

Teaching the Environment of  
*The Winter's Tale*: Ecocritical Theory  
and Pedagogy for Shakespeare

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RECENT ACCOUNTS OF SHAKESPEARE HAVE DONE A LOT OF USEFUL work in exploring discursive intersections between gender and categories such as class, race, and sexual orientation,<sup>1</sup> but there has been almost no work done that looks seriously at how representations of the early modern natural environment fit into such equations.<sup>2</sup> While it is true enough that until recently fairly “little attention has been paid, in cultural analysis, to material means employed in cultural production,”<sup>3</sup> it is perhaps less obvious to question how material resources (outside of the processes of the physical production of texts and their distribution) are figured in, called up, called into being, recalled, produced, and so on in processes of cultural work (such as plays by Shakespeare, for instance). Can we make “a case for an environmental basis of history?”<sup>4</sup> How can a materialist criticism investigate the ways that the environment is worked in discourse? What are the ideological purposes and conditions for which the natural environment is produced in literature?

Critical tradition has read *The Winter's Tale* as political, religious, and autobiographical allegory; as fantasy; as geographically improbable; as the work of someone other than Shakespeare; as realism par excellence; as the literature of escape; as a sophisticated vegetation myth; as boring; as a falling off; as a structural, thematic, or philosophical experiment; as a general failure; as a perfect example of symbolic technique; and so on. There have been reams written on that nasty bear who runs off with Antigonus; discussions about the tension between art and nature in the play are everywhere; and there have certainly been enough analyses of the role and function of natural imagery in the play. Sustained ecocritical readings of *The Winter's Tale*, however, are not

part of the play's critical history. Part of the reason is simply that the necessary critical and pedagogical terms for meaningful discussion are only now becoming available.

It is possible for at least two reasons to debate such well-established issues as misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism in Shakespeare: first, in each case the estranged and disaffected subjects are material things that walk among (often as a threat to) fully enfranchised subjects; and second, it is possible to debate the issues because there is a whole litany of terms with which to describe and then examine the concepts. If, for example, "misogyny" is a hatred of women; "racism," of racial difference; "homophobia," of same-sex issues; and "anti-Semitism," of Jewishness and Jews—then what should we call a fear and contempt for the environment? Perhaps we might use a term such as "ecophobia," but whatever the terminology, the ways in which the environment is perceived and represented—for better and for worse—are concerns of ecocriticism.<sup>5</sup>

There are, of course, several important questions here: what on earth is ecocriticism, how does one do it, what does it do, and, most important, why bother? Are there revealing links between environmentally and socially oppressive systems, overlapping and interlocking structures that need to be examined? Keith Thomas maintains that "it is impossible to disentangle what the people of the past thought about plants and animals from what they thought about themselves";<sup>6</sup> but is it possible to proceed on (or avoid) such an assumption without reproducing the anthropocentrism that undergirds our current environmental crises?

For a play that foregrounds the pastoral tradition so heavily, that stresses so insistently a relationship between nature and art, that is so deeply rooted at many levels in conceptual dividedness, an ecocritical approach can help to give the student an understanding of the literary traditions at work in the text. It can also give insights about "interconnectedness" (a keyword of ecocriticism); of ways in which nonliterary texts and assumptions about nature come to bear on the play; of ways that the division between men and women in the play might be viewed as part of a larger dynamic (larger than simple anthropocentric models) through which difference is designated; and of ways that the play might be seen to participate in our own relationship with the natural world. If our critical work is really directed toward helping people change the way they think and behave, then there has certainly never been a better time to look at these kinds of issues.

Yet as Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor point out, "it is

only too easy to read and/or write as a born-again poststructuralist/Marxist and still teach like an unregenerate New Critic."<sup>7</sup> It is a position that Richard Paul Knowles develops in his brief but evocative article, which seeks, as its subtitle suggests, a way "Towards a Materialist Pedagogy." The problem, Knowles understands, is that the shift in theoretical analysis "has not yet made much impact on classrooms and curricula."<sup>8</sup> Consequently, when we start talking about the environment in *The Winter's Tale* in ways that are clearly not directed toward thematic or imagistic readings, it is not only strong curiosity but often a sense of bewilderment that students express in response. Students want to know what ecocriticism is and how it can be applied to a text such as *The Winter's Tale*.

