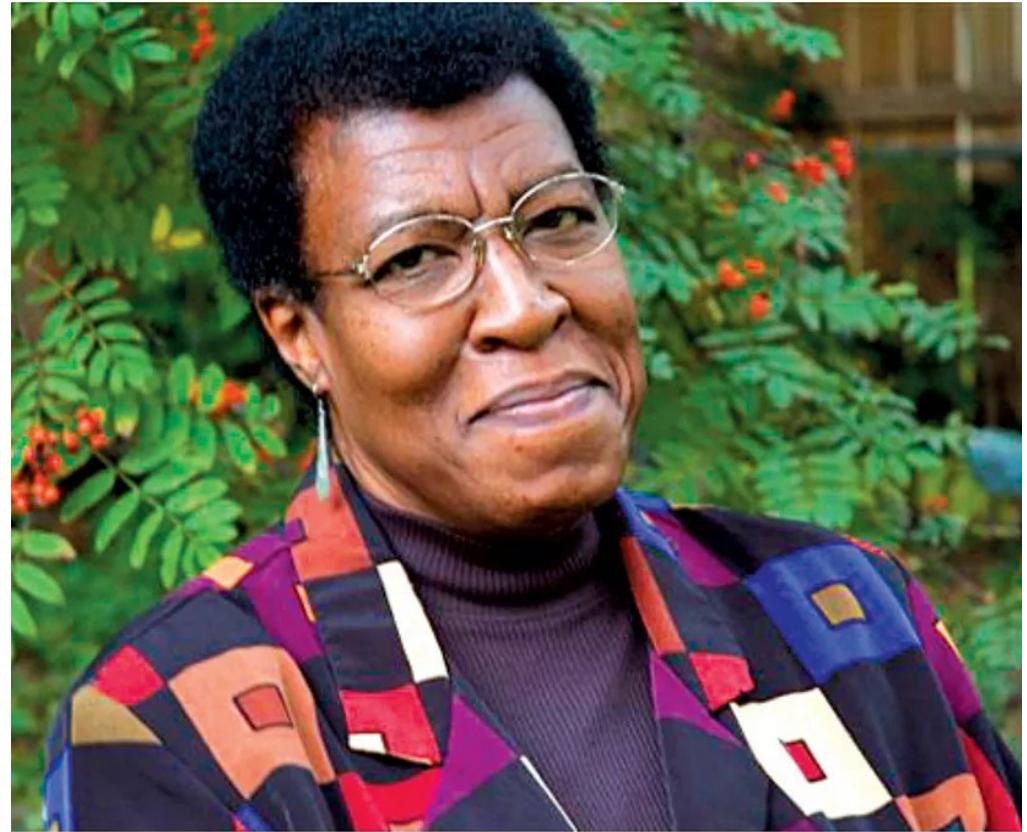


A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground is filled with dark, textured tree trunks and branches. In the background, more trees rise against a bright, hazy sky.

Welcome to ENGL133
Imagining Nature



Palisades Fire, January 2025



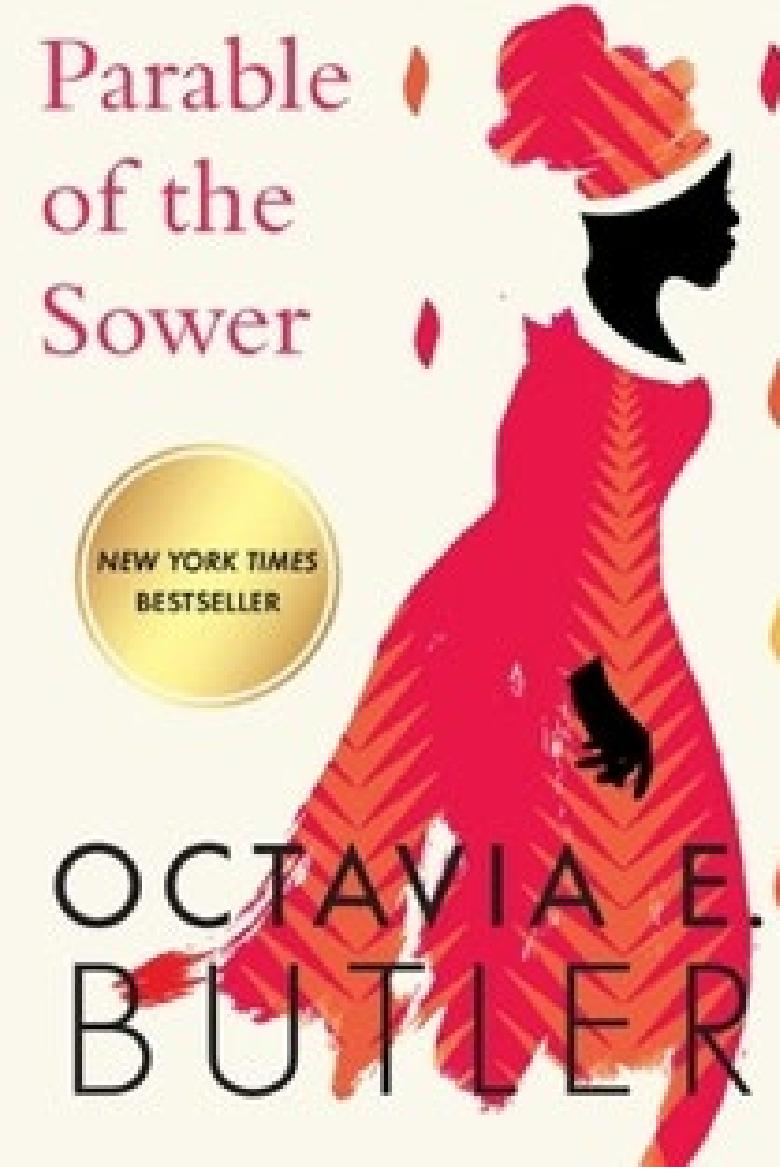
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 1993.

