



## **Iannini, Christopher P. *Fatal Revolutions: Natural History, West Indian Slavery, and the Routes of American Literature*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2012.**

In *Fatal Revolutions*, Christopher Iannini boldly connects the evolution of natural science writing with the Caribbean plantation system that relied on slave labor to produce the valuable colonial commodities of the eighteenth century. He explores natural science's representation of Caribbean flora and fauna—through initial analyses of Hans Sloane and Mark Catesby—as a strategy for coming to terms with Atlantic slavery and its moral significance for economic life. He then traces these strategies in North American writers—J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, William Bartram, Thomas Jefferson, and John Audubon—who articulated “new social and political identities” in the early republic (11). The result is a vision of early American literature that is intimately linked to the formal conventions of natural history as well as the greater Caribbean in new and generative ways.

Iannini's monograph is firmly situated within the contemporary discourse about the interplay between literary forms and the eighteenth century's embrace of speculative finance and plantation slavery. At times, he makes this connection perfectly clear, noting the importance of work by Ian Baucom and Catherine Gallagher, and Iannini is convincing in his claim that natural history occupies a more central role than these authors acknowledge. While Gallagher and Baucom claim that novels required new public practices of reading that trained readers to invest fictional characters with real value, Iannini points to the much more widely read and practiced literary form of natural history. His claim that “natural history is the eighteenth-century literary genre (or incipient genre) most directly engaged with the problem of slavery and finance in its full circumatlantic dimensions” is so thoroughly argued in Iannini's analysis that it is difficult to refute (40). In addition to this sharp attention to formal issues of representation in natural history texts, the book itself is supported by eight detailed color plates that Iannini examines at length. His interpretations of the art in these natural histories are careful and precise, and they often provide the most compelling evidence for Iannini's claims about the formal conventions of this genre as a vehicle for assessing colonial slavery in the Caribbean.

There are significant implications to Iannini's work on representation in Sloane, Catesby, and others, including a nuanced portrait of the Caribbean as a site of both natural bounty and cultural toxicity stemming from the violence of colonial slavery. His most suggestive move, however, is to link these formal elements of representation to the prose narratives of the North American colonies and the early Republic. Iannini's re-reading of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* suggests that the concerns of representation in natural history—namely, the study of the Caribbean as a source of material prosperity and the questionable practice of plantation slavery—remain concerns for the writing of the early Republic. By tracing Jefferson's responses to Caribbean slave revolts and West Indian commerce, Iannini situates *Notes* “not at the center of the emergent nation, but rather at the northern limit of the plantation Americas, as a kind of ‘appendage’ of the West Indies” (231). Such a

reconfiguration of early American writing is typical of the second half of Iannini's work, as the works of Crèvecoeur, Bartram, and Audubon are similarly re-thought in terms of Caribbean accumulation, the plantation system, and other issues initially addressed by the discourse of natural history. To see these influential early authors in light of natural history's generic conventions brings out new, transnational dimensions in complex and revealing ways. Iannini goes well beyond noting where these authors looked to the Caribbean; rather, his deep analysis of how they thought of the West Indies and plantation slavery in light of natural history effectively creates a new framework for seeing how these works contributed to "a radical new vision of New World nature in which the natural abundance of North America, as prospective material basis of the incipient nation, would fuel a planetary future of republican liberty" (17).

Iannini's study is a truly remarkable work that is both highly specific and far-reaching. His clearly articulated thesis and careful examination of natural histories and canonical works of the early Republic give the sources a sense of vitality and, often, violence. For those trained to see natural history as expressions of empirical objectivity, Iannini offers a starkly contrasting portrait of the genre as layered accounts of both "empiricist technique and emblematic method" (25). For readers invested in the historical rise of a "national" body of letters and the early novel, *Fatal Revolutions* accounts for these developments in new, interdisciplinary, and exciting ways.

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## **Ivakhiv, Adrian J. *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2013.**

Like the mysterious Zone in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), what ostensibly begins as an analysis of the representation of a diverse collection of landscapes and environments across film history in *Ecologies of the Moving Image* quickly becomes a metaphysical exploration of our relationships with nature, and ultimately an ontological journey into cinema itself. In *Stalker*, the guide—known only as the Stalker—leads two men—the Writer and the Professor—into the heart of the contaminated and forbidden Zone to seek the Room: a mystical space believed to grant the desires of those who venture into it. As they journey across the Zone, the Stalker tells his companions: "I don't know what it's like when there is no one here, but as soon as humans appear everything begins to move."

In Adrian J. Ivakhiv's most recent publication, this active and almost sentient relationship between the human subject and the lived environment functions as a metaphor for how cinema works and for our relationship to the natural world. Cinema, for Ivakhiv, is a contact zone composed of sounds and images mediating between the human and the non-human, as it invokes our desires, memories, bodily affect, and perceptual responses (17). Likewise, passage through the Zone—through the moving image—moves *us* as spectators and cultural beings, bringing us tangibly closer to the material, perceptual, and social relationships binding culture and nature.

*Ecologies of the Moving Image* is therefore, at its most fundamental, a poetic exploration of how moving images—including animated images, digital cinema, video, but particularly film—engage with, reflect, and shape lived ecologies. Starting from the assertion that cinema moves us on a number of registers (socially, perceptually, and materially), Ivakhiv claims that through our responses to moving images, as well as our production and circulation of them, images also dynamically shape the pro-filmic world. Bringing together previous scholarly forays into human perception and affect, critical anthropology, environmental and ecological studies, philosophy, and moving image studies, Ivakhiv offers an ecologically-derived ethics or ecophilosophy of cinema founded upon two arguments. The first, channelling Heidegger's concept of worlding, is that cinema is intrinsically world-making; since images are always made within the world and (to some extent) in the shape of it, they also bring forth new worlds that shape our responses and perceptions to the pro-filmic one. Ivakhiv's second argument, drawing from Félix Guattari's distinctions between natural, social, and mental ecologies in *The Three Ecologies* (2008), is that cinema's potential to create worlds can be expressed in terms of three 'ecologies': the material, the social, and the perceptual. Each of the ecologies in this model can be used to articulate how any one film may encompass multiple 'worlds' within and outside its form and narrative. Drawing attention to the socio-ecological relations in which a film is produced, circulated, encountered, and disposed of in 'real' life, each ecology forefronts how the imagined film-world is encountered, perceived, and responded to by the viewer. Ivakhiv attributes a different dimension to each ecology as a means to highlight different aspects of the innumerable relationships between subjects, organisms, and their environments that exist in any moving image. These dimensions are a film's geomorphism, anthropomorphism, and biomorphism.