### ECOCRITICAL THEORY

The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) recently posted a number of position papers on the Internet that attempt to define ecocriticism. Some are proudly antitheoretical. Some are dogmatic and prescriptive in their listing of ecocritical principles. Some claim that no such lists have yet been given and hunger for ecocritical theory. Some think they offer answers. Some only raise questions. All of them struggle with the hard reality that ecocriticism is a thing that was named before it was properly born.<sup>9</sup>

The 1999 PMLA Forum on Literatures of the Environment, also posted on the ASLE Website, registers a continuing dissatisfaction with the status of ecocriticism, with many of the contributions (my own included) griping about ecocriticism's shortcomings. One of the recurring complaints (one that this current essay addresses) is that the boundaries of ecocriticism have been far too constricted.<sup>10</sup> A primary question, inextricably linked to these discussions must be, what is ecocriticism, if it is anything at all? What counts as ecocriticism, and what doesn't?<sup>11</sup>

Cheryll Glotfelty's 1996 *Ecocriticism Reader* did a tremendous amount in helping to formalize the critical status of ecocriticism. It was the first of its kind—an anthology of essays devoted to organizing an area of study whose efforts had, until then, not been "recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement."<sup>12</sup> In it, Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment."<sup>13</sup> She argues that it is difficult to defend the traditional failure of

the literary profession to address "green" issues. Glen Love, paraphrasing Glotfelty's point, puts it best: "race, class, and gender are words which we see and hear everywhere at our professional meetings and in our current publications . . . [but] the English profession has failed to respond in any significant way to the issue of the environment."<sup>14</sup> That was then, and, as Love knows, things are changing: the English profession is responding, but the direction of the response may not be very revolutionary. Love has recently noted that "the study of literature and the environment and the practice of ecocriticism has begun to assume an active place in the profession"; however, he also seems to feel some unease about "what that place is to be, particularly in its theoretical and methodological base."<sup>15</sup>

In the same year that Glotfelty's collection came out, Lawrence Buell published *The Environmental Imagination*, where he defines "'ecocriticism' . . . as [a] study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis."<sup>16</sup> Buell acknowledges that there is some uncertainty about what the term exactly covers but argues, "if one thinks of it . . . as a multiform inquiry extending to a variety of environmentally focused perspectives more expressive of concern to explore environmental issues searchingly than of fixed dogmas about political solutions, then the neologism becomes a useful omnibus term for subsuming a large and growing scholarly field."<sup>17</sup>

Buell's definition is valid, as far as it goes. Like Glotfelty—indeed, like many people who are calling themselves ecocritics these days—Buell uses ecocriticism as if it were designed only for nature writing.

Examining nature writing is, of course, one of the things ecocriticism does, and does well; but when nature writing constitutes the sole purview of ecocriticism, the lack of theoretical diversity, conceptual in-breeding, and a weakening of contacts with the wider literary world will spell disaster for the approach. Focusing exclusively on nature writing wrongly suggests an essential link between ecocriticism as a methodology and nature writing as the natural object of its inquiry. As Ursula K. Heise poignantly asserts, "ecocriticism has nothing specifically to do with *nature* writing."<sup>18</sup> Environmental issues are written into many nooks and crannies of canonical literature, in much the same way that issues of concern to other kinds of theorists are embedded in "the canon." As Glotfelty herself acknowledges, feminist theorists do not confine themselves to works about feminism any more than

Marxist theorists confine themselves to works about Marxism or commodity fetishism. The next logical question, then, is simple: why should ecocriticism restrict itself to the genre of nature writing?

Assuming that ecocriticism need not (and, in fact, should not) restrict itself to texts *about* nature, the ecocritic is immediately faced with another obstacle: namely, that the polyphony of critical voices articulate at times seemingly opposed purposes—and, indeed, definitions—resulting in a hydra-headed monster that often seems to be speaking in tongues or at cross-purposes.

