

Terror and Ecophobia

SIMON C. ESTOK

ABSTRACT The resurgence of terrorism and the increasing violence of our climate has ratcheted up the tone of urgency and crisis defining representations of nature: one of the results of this is that terror and ecophobia often define twenty-first-century representations of nature. Estok argues that media and academic confluences of devastating natural events on the one hand with war and terror on the other reflect an ethics in which nature is a thing to be fought. Estok maintains that such a trajectory of thinking is counter-productive to environmentalism. The confluences between the imagining of terror and the imagining of the natural world result in increasingly extraordinary media representations of the natural world, representations that often perpetuate the very ethics of distance and domination that have long contributed to the growing environmental problems we face today. Imagining terror and nature together is unsustainable.

After the World Trade Center, and after Katrina, few of us are under the illusion that the United States is sovereign in any absolute sense. The nation seems to have come literally “unbundled” before our eyes, its fabric of life torn apart by extremist groups, and by physical forces of even greater scope, wrought by climate change [...] (Wai Chee Dimock 1)

Monday, 19 August 2013, cnn.com headline: “Meet U.S.-born al Qaeda member.” In its role as news mediator, CNN plays on fears growing out of the fact that terrorists can be home-grown and reports the matter with an expectation that there will be unease among the audience. The mutually understood response written into the headline grows from unease about terror that becomes more pronounced at the fact that far from being part of the “darkening of terrorists” that Jasbir Puar discusses in *Terrorist Assemblages* (XIII), this terrorist is white and from California¹. We witness a terrifying breakdown of a new order of a dark and foreign “them” against

1. Puar’s book, which seeks to understand the inclusion of sexual minoritizing as a part of the process of writing terror, radically expands discussions of terror beyond the simplistic binaries that have been so much a part of mainstream media conversations. Although my discussion in this article is less about the heteronormative thrust of contemporary constructions of terror that forms the focus of Puar’s discussion, her book is a key reference and inspiration for what follows below.

a domestic “us,” and the terrorist, not so dark after all and not so foreign, is great for headlines—as seen when it became apparent that two white Americans (more or less) were behind the Boston bombings earlier this year. A new normal (a more domestic face of terror) is threatening the new normal of the Bush years and their racist rehearsals of dark external threats and axes of evil. Since 9/11, American media have developed a terror narrative of brown faces and Middle Eastern origins. This kind of racism and xenophobia is consistent with strategies of warfare and defense, since it is perhaps easier to defend that which is threatened from the outside when there are recognizable borders. For terror to work properly (whether for the terrorist or for those who report it), however, those borders need to disappear. Indeed, despite the writing of “sexuality, [...] gender, nation, class, and ethnicity” (Puar XI) into the “terrorist assemblage,” the effect—in fact, the purpose—of terror communication is to entirely erase borders. My interest in this article is less with the matter of terror than with the effects of its twenty-first-century resurgence on environmental ethics. This resurgence and the increasing violence of our climate has ratcheted up the tone of urgency and crisis defining representations of nature: one of the results of this is that terror and ecophobia² often define twenty-first-century representations of nature.

Ushered in through the terror of imminent computer catastrophe (see Di Leo and Mehan on Y2K) and quickly followed up with surreal clips on the World Wide Web of Hollywood-movie-style explosions in downtown New York and of entire cities (East and West) collapsing to unprecedented storms and tidal waves, the twenty-first century has us confused, beleaguered by images of tragedy and terror, yet perversely savvy to the kind of stunt Orson Welles pulled in 1938.³ Worse, we have become somewhat dulled. The “kicks,” to borrow a phrase from Paul Revere and the Raiders, “just keep gettin’ harder to find.” The sheer surfeit of information at my fingertips as I sit writing this produces its own effects, one of which is numbness. Floodings in India, earthquakes in Japan, hurricanes in the Gulf Haiyan in the Philippines, bombs in Benghazi and Boston: it all gets a little bit much. Fact and fiction keep getting more and more graphic and indistinguishable. With fiction becoming more realistic, fact becomes less plausible, less shocking, and less urgent. The twenty-first century has been a media struggle to keep high the affects of terror that result from unpredictability—political and environmental. These affects have been the mainstay of the American imagination since this century began. And so, tragedy and terror just keep coming.

