A PROGRESS REPORT ON SHAKESPEAREAN AND EARLY MODERN ECOCRITICISM

Simon Estok
Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, South Korea

Abstract

When ecocriticism dug its heels into the academy and set off at a gallop a decade and a half ago, early modern literature seemed not to be onboard. Things have changed, and, as I write in the opening hours of 2012, three monographs (one mine), two collections, and a great many articles have been published explicitly linking ecocriticism with Shakespeare and early modern studies. While the individual pieces in the growing corpus of early modern ecocritical scholarship are of varying value, one thing they all share is a discontent with thematic treatments of nature in early modern literature (since this has been done for over four hundred years). Within the past ten years, something new has appeared, something committed to effecting environmental change through analyses of early modern literary texts. This essay reviews that material and offers comments on both the challenges it has faced and the visions it has presented.

Key words: Shakespeare, early modern literature, ecocriticism, presentism, activist theory, ecophobia.

Resumen

Desde que la ecocrítica entrase a formar parte de la academia con una obstinación galopante, hará una década y media aproximadamente, el período moderno temprano de la literatura inglesa parecía serle bastante ajeno. Ahora las cosas han cambiado y, en las primeras horas de 2012 en las que se escriben estas líneas, podemos comprobar cómo se han publicado ya tres libros monográficos (uno de ellos, el mío propio), dos colecciones y una gran variedad de ensayos que explícitamente tratan de vincular la ecocrítica con Shakespeare y los estudios literarios de la época. A pesar de la variedad y diversidad en continuo desarrollo de los artículos publicados sobre ecocrítica en el período moderno temprano, parece que todos ellos coinciden en señalar su descontento con los tratamientos temáticos que la naturaleza recibía por aquél entonces (puesto que estamos hablando de una producción escrita hace más de cuatrocientos años). En los últimos diez años parece que se vienen produciendo novedades, que tienen que ver con una preocupación por los cambios medioambientales que se vienen efectuando, a través del análisis de textos literarios del periodo moderno temprano. Este ensayo revisa dicho material y ofrece comentarios que tienen que ver tanto con los retos a los que se enfrentan como con las visiones que ofrecen.

Palabras clave: Shakespeare, periodo moderno temprano, ecocrítica, “presentismo”, teoría activista, ecofobia.

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Scholarship exploring early modern texts through ecocriticism is thriving. Such has not always been the case. Indeed, it took about a decade for publishers to warm up to the idea that such apparently disparate fields of Shakespeare and ecocriticism might be pursued profitably together. Though the words "Shakespeare" and "ecocriticism" first appeared together in 1998 ("Environmental" 135, n.39), the first book on the topic would take another eight years to arrive, Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*—and it was one that, by most accounts, wasn't very good. Terry Gifford's review of the book is a witty insight on the general consensus among ecocritics about what the book failed to do and about the further possibilities for "green Shakespeares" that remain by the end of it: "many critics might have thought," Gifford suggests, "they would like to write a book of this title someday. Well, there is still time, if not a title" (Gifford 272). Scholars have used that time well, and 2011 has seen amazing work done in the area.

While 2011 was indeed a remarkable year for early modern ecocriticism, there was a lot of groundwork that preceded this very eventful year. A review of the more notable pieces among this vast and growing body of work seems very appropriate at this point. Three essays (plus my own introduction to these essays) published in *ISLE* (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*), the flagship journal of ASLE (the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) in 2005 are notable both in themselves and for their solidifying for dedicated ecocritics the possibilities of early modern applications. In this special cluster, Breyan Strickler seeks connections in *Othello* among race, gender, and environment and argues that representations of Desdemona as innocent and victimized are frustrating when we read her as a powerful woman, rushing away from the safety of her father's house to the hostility and chaos of the battlefield while also longing for adventures like those that fill Othello's past. Reading Desdemona in this way, Strickler maintains, we are compelled to re-read her femininity through a perspective that is both post-colonial and ecocritical.