Stephanie Sarver goes as far as to say that ecocriticism has remained less a theory than a focus: "'Ecocriticism' is . . . an unfortunate term because it suggests a new kind of critical theory. The emerging body of work that might be labeled ecocritical is united not by a theory, but by a focus: the environment. This ecocritical work draws on a variety of theories, such as feminist, Marxist, post-structuralist, psychoanalytic and historicist."<sup>19</sup> In a sense, Sarver has a point, but it is a point that may be applied to any kind of theory, indeed the very theories she mentions as being theories in themselves: feminist, Marxist, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and historicist theories. All of these draw heavily on other theories that preceded them. Such borrowing, however, is exactly what goes on in the articulation of a new critical practice. All theories are a synthesis, and Sarver's apparent failure is in not recognizing this fact. Nevertheless, the argument Sarver is making is valid insofar as it calls ecocriticism to task for not being theorized enough.

Patrick D. Murphy offers the most promising synthesis of material that works toward articulating a methodology for ecocriticism. For him, the problem with ecocriticism is that too much of it "remains theoretically unsophisticated. Too often, there remains an anti-theoretical, naive, realist attitude expressed in" the work of ecocritics.<sup>20</sup> In place of these theoretically unsophisticated stances, Murphy offers a Bakhtinian "dialogical orientation," which, he maintains, "reinforces the ecofeminist recognition of interdependence and the natural need for diversity."<sup>21</sup> Sarver would argue that this is simply not good enough. In her own words, "Literary scholars who are environmentalists seem not to be creating a new critical theory; rather, they are drawing on existing theories to illuminate our understanding of how human interactions with nature are reflected in literature."<sup>22</sup> The dialogic answer would be that such borrowing is exactly what goes on in the articulation of a new critical practice. If nothing else, Murphy



succeeds in taking ecocriticism out of the hands of the theoretically unsophisticated. If Murphy is to be critiqued, it is for the theory that he chooses rather than for the choosing of theory. We might debate the usefulness of Bakhtinian dialogics, for instance, but that is not part of my project here.

While ecocritical debates are developing, one thing is agreed on: ecocriticism must create change. In a sense, though perhaps few practitioners would agree, ecocriticism is an approach with heavy leanings toward various materialist critiques. We can answer the question about why bother with ecocriticism in the same way that we answer detractors who ask why, for example, bother with materialist-feminist approaches. We bother with ecocriticism because there are problems in these times; because understanding the relationship of humanity with the natural environment, both in contemporary times and in earlier periods, can help us to understand how we got to where we are; because it is time to start looking at the ways that we conceptualize the natural world, and how these conceptualizations affect our behaviors toward the natural environment; in short, because it is important.

#### ECOCRITICAL THEORY AND PEDAGOGY FOR SHAKESPEARE: A BRIEF STUDY OF *THE WINTER'S TALE*

What *does* ecocriticism have to do with *The Winter's Tale*, a text written hundreds of years before we noticed the hole in our sky?<sup>23</sup> Students and teachers alike have wildly mixed responses to *The Winter's Tale*, and teaching the play (not to mention environmental issues within it) is no easy task. Part of the difficulty for students is that the play seems disjointed—the pastoral scene of act 4 radically counterposed to the court scenes, in terms both of physical and temporal scene, is one of the most immediate problems. Acknowledging the perceived disjunctions *and* continuities of the play is a useful pedagogical maneuver that helps students begin informed discussions.

One of the more fruitful lines of comparison for students looks, for example, at the dynamic similarities between representations of the natural environment and of women in the play. This approach is easily accessible because it resembles (and can too easily swing into) a formalist thematic groove (which students tend to prefer because it is easier to do than materialist criticism). The representations of women and the environment clearly articulate values about patriarchal power that the text carries. Both the en-

vironment and women are characterized in ideologically highly charged terms. The environment and women are often *either* good *or* bad in Shakespeare: in *The Winter's Tale*, the environment is a vicious space of bears and wolves, or else a beautiful place of fertility and abundance; women are liars, shrews, and lechers all, or else they are chaste, guiltless, or otherwise guileless. There is no ambiguity in this play. Paulina is a good woman, as is Hermione,<sup>24</sup> but the spectator (constructed with all of the insecurities of a man like Leontes) is dragged along and made complicit in the testing of these women. Justifiably or not, the audience may wonder about Hermione and about whether Leontes has just cause in his worries. This possibility raises several questions that are difficult to answer but useful for students to consider. Do men and women in the class have the same thoughts about Hermione? Where do these responses come from? What ideological positions do these responses to Hermione support?