FEATURING A NEW FOREWORD BY ACCLAIMED ACTOR AND AUTHOR LEVAR BURTON

Parable of the Sower



OCTAVIA E.
BUTLER

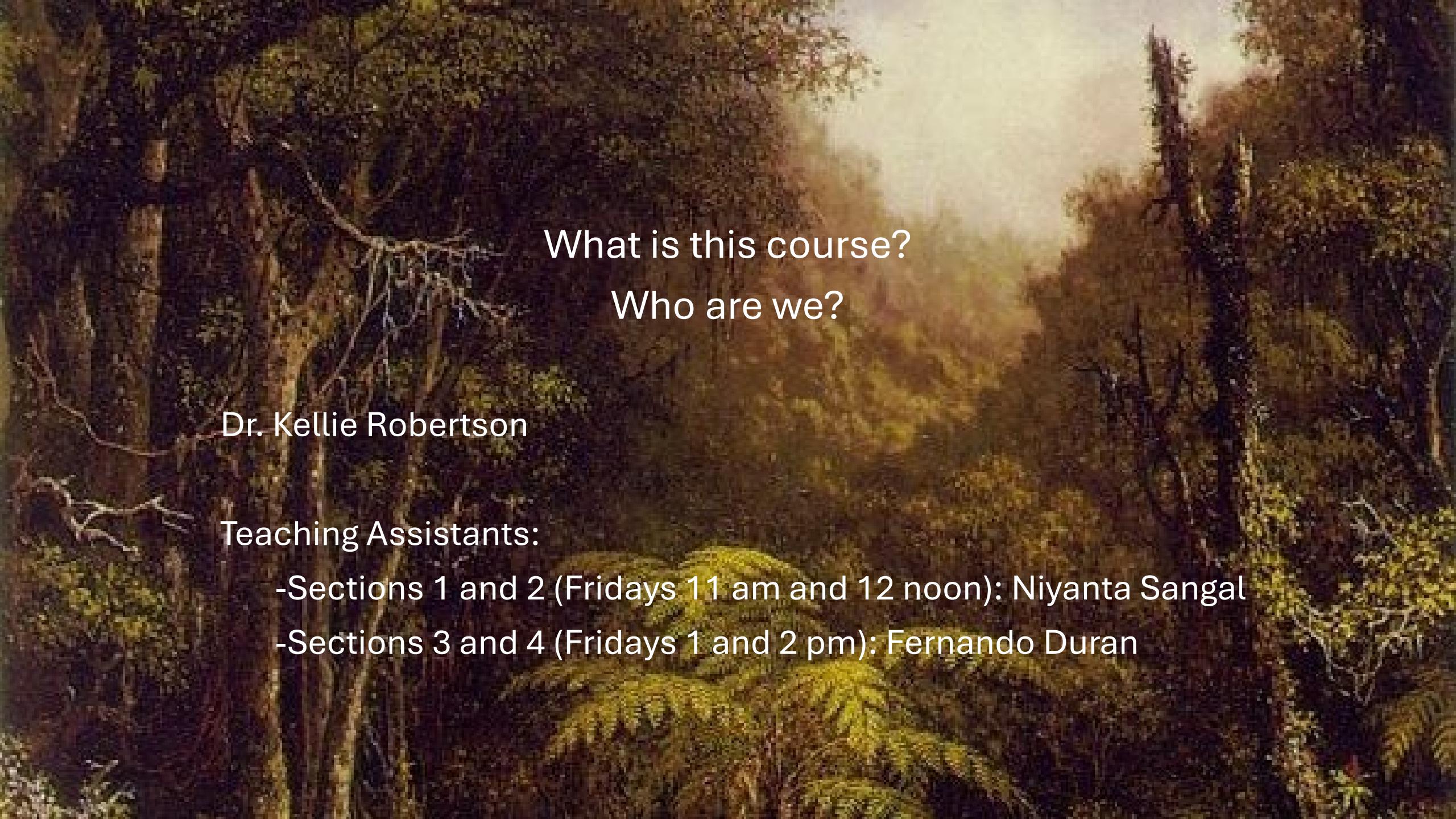


“February 1, 2025.

There’s a fire today...again. This time it’s big. It’s burning a lot of houses. People are running for their lives.”

-Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower* (1993)

Never
TRIED
TO TELL US

The background of the slide is a photograph of a forest. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of tall evergreen trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The colors are rich greens and yellows.

What is this course?
Who are we?

Dr. Kellie Robertson

Teaching Assistants:

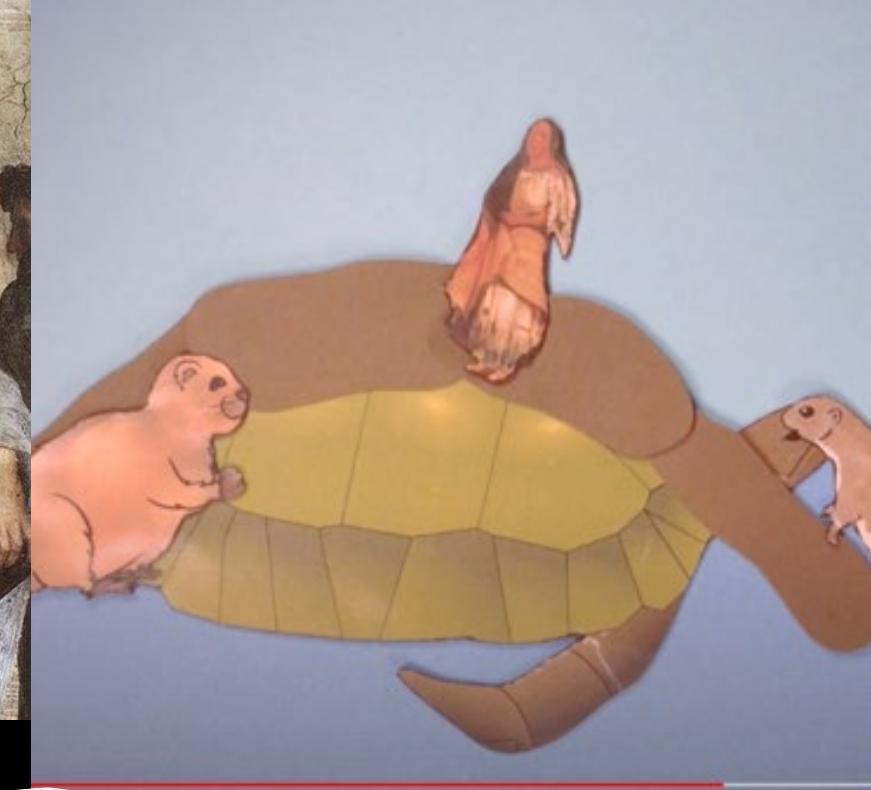
- Sections 1 and 2 (Fridays 11 am and 12 noon): Niyanta Sangal
- Sections 3 and 4 (Fridays 1 and 2 pm): Fernando Duran