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We might note in passing that it would take another five years before a full manuscript on postcolonial ecocriticism would appear. Strickler was well ahead of her time. Using these illuminating postcolonial-nuanced perspectives to navigate among the assumptions behind the gendering of both the city of Venice and the wilderness and looking at how the gendering process is linked to the rhetoric of war and contamination, Strickler offers something new. In these analyses, we find that typical readings of Othello's demise and redemption are not at issue; rather, the process of his character's development can be identified as a product of place and the cultural tendency of early moderns to demonize the wilderness. As an ecocritical perspective suggests, the colonizing forces of the *process* of the Venetian rhetoric corrupts other cultural signifiers like gender.

Frederick Waage's contribution to the Special Cluster takes quite a different approach to making an ecocritical reading of Shakespeare. Waage begins "Shakespeare Unearth'd" by noting that ecocritical studies of Early Modern writers, particularly Shakespeare, are fairly few in number and that in many cases, ecocriticism exists only as an appendage to studies with related, but different, critical agendas. Waage suggests that one possible way of approaching pre-modern writers ecocritically,

while avoiding inhibitive perils such as anachronism, is by centering on a "topic"—a particular natural phenomenon. As a primal entity in this regard, Waage maintains, earth itself can be discussed ecocritically as it manifests itself in Shakespeare's plays. Moreover, what we know of the playwright's life on the earth gives evidence of his own lifelong connections with land, earth, and soil. Earth as a physical substance, Waage shows, is staged or verbally evoked throughout Shakespeare's works, and more expansively as the site of husbandry. Earth is also evoked as figurative of the human body and the body's fate on, or in, it. Most richly, in *Timon of Athens*, earth centers an ideological questioning of the human connection with nature. Timon's "questionings about the human place in nature," Waage concludes, "are surely basic to Shakespeare's thinking. They are twinned with his consciousness of the earth's sheer physical presence" (Waage 160).

Taking another play and another approach, Sharon O'Dair seeks to address the unbalance of the last quarter century of *The Tempest* criticism, which has been almost uniformly about colonialism in the Americas. In "*The Tempest* as *Tempest*: Does Paul Mazursky 'Green' William Shakespeare?" O'Dair discusses Mazursky's 1982 release of *Tempest*, a film that Americanizes Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in a different way—namely, by setting the mid-life crisis of an upper-middle class New York professional on a Greek Island. At the time, critics panned Mazursky's effort, but in recent years several critics have tried to recuperate the film for serious attention. O'Dair continues this recuperation by asking ecocritical questions: does Mazursky "green" Shakespeare? And if so, how does a green Shakespeare rework Shakespearean pastoral? And further, how does a green Shakespeare contribute to current debates about environmentalism?

These essays are compelling and original, both as ecocriticism and as Shakespearean scholarship. I myself maintain in this special cluster that to many Shakespeareans, ecocriticism seems not to be new and instead to be like old thematicism and nature studies. Many Shakespeareans want to know what ecocriticism can offer, either methodologically or theoretically, that will shed new light and meaning on their field of study: 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. The demands of Shakespeareans seem reasonable, if we assume that ecocriticism is not simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature, that it is any theory 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. Doing ecocritical Shakespeares represents a tall order, and it probably explains why ecocriticism took so long getting to Shakespeare, with a few exceptions. When applied to Shakespeare, "ecocriticism," unlike image-cluster-counting, is hard work, and Shakespeareans want to know what "ecocritical" Shakespeares might look like, in contrast to what thematic readings of Nature in Shakespeare look like.

Following the *ISLE* Special Cluster, things got much better for early modern ecocriticism. If the ecocritical establishment tacitly endorsed extending ecocritical research to the early modern period through its flagship publication of the Special

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Cluster on "Shakespeare and Ecocriticism," no less did the Shakespearean community tacitly give the nod when it allowed me to run a panel at the 2006 World Shakespeare Congress in Brisbane on "Ecocriticism and the World of Shakespeare." Indeed, 2006 turned out to be a pretty good year for early modern ecocriticism. The first two full monographs on the topic came out in this year: Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* and Robert Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*.