Films that raise awareness of environmental issues often do so in ways that are very counter-productive (at least to the environmental movement). Patrick Murphy argues that films with “environmentally aware story lines do have the potential to contribute to increasing public awareness of real environmental issues,” but that it is no less true that these “writers and directors tend to capitulate to a Hollywood style emphasis on pathos and de-emphasis of political critique.” Moreover, as Murphy maintains,

They do so by too frequently focusing on the reintegration of the biological nuclear family and by portraying the inertia of governments and corporate obfuscation of scientific knowledge as the work of evil individuals rather than fundamental drives of the corporate and government systems of power.

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 2. We may define ecophobia as an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism. Because of the uproar this term has caused (see Robisch), it seems worthwhile here to reiterate some points I have made on the topic in the past and to give a brief history of the term. Portions of this footnote appear in varied versions in “Ecocriticism in an Age of Terror” (2) and in *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare* (4).

I first used the term “ecophobia” in my PhD dissertation in 1996. In the same year, and apparently independently, David Sobel used the term to define what he calls “a fear of ecological problems and the natural world. Fear of oil spills, rainforest destruction, whale hunting, acid rain, the ozone hole, and Lyme disease” (5), though Sobel does not go much further than this in defining the term. Clearly, he uses the term differently than I do—for instance, whereas for Sobel, fear of whale hunting is (by his definition) ecophobia, it is clear, as I argue, that whale hunting is a *result* of ecophobia, of a generalized fear or contempt for the natural world and its inhabitants. Clinical psychology uses the same term to designate an irrational fear of home; in ecocriticism, the term is independent of and in no way derived from the manner in which it is used in psychology and psychiatry. In 1999, Robert van Tine proposed a similar term—“gaeaphobia”—(independently, it seems, since there are no references to his source for the term), which he defines as “a form of insanity characterized by extreme destructive behavior towards the natural environment and a pathological denial of the effects of that destructive behavior” (<http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/gatherings2/robin.htm>). Potentially useful though it is for its identification (sometimes quite mechanical) of attitudes toward the natural environment in terms of pathologies laid out in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV)*, van Tine’s article has not been referenced in any scholarship anywhere that I can find. While this is a bit distressing, van Tine’s scholarship is important nevertheless because it shows that the kind of theoretical articulation I am seeking in defining ecophobia has been recognized as being necessary in the field of ecopsychology. My approach (see “Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness” and *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare*) wherein I lay out an extended definition of the term), then, while it does not reject ecopsychological analyses of the pathologies behind contempt for the natural environment, is more interested in the confluent approach that examines philosophical underpinnings. The “Theorizing” article is at the center of a growing debate about the place of theory in ecocriticism, as the responses in *ISLE* 16.4 attest. In turn, responses to *ISLE* 16.4 itself had been so intense that by December 2009, Scott Slovic had felt compelled to issue “a call for submissions to a special forum on the broader topic of ‘Ecocriticism and Theory’ that would appear in one of the 2010 issues of *ISLE*” (“Further Reflections”). The call—though it made absolutely no mention of the two articles (Estok’s or Robisch’s, effectively silencing debate about both) that motivated it—appeared in the first issue of 2010 and barely touched the hypothesizing that spurred it.

3. On October 30, 1938, Welles narrated a radio program that simulated news reports and told of an invasion by Martians. Many believed the report to be factual, and there was widespread public panic.

A perfect example of this—among many indeed—might be *The Day After Tomorrow*. In an almost comic acceleration of climate change with equally comic effects—ships negotiating downtown New York City streets—the real story we follow is Professor Jack Hall’s (played by Dennis Quaid) as he treks through the horrors of a clearly oppositional and hostile nature to find his son. There are several issues here: first, the male hero and his singularly important subjectivity (the focus of so much of the narrative) is unquestioned—neither the environmentally destructive elements of this massively self-centered ego nor the unsustainability of the patriarchal ideals of independence and triumphal selfhood that it embodies are queried—even though director Roland Emmerich claims to have wanted to critique the environmental policies of the Bush Administration; second, the film’s choice of Hall as a hero and of the government as an anti-hero is in line with Murphy’s comment that a focus on government sidelines our personal involvement with the issues; and as a third point, perhaps most importantly, the overall position of the film is hardly pro-environment, pro-Nature, or pro-world, and it is difficult to imagine how a film that is, in fact, so anti-environment—so ecophobic—can possibly do any good. Emmerich was very aware of what he was doing, of his portraying Nature as a “bad-guy,” a thing to be fought, an angry opponent to be feared but finally conquered. He is quoted as having said: “I don’t need a monster or a villain. Just the weather” (Bowles, “The Day After Tomorrow”). One certainly does not want to minimize the good work that this and similar films do, and yet neither should we be naïve about this work and about the dangerous assumptions these films reiterate.