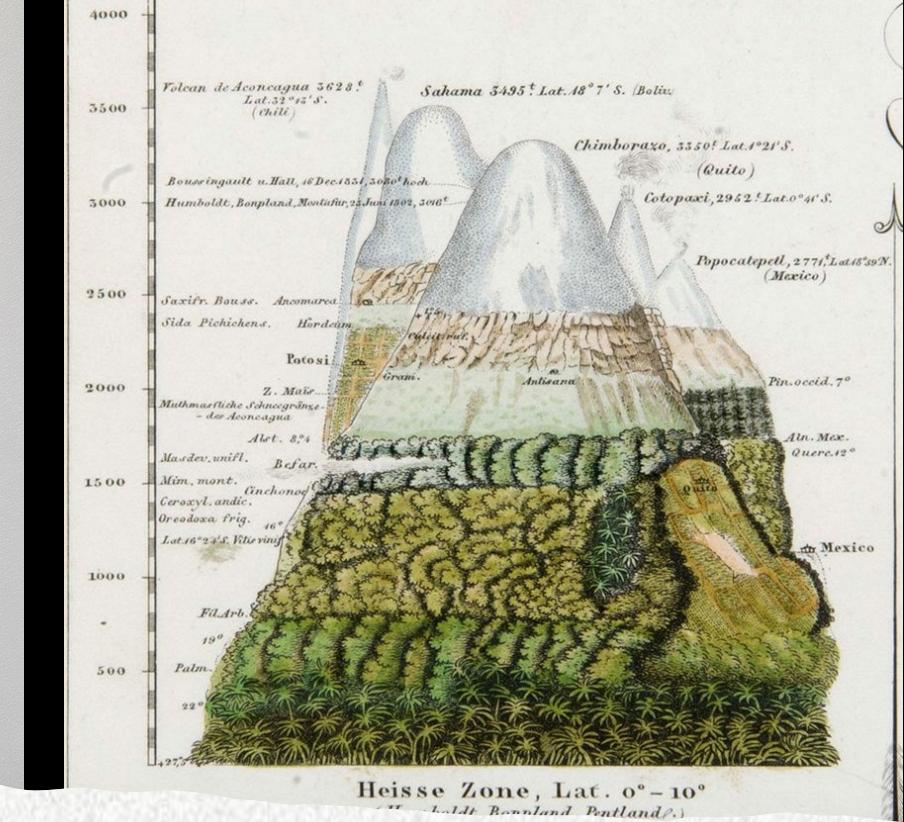
What's the point? So what?

The long history of environmental writing in the
Euro-American context from -0 to 2025

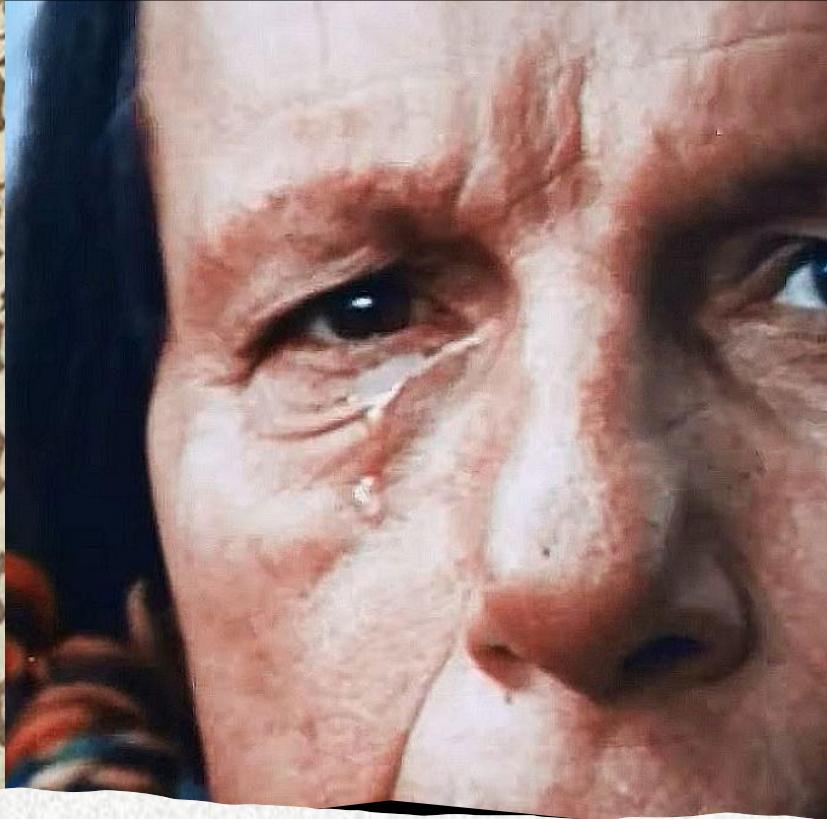
STEEN SPRING RACHEL



What counts as environmental literature? As ecocriticism?



How do we talk meaningfully about representations of nature in a comparative context? What kinds of ecological knowledges are produced and how are they valued?



Most importantly: Who gets to speak for nature? Who doesn't get to speak?

A photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating bright highlights and shadows. The foreground shows the dark trunks and branches of the trees.

What will you be asked to do? What will we read?

<https://umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432>

UMD Land Acknowledgement

Every community owes its existence and strength to the generations before them, around the world, who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy into making the history that led to this moment.

Truth and acknowledgement are critical in building mutual respect and connections across all barriers of heritage and difference.

So, we acknowledge the truth that is often buried: We are on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway People, who are the ancestral stewards of this sacred land. It is their historical responsibility to advocate for the four-legged, the winged, those that crawl and those that swim. They remind us that clean air and pristine waterways are essential to all life.

This Land Acknowledgement is a vocal reminder for each of us as two-leggeds to ensure our physical environment is in better condition than what we inherited, for the health and prosperity of future generations.

Keep America Beautiful PSA (Earth Day 1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0sxwGlTLWw>



The so-called “Crying Indian” ad was released in 1971 for the Keep America Beautiful campaign.

- Who created it?
- Who speaks for Nature?
- What's the message behind the message?
- What happened to the ad?

The Stereotype of the Ecological Indian

- Europeans created the “noble vs ignoble Indian” images from the 15th c.
- the Crying Indian ad plays on the noble savage idea transmuted into the “ecological Indian”