Of course, students soon see that there really are no evil women in the play, that Hermione is evil only in the mind of Leontes, and that Paulina's open revolt against constituted authority is for a higher moral good than that which the Crown pretends to represent. It is then worth pointing out to students that phobic reactions toward Hermione cannot be rationalized,<sup>25</sup> and that misogynistic fear is the only foundation for Leontes' rage and jealousy.

We cannot, however, say the same of the fear and loathing that the play generates for the natural environment. If the play challenges gynophobia (no matter how weakly, ineffectively, or inadvertently), it fails to challenge ecophobia. After all, the hapless Antigonus *does* have an unfortunate and fatal encounter with a bear, which "tore out his shoulder bone" (3.3.89) and ate him. And moments before this, "the sea mock'd" (3.3.92) and "swallowed with yeast and froth" (3.3.87) the equally unfortunate mariners who accompanied Antigonus. The anthropocentric image is of the environment as some kind of disaffected subject (in competition with the men), whose *raison d'être* is to cause chaos, pain, suffering, or loss. It is ruthless, both in the anthropocentric language that the characters in the play use to describe it, and in the audience's understanding of it as a hostile threat to order and goodness.<sup>26</sup>

David Laird argues that the main problem for Leontes is in keeping a sense of order and goodness, and that it is a linguistic problem: "To control language, to exercise the power to name, categorize, and classify is an essential weapon in the arsenal" of

things Leontes uses to control his world;<sup>27</sup> so, when Leontes thinks that Hermione uses “a discourse where meanings are multiple, ambiguous,”<sup>28</sup> we may want to encourage students to talk about the various ways that the play talks about disruptions of order, transgressions, and, in particular, pollution.<sup>29</sup> There may be times when we really do not like the environment that this play describes, and the two-dozen references, oblique and direct, to pollution in *The Winter's Tale* contribute to this ecophobic reaction.

Often metaphorical, pollution in the play covers a broad field: epistemological pollution (rotten opinions [2.3.90] and infected knowledge [2.1.43–44]), gender pollution (the blurred gender boundaries of the “mankind witch” [2.3.68]), sanguinary pollution (Polixenes’ infected blood [2.1.58–59], “an infected jelly” [1.2.417–18]), and air pollution (the infected air of Sicilia [5.1.167–69], an instance of environmental pollution working allegorically as a metaphor for the pollution of the body politic). But by far the most important kind of pollution in *The Winter's Tale* is perhaps best described as “genetic.” It is on this string that most of the plays thematic issues hang, and its acme is reached in the play’s pastoral interlude. It is a formal debate between Polixenes and Perdita on the division between art and nature, resting on anxieties first about crossbreeding, and second about definitions, classifications, and naming.

The question of crossbreeding has numerous implications, both in the play and in early modern culture in general. It is an important question in regard to the protagonist couple, Perdita and Florizel, who, to all appearances, are mismatched: Perdita, ostensibly a country lass; Florizel, a prince. The whole section on what Perdita calls “Nature’s bastards” (4.4.83) smacks heavily of allegory: if there is any doubt about whom the gentler scion or the wildest stock might refer to, it is dispelled a moment later by Perdita when she talks about Florizel breeding or reproducing by her (4.4.103). In an instant, she has collocated women with breeding animals and fertile flora. Yet this is the same woman who sees crossbreeding as a diluting of nature, a hybridization and infection of natural processes: “I care not to get slips from them [crossbred things]” (4.4.83–84), she insists, because she thinks that selective breeding “shares / With great creating Nature” (4.4.87–8). The argument that Polixenes makes is that Perdita (of ostensibly wild stock) and Florizel (a gentler scion) can crossbreed profitably and without fear of the kind of pollution Perdita seems to imagine. Polixenes has argued that in a material sense

crossbreeding, rather than polluting nature is, in fact, natural: it uses natural materials.