The villain that Emmerich finds is worse than any volitional monster—except, perhaps, a terrorist. When knowledge, power, and control over the future fail, building and maintaining otherness is an understandable response (which is not the same as saying that it is reasonable). The spatial dimensions of this otherness, however, run amuck—hence the terror of an unruly nature freezing the heart of America in fiction, or of nature in reality ‘Sanding’ its way to the U.S.-American east coast, or of domestic subjects (though with geographically displaced religious convictions) bombing the marathon in Boston. Writing a beleaguered home-space is a powerful (and potentially powerfully violent) statement of control, though delusional. The potential for violence here accounts for the so-called “war on terror” and for such things as the Keystone Pipeline, fracking, and tar sands extractions.⁴

Sucked into a patriotic vortex (even if we are not US-American) of nationalist, heterosexist, White, ableist, ageist, classist, ecophobic, US-American exceptionalism, we are complicit in the making of the

terrorist assemblage—and it is a vast one, certainly not confined to descriptions of people who fly planes into buildings. Increasingly, humanity imagines itself under siege and vulnerable. Perhaps it is a sign of our maturity as a species that we see and try to understand the threats to our survival: colony collapse disorder, new and devastating diseases, global warming, 9/11 and terrorism, increasing food, water, and resource shortages, and so on. Perhaps it is a sign of our intelligence and wisdom that we narrativize our visions of apocalypse and that we entertain ourselves with stories of our own vulnerability before forces which we perceive as profoundly—indeed, lethally—violent toward our very existence. Perhaps our perceptions and almost fetishistic representations of ourselves as being under siege signals changes in our ethics toward other people and toward the natural environment. Yet, to borrow the words of political theorist Jane Bennett, “we continue to produce and consume in the same violently reckless ways,” as if we do not take our own violence (or the violent reactions to it) at all seriously (113)—at least not on a level that would cause us to change our behaviors.⁵

It is increasingly less debatable that our climate is changing because of our release of carbon stored over a period of hundreds of millions of years by various planetary processes. It is increasingly clear that our world is daily more dangerous and that our “new normals” reside both in unpredictability and violence. It is increasingly a reality that there is the notion of a presence of terror in the lives of people in fully industrialized nations. As the warden of an imaginary future archive in a world devastated by climate change, Pete Postlethwaite, may argue in the film *The Age of Stupid*; we have entered an age of stupidity, but no less have we simultaneously entered both an Age of Terror and an Age of Climate Change. In some ways, we must see what I have called the “ecophobia hypothesis” (see Estok 2013b) as a tonic to E. O. Wilson’s “biophilia hypothesis” (the idea that our love of other living things guides our ethical relationships with the natural world). It seems, in many ways, that theorizing ecocriticism without discussion of ecophobia is like

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4. The Keystone Pipeline is a system for delivering crude oil from Alberta’s tar sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas. It has been widely resisted for its environmental hazards. Cracks in the pipeline could cause irrevocable environmental damage. The “tar sands” of Northern Alberta in Canada contain several trillion barrels of oil, the extraction of which produces tailing ponds of filth and poison and vast scars from in situ open pit mining operations. “Fracking” is the hydraulic fracturing of rock through the use of pressurized liquids to expose various buried resources. Fracking has substantial environmental impacts, including air and water pollution, total destruction of local ecosystems, noise pollution, and so on. Entire mountains have been fracked away, resulting in total and permanent landscape changes.
 5. A slightly different version of this paragraph appears in my “Ecocriticism in an Age of Terror.”

doing feminist theory without discussing sexism. And it is worth repeating that ecophobia (no less than sexism) is a subtle, ubiquitous, and marketable thing, one very relevant to our topic here.