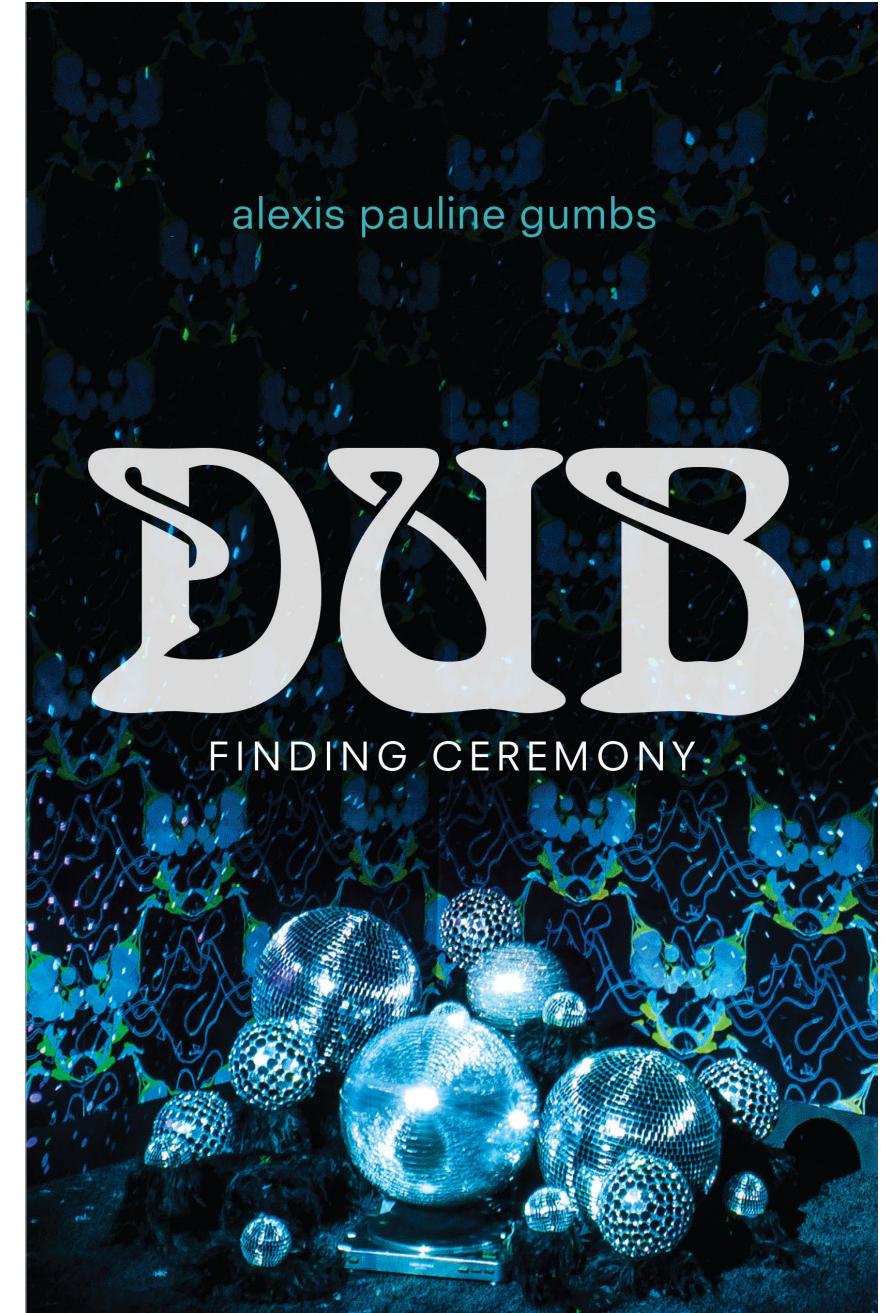
“But what does it mean to say that Indians are ecologists or conservationists? Because they are the most consistent attributes of the image of the Ecological Indian, the concepts should be defined with care. Embedded in them are certain cultural premises about the meanings of humanity, nature, animate, inanimate, system, balance, and harmony, and their suitability for indigenous American Indian thought or behavior should not be taken as a given.”

-Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (22)

“Request”

we would like it if you wrote us poems. we would like it if you wrote us long life sentences. we would like it if you broke sentences and gave us more life than you or we were told could be contained. we would like it if you remained. we would like it if you showed up every day. we would like it if you drank water. we would love it if you would turn off your phone. we would sincerely appreciate it if you stopped pretending to be alone.

-Alexis Pauline Gumbs, from *Dub: Finding Ceremony* (2020)



A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured trunks and branches of several trees. In the background, more trees rise against a bright, hazy sky.

1. What is Nature? Green Children, Environment, and Nature

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Welcome back to ENGL133!

Course stuff:

- How to take notes in this class?
- What will the exams be like?
- First assignment: due Friday 2/7
- What's my section? Who's my TA?

Section 1: F 11:00 am – 11:50 am (0101)

Section 2: F 12:00 pm – 12:50 pm (0102)

TA: Niyanta Sangal

Section 3: F 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm (0103)

Section 4: F 2:00 pm-2:50 pm (0104)

TA: Fernando Duran

Tiny Ecologies Assignment 1

Format: Discussion Post

Length: 300-500 words

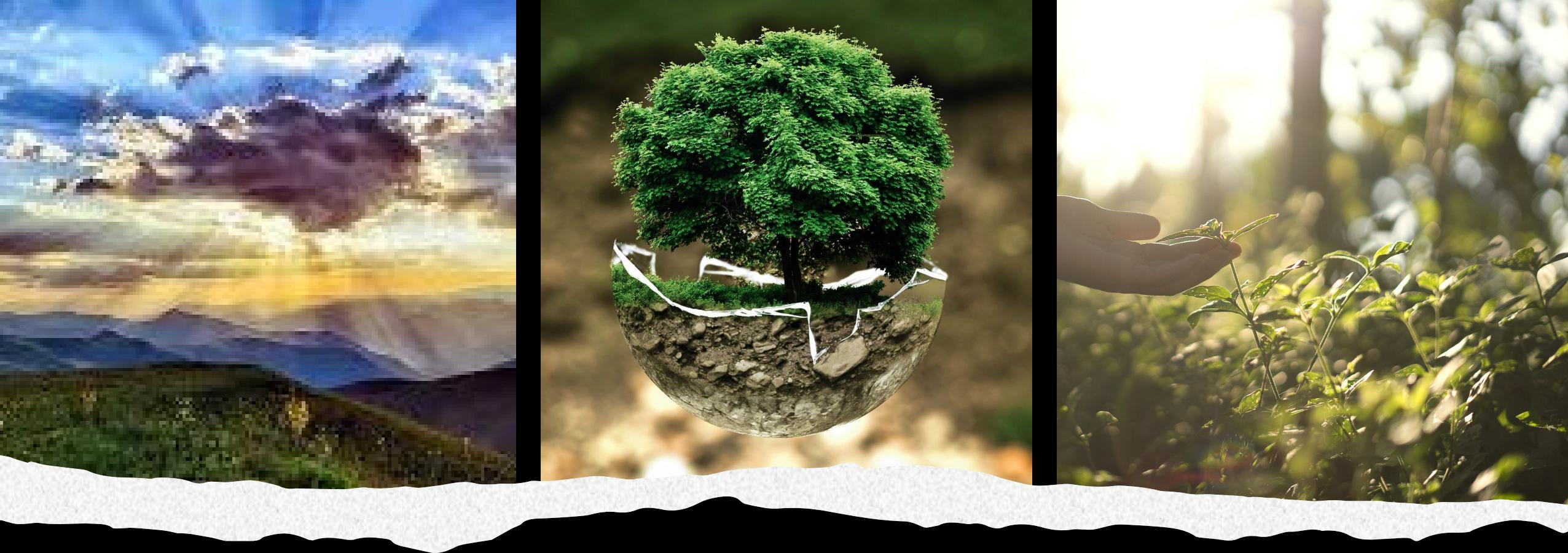
Goal: A detailed description of your ecological place.

At the beginning of the term, you should choose a local spot near you that you pass most days near your home or on your way to school or work. This can be anything from a single tree and its surroundings, a fountain and nearby plantings, or even a pot with weeds growing out of it. You'll be asked to observe this spot over the course of the term and it will be the basis for a series of short writing assignments. Dwell in your chosen place often and record its many moods and changes; this record could take the form of a written journal or photos or whatever best preserves your thoughts.

