

Ecopoetics Groundwork

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0.1 example skull with proshap.py

Ecopoetics Groundwork is a conceptual primer for the transdisciplinary enterprise of ecopoetics. Primarily relying on examples rather than abstractions as such, the book aims to do the brain-rewiring required to ground ecopoetics in an anarchist philosophy of open systems. It explores reparative practices that work on and through language and its kinship with complex and evolving ecologies, drawing on the Kabbalistic practice of tikkun (re-pair), which links activism with more arcane work of meaning-making. Starting from Wittgenstein's mandate that the whole of language has to be thoroughly plowed up, groundwork refers to an overturning and opening up of conceptual and imagistic grammar that deconstructs modernist dualities among nature, humanity, and divinity. After this introduction, the chapters follow ecopoetics through the realms of language (two), visual art and architecture (three), science (four), religion and mysticism (five), and poetry (six), accompanied by key poetic texts at every turn.

0.2 example faceshape with proshap.py

I begin with a bit of a
poem, the way a rabbi or preacher would
start with a biblical verse. Today's sermon is drawn
from Wallace Stevens' massively canonical poem **The Idea**
of Order at Key West, in which two men philosophize as they
watch and listen to a woman singing at the seaside, and they are struck
by the sense that. . . there was no world for her Except the one she sang
and, singing, made. The men are trying to come to terms with what, if any-
thing, the singing (standing for art, language and consciousness generally) does
to the world— its relationship with the sea, and the question
of who dances to whose tune. As in Stevens' poem
Anecdote of the Jar, in which the simple place-
ment of an empty glass jar on a hill has somehow orga-
nized the wilder- ness around it and has taken **dominion**
everywhere, the ef- fect of her singing is both vanishingly subtle
and total; the sea and the night sky are harmonized, enchanted, and thrown into mystical per-
spective by it. What can be the effect of human meaning-making on the world, and how do
language and art participate in shaping it? An open, high-stakes question for us in the 21st
century, and for ecopoetics. Part of the point of Stevens' poem seems to be how philosophy—
which Stevens codes as masculine— falls short of art— which he codes as feminine— but the poet,
by folding philosophy back into art in the form of the poem, manages to perform a transcend-
ing synthesis. It's an old Wordsworthian move: a kind of dialectical masculinism, starting
with the bi- nary distinc-
tions of cul- ture and nature, singer and sea. The poet is the woman singing and
the men phi- losophizing. Or does he attribute this synthesis to the singer?
It's hard to tell. The point of **no world for her** / **Except the**
one she sang seems to be that conscious- ness and lan-
guage alienate us from the natural
world (we are **an unhappy people**
in a happy world as Stevens put it
elsewhere) and we are thus obliged to make
our own world. If singing were a mere elaboration of the
rhythms of human breathing, it would remain a sibling phe-
nomenon with the waves, a **heaving speech of**
air, a summer sound / Repeated in
a summer without end,