There are many reasons why it is tempting to dismiss Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare* as a book that falsely markets itself under the provocative banner of ecocriticism. The book virtually ignores ecocriticism. It barely cites ecocritics, reading as though it were trailblazing in totally uncharted territory; but "Shakespeare and ecocriticism" is *not* uncharted territory. Several chapters had appeared in books, several articles in journals, and that entire "Special Cluster" had by this time appeared, but none of this finds its way into Egan's book; all were available before Hurricane Katrina, which *did* make it.[1] The book claims to be "ecocritical" from the start, to make explicit links with ecocriticism, and to be "political" (Egan 44); however, it doesn't do what it promises to do. It unproblematically seeks to revive old historicist notions of Shakespeare via E.M.W. Tillyard's writings about the "Elizabethan World Picture" over the more historically honest, sensitive, and accurate writings of people such as Jonathan Dollimore. It is more concerned with analogies and themes than with activist (presumably what Egan means by "political") readings. To the extent, for instance, that it deals with animals from an activist position, the book is concerned with the ethics of animal rights and animal liberation rather than with connections between animals and environmental ethics. It is decidedly anthropocentric. Egan argues that in Shakespeare "human society is not so different from animal society" (102), "that we have much in common with animals" (107), and that "the more we discover about animals, the harder it is to maintain the distinctions between them and us that have become so firmly entrenched since Shakespeare's time" (174). True though some of these statements are, they are not ecocriticism. Ecocritical activism must go further than simply recognizing continuities between human and nonhuman animals, and it must go further than "animal rights" or "animal liberation" (though these are clearly related issues and are not opposed to ecocriticism).

The book, nevertheless, does have strengths, and one of these is that it puts into print some very obvious things, things which demonstrate the truth of the notion that commonsense isn't always so common. Egan comments, for example, on the importance of retaining the distinction between "human" and Nature: "If everything is nature [...], then nothing is, for the word has nothing from which to distinguish itself" (130). Such seems an almost painfully obvious thing to say, but it needs saying. Of course, everything in the world *is* "nature," from bird nests to pop bottles, but some might argue that such a notion causes the distinction between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism to simply dissolve. Egan is right to maintain the

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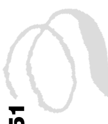
[1] For an extensive list, see Raber, "Recent."

distinction. It enables discussion of ecocentric actions (those that give priority to the nonhuman environment), performed from clearly and ineluctably anthropocentric positions (it is difficult to imagine arguing *from* any but anthropocentric positions). As long as we distinguish between human and nonhuman natures, the distinction between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism remains valid and useful. Doing ecocriticism with Shakespeare means supporting ecocentric reading positions. It also means revisiting very basic terms, such as "anthropocentrism" and "anthropomorphism" (which I won't really do here).

And the book does reiterate some important ecocritical matters, notwithstanding its relative lack both of original arguments and of an ecocritical methodology. Among these important matters is Egan's rejection, for instance, of Jonathan Bate's "claim that ecocriticism should be non- (or in his phrase, pre-) political." Having it so divorced is as absurd, Egan claims, as having non-political Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, and queer criticisms (44). Certainly, Egan here is responding to ecocriticism's distinguishing birthmark. It is the activist part (about which I have more to say below) that really sets ecocriticism off from green thematicism, which is really old hat for Shakespeare.

So it is perfectly in line with where ecocriticism has gone for Egan to note that we should "retreat from the blind alley of treating ecocriticism as the study of nature writing" (45) and for him to note further that "just as politicized radical criticism based on gender, race, and sexual orientation takes in the full range of cultural considerations, so Green criticism has an application beyond the obviously green-world plays such as *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*" (175). It seems so obvious, but it needs being said, for nothing comes of nothing.



Indeed, while there are many reasons to dismiss the book as a throwback to earlier kinds of criticism, precisely the complaint Timothy Morton makes of so much other work that purports to be ecocriticism, the mere fact of its being published with the word "ecocriticism" in its title is an indication of changes in the field.