Although Ivakhiv's three ecologies strategically address the intrinsic connectedness between the real, our inner social worlds, and cinematic worlds on-screen, Ivakhiv's assertion that the distinction between the natural world and culture is ultimately an illusionary one undergirds his entire ecophilosophical project. As such, while much of the book follows a tri-partite structure exploring these three dimensions, he relies upon a process-relational view (heavily influenced by the works of Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, and Henri Bergson) to bring them together into an irreducible whole. After exploring geomorphism, anthropomorphism, and biomorphism in depth in his case studies, he brings these threads together in his final chapter to focus on the 'psychodynamics' of our contemporary global ecological crisis. Since he concludes with a meditation on digital cinema in a brief afterward, however, his analysis of how digital technologies now shape our affective, material, and social ecologies almost seems to be an afterthought.

The relationships between the filmic world, human affect and perception, and pro-filmic nature is Ivakhiv's central ecocritical agenda in *Ecologies of the Moving Image*, and his primary scholarly contribution to the growing field of environmental humanities (26). *Ecologies of the Moving Image* closely follows the environmental and spatial turns within cultural studies and moving image scholarship over the two last decades, sitting comfortably next to the work of Sean Cubitt, Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, Nadia Bozak, Rob Nixon, and Ursula K. Heise. Reflecting the interdisciplinarity within environmental humanities, Ivakhiv impressively draws upon a century of film history, as well as critical scholarship from anthropology and geography to discuss an astonishing array of films, including ethnographies, wildlife films, blockbuster science fiction and action cinemas, experimental and essay films, digital cinema, documentaries, animated films, Westerns, road movies, and European art films. Yet this breadth also imbues the book as a whole with the impression of fragmentation between chapters and an obfuscation of Ivakhiv's overarching theoretical arguments. As each lengthy chapter unfolds across a different yet sizeable sub-field of cinematic study, his case studies can even be read as a veritable overview of the topical developments within critical film scholarship: animal studies (Chapter

5: *Anima Moralia*), critical geography (Chapter 3: Territory), twenty-first century environmentalism (Chapter 6: *Terra* and Trauma), and ethnographic and postcolonial studies (Chapter 4: Encounter). Interested readers looking for a more lengthy engagement with these large fields would therefore do well to seek out some of the texts Ivakhiv himself cites.

Analogously, although Ivakhiv skilfully evokes the Zone to express the complex and ever-shifting relationships between moving images, culture, and ecology, he is not the first to turn to Tarkovsky's *Stalker* to illustrate environmental theory. Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt, for instance, also adopt a screen still depicting the Stalker within the Zone for the cover of *Ecocinema Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2013). This coincidental doubling deftly illustrates how well established the canon of 'green cinema' has today become within moving image scholarship. Ivakhiv himself relies heavily upon this canon, analysing eco-juggernauts such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich, 2004), *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005), *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006), *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), and *The Tree of Life* (Terrence Malick, 2011), as well as *Stalker*. Although Ivakhiv offers innovative readings of these films' ecological workings, he nevertheless frequently returns to the canonical 'masters' of cinema, including Stan Brackage, Peter Greenaway, Malick, and Herzog, leaving less space for geopolitically marginalized filmmakers, a selection he defends by categorizing these films as having "left behind marks of their resonance in the world" (24). Despite the aura of an interdisciplinary jigsaw puzzle *Ecologies of the Moving Image* sometimes radiates, Ivakhiv nevertheless offers a timely and significant meditation on the material realities of moving images and the shared connections between humans and non-humans which surround them, to the benefit of scholars and graduate students alike. Like his first publication *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Indiana UP, 2001), *Ecologies of the Moving Image* draws together his diverse interests in environmental studies and ecology, cultural studies, philosophy, religion, and social studies to delve into the complex relationship between the natural world and the cinema.

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**Gaard, Greta, Simon C. Estok, and Serpil Opperman,  
eds. *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*.  
New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.**

*International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*, the most recent publication in Routledge's Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature series, offers a much needed reassessment of the crucial contributions of feminist scholarship to the origins of ecocriticism, while at the same time expanding feminist ecocriticism in new and exciting directions. This volume brings together fifteen essays bridging various disciplines, including ecofeminism, postcolonial ecocriticism, animal studies, queer theory, gender studies, and cross-cultural and international ecocriticism. Moreover, this book extends the work of Greta Gaard's 2010 article, "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a more Feminist Ecofeminism" and complements other recent publications including Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman's *Material Feminisms* (2008) and Bruce Erickson and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands's *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (2010), among others.

The "Introduction" provides a useful summary of the state of the field as well as a discussion of the difficulties of even naming and defining feminist ecocriticism. The editors insist on "reclaiming ecocriticism's feminist lineage" in order to confront why "feminist and ecofeminist perspectives aren't sufficiently addressed in mainstream ecocritical discussions" (1, 3). The volume as a whole goes on the offensive against the claim that ecofeminism is essentialist, an accusation made against writers, scholars, and activists for wrongfully aligning women with nature and thereby ignoring the reality of race, class, and gender differences. Instead, the editors argue that the field is not irreparably tainted, as Mortimer-Sandilands suggested in her article, "Eco/Feminism on the Edge" (2008). This volume is a strong sampling that demonstrates how feminist ecocriticism is moving in more inclusive and methodologically intersectional directions due to the influences of new materialism and posthuman studies. All selections in this new collection are united in their commitment to reassess, reevaluate, reclaim, and resituate feminist ecocriticism as a vital, dynamic, and interdisciplinary discourse.

The collection is organized into four clusters of essays, each of which foregrounds a different topic: feminist ecocritical theory; postcolonial/feminist/environmental justice; sexualities, species, and eco-activisms; and apocalyptic visions. In the first section Timothy Morton's article "Treating Objects Like Women: Feminist Ontology and the Question of Essence" draws on object oriented ontology to "recuperate new understandings of essential being" (8). Insisting on what he terms "weird essentialism" (related to, but departing from, Niels Bohr's theory of entanglement and Karen Barad's ontology of intra-action), Morton tries to eschew any materialist and process-based ontologies, which he finds static, conservative, and ill-suited for feminist ecocritical practices. Rather "[e]ntanglement implies a connection so deep as to be a kind of identity," leading Morton to argue for a metaphysics of presence over absolute non-essentialism (60). Morton's essay stands on different theoretical ground than most of the other essays included in this collection, and it should be read alongside the selections by Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino, whose methodologies rely on posthumanist theory and material feminism.