This is an exercise in sustained attention to our local environment so choose a place that is worthy of your attention. You'll have a chance to think about the many forces that have historically shaped that spot and how human and beyond-human visitors use it on a regular basis.

Tiny Ecologies Assignment #1: Visit your place several times over the course of the week. Observe it at different times of the day if possible. Then write a detailed description of it. Think of this as an introduction: introduce your reader to your spot. Include a description of its inhabitants (human, animal, vegetable, mineral, etc). Bring the place alive through concrete and vivid language. Help your reader really see, hear, touch, and experience the place through your writing. It's okay if you don't know the names of all of these inhabitants; just describe them. Give as much detail as possible alongside an explanation of how you interact with the place or why you choose it.

You also have the option of composing this description as a poem if you prefer. The format is up to you.



Today's lecture:

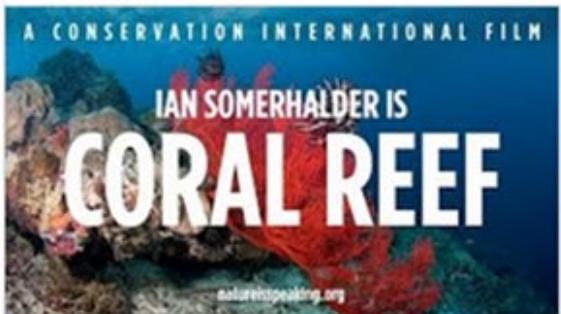
- What's the difference between nature and environment?
- Why is defining nature so complex?
- How were the categories 'natural' and 'unnatural' used in the European Middle Ages (and how is this legacy still with us today)?

**IN FOCUS**

Africa Sustainable Transport Forum
1st Ministerial and Experts Conference on
Sustainable Transport in Africa
October 28-30, 2014, Nairobi

UNEP NEWS

Governments Commit to Significant Funding Increase and Accelerated Action to Achieve Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Nature Is Speaking - Ian Somerhalder is Coral Reef | Conservation International (CI)

- H.E. President Kenyatta of Kenya and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Witness Adoption of New Plan to Set in Motion Africa's Sustainable Transport Transition
- Governments Commit to Significant Funding Increase and Accelerated Action to Achieve Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development
- IPCC Launches Full Working Group II Report

ASK AN EXPERT**Michael Stanley-Jones**

Topic: How caring well for the environment and natural resources can help lift communities out of poverty

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative



Rwanda

Rwanda: Greening policies and villages for poverty reduction

VIDEOS



United States Environmental Protection Agency

[Search](#)[Learn the Issues](#)[Science & Technology](#)[Laws & Regulations](#)[About EPA](#)[About Administrator McCarthy](#)**Children's Health Month****Children's Health Month****Schools and Children's Health****Mercury Emissions and Children****Lead Exposure and Children****Happy Energy Star Day!****0**

No level of lead has been identified as safe. It's found in soil, old paint, and some household products. Exposure can lower intelligence, attention span, and growth.

[**LEARN MORE**](#)**NEWS**

- Rebates to Reduce Diesel School Bus Emissions
- Forty-Two Student Teams Get P3 Grants to Solve Environmental Problems

PHOTOS**BLOG**

[ENERGY STAR Day: The Power of the Little Blue Label](#)

[200 billion dollars in savings](#)



Welcome to ENST!

The Department of Environmental Science and Technology's primary mission is to educate students on the fundamentals of environmental science, while instilling a deep fascination and intellectual capacity to work in their chosen area of specialization. When our students graduate, we want them to be top-notch environmental stewards with a broad framework from which they can advance professionally, personally and socially.

Learn more!



Nature vs. Environment: What is in an etymology?

- etymology: from the Latin *nātūra* ‘birth’
- all of the following meanings appear in Middle English:

- constitution
- character
- the creative power governing the world
- the physical world itself
- the natural course of things
- the genitals or semen

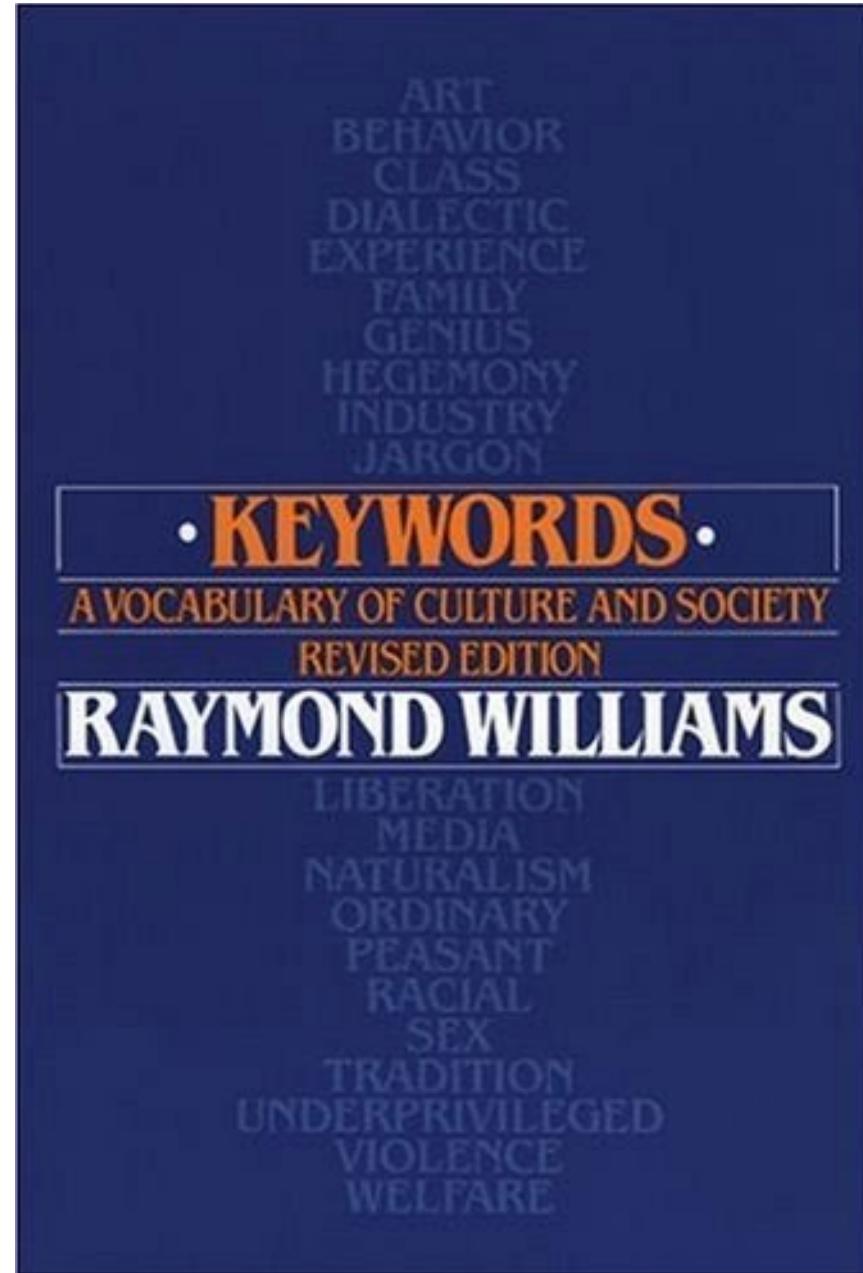
“Nature is so called because it causes something to be born, for it has the power of engendering and creating. Some people say that this is God, by whom all things have been created and exist.”

-Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*

- etymology: from the Medieval French verb ‘environner’ ‘to surround’
- Oxford English Dictionary notes that its primary meaning as ‘the area surrounding a place or a thing’ does not appear until the eighteenth century
- Environment as a synonym for “the natural world or physical surroundings in general” is even later, not attested until the twentieth century.
- ‘environment’ and its cognate forms have a wider semantic range today than nature and its cognates. ‘Environment’ encompasses the built as well as the natural landscapes

Raymond Williams, “Nature”
from *Keywords: A Vocabulary of
Culture and Society*

Why, according to Williams, is
nature the “most complex word”
in the English language?



Williams, “Nature”

How does the Western European figure of Nature the goddess evolve?

- personification as medieval queen
- tensions between the idea of Nature and a monotheistic God
- Nature as absolute monarch vs divine deputy—to what extent is she independent from her creator?

How do ideas about nature evolve in response to politics and historical situations?

- In 17th c. change from an absolute to a constitutional monarch (Scientific Revolution)
- “Laws of nature”
- Personified in 18th and 19th c. as a constitutional lawyer
- From the late 18th c. nature associated with ‘goodness and innocence’—i.e. in Romantic poetry (nature poetry)
 - This leads to a contrast between nature meaning ‘what man has not made’
- In 19th c. nature becomes the “selective breeder”—why?
 - Darwin, On the Origin of Species
 - Nature’s laws reduced to a single law: “the laws of survival and extinction”

In-class Writing Exercise:

How could we extend Williams' discussion since the 1970s? What other metaphors or images for nature are dominant today?

Please think alone. Make sure your writing has your name and section number on it. This will be turned in at the end of class in hard copy.

Take 3 minutes to answer any **one** of the following—you need not answer all of them:

1. What does nature look like today? What analogies do we use to describe nature? What do we compare nature to?
2. Who speaks for nature in the modern world? What images of nature do we get in media, movies, on the web, in your community, or where you live?

(Make sure you know what section you are signed up for on Friday so that your answer doesn't go astray).

The Green Children of Woolpit

- William of Newburgh, *History of English Affairs (Historia rerum anglicarum)* (ca. 1198)
 - -William was a member of the Augustinian friars at Newburgh Priory in the English Midlands
 - -one of the most important and well-respected historians of the 12th c.
 - -what was history or ‘historia’?
- In William, the story of the Green Children appears in a list of miraculous happenings (*mira*) where it is followed by examples of natural wonders and *maleficia* (malicious happenings attributed to the devil): two dogs in a rock; a frog with a gold chain around its neck in a rock; a gold cup from a fairy feast



St. Mary's, Woolpit



William's account of the Green Children

- what is the significance of where they are found?
- what is the significance of the description of their country?
- what is the significance of their skin color?



Green Man, Westminster Abbey. London.



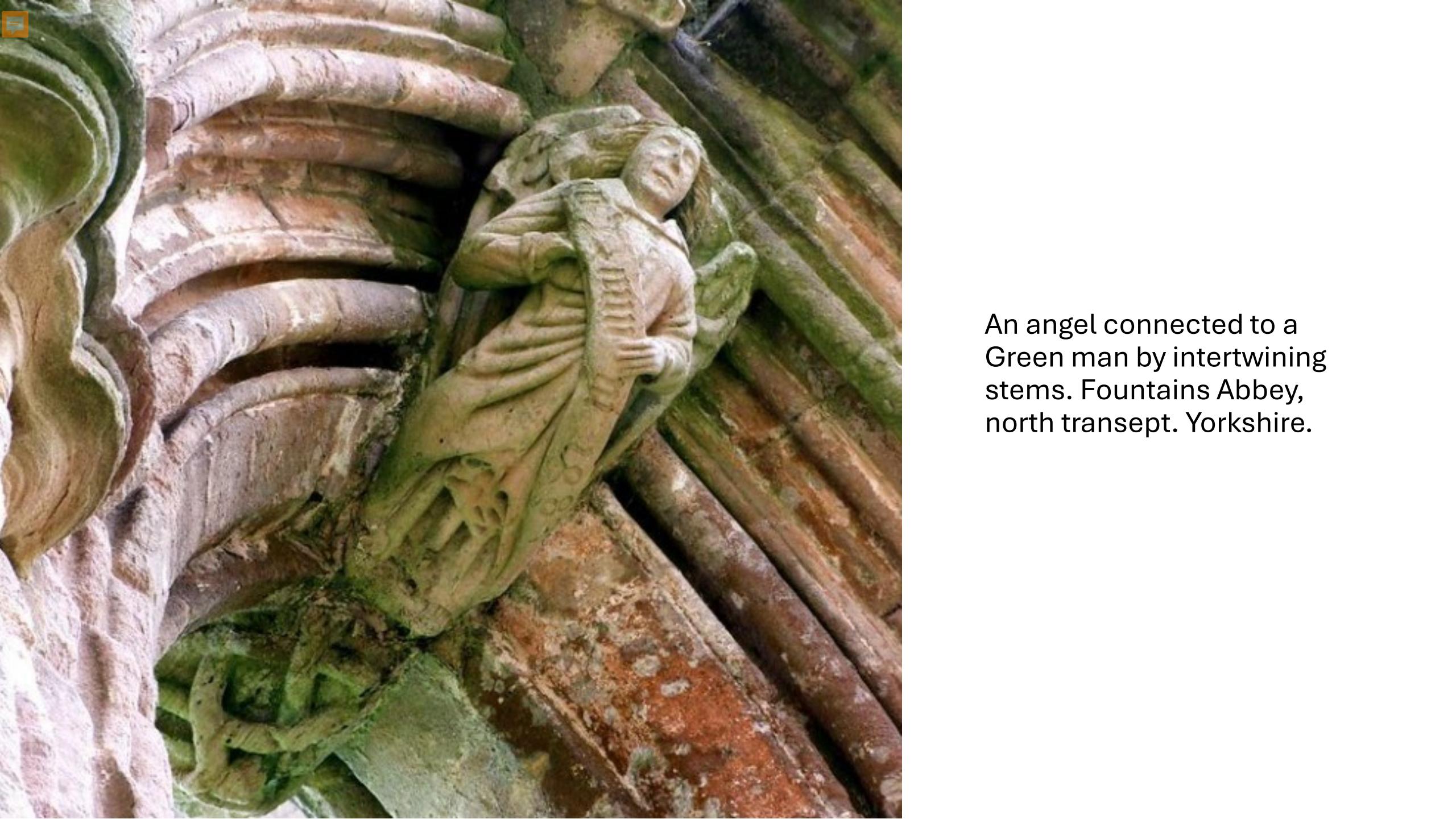
Cloister roof boss, Norwich Cathedral. East Anglia.