Crossbreeding, nevertheless, a form of pollution in the text as in the larger culture of which the text is a part, disrupts classification systems, blurs “natural” with “unnatural,” culturally acceptable with unacceptable, fair issues with monstrous ones.<sup>30</sup> While we are, for the most part, spared real disaster in the play (perhaps because the play is generically confused, beginning in high tragic style and switching abruptly to comic mode with the sudden appearance of the bear in act 3, scene 3), what we do get is a jiggling of classificatory schemata, and people suffer when there is this kind of jiggling.<sup>31</sup> With all the images of monstrosity, disease, infection, and pollution that run through this play, and with all of the implied and explicit questions about what is what, people (children and women in particular) suffer. Mamillius dies; Hermione has half her life taken away and for sixteen years has no daughter. And why? We might ask our students if they think that Leontes is terribly strange in his feelings about women. We might also point out that there is a long history in Western culture of perceiving and constructing women as sources of pollution, and that we see this history in much early modern drama.<sup>32</sup> We will ask our students to think things through, to try to understand how materials are manipulated in this and other plays. Camillo argues that “’tis safer to / Avoid what’s grown than question how ’tis born” (1.2.432–33), but doing this doesn’t get us anywhere.<sup>33</sup>

The methodological ground of ecocriticism is interdisciplinary, regardless of Stephanie Sarver’s views, and there are numerous routes we could take to continue an ecocritical reading of *The Winter's Tale*. We could use theories from social and feminist geography to help us think about space, place, and the widely disjunctive geographies in *The Winter's Tale*. We might argue that because the pastoral scenes represent not only a different geographical space but a different political economy, it is a mistake to think that we can talk meaningfully about social relations in the play without talking about how the production of space bears on these relations. Another issue that we could look at is the spatial dimensions of the play’s patriarchy: the patriarchal assumptions of Sicilia remain essentially unchallenged, and the space of Bohemia remains an unrealistic ideal (with a few fatal exceptions),<sup>34</sup> insofar as it represents the “flower power” dream of the play, the never-never land where all is happy and peaceful but which cannot actually be located on a map. Certainly space and

its conceptualization in this play are very significant, not only for the choppy plot but, more important, because they determine the structure of the lived experiences of the people in those spaces. Discussing such things is the heart and soul of literary criticism, and there are many more discussions to be had: ecocriticism is in its infancy.

Thematic and symbolic readings of green issues have had, as I noted earlier, a substantial history in Shakespearean criticism, but ecocritical readings, which position themselves on par with feminist, Marxist, and materialist readings have, for the most part, been ridiculed. I have tried to suggest what shape an ecocritical reading of *The Winter's Tale* might take, and though I suspect that I have not provided much more than a truncated, fragmentary study, I hope I have also provided at least the beginnings of a convincing argument for ecocritical Shakespeares and for confronting the "inevitable difficulties" that attend such an approach.<sup>35</sup>

#### NOTES

1. My wording here is only slightly different from that used by Newton and Rosenfelt in their remarkable book that brilliantly sketches possible parameters for a materialist-feminist criticism (xi). See Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, preface and "Introduction: Toward a Materialist-Feminist Criticism," in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), xi-xiv, xv-xxxix.

2. The most promising recent gesture vowing to link ecocritical approaches and Shakespeare texts came in March 2001 in Toledo, Ohio, at the Ohio Shakespeare Conference. This conference, entitled *The Nature of Shakespeare*, took as its focus the relationships between nature and Shakespeare and showed a remarkable openness to discussions that ranged far outside the thematicism that has so long beleaguered other similar discussions.

3. H. Gustav Klaus, "Cultural Materialism: A Summary of Principles," in *Raymond Williams: Politics, Education, Letters*, ed. W. John Morgan (London: St. Martin's, 1993), 91.

4. Clarence J. Glacken, "Environmental Theories of Early Modern Times," in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1967), 445.

5. I use the term "ecophobia" to denote fear and loathing of the environment in much the same way that the term "homophobia" denotes fear and loathing of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; see my "Conceptualizing the Other in Hostile Early Modern Geographies: Situating Ecocriticism and Difference in Shakespeare," *Journal of English Language and Literature* 45, no. 4 (December 1999): 877-98.

6. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 16.

7. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, introduction to *Reproducing Shakespeare: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (London: Methuen, 1987), 5.

8. Richard Paul Knowles, "Otherwise Engaged: Towards a Materialist Pedagogy," *Theatre History in Canada* 12, no. 2 (fall 1991): 193.

9. William Rueckert coined the term in his 1978 article entitled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," which is reprinted in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Ga., and London: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1996), 105-23. It is only since the mid-1990s, however, that the term has gained relatively popular currency.