The second group of essays is clustered around approaches to postcolonialism and environmental justice. This grouping brings together scholars and texts from various geographies: Costa Rica, Haiti, and Australia. Kate Rigby's "The Poetics of Decolonization: Reading *Carpentaria* in a Feminist Ecocritical Frame" looks at Australian Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria*. In reading *Carpentaria*, Rigby utilizes the intersection between postcolonial theory and posthumanist theory. She draws from Val Plumwood's theory of the "logic of colonization" to show how *Carpentaria* "deftly discloses the dysfunctionality of the logic of colonization, while restoring voice and agency to the colonized, both human and otherwise" (128). Rigby also points to the ways the perspectives of non-modern Indigenous characters converge with the postmodern and posthumanist. What stands out in this essay is Rigby's self-conscious acceptance of her own position as a white reader and the ways she relinquishes the "attitude of hermeneutic mastery embodied in that seamless assimilation of this indigenous signed novel to Western codes of knowledge" (123); Rigby accepts her position as a "welcomed stranger," a kind of negotiation that is instructive for postcolonial and feminist ecocritical scholars alike. Rigby's article is a nice companion to Laura White's essay which also examines Australian literature and reflects themes of environmental justice for women living in various geographies throughout this section.

In the third grouping, "Species, Sexualities, and Eco-Activism," Nicole Seymour's "Down with People: Queer Tendencies and Troubling Racial Politics in Antinatalist Discourse" uncovers the contradictions in antinatalist discourse by examining digital and print texts including websites, television, and nonfiction. Seymour finds that arguments for population control in the form of antinatalist discourse are "elitist

anti-anthropocentrism” that ignores issues of social justice and wrongly privilege population control over birth control (207). This essay is unique in its examination of digital media and the intersections of antinatalism, gender politics, and queer theory. This cluster is the most diverse group of essays in the collection; no reader should forgo reading the essays by Chia-ju Chang and Iris Ralph on interspecies activism in Taiwan, an excerpt that works toward an Asian cultural-ecocriticism, along with Lauren Rae Hall’s reassessment of Carol Adams and ecofeminist politics of vegetarianism.

The collection concludes with “Apocalyptic Visions,” three articles that reevaluate the way narratives of the apocalypse are traditionally constructed as a masculine and heteronormative discourse. These essays question how gender and sexuality shape and reshape apocalypse narratives, as Kate Hogan does in her exploration of Tony Kushner’s queer apocalyptic vision in *Angels in America*. In the concluding essay, “In(ter)dependence Day: A Feminist Ecocritical Perspective of Fireworks,” Greta Gaard borrows from Rob Nixon’s theorizations of slow violence to bring to light the disproportionate burden placed on women, children, and nonhuman animals in the global production and performance of fireworks. Drawing on histories of firework production and performance, Gaard comes to call firework shows “the reinforcement of a dominant group’s *naturalization* of empire, erotophobia, and ecophobia” (274; emphasis original). Gaard’s application of material histories and slow violence lenses to a relatively unexplored cultural phenomenon (the fireworks show) makes this essay cutting-edge, lively, and interdisciplinary. One might even say explosive.

Scholars, writers, teachers, and activists should find that this collection reflects the editors’ desire to “acknowledge not only the feminist roots of ecocriticism but also the centrality of feminist views, methods, and interpretations in building ecocriticism’s future” (3). *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* draws on a plurality of perspectives, ultimately positioning feminist ecocriticism as a dynamic and intersectional field that is ethically, politically, and theoretically driven to address the “intimate relations between social, biological, gender, species, sexual, and environmental justice issues” (3). Readers will find this book instructive in various modes of writing feminist ecocritical scholarship as well as a tool that reinforces the utility and urgency of feminist ecocritical perspectives.

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## **Ashford, Joan Anderson. Ecocritical Theology: Neo-Pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012.**

In *Ecocritical Theology: Neo-Pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present*, Joan Anderson Ashford shows how religious and spiritual themes parallel, challenge, or otherwise inform pastoral motifs in eight contemporary American novels. Ashford describes how the novels, in various ways, revise or challenge the traditional pastoral narrative through the use of a common form: the “neo-pastoral.” Situating the neo-pastoral in a postwar world reflective of “people’s estrangement from religious beliefs and separation from nature,” Ashford argues that scholars of pastoral literature, including Leo Marx, Lawrence Buell, and Terry Gifford, fail to sufficiently address “an historical biblical

basis for their terminology when discussing people's inner thoughts and a sense of a divine creator" (16). *Ecocritical Theology* aims to define the neo-pastoral form and to explicate how narratives drawing on or clearly acknowledging the biblical traditional can inform ecocritical readings of contemporary fiction as well as ecocritical and environmental criticism more generally.

Ashford examines eight American novels, dedicating one chapter to each novel. Beginning with John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960), Ashford demonstrates how neo-pastoral novels often feature a hero or anti-hero embarking on some kind of spiritual quest. Just as Updike's protagonist Rabbit fails to understand his place in the world, Pynchon's Oedipa Maas is similarly unable to find "meaning" in an environment within which the pastoral myth and other grand narratives have been exposed as illusory. Employing an ecocritical lens, Ashford argues that creation stories and their related themes, especially those from the Judeo-Christian tradition, are important when analyzing how these characters relate to their environments. According to Ashford, "a disconnect with canonical scripture or formative creation narratives" emerges as a key feature of the neo-pastoral novel (20). Both Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer* (1966) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *The Almanac of the Dead* (1991) exemplify how creation stories influence both the content and form of neo-pastoral novels. In *The Fixer*, protagonist Yakov Bok studies the work of seventeenth century philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Ashford shows how in essentially locating "God" within nature, Spinoza's work is similar to that of deep ecologists, including Lynn White Jr. (67). In turning to *The Almanac of the Dead*, Ashford discusses how Leslie Marmon Silko's novel demonstrates "a web of environmental storytelling that connects all peoples of the earth through Native American myth" (25). The concept of "master metaphors" constitutes an important part of Ashford's discussion here, as she explicates the novel in part to show how master metaphors from various cultures often overlap with natural forms, thereby showing how spiritual and environmental concerns are often synonymous. Of course, creation stories provide fruitful ground for discussions of gender, power, and the environment, and Ashford's study of Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997) shows how the "life forces" important to ecofeminists are threatened by patriarchy (149). *Paradise* reveals, among other important themes, competing sources of agency wherein nature both has power and is threatened by other (often patriarchal) sources of power. The three other novels addressed in the book—Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1987), Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* (2000), and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006)—demonstrate various ways in which individuals respond to the threatening, apocalyptic, alienating conditions of contemporary America. While *White Noise* and *The Road* contribute to characterizations of the contemporary environment as bewildering, artificial, and unfamiliar, *Prodigal Summer* attempts a return of sorts to the "theological philosophies of hope and positive expectations for the future" that Ashford links to some examples of the neo-pastoral form (22). Indeed, Ashford illustrates how many of the characters in neo-pastoral novels long to return to the sacred, even when such attempts prove futile (201).

