting it. At the 5th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment held in June 2003 in Boston, Marx and Lawrence Buell squared off in a debate on this binary. Marx aligned himself with the anthropocentric side by maintaining that people are "at the center of environmental thinking" and represent "the most responsible agent of environmental devastation." Buell, meanwhile, essentially took the opposite position. There seem to be at least two questions here: firstly, how far can we go from anthropocentric models

and retain both the analytical and transformative potentials of ecocriticism? After all, surely humanity is central to effective environmental action and transformative analyses. The other question is equally compelling: if we don't put Nature front and center, doesn't ecocriticism reiterate the very arrogance it critiques–namely, of humanity having dominion over everything?

[21] King, "Toward" 142.

[22] Patrick Murphy, *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 92.

[23] Dollimore seems to hold a slightly different opinion on this matter, suggesting that Lear in fact is fully experiencing the situation he is in. Dollimore argues that "the distracted use of the abstract—'You houseless poverty'—subtly suggests that Lear's disregard has been of a general rather than a local poverty. He has ignored it not through callous indifference but simply *because he has not experienced it*" (Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, second edition. [Durham: Duke University Press, 1993], 191.) The clear suggestion is that he *is* now experiencing it, but I would argue otherwise, since the second person abstraction points away from Lear rather than toward him.

[24] The sensory appeal of Lear's experiences is perhaps nowhere more vivid than in the images he uses when he rails against what he sees as a conspiring Nature:

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage, blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, [drown'd] the cocks!
> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Smite flat the thick rotundity o' th' world!
> Crack nature's moulds, an germains spill at once,
> That makes ingrateful man! (3.2.1–9)

[25] Mary Douglas, "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space," in *Home: a place in the world*, ed. Arien Mack (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993), 263.

[26] The Gentlemen to whom Lear says he is king do not confirm his statement but merely accede that "You are a royal one, and we obey you" (4.6.201). To them, the sight he presents is "most pitiful in the meanest wretch,/ [And is] Past speaking of in a king" (ll.204–5). The indefinite article again fails to confirm Lear's assertion of self-identity; Lear is clearly not a King at this point. The space and circumstances he inhabits deny him that identity.

[27] Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 296.

[28] Woodbridge's comments about Cordelia, similar but far more detailed and substantiated than mine, are worth quoting at length here: "The link between domestic and national homelessness is built into Lear's thinking, a product of Tudor ideology identifying nation with home. Disinheriting his daughter, Lear turns her into a foreigner. He has 'stripped her from his benediction, turned her/ To foreign casualties' (4.3.44–5). Conjuring the legendarily barbaric Scythian, he orientalizes her: 'The barbarous Scythian,/ Or he that makes his generation messes/ To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom/ Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved/ As thou my sometime daughter' (1.1.116–19). Which means not at all: Lear's Britain hardly provides foreign aid to Scythians or cannibals. The word 'neighbored' suggests an idealized world where neighbours spontaneously help the poor, a world before wandering beggars were exempted from pity. 'Relieved' could suggest private charity, but a primary meaning of 'relief' was 'assistance...given to the indigent from funds administered under the Poor Law or from parish doles' (*OED*). To Lear, Cordelia is ineligible even for poor relief; she is among the undeserving poor. 'Stranger,' which he twice calls her (1.1.115, 207), often meant 'foreigner,' and was also the term parish registers used for a person not of the parish, and hence ineligible for poor relief–vagrants were strangers. Kent emphasizes her shelterlessness: 'the gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid' (1.1.185), and even after the King of France takes her up, Goneril emphasizes Cordelia's precarious position in a world of changing fortunes and reliance on alms-giving: 'your Lord...hath received you/ At Fortune's alms' (1.1.281–2). Lear has turned his daughter into a vagrant" (Woodbridge 285–6)

[29] Kent is consistent in his beliefs, claiming in the Fourth Act that "It is the stars,/ The stars above us, govern our conditions" (4.3.32–3).

[30] Hard-heartedness, empty-heartedness (1.1.153), and dog-heartedness (4.3.45) seem interchangeable in this play, interesting because such a metaphoric nexus conceives of the non-human as amoral and empty, a space empty of conscience and decency, a space of nothingness.

[31] Paul Delany, "*King Lear* and the decline of feudalism," in *PMLA*, 92 (1977), 437 and 431.

[32] Yet, Edmund contradicts himself when he adopts his melancholic air and talks to his brother about the "unnaturalness between the child and/ the parent" (1.2.144–5) that he pretends to fear will come. If we assume that this fictional character is a unified subject with unified opinions, it seems difficult to believe that he can possibly feel that such strife is natural (at least in the sense of it being something desirable), but there is no reason to assume that he is a consistent character with consistent feelings. He is, after all, a son who has substantial grievances against his parents, of a sort that makes everyday adolescent defiance to parental authority pale. Edmund's defiance, we may assume, is no less ambivalent (and is perhaps more so) than are more garden varieties of defiance to parental authority.

[33] Edgar, however, holds a different view about what unaccommodated men such as he has seen owe to the natural world. Having just seen his blinded father in the storm, he claims that "The wretch that thou has blown unto the worst/ Owes nothing to thy blasts" (4.1.8–9). Whether or not this "nothing owing to the natural world" represents the environmental ethic of the play as a whole is impossible to say without straining at the seams of textual plausibility, but it does accord with the waning of organicism of the period in which the play was written.

[34] See Dollimore 193.

[35] Lear seems to understand the necessity for moderating one's self-expression and, at one point, claims that he "will be the pattern of all patience,/ I will say nothing" (3.2.37–8). It is one of the things people learn as they grow out of childhood that it is not always good to "speak what we feel." While Lear is being more child-like than not in his petulance and absolutism, his comment does have some core value if patience (albeit a slippery thing to define) is a virtue. Gloucester also lands a mediated position

between speech and silence when he says to Edmund "Go to; say you nothing" (3.3.8). It is not for virtue, nor out of petulance that he says this, but rather out of a sense of political strategy. When he later says to Lear, "No words, no words, hush" (3.4.181), we understand yet another reason for silence–namely, that people sometimes rub salt in their own wounds by speaking freely what comes to their minds. The Gentleman who says that Lear's condition is "past speaking of in a king!" (4.6.205) knows the unnecessary pain speech can cause. There are other reasons why speaking is dangerous. When the paranoic Lear urges Kent and the Fool to "make no noise, make no noise" (3.6.83), we know that even though Lear is paranoid, it is unwise to make noises when an enemy, be it a person or a hungry lion hiding on the velt, is afoot. There are, then, many occasions when and reasons why characters request silence. Goneril's request for Albany's silence, however, is of a different nature than the requests for silences that offer mediated positions between the poles of unbridled self-expression and total discursive subjection. When she says "No more, the text is foolish" (4.2.37), she is a mirror of Lear who essentially says to Cordelia "No more, the absence of text is foolish." Neither Goneril nor Lear like what they hear. The same might also be said of Albany, who says to Goneril, "Shut your mouth, dame" (5.3.155). The fact that the audience is written into a position of agreement with Albany, that what Goneril says *is* objectionable to the audience, does *not* resolve the issue of free speech that the play raises. Since the natural environment is so vigorously associated with nothingness and varieties of silence in this play, the ambivalence of the unresolved silence/speech binary leaves Nature itself in something of an ambivalent position. As such, it can be (and is) both a tool and a victim, determining and determined by suffering in the play.

[36] See Dollimore 197.