10. The boundaries and methodologies of ecocriticism are the central concern of the recently published Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, eds., *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (Charlottesville, Va., and London: Univ. Press of Virginia, 2001).

11. Much progress has been made connecting environmentally oppressive structures with social ones. Discussions looking at dynamic similarities between the representation of women and animals are extensive; see particularly Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1991); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, eds., *Animals and Women: Theoretical Explorations* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1995); Carol J. Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1993); Carol J. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1995); and Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991). There is also a growing body of work that looks at women and geography; see Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1975). A flurry of greatly diversified discussion has recently appeared linking racism and fear and contempt for the natural environment; see Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995), 53-82; Gretchen Legler, "Body Politics in American Nature Writing: 'Who may contest for what the body of nature will be?'" in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), 71-87; Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989); Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995); and Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995). Discussions that draw links between ecophobia and homophobia, on the other hand, are more difficult to locate; see Barbara White, "Acts of God: Providence, the Jeremiad and Environmental Crisis," in *Writing the Environment*, 91-109. Links between geographies of exclusion and dissident sexualities are raised by many of the essays in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), and by Gill Valentine, "(Hetero)Sex-



ing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11 (1993): 395–413. Despite all of this, mountains of work remain. As Jonathan Levin succinctly observes, "nature and culture are mutually entangled in complex and inherently elusive ways": "Contribution to the PMLA Forum on Literatures of the Environment," *PMLA* 114 (1999): 1098. If ecocriticism is to stand on its own, clearly distinguishable from "nature studies," then how it relates with social matters *matters*.

12. Cheryl Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Glotfelty, xvi–xvii.

13. *Ibid.*, xviii.

14. Glen A. Love, "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism," in *ibid.*, 226.

15. Glen A. Love, "Science, Anti-science, and Ecocriticism," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 6, no. 1 (winter 1999): 65.

16. Buell, *Environmental Imagination*, 430 n. 20.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Ursula K. Heise, "Contribution to the PMLA Forum on Literatures of the Environment," *PMLA* 114 (1999): 1097.

19. Stephanie Sarver, "What Is Ecocriticism?" January 2, 1998, <<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~djp2n/conf/WLA/sarver.html>>.

20. Patrick D. Murphy, *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (Albany, N.Y.: State Univ. of New York Press, 1995), 165.

21. *Ibid.*, 22. See also Murphy's "Otherness and Inhabitation in Recent Multicultural American Literature," in *Writing the Environment*, 42.

22. Sarver, "What Is Ecocriticism?"

23. There is no shortage of books and articles that look at the representations of natural environments in Shakespeare. In general, these books and articles fall under two general categories: the formalist camp and what I would call the proto-ecocritical group. The formalists have looked at birds, plants (especially flowers), gardens, the relationship between nature (as a general theme) and genre, the way the natural environment could be seen to fit into cosmic patterns, and so on. The difference between the group I am calling proto-ecocritical and the earlier group is in the *kind* of analysis that is being undertaken. While the former is structuralist (concerned primarily with enumerating instances of thematic clusters, with comparing such clusters, with trying to get idealist pictures of the English Renaissance, and so on), the latter is poststructuralist in its various movements toward theoretical analyses of the ways that thinking and talking about the natural world interrelate with other early modern discourses. In *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender* (Lincoln, Neb., and London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1991), Jeanne Addison Roberts "marks the stages in the evolution of Shakespeare's ideas" about the wild (84) in a largely formalist attempt to analyze discursive relationships, "how the construction of Culture and Wild [in Shakespearean literature] shapes our perceptions of females" (12). In *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), John Gillies relies heavily on detailed discussions about the influence of classical texts on Shakespeare and elegantly maps the coordinates linking geographical difference with social exclusion and otherness. Richard Marienstras, a proto-new historicist, tries, among other things, to unearth early modern environmental laws, the background against which Shakespeare wrote; see his *New Perspectives on the Shakespearean World*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press;

Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1985). Linda Woodbridge looks at interconnected representations of land and body, penetration and pollution, at how sexualized landscapes form part of semiotic systems that she calls "the discourse of fertility" (159), and at ways that this discourse overlaps and interacts with discourses of magic; in particular, see "Protection and Pollution: Palisading the Elizabethan Body Politic" and "Green Shakespeare," in *The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), 45–85, 152–205. There is a lot that has been written about the environment in Shakespeare, but *none* of it is properly ecocritical. None of it is, at core, ecologically revolutionary, and the goals are not explicitly to effect change in the way we think about and produce the environment. Nevertheless, much of the work, both from the proto-ecocritics and by the formalists and structuralists, is very useful.