Ashford makes clear that she views her work as contributing to the fields of ecocriticism and environmental literature. Throughout the book, she places her argument in dialogue with fundamental works from the field of ecocriticism; importantly, she argues that Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), and Gifford's *Pastoral* (1999) draw mostly on poetry and nonfiction in their investigations of the legacy of pastoralism in American literature (16). By focusing on the contemporary American novel, Ashford views *Ecocritical Theology* as advancing ecocritical scholarship on an overlooked genre. Curiously, Ashford avoids any mention of postmodernism and does not address whether she views her work as parallel to, departing from, or irrelevant to postmodernism. Because the novels surveyed in the book are often identified as key examples of the postmodern novel, some scholars may question how the postmodern tendency to revisit, revise, mock, or simulate meaning and master narratives may contribute to and perhaps overlap

with Ashford's definition of the neo-pastoral novel. For example, both Updike and Morrison are often approached as writers whose work makes use of magical realism, an arguably postmodern discourse within which natural forms are often linked to magic or enchantment. My point here is not to suggest that *Ecocritical Theology* must acknowledge every link between its approach and other critical approaches, but rather to point out how some brief discussion of the obvious parallels between postmodernism, magical realism, and the characteristics of the neo-pastoral novel could have proven useful to the scholars of twentieth century American literature likely to access this book.

Although each chapter presents a clear argument for how the novel in question exemplifies one or more characteristics of the neo-pastoral and engages with spirituality in its themes, forms, or sources, the chapters do at times rely heavily on summary and explication. While students will surely benefit from summaries of key moments in environmental literature, including the arrival of the locomotive in Hawthorne's *Sleepy Hollow* passages, the train passages in Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and the case for the toxicity of DDT in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), experienced scholars of ecocritical and environmental literature may find these lengthy reviews unnecessary.

Despite these arguable weaknesses, *Ecocritical Theology: Neo-Pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present* is an immensely readable, genuinely interesting volume that surely has the potential to inspire new scholarship on echoes of pastoral forms and content in contemporary American fiction. Specifically, Ashford establishes the biblical tradition and its associated narratives and themes as a source to which contemporary authors and their characters consistently return. *Ecocritical Theology* makes a strong case for why scholars of ecocritical and environmental literature should do the same.

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## **Bell, Shannon Elizabeth. *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice*. Urbana: U of Illinois, 2013.**

*Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed* by Shannon Elizabeth Bell is an emotional and insightful narrative documenting the eco-activism of Appalachian women against mountaintop-removal coal mining. The collection of twelve women's stories makes the topic especially approachable and relevant. Experiences and encounters chronicled by these twelve women include "coal-industry-related destruction or hazards, such as devastating floods; well-water contamination; perilous roadways from overweight, speeding coal trucks; coal dust air pollution; dangerous conditions resulting from a coal slurry impoundment and/or a mountaintop-removal mine close to one's house; or the threat of destruction due to a permit for mountaintop-removal mine" (4). While heartbreaking, the stories are as well-informed as they are moving, making this a great collection for those new to the topic of ecocriticism, eco-activism, or coal mining, as well as those who are well-versed in such topics.

A common sentiment among the women profiled in this book is that they are not fighting against coal mining. After all, their families and friends make their livings in the coal mines. Mining is an intricate part of the Central Appalachian culture. These women are simply advocating for a more ecologically



responsible form of coal mining. As Pauline Canterbury, one half of the “Sylvester Dustbusters,” asserts, “Now I’m not going to say stop mining. I know a lot of environmentalists, they [say], ‘Let’s get rid of this coal completely.’ I can’t say that—that’s our livelihood in this valley. But they could go back to doing it like it used to be—the coal can be mined different. It can be mined responsibly with the people in mind” (37). The women featured in *Our Roots Run Deep* are fighting to maintain the safety of not only their natural resources but also their community. They have to fear for their homes and their schools, because as the mountaintop-removal coal mining continues, their communities are suffering from the devastating side effects of this process, such as violent flooding and coal dust coating the town.

Mary, the other half of the “Sylvester Dustbusters,” explains the dichotomy facing communities plagued with mountaintop-removal coal mining: “There is a right way, and there is a wrong way [to mine coal]—this should have never happened to us. They should have never put a stoker plant where they did to destroy us... When we go to bed at night, we don’t know if we’re going to wake up or not. There is no alarm system [in case of a breach or collapse] and we’re surrounded by three of the most dangerous impoundments” (37). These women are not trying to stop the coal mining that sustains these communities; they are simply trying to infuse ecological and cultural responsibility into the mining that has come to control their lives.

Documenting how coal mining is more than just a means to a paycheck, *Our Roots Run Deep* is very much a testament to the culture of Central Appalachia, and Bell discusses this beautifully as she concludes the book: “while the Appalachian region is (incorrectly) stereotyped as monolithically white, this whiteness is socially constructed to be a ‘problematic’ whiteness, a marked muteness. The unearned privileges that are typically bestowed on people with white skin do not translate to those who are Appalachian whites” (177). The deprivation of these “unearned privileges” seems to make it easier for companies to infiltrate these communities and operate with little restriction. Coal mining is an intricate part of the cultural identity in this area, and as mining practices change, the cultural identity changes. Activist Maria Gunnoe is fighting to preserve this land, not just for the externally validated ecological benefits, but she is fighting to maintain the identity and community of the land: “The thought of there never being another generation of hillbilly children makes my skin crawl” (23). Simply moving to escape the reach and impact of the coal companies is impossible, because these women, their communities, and the land on which they live are forever intertwined. By destroying the land, and thus destroying the communities, Bell’s book vividly illustrates the cultural destruction that would result, making each woman’s call to action even more heart wrenching and consequential.

Still, while this book does an excellent job explaining the humanity involved with the fight to restore responsible coal mining practices to Appalachian mining communities, it falls short in its gendered analysis. Each of the women in the collection is a mother and, in some cases, also a grandmother. As a result, there is a heavy emphasis placed on how their role as mother enhances their role as activist. Mothers are protectors, and their need to protect their children and grandchildren is what leads these women into eco-activism. Are they only motivated to seek change because they have procreated? Are other women without children not motivated to preserve the environment? The women interviewed for this book acknowledge that women are more apt to seek change and to aggressively fight for change, but no mention is given to the role of childless women in this fight. While these women attribute their families as a part of why they fight, they do not credit that solely to their role as mother; the author of this collection continually puts an emphasis on this maternal role, which, perhaps inadvertently, ostracizes those readers who are not parents. A reasonable distinction should be made that this book is the story of Appalachian *mothers* fighting for environmental justice.