While Robert Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (also published in 2006) is a much more sophisticated and scholarly book in many ways, it falls into the same trap of choosing one of its two topics (late Renaissance) over the other (ecological advocacy, which Watson in many ways equates with ecocriticism). Watson's book opens with the promise that it will bring "ecological advocacy into the realm of Renaissance literature" (Watson 3), yet it seems in many ways hostile to such a project. It is more than the hostile questions the book asks of ecocriticism and environmental advocacy that makes this so, yet such hostile questions also need attention and are worth quoting at length. Watson asks

> Is ecocriticism—like New Historicism, some might argue—mostly an effort of liberal academics to assuage their student-day consciences (and their current radical students) about their retreat into aesthetics and detached professionalism, by forcing literary criticism into a sterile hybrid with social activism?... is ecocriticism the latest resort of identity politics in the academy, a way for those excluded by the usual categories to claim victim status, either by identifying with an oppressed biosphere... or else by imagining their suffering and extinction in an anticipated ecological catastrophe? (4)

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Few would dispute that Watson here is engaging in baseless, insupportable, and unsupported *ad hominem* reasoning and that his arguments expose a basic misunderstanding of ecocriticism lurking beneath his project, a misunderstanding further revealed when he argues that environmentalist movements represent a "search for a politically safe and aesthetically attractive version of late 1960s radicalism" (5). Watson's idea that environmental concerns are a "search" for window-display activism is ludicrous, and, combined with the lack of reference to core and basic ecocritical texts, not to mention ecocritical Shakespeares, one gets the sense that Watson is talking off the top of his head in very much the same way Egan does in his book. Erudite in the late Renaissance, Watson's book, like Egan's, fails at undergraduate-level ecocritical theory.

Watson refers (without any apparent intended irony or critique) to "modern nature-lovers" (32), echoing the belittling and dismissive term "animal-lovers" used by detractors of animal rights. Watson's use of the term "nature-lovers" is consistent with the anti-ecocritical tone the author seems to establish from the beginning of the book. Peter Singer has argued that the term "'animal-lovers' has had the effect of excluding the entire issue of our treatment of nonhuman animals from serious political and moral discussion" (xi). Using the term "nature-lovers" is inappropriate in a book that claims to do ecocriticism: ecocriticism is no more about schmaltzy appeals for the cuteness of animals or the loveliness of nature than animal rights is about sentimentalism (or inordinate love) for animals. While Watson is certainly accurate to observe that "the ethical quality of human relations [...] implicates the human relationship to other animals" and that our "shooting it [Nature] with arrows and shattering it into similes" raises questions that bring the drama of Shakespeare "into the active field of ecocriticism in a duly ambivalent way," he misses the shot and flies far wide of the mark when he begins talking about "the animal rights movement":

> Though the deer-hunt scenes offer some emotional aid and comfort to the animal rights movement, the play as a whole undercuts that endorsement by demonstrating that such pervasive anthropomorphizing sentiments may invade and constrain the animal world more insidiously than sporadic open warfare—just as a Petrarchan worshipper can cause a woman more deep and protracted misery than a loudmouthed misogynist transient. (82)

This is all very well, and no doubt true, but Watson seems to have missed an opportunity here to comment about how our assumptions about animals impact on the natural environment, choosing instead to talk vaguely and anachronistically about some transhistorical "animal rights movement." Ecocriticism is not about sentimentalism nor about animal rights in the way that Watson imagines. Doing ecocriticism with Shakespeare means opening up radical challenges in the plays.

Neither Egan's nor Watson's book engages with ecocriticism. Both fail either to follow or to articulate a methodology or to advance ecocriticism in theoretical terms, and both fail at meeting ecocriticism's mandate for praxis.

The praxis question is not new to critical theory, and while this is not the place to give a history on the topic, a few words about what activism *means* are in order here. There are several things that an activist ecocritical reading needs to do.

Firstly, it needs to lead to a heightened environmental awareness. This prerequisite is perhaps why, as the people in the Literature and the Environment Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara have observed, "many, if not most, ecocritics may think of themselves as environmental activists" (<http://lit-environ.english.ucsb.edu/Questions,%20Literature%20and%20the%20Environment%20at%20UCSB.html>). Certainly, the UCSB L&E Program is correct to maintain that "as environmental criticism can deepen our understanding of the relationship that we have with the environment, it can certainly be an aid to activism." An aid, yes, but in and of itself, a gesture toward greater environmental awareness is not enough.