Among the effects (and perhaps also causes) of imagining environment and terror through a similar conceptual frame are matters of urgency and expediency. Imagining terror *is* affect,⁶ is one of “those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement” (Seigworth and Gregg 1, emphasis in original). The events since 9/11 offer a good example of this: “Post 9/11, it no longer seems responsible for theorists to engage in apolitical analysis,” Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Uppinder Mehan argue: “there is an obligation to take theory out of the classroom and the library, and to bring it into the public arena” (18). Jasbir Puar attempts to put such theory into a frame that is both publicly relevant and explicitly activist, arguing that “9/11... [is] a particular turning point or a central generator of desires for expediency, rapidity, political innovativeness” (XVIII).

While the goal of the terrorist is to instill a sense of paralysis (which only works as a reflex and never in the long-term), the story-teller, the reporter, and the mass media, on the other hand, have perhaps a quite different goal beyond mere narrative: to instill indignation that tends toward action. This is important in itself because it means that imagining the environment as a source of terror potentially implies not paralysis but action. Terror imagined seems to imply activism in its very nature. At the same time, though, the very narrativity of terror and ecophobia risks trivializing the eventness of the rising of global sea-levels, the causal nature of global warming, and the dwindling of global diversity (also known as “the dwindling of our resources”). Perhaps this goes a long way to explaining why news of our imminent demise seems to have such little effect on how we live our daily lives.

Perhaps also, although terror imagined implies activism, it does not do so singularly. Indeed, if Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg are

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6. Following Sianne Ngai (and I am grateful to Sylvan Goldberg for this reference), although “the distinction between affect and emotion is... helpful here in a number of ways, I will not be theoretically leaning on it to the extent that others have—as may be apparent from the way in which I use the two terms more or less interchangeably” (Ngai 27. See also Golberg, forthcoming).
7. Walter Benjamin states that “to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (255, Thesis VI). He calls these flashings-up “flashpoints” (aufblitz). David Kazanjian interprets Benjamin, adding that “the dangerous, fleeting, elusive, even blinding elements of memory are precisely the qualities of articulate history” (27). Put slightly differently, “flashpoints signal a procedural becoming-time... a centripetal turbulence of illumination so powerful that it may blind the past even as it spotlights the present and lights up the future” (Puar xviii). Imagining terror—whether political or environmental—means freezing a moment in the great flux that is contemporary life.

correct, it is in the very nature of affect to be entangled in the sort of in-betweenness in which terror imagined is entangled. Seigworth and Gregg argue that “affect arises in the midst of *in-betweenness*” (1, emphasis in original); terror imagined is entangled in a bizarre flashpoint dance⁷ between a passive aesthetic appreciation and a “burst[ing] into action or being” (Kasanjian 27). Terror imagined is pure narcissistic and masochistic entertainment on the one hand: “Mankind, which in Homer’s time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (Benjamin 242). On the other hand, terror imagined is drama of the emotions gone mad, a call to arms, a visceral force demanding a response. On the one hand, we search the web for exciting news entertainment; on the other, we feel indignation and a motivation to “support our troops”... or to separate our plastics. Our contempt for “terrorists” and our contempt for hostile nature (our ecophobia) are on a par in the affect that they each produce, whether it is Al Qaeda or Katrina about which we are talking.

Seeing environmental matters from within a human frame obviously means seeing these matters as they impinge on human constructs. Among the constructs with which environmental matters come into conflict are “the nation” and, indeed, time itself. Events of Nature take no heed of human boundaries:

[...] the nation is revealed to be what it is: an epiphenomenon, literally a superficial construct, a set of erasable lines on the face of the earth. It is no match for that grounded entity called the planet, which can wipe out those lines at a moment’s notice, using weapons of mass destruction more powerful than any homeland defense. (Dimock 1)

Dimock’s use of the phrase “weapons of mass destruction” to describe natural events conflates war (or terror) and natural disaster imagery. Seeing Nature as an antagonist using weapons is, in the purest sense, an ecophobic distortion of what is really happening. Following the logic of the conflation between devastating natural events and war means seeing nature as an opponent to be fought. This kind of thinking has gotten us to the position in which we currently find ourselves, and there is little reason to think that it will be any more productive for the future to stay on this trajectory. Devastating storms are not acts of will; acts of terror are. Even so, both have similar effects with regard to how we imagine boundaries.