This collection of personal narratives is an important addition to the conversation on environmental justice. It vividly and poignantly shows the trials of the individuals and families who are entrenched in the efforts of eco-activism. However, the stereotypical depiction of mothers protecting the earth, engaging in this fight for environmental justice simply because they are mothers, undercuts the strength that each woman's story would otherwise exude. Still, the conflicted role of women, whether defined by motherhood or not, in this movement is appropriate, given the fact that mountaintop-removal coal mining is changing not only the identity but also the landscape and ecology of their communities.

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## **Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2013.**

*The more a thing tends to be permanent, the more it tends to be lifeless.*

– Alan Watts

*Hyperobjects* is like oil, viscid and vicious. It is difficult to shake off and difficult to ignore. It is immediate and infuriating. There is an uncanny strangeness in not only recognizing the end of the world while reading Morton's work, but also (and more so), experiencing the absence of that world—all of this recognition occurs, of course, while nevertheless and simultaneously being a part of it, within it. Hyperobjects—e.g., global warming, evolution, black holes, nuclear materials, and the collective machinery of capitalism—are “entities [that] cause us to reflect on our very place on Earth and in the cosmos” (15). They are “massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (1). The hyperobject par excellence, *global warming*, which is the clear focus of Morton's work, “seem[s] to force something on us, something that affects some core ideas of what it means to exist, what Earth is, what society is” (15). Hyperobjects are not accessible over there, some other place, beyond—“hyperobjects are here, right here in my social and experiential space” (27). These hyperobjects are, quite literally, everywhere and nowhere at once. You can't clasp global warming, or capitalism or evolution for that matter, but all the while, there you are—*poof*—within it; point in any direction, anywhere, and there they are, right before you, always already interconnected. Because, like Jonah in the Whale, Morton remarks, we are inside hyperobjects (20), and being inside forces us to acknowledge their presence as they present us with enigmas in both being and also in our thinking about being after the end of the world. *Hyperobjects* is, after all, an ontology.

As a timely and essential contribution for Object Oriented Ontology (OOO)—a sub-set of the *speculative realism* movement—Morton was surely correct in assuming that “the subtlety of OOO itself requires a thorough examination of hyperobjects” (15), as these entities are both the windows into our being and also the very objects of observation—“finding out real things about real things” (15). Along with

ecocriticism and the larger umbrella of the environmental humanities, OOO—both as methodology and object of study—have benefited from this culturally interdisciplinary project. His assessment of modernity's usage and understanding of both irony and sincerity, along with commentaries on New Age environmentalism, generate reason to extend his work out of the academy and into the conversation of contemporary hip-pop-culture itself. Accordingly, the *Hyperobjects* readership should develop a richer understanding of the OOO position and of the Humanities relationship to ecology—with global warming being the very liaison for this investment, as hyperobjects are the cohorts to everyone's lives, quite literally, everywhere.

Morton's quantum theory appropriations, spacetime insights, musical interludes, notes on infinity, Buddhist quirks, environmental performativity, and overall aesthetic dimensions are presented as a medley of interstices in philosophy, art, and literature. Said a bit differently, *Hyperobjects* is a quilt of liminal avant-garde theory. His deployment of pop-cultural references—e.g., it's clear that Pixar's *Wall-E* and *Hyperobjects* are both stories of how broken tools will save the earth (23), *The* (obligatory) *Matrix* alignments are in abundance and mirror quite well the absorbing and unshakable properties of hyperobjects, which are encountered in the text like the way "Jimi Hendrix-style guitar phasing seems to whoosh toward one's hearing and away from it," like the oscillating effects of hyperobjects themselves (74)—right alongside the dense and at times opaque philosophy of Derrida, Hegel, Kant, and the persistent and fruitful engagements with Heidegger, is a peculiarly welcomed approach to academic writing within the environmental humanities and critical theory at large. But there is nothing customarily ironic about this project and these pop-cultural references, for Morton arranges a phenomenological sincerity throughout the text with a poetically elevated voice, which frequently warrants a recurring and welcomed hyperbolic cadence of certain non-real realities of and in this non-world world. Again, this is a project that presents itself *after the End of the World*, and thus his David Lynchian dream-like scenarios amid the shadow of hyperobjects (153), witty *Monty Python* mentions, Nietzschean nihilistic tendencies and self-proclaimed "hog-wild Heidegger style" of prose (148) are eccentrically contagious and, at times, reasonably baroque.

As Morton's interdisciplinary background blazes through *Hyperobjects*, his interrogation of modernity through his understanding of irony and sincerity is a particularly gripping example of the way his work on poetry, literature, and philosophy affects his understanding of ecology. While Morton questions whether the maxim of modernity remains "anything you can do I can do meta," (146) he too asserts that, "hyperobjects bring about the end of modernity," (94) but not the end of irony—as irony is clearly essential for announcing the end of something and at the same time investigating the essence of said something itself. But then again, to add to the Morton maxim of meta-modernity, amid this non-world world, "in the midst of irony, there you are, being ironic" (35). And "unlike Latour," writes Morton, "we have been modern, and we are only just learning how not to be" (19). And this un-learning of modernity is akin to the Tao of sorts: for in the pursuit of knowledge something is learned every day, yet in the practice of the Tao, of Zen, of being human amid hyperobjects, something *must* be unlearned. And so while "modernity is the story of how oil got into everything" (54), *Hyperobjects* is the story of how we cope with this phenomenological truth. Thus "humans enter a new age of sincerity, which contains an intrinsic irony that is beyond the aestheticized, slightly plastic irony of the post modern age" (128). This ontological threshold of sincere irony, which reveals the presence of hyperobjects, is sometimes called an *ecological awareness* (128). And this awareness takes focus, and attention, and a mindfulness that requires what Tibetan Buddhism calls *gom*, a term for meditation, a "getting used to," a "growing accustomed" (75).