Secondly, as I have argued in a different forum, activism within an ecocritical context also means asking to what degree and with what effect ecocriticism can and should work with other activist theories. Thirdly, it means posing the question Hans-Georg Erney did in a 2003 CFP: "How can the tensions between scholarship and activism, which are inherent in ... ecocriticism, be negotiated"? It means that the writings of ecocritics need, as David Orton has argued, "to have some direct relevancy for environmental and green activists who embrace changing industrial capitalist society." And, finally, it does what feminist criticism does, as Toril Moi so aptly expressed: "it seeks to expose, not to perpetuate" (xiv)—which ultimately means either an implicit or explicit call for broad changes in behavior.

Egan and Watson are strong on the first of these prerequisites that define ecocriticism's mandate for praxis, but they are weak on the rest and are really not in any sense offering very new or radical readings.

Watson and Egan both, in their own ways, walk the tightrope of early modern ecocriticism with its demanding gravity on either side, and both, in their own ways, pitch perilously, and ultimately plunge off to one side. Yet, if both of these books fail with ecocritical theory, the same is certainly not true of the work that follows them. The Hallock/Kamps/Raber collection, entitled *Early Modern Ecostudies: From the Florentine Codex to Shakespeare*, published in 2008, is a good case in point. This versatile book of fifteen essays ranges from the deeply thematic to the heavily theoretical, from the local to the global, from critical self-reflexivity of a profession that produces an enormous carbon footprint to theorizing about positions of utopian post-humanity. This is a book that reflects very well the enormous diversity upon which ecocriticism is founded and with which it prides itself. Divided into three sections that might for convenience be reduced to theory, religion, and empire, the essays take us further in different directions than we have gone before. The only thing comparable up to that point is something published a year earlier by one of its editors.

Karen Raber's "Recent Ecocritical Studies of English Renaissance Literature" is a remarkable piece of scholarship that scrupulously reviews virtually all scholarship done up to February 2007 that has anything to do with the environment in the early modern period. In this article, Raber argues that "some of the most promising and critically challenging work comes from efforts to reconsider in an ecocritical light historical contexts" for various issues that have been studied extensively from other angles (Raber 168). It is in the spirit of such efforts that the much of what is to follow in early modern ecocriticism proceeds.

One of the things that has begun to emerge is a sense that in order for it to work with early modern materials (which is to say, in order for it to remain loyal to its activist vision of effecting tangible, material, environmental benefits), ecocriticism must conceptualize a form of ideological critique that is alive both to historicist and presentist concerns. Applied to the early modern period with such loyalties, ecocriticism produces a surprising and exhilarating diversity of approaches and results.

There is indeed enormous diversity, therefore, in ecocritical Shakespeares. A good case in point might be the Bruckner/Brayton collection entitled *Ecocritical Shakespeare* (Ashgate 2011), which brings a vast range of material to the table, from what seems bizarre musings on the emotions of flies to discussions of excrement, trees, and "fairies in the role of the microbes." If musing on the emotion of flies seems bizarre, then we do well to remember that ecocriticism is all about re-focusing, about re-adjusting our views and our relationships with things, and the fact that we are even concerned with such questions as flies in the first place is monumental: it is a concern that may very well reflect an important moment in our attitudes to flies, attitudes that may affect their populations, for we may be certain that if flies were to be wiped out, the event would be catastrophic to all life.

It is this sense of the catastrophic that underscores ecocritical Shakespeares. To be clear, ecocriticism seeks engagement with environmental issues confronting the contemporary world, and Shakespearean ecocritics are at considerable pains to show the relevance of their work to contemporary environmental crises, but doing so in ways that retain validity for both areas. In effect, this has often produced something of a balancing act between valid early modern scholarship on the one hand and real ecological advocacy on the other. This is the tightrope. It is in this sense of difficult balancing, perhaps, that we may agree with an observation Frederick Waage made in 2005 that one of the problems in doing ecocriticism with Shakespeare is that "'ecocritics' seem to be held to higher standards than 'other kinds of theorists' in defining both their approach and its applicability to literature of the [early modern] period" (Waage 140). Shakespearean ecocritics still seem to lack the professional dignity of, say, the archivists who burrow in the bowels of the Folger. If part of the accomplishment of *The Ecocriticism Reader* was to recoup professional dignity for the "undervalued genre of nature writing" (Glotfelty xxxi), then no less do volumes such as the Bruckner/Brayton collection bring similar attention to green Shakespeares. Published in 2011, this book is a sign of what's ahead.