Devastating storms collapse our notions of time by destroying things we could not otherwise imagine disappearing within our life-times—and, of course, acts of terror function in a similar way. Who, for instance, could have imagined that the New York skyline would be without the Twin Towers within our life-times? Like Muider slot, St. Paul's, Namdaemun, or the Great Pyramids, the Twin Towers were supposed to last longer than our life-times. So was New Orleans.⁸ Something went wrong. Indeed, narrativizing nature through a lens of terror to a large degree means invigorating affect against nature by enforcing narrative notions of right and wrong. But what exactly does “wrong” mean?

One place to start to answer this question is with Aldo Leopold's oft-quoted comments about the wrongness of environmental disruption. But calling something “wrong” when it tends not “to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community” (Leopold 224–5), whatever Leopold's best intentions, seems an egregious misrepresentation of biotic communities: they are far from stable and are rent from within and without by violent upsurges and down-surges, fantastical (indeed, virtually unbelievable) occurrences,⁹ and other morally neutral events. As I have stated elsewhere (see “Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness”), “Nature actively disrupts the integrity and stability of biotic communities all of the time, and this is neither good nor bad” (209). Climate change may feel evil, but it is not. In an earlier article on the topic of terror and ecophobia, I wrote on the similarities between terror and tragedy as follows:

Terror and tragedy obviously have much in common: both attract and repel, both compel “us to approach with sympathy and recoil with alarm” (Douglas–Fairhurst 62), both exploit our aversion toward unpredictability (an aversion that is at the core of ecophobia), both stimulate our distaste for violence against our own agency, and both present unequivocal notions of right and wrong. They both also assert assumptions about positions, about what and where we are in relation to other things and concepts. (“Ecocriticism in an Age of Terror” 2)

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8. Muider slot, built at the mouth of the Vecht River outside of Amsterdam in 1280, was destroyed in 1300 and rebuilt by 1386. It remains standing today. St. Paul's was completed in London in 1720 and remains standing today. Namdaemun was built in Seoul in 1398 and severely damaged by an arsonist in February 2008. It was fully restored by May 2013. New Orleans, devastated by Hurricane Katrina, remains, but, at the time of writing, still a diminished thing.
 9. The idea that some pine trees would need fire to melt the resin that holds the seeds in the cones comes to mind.

Imagining Nature as terror means re-articulating and reinforcing (and paradoxically erasing through the anthropomorphic gesture of attributing Nature volitional motive rather than simply agency) a binary of human and non-human. We are well beyond the days when such a binary remains useful.

Unpredictability has become the new norm for an increasingly anxious global community and how it sees both social conflict and environmental events; and with the increasing perception of terror as the defining feature of our age there is an increasing inability to move beyond the dread and horror that frame our imagination. Increasingly, terror and ecophobia define twenty-first-century representations of nature.

As the physical landscapes in which we have lived have changed radically even over the past ten or fifteen years, so too have the literary landscapes. In 1996, Lawrence Buell wrote that “to investigate literature’s capacity for articulating the nonhuman environment is not one of the things that modern professional readers of literature have been trained to do or for the most part wish to do” (*The Environmental Imagination* 10). Buell went on to wonder “[m]ust literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?” (11). Well into the second decade of the twenty-first century, both sets of comments, although pertinent in their time, seem less than valid today. Indeed, virtually all ecocriticism since (and to a large degree initiated by) Buell’s monumental *The Environmental Imagination* has been about answering the first claim above. It is about the second matter—literature’s imagined lack of proximity to the physical world—that requires some unravelling, since beneath it is a conflict (perceived and real) between theory and practice. Certainly one of the effects of conflating terror and environment is to seem to erase the distance between representation and world, to bring us back to the physical world, to move us (at least in theory) to act. Studying this conflation forces critics to continue to speak beyond the concept of nation as well as to gather data from across the disciplines. As Ursula Heise succinctly explains,

[...] transnational ecocriticism faces the dual challenges of a global expansion of its objects of study and an interdisciplinary integration of theories, concepts, and methods. Less bound by national, regional, and linguistic borders than literary studies have tended to be, these related disciplines promise tools for developing ecocriticism’s global horizons. (“Globality” 641)

While Lawrence Buell is certainly right to note that there has been a “slow and uneven advance of ecoglobalism as a settled conviction and critical modus operandi relative to its ostensible cogency, relative to nationness, as an image or notion” (228),¹⁰ repetition breeds consensus, and we are slowly recognizing (and perhaps even acting on our recognition of) the global nature of nature. As environmental issues know no borders and require global perspectives, so too, Peter Singer argues

[t]errorism has made our world an integrated community in a new and frightening way. Not merely the activities of our neighbors, but those of inhabitants of the most remote mountain valleys of the farthest-flung countries of our planet, have become our business. (7)

The structural similarities between the unpredictable assailants—whether political or environmental—accounts in part for compatibility of imagining terror and environmental matters together.