"If the first phase of my work on ecology was ecology without Nature," writes Morton (as if written as an advert for *this* exact type of appropriation), "this [project is about] *ecology without matter*" (150). "And just to cap it all," he remarks earlier, "we need *ecology without the present*" (92). This need to embrace the absence of *the present*, for ecology, comes as a critique of the pop-popular contemporary environmental presentism movement, which places emphasis on the immediacy of Nature's need for us to, (ahem), "be here, act now, and think later." This new-age distraction of "presentist thought" that pervades America is precisely one of the problems he addresses, along side the commonplace illusion of *sustainability*, or the contradictory (and paradoxical) slogan itself, "sustainable capitalism." Said most simply: "Living in the now"—"*the present*"—has not served ecology well (93)—illuminated best by acknowledging that the present, once one attempts to grasp it, is nowhere to be found (92). Immediately after this "nonspatial rift between future and past"—essence and appearance—is understood, one uncovers quite effortlessly that the now doesn't exist (93). "Time is not a series of now-points," writes Morton, "but rather a sickening surge, like crosstown traffic, or an ocean of many currents" (93). *Hyperobjects* is just that: a comparative non-linear surging-jam of a quasi-sans-now ontology. Like being amid the tides. The "*now*" is an ungraspable advancement of essence (the past) devouring appearance (the future), a *Rifting* of ontological genera (93). What Morton is suggesting is an aikido of sorts—"an *exaggeration* of the lack of a true now" (93); for "what is called *nowness* in Buddhist contemplative theory is not a point or even a bubble, no matter how wide, but a fluid, uncanny washing back and forth like a current and an undertow" (93). This is a kind of aesthetic liminality, a threshold of incessantly becoming *not-now*. Or as Tibetan Buddhism puts it, all of reality is a *bardo*, a "between," or, "rather a series of bardos" (54). Akin to Kantian *beauty*, which "seems to float 'between' me and object" (145), this nonspatial rift is the place of the hyperobject, the space we call "home." The abyss. As home is never home as such, as it is always relational and within and amidst other homes, for "home is a multiple and endless series of nested Russian dolls," homes within homes within homes (128). Being home and somewhat homeless amid this worldless world may appear difficult to consume at times, and certainly difficult to become accustomed to at first. And so "in a reality without a home, without world, what this study calls *objects* are what constitute reality" (116). But then there it is, on your best friend's bedroom wall all throughout the middle and high school years: the recognizable (and Carl Sagan endorsed) image of the Milky Way Galaxy, with a white arrow pointing to what is understood as our Solar System, with the white block letter caption reading, "YOU ARE HERE." And thus "home is purely 'sensual': it has to do with how an object finds itself inevitably on the inside of some other object" (117), or how a poster find itself on your walls, inside your room, inside your home, inside your solar system. And thus this "makes holism of any kind totally impossible," as "there is no top object [that gives all objects value and meaning] and no bottom object [to which they can be reduced], it means that we have a very strange situation in which there are more parts than there are wholes" (116). Jonah. Appropriation. Oblivion.

As there is no longer an "away" after the end of the world (109), there is no longer a way of not seeing the effects of hyperobjects, everywhere. "Out of sight is no longer out of mind," because, as Marx wrongly assumed, all that is solid *does not* melt into air, for it comes back as another pervasively oppressive form, as "hypersolidarity oozes back into the emptied space of capitalism" (115), and so too with *Hyperobjects*. The more one learns of global warming, writes Morton, "the more one realizes how pervasive it is" (28). And similarly, the more a reader learns of hyperobjects, the more he or she realizes its pervasiveness, and its uncanny strange strangeness, and its viscosity, and its nonlocality, and its temporal undulation, and its phasing, and its interobjectivity. And it's terrifying. Like a really, really, really contagiously terrifying sort of terrifying—"a sickening surge" of sorts. But then again, in the end, which had ended, "sincerity eats irony" (190), and I wonder with prodigious care: what about the human? Because this rifting surge of sorts is happening to humans, because humans are really real,

because humans are living on this world in this not-so-present-now, *now*—and then there you are again, amidst sincerity, being ironic. Gom. Gom. Gom.

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## **Kilcup, Karen L. *Fallen Forests: Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics in American Women's Environmental Writing, 1781-1924*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2013.**

Writing focused on the environment is often readily recognizable. However, environmental lessons, advice, and predictions have at times been overlooked or neglected, especially when they appear in the “hybrid genres and complicated rhetorical strategies” of 19<sup>th</sup> century American women writers (5). Karen L. Kilcup begins to address this gap in ecofeminist and ecocritical scholarship in her monograph *Fallen Forests: Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics in American Women's Environmental Writing, 1781-1924*. Analyzing several forms of writing, Kilcup teases out environmental concerns shared by nineteenth-century women of differing cultures and socioeconomic classes, concerns that often anticipate some of our 21<sup>st</sup>-century issues. By looking at 19<sup>th</sup> century women's writing, Kilcup states that her goal is to “enrich the three ecocritical modes that Cheryl Glotfelty has identified: considering representations, enlarging the tradition of American nature writing (here, environmental writing), and broadening its theoretical grounds” (5). Kilcup's endeavor is a success.

To achieve her goal, Kilcup argues that the works she examines use rhetorical devices and call upon biblical principles to persuade audiences of the importance of preserving the environment. Kilcup presents ecofeminist analyses of narratives, speeches, prose, poetry, travel writing, and advice writing of 19<sup>th</sup> century American women writers. The author claims that ecocriticism is present in the works included in her study, but it has been labeled as sentimentalism rather than rhetoric; Kilcup argues that this sentimentalism should be viewed as “emotional intelligence,” a type of intuition resulting from women's association with nature. Because of this association, the writers could anticipate some of today's environmental problems. The cause / effect predictions elevate the women's writing to rhetoric. Kilcup also analyzes the Christian references in the works she examines. Writers such as Lydia Sigourney and Harriet Jacobs frequently refer to Christian ideals as they focus on nature. By including the analysis of Christian elements, Kilcup reveals the biblical principles of stewardship that several 19<sup>th</sup> century women writers found important. From a feminist stance, Kilcup argues that some of the writers included in her study saw the beginning of environmental problems as the result of men with axes and saws exploiting nature for profit. This exploitation continues today.

Kilcup's carefully researched book begins with a brief history of Native American matrilineal culture, the resource wars waged by colonists, and the devastating results of those wars on the environment and on the Cherokee Nation. The second chapter, mostly devoted to travel writing, focuses on clear cutting forests. The third chapter analyzes the travel writings of female slaves and working-class women of various races. In the fourth chapter, Kilcup explores, through the advice writing of Celia Thaxter, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Pauline Hopkins, middle-class women's desire for respectability. The fifth chapter, focusing on environmental justice and “the ethics of displacement and

consumption" (268), features the writing of Sarah Winnemucca, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, and Zitkala-Sa. These writers explore the relationship of humans to nonhuman nature and wilderness to civilization. In "After Words," Kilcup, agreeing with several contemporary writers including Annie Dillard, Winona LaDuke, and Barbara Kingsolver, calls for her audience to try to reunite with nature and preserve what is left of it for physical as well as aesthetic health.