It is no exaggeration to say that 2011 was a brilliant year for early modern ecocriticism. There were three other books (in addition to the Bruckner/Brayton *Ecocritical Shakespeare* collection) and two major conference events. Todd Borlik's *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* is among the best of the books that have appeared in recent years doing ecocriticism with the early modern period. The strengths of Todd Borlik's book are many, the weaknesses few indeed.

Inspired in the ecocritical tradition by a desire "to imagine more sustainable ways of inter-acting with and dwelling on the earth" (Borlik 54), Borlik begins his study with an extended grounding in and discussion of Pythagorus and his importance for the early modern period and for how, to some degree, "the personi-

fication of Nature in Renaissance literature ... can be seen in a continuum with the branch of Pythagorean philosophy that encouraged its followers to become pious, awestruck observers of the harmony in the natural world" (67-8). The chapter that follows, entitled "Mute Timber," is a breath-taking and meticulous case for "complicating reductive views that fail to see the forest for the commercial trees and amplifying a voice in nature at a time when it was increasingly muted by agrarian capitalism" (96).

Complications are certainly what some of the previous work in the area has lacked. Borlik's deft handling of the Reformation, neither reductive nor simplistic, complicates what was happening at the time—the opening of "vast tracts of land to commercial exploitation" (105); the Little Ice Age of the 1590s; food shortages—as these things relate with what was being written. The result is "a sobering reminder of the danger of assuming that all early modern pastoral texts invariably revere a sentience in, or express a spiritual affinity with, the natural world" (134).

There are, indeed, very few weaknesses of the book. One of these, though, resonates through the fourth and fifth chapters, which are largely focused on the early modern pastoral. One wonders why Borlik didn't use more of Terry Gifford's work on the subject—nothing, for instance, from either *Green Voices* or from *Pastoral*, both of which seem germane. Another matter is the index, which includes no material from the notes of each chapter, thus rendering the index far less useful than it might have been.

The introduction, meanwhile, feels a bit rocky, beginning with a tone that seems at once hostile to ecocriticism and yet defensive of the appropriateness of ecocriticism for early modern studies. While it is peppered with occasional inaccuracies—for instance, the view that ecophobia is "an insecurity about discussing environmental issues" (10) rather than an irrational fear or contempt for the environment; or the claim that "nothing in nature exists superfluously" (7), which cannot account for blackberry seeds, spermatozoa, or food in general, each of which suggest that nature thrives in its superfluity—the introduction nevertheless stakes the ground well, closing powerfully with the claim that "early modernists can make certain contributions to literary ecology as important as any insights derived from contemporary nature poetry" (21). It is a claim that the rest of the book scrupulously follows and proves. This is a must-read book for anyone who has any pretensions to doing early modern ecocriticism.

My own book, entitled *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia*, was also published in 2011. This book begins by reviewing the debates that have textured ecocriticism since the mid-1990s and contending that doing ecocriticism with Shakespeare is very different from doing thematic nature criticism. It addresses the definitional lack at the core of ecocriticism, an openness which has been at once an asset and a liability, allowing ecocriticism to expand remarkably since its appearance on the critical scene and yet to do so without deep theorization and without an adequate or appropriate terminology. As have previous scholars, I note a weakness in the theoretical acumen of ecocriticism but in contrast propose a solution, one that is applicable both within and beyond Shakespearean scholarship. The book develops the controversial term "ecophobia" and briefly sketches out its parameters, contend-

ing that the need for this paradigm has so long been unanswered that ecocriticism has entered into something of a crisis of identity. I am clear throughout that the intention is not to use the term monolithically but rather to provide a term for a dynamic that, simply put, needs a name.

A chapter on *King Lear* argues that the fear of environmental unpredictability within the play dramatizes an imagined natural world that is very constitutive in the patterning of power relationships, identity, and the notion of home, and in ways that present the natural world as an antagonist. This ecophobia is pervasive in the play and is easy enough to catalogue, and the conservative warnings the play offers about what tragedies happen when Nature goes unbounded are equally clear.