24. Howard Felperin seems inclined to argue that Hermione is "tongue-tied" and that her contorted and tortuous syntax perhaps partly justifies the wild imaginings of Leontes; see "Tongue-tied our queen?" *The Deconstruction of Presence in The Winter's Tale*, in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 10–12. It is more productive for my purposes to look not at how her words might damn her, but at the ideological effects of her silence, at the workings of the words that are inscribed in the space left empty by her silence. What we are presented with is not merely a silencing, though, nor even an erasure, but an ossification, a pause held for Leontes to work out his matters. Hermione, a very real material presence, must, in this play, be denied her material realities for the man whose matters weigh more heavily in the sexist scales that the play presents. Hermione's presence can be turned on or off, depending on what the matters demand in the male arena that views and controls her. Such is her dramatic function, and it is one that is startlingly similar to the dramatic function of the bear. When it is needed, it is called in, and it is abandoned just as easily.

25. Dorothea Kehler argues this position in "Teaching the Slandered Women of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's The Tempest and Other Late Romances*, ed. Maurice Hunt (New York: MLA, 1992), 80–86. Drawing heavily on the work of Jean Baudrillard, she argues that depictions of women in *The Winter's Tale* follow Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, models "without origin or reality" (80).

26. This is perhaps not so surprising, since Judeo-Christian society has a long history of allegorizing the environment; one has only to think of the tree that bears the fruit that yields knowledge of good and evil.

27. David Laird, "Competing Discourses in *The Winter's Tale*," *Connotations* 4, nos. 1–2 (1994–95): 27.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Laird goes on to say that "Hermione speaks a discursive skepticism that measures the distance between words and things" (27); unfortunately, he doesn't explore how this relationship between words and things functions in the objectification of Hermione, how words "thingify" her. She is a palpable material presence in the text, yet the text vigorously excludes her from much of the material action of the drama, the male action that determines her material fate. Made passive, excluded, and ossified, Hermione may be, as Laird implies, "singularly daring" (30), but she suffers singularly in a way that singularly daring men in Shakespeare don't.

30. Witness the anxieties about crossbreeding in the many early treatises about monstrosities, deformities, and so on.

31. We don't see disaster of the kind that we see, for instance, in other plays of Shakespeare where there is similar substantial boundary transgression. *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, and even *Romeo and Juliet* come to mind (the latter because the warring families could be argued to constitute a version of class conflict and can unquestionably be said to profile a forbidden inter-breeding).

32. Linda Woodbridge explains that if pollution is primarily the transgression of culturally significant boundaries, bodily orifices being one such set of boundaries, then it is easy to see why men constitute women as a site of pollution: "women have more orifices than men to start with, which may be why the female body offers the more frequent image of society endangered" ("Protection," 52). Leonard Tennenhouse urges much the same position, claiming that early modern tragedy "defines the female body as a source of pollution . . . any sign of permeability automatically endangers the community": *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), 117-18. The female rape victim becomes a site of pollution (as her tousled hair perhaps signifies), and the woman with her own sexuality is also a site of pollution (and a threat to the patriarchal hegemony). But the tradition that seeks to identify women as a source of pollution is not merely concerned with what goes in but with what comes out of the body as well. Thus, women who speak out of order become sites of pollution as do menstruating women.

33. Much of what I have been talking about in this essay centers on birthing—perhaps an unfortunate metaphor, since it genders my topic in ways that indict me for my own sexism. Nevertheless, I began by saying that ecocriticism is a thing that has been named but not properly born, and the question of *how* something is born—the methodologies of its birth—strikes me as vitally important.

34. The fantasy of an idyllic paradise, in part, is what fueled the imperial drive to the New World at precisely the time the play was written, as many people have noted over the last couple of decades.

35. Raymond Williams, "Problems of Materialism," *New Left Review* 109 (May-June 1978): 3.



# SHAKESPEARE MATTERS

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Edited by  
Lloyd Davis



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