*Fallen Forests* is a fascinating look at the writing of 19<sup>th</sup> century American women who show concern for their environment and attempt to persuade people to respect it. Some of the writers may not have had environmental preservation as a goal or even a theme, but each of them interacted with or endured nature in various, often frightening ways, including losing their homes, being bitten by poisonous snakes, and squeezing their bodies into corsets. The diction is highly accessible, making the work suitable for the general public as well as for scholars. Potentially unfamiliar terms, such as "emotional intelligence" and "environmental justice," are defined early on, helping readers to follow Kilcup's argument.

*Fallen Forests* would be a great book with which to begin an academic or personal study on ecofeminist criticism. The work explains how specific historical, religious, political, and social elements are related to the environment. Kilcup's writing style is never heavy-handed. She even includes a bit of personal narrative that helps the reader feel connected to the argument. Kilcup has included some pertinent photos in her work, also increasing interest. She provides copious notes and an extensive list of bibliographical references. These two elements will aid in further research of this timely and important topic.

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**Mahapatra, Sitakant. *Rotations of Unending Time: Selected Poems of Sitakant Mahapatra*. Trans. Sura P. Rath and Mark Halperin. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2013.**

*Here is a place of disaffection  
Time before and time after  
In a dim light: neither daylight  
Investing form with lucid stillness  
Turning shadow into transient beauty  
With slow rotation suggesting permanence  
Nor darkness to purify the soul  
Emptying the sensual with deprivation  
Cleansing affection from the temporal. (T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton" Part-III)*

The poems of the Indian poet (Odia poet) Sitakant Mahapatra have been subjects of numerous anthologies, critical dialogues, and research monographs. The new volume of his translated poems

*Rotations of Unending Time* (2013) promises to preserve certain cultural tropes of Odisha and the charms of its unique landscape that are embodied in Mahapatra's verse. There is an added emphasis in the poems of this volume on the organic relationship between nature and human beings. While reading through these poems, one gets an instinctive feeling that temporality and the momentary nature of life and death form the core of this volume similar to the other volumes of Mahapatra's poems. As the lines quoted above from "Burnt Norton" celebrate the intersection between the temporal and the spatial, so *Rotations of Unending Time* also locates itself in the centrality of time and temporality. The mystic cadence of Mahapatra's verse, the aura of traditional knowledge systems, the mystery of the temporal, and the metaphysical quality of his writings have been a part of the critical discourse of those who have closely observed the evolution of his work. Critical studies on Mahapatra date back to the mid-twentieth century, when Prafulla C.Kar wrote one of the first essays on Mahapatra: "Poetry of Sitakant Mahapatra" in the Sahitya Akademi journal *Indian Literature*. In his analytical reflection into the poetry of Mahapatra, Kar writes: "He has not only assimilated the Western Cultural tradition, but also the richness of his own native culture which is deeply rooted in the metaphysical tradition. He combines both these traditions in poetry" (*Indian Literature* 44). Mahapatra has been addressed as the "Mythographer of Time" by Sura P. Rath and as the "Poet of Word and Time" by Namwar Singh. His works are invariably compared to his western predecessors like T. S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats, who, philosophically speaking, may also be called mythographers of time. However, the aspect that stands out as the unique characteristic of this new translation by Sura P. Rath and Mark Halperin is the emphasis on landscape, the space of place, and the eco-consciousness in these poems. I shall be focusing my discussion of this volume on these three aspects in this paper.

## The Poetics of Landscape

The archetypes of memory and myth that clearly imprint themselves in Mahapatra's poetic vision are encoded in the cultural and physical landscape of Odisha. It is difficult to claim that landscape writing is a conscious aesthetic technique used in these poems, but it will be perhaps appropriate to claim that these poems would not exist if separated from the physical landscape of the mountains, the valleys, and the villages of Odisha:

The bus packed with people like matchsticks in a box of matches, and the bumpy road,  
the ferry on the river Mahanadi,

hovering clouds, an unending drizzle,

brambles, the narrow way through the snail and crayfish filled

paddies;

dark by the time we get through and the journey is done.

I recall she would say, even Yama,

god of death, gets to our village late. (6)

In these poems, the emotions of people and their relationships with one another appear as if guided by their relationship to the markers of the land, the dimly lit temples of Odisha, and the lash of the first monsoon rains:

When I touch you, I sense gongs and bells  
from the temples in distant villages  
ringing the evening arati  
along my nerves,  
and hear the chanting  
of birds, homeward bound, flapping their white wings to announce the evening.  
When I touch you, the first rains of the monsoon drench  
and cover my childhood once again with the smell of wet earth... (16)

The significance of the landscape of Odisha, its intense visual appeal, the typical flora and fauna, the multiple rivers and mountains and their specific names, and the intense pictorial nature of these verses constitute their artistic expression. Aesthetic representation of the geographical landscape of Odisha becomes a significant aspect and an integral part of the translators' interpretation of the original poems of Mahapatra. Geographical and cultural markers are consciously explored and retained almost religiously by the translators. In the book *Landscape and Power* (1994), W.J.T. Mitchell elaborates the significance of landscape as the receptacle that holds both time and place:

... landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium... in which cultural meanings and values are encoded, whether they are put there by the physical transformation of a place in landscape, gardening or architecture, or found in a place formed, as we say by nature.... Landscape is already artifice in the moment of its beholding, long before it becomes the subject of pictorial representation. (14)

In *Rotations of Unending Time* too, landscape is power. Time and place, history and geography intersect in the poems, and it appears as though it is geography that determines the course of history, as though space calls for the movement of time in the poems. The culturally and historically loaded past of Odisha is posited against the capitalized and industrialized present of the land in these poems. The poet laments the "nothingness" of contemporary times that has drained Odisha of its cultural history. However, in addition to the cultural history, this process of rapid capitalization and industrialization has also destroyed the geographical and natural heritage by not taking into account the ecological needs of the land. The changes in the course of time match with the spiritual and physical depletion of the pictorial landscape of Odisha. "Land" itself is a loaded term, having both a material presence and an emotive and affective significance. It gives a sense of both longing and belonging in addition to being a geopolitical marker. In these poems, land becomes the archetypal symbol of a collective transformation of the old order into new ones:



All the empires:

the Kesari, Bhauma, Ganga, Ashoka, Kharavela, bound by asphalt irritation and the  
barbed wire, the voices of a million words

and cackling of birds, float or sink like rotten corpses

in the dazzling water,

the rivers of sound in the dark wombs of microphones;

and the gray newsprint on the conveyor belt

disappear into nothingness. ("Bhubaneswar 1972" 36)