The book also looks at the actual weather of Shakespeare's England and its relationship with things such as economic growth, with early modern notions about witchcraft, and with the obviously changing views toward nature (from organicism to mechanism). Data are increasing on the colder temperatures, crop failures, and poor fishing that were so very much a part of the early modern daily realities. Everything has a cause, and the purpose of this chapter to assay the causes of early modern ecophobia as represented in *King Lear*.

Other chapters look at *Coriolanus* and how it reveals relationships between ecophobia, displacement, and voice in the play. *Coriolanus*—embroiled in debates about voice, sexuality, and place—posits a crisis of identity as a crisis of environmental embeddedness and thus demands a kind of confluent theorizing to which ecocriticism is particularly suited. For a text such as *Coriolanus*, which enunciates radical comments about sexual mobility and about spaces of Nature, ecocriticism offers an organizational theoretical framework that makes sense of matters often discussed thematically as unrelated issues; these issues need to be discussed in confluence. So doing allows us to see that Coriolanus, on whose body is mapped an ethically inconsiderable environmental schema, not only becomes subject to the same handling as Nature but becomes constitutionally indistinguishable from it. Coriolanus, in seeking to separate himself from his society, becomes indistinguishable from the natural world but like a weed or a disease that must be cut away, in a space that is no space, the space of same-sex love, a loathed and feared no-man's land, as it were, somewhere between heterosexual marriage and same-sex friendship, between Rome and Corioles, a space that, in this play, cannot be inhabited or voiced. Such work is necessary because through it we can discuss the early modern triumph of individualism in terms of the linked dynamics of what were to become homophobia and ecophobia, dynamics which were becoming increasingly intense during the period.

Another chapter looks at *2 Henry VI* and *2 Henry IV* and at relationships among social resistance, environmental ethics, and matters of disease. One of the issues that arises is vegetarianism. This chapter discusses both the stage marginalization of vegetarianism and its "real life" early modern proponents, showing along the way at least some contemporary implications to the debates that were so clearly raging at the time. This chapter also discusses the matter of illness as it relates to the environment in Shakespeare's England. From an ecocritical perspective, precious little has been done on this topic.

Monstrosity, meanwhile, is the topic of another chapter. It is time, as Georgia Brown has noted, for ecocriticism to talk about monsters. Ecophobia is central to the early modern imagining of hostile geographies; that such geographies house truculent, disenfranchised, and monstrous figures; and that such figures are on (and are often synecdochal of) the outside borders of decency and order. This chapter discusses postcolonial ecocriticism, arguing that the semiotics of cannibalism is one of the vitally overlapping areas between postcolonial theory and ecocriticism. Cannibalism is a race and environment issue. As with so many other of the topics in this book, cannibalism—a matter very present in both the theatre and the popular imagination of early modern England—is almost never a topic of ecocritical consideration.

Ecocriticism and Shakespeare goes on to cover the relationship among matters such as disgust, pollution, and gender, and how these form a kind of nexus in Shakespeare and both require and benefit from ecocritical readings—readings which show again important links among ecophobia, misogyny, racism, and the persecution of various kinds of social minorities. Of course, all of this is linked with the exploration ethics of the times. For the growing map of uncharted and unknown places in the early modern period, the opening of vast new worlds of resources—natural and human—that had to be controlled before they could be hocked as commodities, ecophobia plays a central role in the environmentally hostile imagination that sought control and domination. Ecocriticism gives access to this process, to understanding *how* ecophobia works, *how* it helps to write geographical and social difference, and to seeing what sorts of relationships we might expect between historical contexts and the staging of ecophobia as well as between the connections ecocriticism and postcolonial theory are currently developing with each other. Discourses of madness form a foundational base on which much Shakespearean exoticism and otherness is grounded. The commodification of this exoticism in characters as varied as Caliban, Shylock, Portia, and Antonio reveal an interdependence of oppressions, each contingent in their varying ways, on ecophobic ethics. The book finishes with a discussion of sleep in Shakespeare and how it represents an interstitial space between "the human" and "Nature" in the early modern imagination and that the contempt for both sleep and night are inseparable from a generalized contempt for the natural world.