Green man carving. Misericord.

Green Man carving. Fountains
Abbey, Yorkshire. Apex of arch on
the east wall of the main abbey
ruin. Possibly added in 19th c.





An angel connected to a Green man by intertwining stems. Fountains Abbey, north transept. Yorkshire.

- How are the green children assimilated into the human community of Woolpit?
- Why does the boy die but not the girl?
- What view of the relation of human to the natural world is implicit in William's account?
 - their appearance is "unnatural"--the Latin word William uses for unnatural is "prodigiosum"
 - nature is a source of wonder so that humans will marvel at creation
 - creation is the domain of God alone and not magic or devilry who can only pretend to create
 - William's conclusion about the children:

"But an explanation of the green children who are said to have come forth from the earth is more puzzling; the frailty of our intelligence is quite incapable of unearthing this."
- What is the ultimate moral of the Green Children story for William?

Ending slide:

Commitment

By Alexis Pauline Gumbs

we promise to wake you up if we think you won't get the point of the dream. we promise to show up if you show up. every day. we promise to make you feel sick when you lie to yourself. we promise to let love through if it's love you came to do. we promise to make time flexible if you give us all your time. we promise to think of you more often than you think of us. we promise to remember you when you forget. we promise to be wherever and in everything you haven't noticed yet. we promise to be we, even one by one. we promise to outsmart your mind. we promise to overlove your heart. we promise to echo over your voice. we promise you everything. everything. all we ask.

A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall evergreen trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured bark of a tree trunk.

2. Indigenous Native American Creation Stories and Cosmogonies

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Cosmogony=story about the beginning of the universe, scientifically and mytically

Etymology: From Ancient Greek *κοσμέω* (kosméō) ‘to order, to arrange’ or ‘to adorn’ and genesis ‘birth’

Vs. cosmology=the study of the structure of the present universe

Creation story=story about the origins of life, human and beyond the human
-A subset of cosmogony

‘Indigenous’: from the Latin ‘indigena’: sprung from the land, native

Indigenous North American Creation Stories and Cosmogonies: Sources, Archive, Terminology, Methodology

Sources

Orature= "oral" + "literature"

-verbal art that is passed down through generations and that may, at some point, get written down

-exs. the Indigenous creation stories we read for today, *Beowulf*, the Homer's *Iliad* or anything that may have been sung or spoken before being written down

-elaborated on in the work of the Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Globalectics : Theory and the Politics of Knowing*

"Orature is the great legacy of African life and languages" (126)

"Each performance was a new imaginative creation" (110-11)

Sources

Orality and Literacy

Plato's argument against writing things down (put in the mouth of the character of Socrates):

"For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise. ...

You know, Phaedrus, that is the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly correspond to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive. But if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words. They seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say from a desire to be instructed they go on telling just the same thing forever."

-Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c-275b

-Plato's argument against writing: destroys memory,, makes the ignorant appear wise, gets rid of face-to-face interaction and dialogue

-the relation between oral literature and written literature is not necessarily teleological/linear

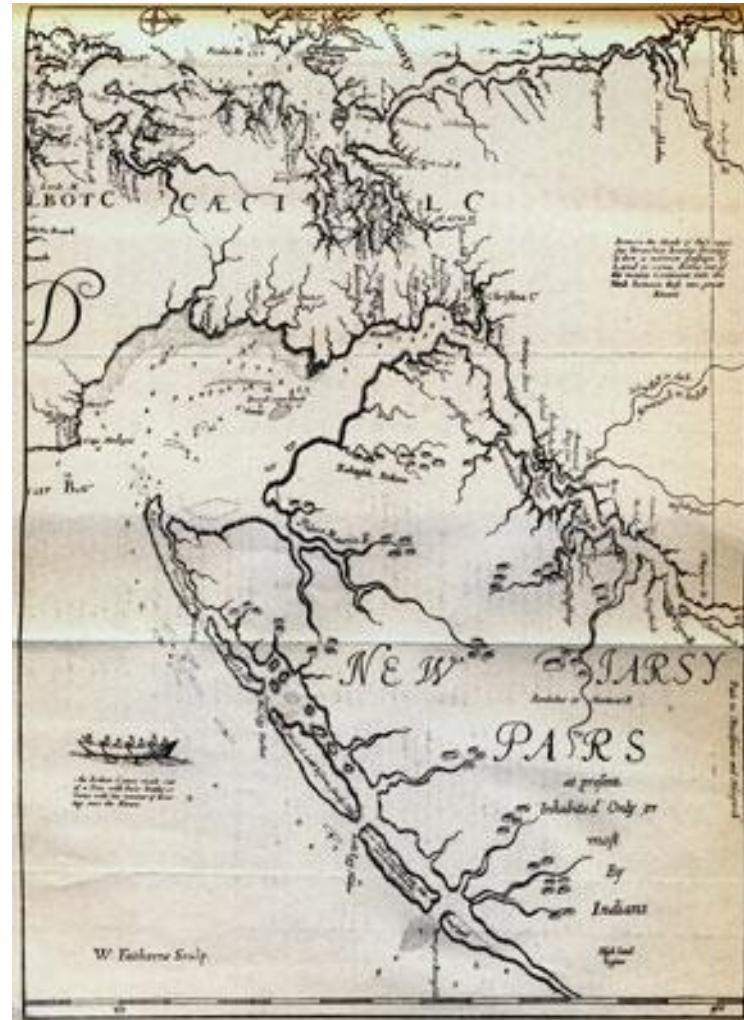
Archive

How are Indigenous stories transmitted?

What is an archive and why does it matter?

-Lenape story of the “Great Turtle” was first recorded by Europeans ca. 1680 in the journal of Jasper Danckaerts

-the complexity of the Indigenous archive



Northeast portion of Augustine Herrman's Map of Maryland, 1673

Archive

We told him [e.g. the Indian] he must not make such a difference between himself and a Christian, because one was white and the other red, and one wore clothes and the other went almost naked, or one was called a Christian and the other an Indian, that this great and good Sakemacker was the father of us all, and had made us all, and that all who did not do good would be killed by Maneto whether they were called Christians or Indians; but that all who should do good would go to this good sakemacker above. "Yes," said he, "we do not know or speak to this sakemacker, but Maneto we know and speak to, but you people, who can read and write, know and converse with this sakemacker."