The visual nature of these poems and the pictorial quality are intuitively woven into the framework of memory, longing, and recollections. Places and geographical markers in *Rotations of Unending Time* become an integral part of the internal journey from "being" to "becoming" in the individual, as well as of the journey from the individual to the collective. The possibility of a "return" to the "pure," unsullied bonds of human beings in their natural habitat becomes almost a kind of unrequited love and a pilgrimage in the poems. The gap between the home and the world widens in these poems as a result of the movement of individuals from the quietude of their homes and villages to the competitive, ruthless marketplace of professions and expectations of the world. The affection towards land and the landscape is often expressed through an attachment towards the language of that land—Odia in the case of Mahapatra's poems. The translators have carefully retained some of the original Odia words in the English trans-creation of these poems. For instance, the word "Pahandi" is retained in the poem "Relationship." The word immediately connects the reader with the cultural landscape of Odisha, to the significant geographical marker of the Jagannath temple in Puri, the important trope of the grand narrative of Odia culture. The slow, steady, rhythmic journey of the deities down the twenty two steps of the temple at Puri (called "Pahandi" in Odia) is retained in the English version. This journey of the deities down the stairs symbolizes the rhythmic, slow movement of time in the landscape of Odisha. This translation appears without italicizing the Odia words and without a glossary/note as if to reiterate the living, palpable, organic bond that land shares with language:

You return to the wet consolation of Gita chants, like the Lord's journey, the Pahandi,  
down the steps twice from the veranda to the room

and from the room to the open veranda;

and I return to see my market

of torn and grimy paper, attending to the myriad, meaningless affairs of the king's  
palace. ("Relationship" 5)

## **Space/Place Dynamics**

The private space of the mind of an individual with emotions of love, death, sadness, guilt, anger and longing are explored with places and the memories that they evoke in this volume. The bank of Chitrotpala river is a recurrent trope in some of the poems. The river appears as an evocative witness to a longing for a “return” from the bustle of urban life to a place called “home” that has the reassuring presence of a protective cocoon. The villages described in the poem and the river Chitrotpala are not just places on the geographical map of Odisha; they are an indivisible part of an individual and cultural landscape.

The name of the river Chitrotpala is a metaphor for a unique cultural identity in this volume of poems. The recurrent images of this particular river evoke a sense of lyrical storytelling, of people and places and civilizations that have sprung up and melted away on the banks of Chitrotpala. It is difficult to exactly define a specific “Odisha” and “Odia” identity that emerges in Mahapatra’s poems with my own limited set of critical and linguistic understanding of translational problems. However, it appears as though there is a typical Odisha with unique characteristics and a distinct geo-cultural identity that emerges in the panorama of these poetic landscapes. The recurrent motif of Chitrotpala is a witness to the uniqueness of this identity:

Should I tell you that even now the river Chitrotpala, lured  
by the fragrance of ketaki flowers,  
veers toward the saint’s samadhi ? Your time resembled any other:  
the teacher sits in the crumbling schoolhouse, cane in hand and the commotion of  
children stretches all the way to the clouds;  
the afternoon ends. The father walking ahead, small son behind,  
rustles the thistles, the dead snails and crabs... (“Relationship” 3)

The river remains a mute spectator to the movement of time and to the spectres of history.

Looking ahead, as in a dream,  
you might survey the lines of henna  
sprouting along the banks of Chitrotpala— you would probably walk that village path  
that has seen epics and heard epics, countless, depthless, and without rest.  
 (“Relationship” 4)

The soil finds a romantic longing in the language itself, and the defiance of the poet to write in any other language except Odia speaks volumes about the difficulty that the translators may have encountered while translating from the Odia language into English.

An intense sense of individual space and geographical place go into defining the place-space dualities in the anthology. In the poems, places are a part of people and vice versa. The terrains are populated by memories and relationships that an individual shares with the land and the landscape through a father, a grandfather, grandmother, mother, a friend or beloved. Landscapes are associated with people and their presence. Spaces of memory and personal recollections create ripples in the mind of the poet and bring a spiritual connection to the place. For example, the Swargadwara of Puri in the poem "Father, Heaven" in this volume, is not merely treated as a cremation ground; it is rather an archetypal symbol of life and death, of attachment and detachment, of connection and dissociation. The poet conjoins the personal space of the individual's loss of a father or a close kin to the larger spiritual sadness and deprecation of the sands of Puri beach:

On the wet sands of Puri beach, after handing him over  
to the shaking hands of the god of cremation,  
afterward, I do not know where he went.  
If someone does, it must be one of those trickster gods in heaven.

("Father Heaven" 11)

The spatio-temporal relationship between eternity in the form of a spiritual bond to the land and the changes in the pages of history is explored by the poet in these poems. Life, death, birth, and regeneration are connected with the temporal changes of the land and the landscape.

## Ecopoetics

The interplay of a deep ecological consciousness and the changing grounds of the relationship between human beings and nature is explored in all the poems in *Rotations of Unending Time*. The translators have captured with a deep sensitivity the changing of the rural, idyllic, pictorial Odisha into a bustling, urbane, modernized, mechanized state in Mahapatra's poems. One could discern an almost wishful longing in these poems for eternity, to retain the "romantic," idyllic charms of a slow-moving village life.

Whatever else the infinite is, the infinite is the keeping of plowshares and gazing  
straight ahead through a curtain of rain.

Taking one step in mud at a time is  
the infinite, including  
summer, rains, autumn and winter.... ("Our Village" 30)

These poems evoke the Heideggerian notion of “dwelling” from his seminal work *Being and Time* (1927) and later explored in greater detail in Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking.” The idea of dwelling as a “poetic habitation” in Heidegger, combines a sense of mystery with a sense of heritage in human habitation, and propagates the idea of living as close to nature as possible. While certain thinkers have called the idea of “dwelling” regressive and anti-development, from the vantage point of the extreme urbanization and “technologization” of the twenty-first century, one cannot resist finding a sense of prophecy and an urgent appeal to save the earth in both Heidegger and in the poems of Mahapatra. The eco-poetics of these poems come from an intense respect for nature and human dwellings organically connected to their natural habitat. One might use the metaphor that Nature is the ultimate temple or place of worship in Mahapatra’s poems. Human beings “dwell” in this large prayer-house of nature.

In this volume of poems the “mystery” of dwelling is connected with the folkloric character of the landscape in the poems.

Silently, throughout the night,  
the stars and dewdrops fall  
into the apsara’s navel.  
On the steps of the temple pond,  
the dirty, double-stitched clothing  
of history and tradition  
are washed  
on the broad back of Ganesh,  
god of learning. (“The Ruined Temple”, 37)

*Rotations of Unending Time* promises to be an assortment of poems that reflect a deep engagement with nature as well as culture. The poet and the translators’ creative dilemma of treating the dualities between the savage and the civilized, between nature and human beings, between urban and rural, enhance the emotive and cognitive appeal of these poems. Thus, an eco-sensitive approach towards land and landscape define the uniqueness of this poetic volume.

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