Ursula Heise has used the risk theories outlined by Anthony Gibbens and Ulrich Beck to address “one of the most important ways of imagining global connectedness” (*Sense* 11), showing that the ubiquity of environmental issues “now fully integrated into the ordinariness of everyday life” (120) has resulted to some degree in a what Beck terms a “world risk society.” According to Beck, “in the risk society the unknown and unintended consequences [of modernization] come to be a dominant force in history and society” (22). Keenly aware that confronting environmental crises requires engaging with the fear associated with their representations, Heise argues that risk theories enable broad visions of how “ecocosmopolitanism might link experiences of local endangerment to a sense of planet that encompasses both human and nonhuman worlds” (*Sense* 159).

While I intend here neither a critique of risk theory in general nor of Heise’s applications of it in particular, there are a few comments that we might make. Risk communication appeals to the rational on the basis of predictable dangers; terror communication appeals to a more visceral set of fears on the basis of unpredictable dangers. We might maintain that terror communication can and should be subsumed under the subset of risk communication known as “Dread risk,” which Paul Slovic and

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10. Buell defines “ecoglobalism” as “a whole-earth way of thinking and feeling about environmentality” (227) in his article “Ecoglobalist Affects.”

Elke U. Weber define as a “perceived lack of control, dread, catastrophic potential, fatal consequences, and the inequitable distribution of risks and benefits” (8). The problem with so doing, however, is that at the same time that it collapses several different affective responses under the rather broad notion of risk, it also precludes analysis of the assemblage work of terrorist communication. After all, representations of various environmental catastrophes in an age of terror are raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized, and the co-assembling of terror¹¹ and ecophobia requires a theoretical approach that recognizes the wilful management (rather than in advertent evocations) of visceral fears about unpredictability.

It is fears about unpredictability that feature so heavily in twenty-first-century representations of the natural environment, representations that are defined by terror and ecophobia. Beginning with terror and characterized in large part by a growing consciousness of unpredictable dangers, the twenty-first-century has seen an increasing social packaging of terror and nature together. News media and film have been a sizeable component of this packaging of ecophobia and terror, and the effects have been profound. We witness not only the radical blurring of spatial/national boundaries but also of temporal ones. A bid to both sell narratives and to represent control, imagining terror and nature together presents images and narratives that are both riling and numbing, galling and entertaining, urgent and trivial. We become agitated but remain “spectators to future ruin” (Morton 2). Imagining terror and nature together is unsustainable. It is not leading to change, and change is urgently needed.

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11. Jasbir Puar looks at “the historical convergences between queers and terror: homosexuals have been traitors to the nation, figures of espionage and double agents ... more recent exhortations place gay marriage as ‘the worst form of terrorism’ and gay couples as ‘domestic terrorists’” (XXIII). Puar goes on to note that “the terrorist is... an unfathomable, unknowable, and hysterical monstrosity” (XXIII). If Puar is right and if imagining terror means imagining non-normative subjects with such vociferous distress, then it seems to follow that we need to direct our attention to matters of identity, to the hows and whys terror and ecophobia reassert sets of values within identity-based narratives. Our satellites notwithstanding, we really don’t know what the world will be like a year from now. We really have no idea of what either the climate or the weather will be, no idea of what either disaffected U.S.-Americans or anti-U.S.-American others will do.

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BIOGRAPHY

Simon C. Estok is a Distinguished Visiting Fellow in the Research Center for Comparative Literature and World Literatures at Shanghai Normal University. Estok is also a Junior Fellow and Professor of English and Literary Theory at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea. He has published extensively on ecocriticism in *PMLA*, *Configurations*, *Mosaic*, *ISLE*, *English Studies in Canada*, *FLS*, *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, and other journals. His work includes the award-winning *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (Macmillan 2011), the co-edited *International Perspectives on Feminist Ecocriticism* (Routledge 2013) and *East-Asian Ecocriticisms: A Critical Reader* (Macmillan 2013), and “Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia,” (2009) which has cemented the term “ecophobia” into ecocritical theory.