The fourth book of 2011 on the topic is Ken Hiltner's *What Else is Pastoral: Renaissance Literature and the Environment*. It comes two years after his article in *ISLE* entitled "Renaissance Literature and Our Contemporary Attitude toward Global Warming," which offers a short but compelling discussion comparing representations of air pollution in the seventeenth century with representations of global warming in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Meticulously grounded in archival materials, Hiltner's essay foreshadows his 2011 book, which is similarly meticulous. Hiltner's over-riding concerns are with matters of representation, which lead to the opening moments of the book—a productive set of comments ranging from Plato to Heidegger on the nature of art and what it needs and does not need, how it represents and how it does what it does.

The ecocritical readings begin in earnest in the book with Virgil within the context of a wildly expanding Rome. Hiltner wastes no time carefully drawing comparisons to early modern representations, yet, it is oddly stand-alone-ish, very

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little of what has become canonical ecocriticism appearing in the pages as support. Indeed, as with Borlik's work, the general absence of Gifford is notable, the more so in this book, since pastoral is its central topic. Nevertheless, the discussions shed new light on old texts with occasional brilliance, making clear as Hiltner memorably words it that "(1) early modern England was indeed experiencing a number of strikingly modern environmental crises that influenced its literature, and (2) texts influenced by these crises came in a variety of forms and genres" (Hilter, *What* 9). Hiltner shows that "there were a variety of environmental crises that were already threatening the picturesque countrysides ... [and that] these crises are in part responsible for the emergence into appearance [in literature] of the English countryside" (91). Hiltner talks about early modern air pollution and, significantly, about early modern environmental protest literature, much of which can be seen to be "presaging the protests of modern environmentalists" (141).

The two major conference events of 2011 that show early modern ecocriticism's solid acceptance as a viable field of study are the "Crawl, Adapt, and Diverge: New Evolutionary Paths in Shakespeare Ecocriticism" at the World Shakespeare Congress in Prague and the pre-conference seminar entitled "Ecocriticism and Early Modern Literature" at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in Bloomington. The questions for the participants at this pre-conference seminar resulted in a startlingly diverse collection of ideologies and approaches. Among the questions the participants were asked to consider in preparation for the seminar were these:

1) Why look at early modern literature through ecocritical lenses?
2) What does ecocritical work hope to achieve with early modern literature that hasn't already been done? Shakespeare's work, for instance, is far and above the most heavily glossed secular literature to be found. Virtually every environmental matter in it has been discussed thematically. What new insights can ecocriticism hope to offer?
3) A related question: what—as a balancing act between valid early modern scholarship on the one hand and real ecological advocacy on the other—does ecocritical work on early modern literature ideally look like, and (equally important) what doesn't it look like?
4) In doing ecocriticism with early modern literature, what are the relationships between historicism and presentism? What are some of the issues here that arise, and what do resolutions look like here?
5) What are some anxieties that accompany "ecocriticism and early modern literature"?
6) If, as Richard Kerridge so eloquently puts it, the present crises we face are "the preoccupation that is the starting-point" of what we do as ecocritics, then how does praxis translate when the texts are early modern? What, then, does/could praxis mean?
7) Why has this area become so hot, and, honestly, what are some issues that might arise with this heat?

These are not easy questions.

One of the results of this seminar, whether the readings were close or far, was a felt-need to connect early modern literature with current concerns. When Todd Borlik, for instance, spoke about transportation as an ecological issue in Shakespeare, he did so both in terms of the animal-rights sympathies Falstaff has for his horse and in terms of contemporary emotional detachment from our current forms of transportation: "In an era when transportation took place literally on the back of sentient creatures—what if our cars moaned in pain each time we stepped on the accelerator?—and was fueled by the sweat of local farmers who grew their food, the energy required to generate such horse-power could not be hidden under the hood." Here Borlik succinctly and effectively positions the question about the relationship between animal rights and environmentalism while keeping an eye on the dangers of anachronism and silliness.

The dangers and the questions remain, notwithstanding the enormous amount of work that has appeared in the area. Though less a novelty now in 2011 than ever before, early modern ecocriticism remains a tough study, one that raises important questions both about the visions and about the possibilities for ecocriticism. Obviously, both ecocriticism and early modern literature stand to gain and have gained much from their productive alliance, yet questions about what might be achieved and *measured* (in terms of "the environment") from the alliances forming between ecocriticism and early modern literature loom larger than ozone holes.

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