We asked him, where he believed he came from? He answered from his father. "And where did your father come from?" we said, "and your grandfather and great-grandfather, and so on to the first of the race?" He was silent for a little while, either as if unable to climb up at once so high with his thoughts, or to express them without help, and then took a piece of coal out of the fire where he sat, and began to write upon the floor. He first drew a circle, a little oval, to which he made four paws or feet, a head and a tail. "This," said he, "is a tortoise, lying in the water around it," and he moved his hand round the figure, continuing, "This was or is all water, and so at first was the world or the earth, when the tortoise gradually raised its round back up high, and the water ran off of it, and thus the earth became dry." He then took a little straw and placed it on end in the middle of the figure, and proceeded, "The earth was now dry, and there grew a tree in the middle of the earth, and the root of this tree sent forth a sprout beside it and there grew upon it a man, who was the first male. This man was then alone, and would have remained alone; but the tree bent over until its top touched the earth, and there shot therein another root, from which came forth another sprout, and there grew upon it the woman, and from these two are all men produced." We gave him four fish-hooks with which he was much pleased, and immediately calculated how much in money he had obtained. "I have got twenty-four stivers' worth," he said. ...But at noon he returned with a young Indian, both of them so drunk they could not speak, and having a calabash of liquor with them. We chided him, but to no purpose, for he could neither use his reason nor speak so as to be understood.

-Story of Turtle Island as recounted in *The Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680*

Terminology

Why “settler colonialism” vs “colonialism”?

-colonialism demands that indigenous peoples “work for” them and also that natural resources be put at their disposal. Critics have called this a “logic of commodification”

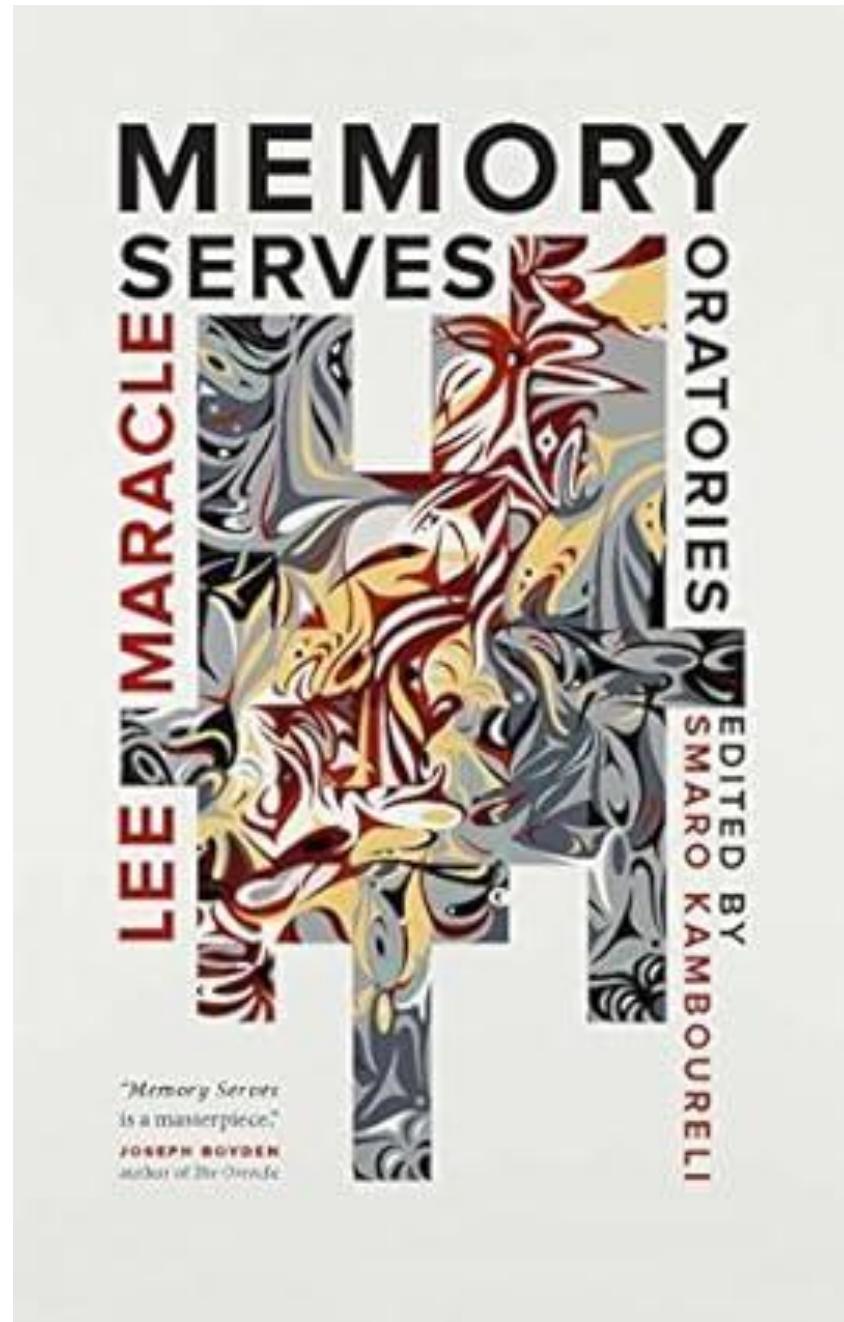
-settler colonizers additionally use a “logic of evacuation to demand that indigenous peoples ‘go away,’” in order to clear land for new arrivals

-settler colonialism and the archive: why it matters for this class?

-the ethics of the archive



Lee Maracle (Stó:lō) [1950-2021]



What is an oratory?

Oratory: place of prayer, to persuade. This is a word we can work with. We regard words as coming from original being -- a sacred spiritual being. The orator is coming from a place of prayer and as such attempts to be persuasive. Words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction, and thus story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people.

-Lee Maracle, "Oratory: Coming to Theory," *Memory Serves*, 161

Methodology

Lee Maracle, “Oratory on Oratory”

-Maracle's question: How do we create new knowledge and orient ourselves to past stories?

-What is the difference between Maracle's Indigenous model of understanding stories and Western ones?

Study:

Western ideas of discovering authorial intentional (individualistic and “invasive”) or attempting to “master” nature through science/ technology with no regard for its autonomous status

-characteristic of “the Diaspora” (i.e. those not indigenous to North America)

Vs. Indigenous ways of study:

- goal=to uncover that which is hidden
- object=“the unknown but cherished thing” (240)
- collaborative not oppositional
- processual: discussion and then reflection and then integration
- process common discomfort in the search meaning
- emphasis on seeing
- self-awareness of positionality (masks)
- the need for dialogism with not dominance over the object of study
- recognition that cannot know the thoughts or spirit of the phenomenon
- not for dominion or instrumentalization
- a model of shared ethical attention

What does oratory value?

Assumptions about truth: Maracle: “In a certain sense, fiction/ myth, story, is real: it is historic and reflects life; it is conditioned by the desire to mirror a character’s relationship with the world” (231).

Narrative expectations: Story values leanness and concision so that others may participate and expand it

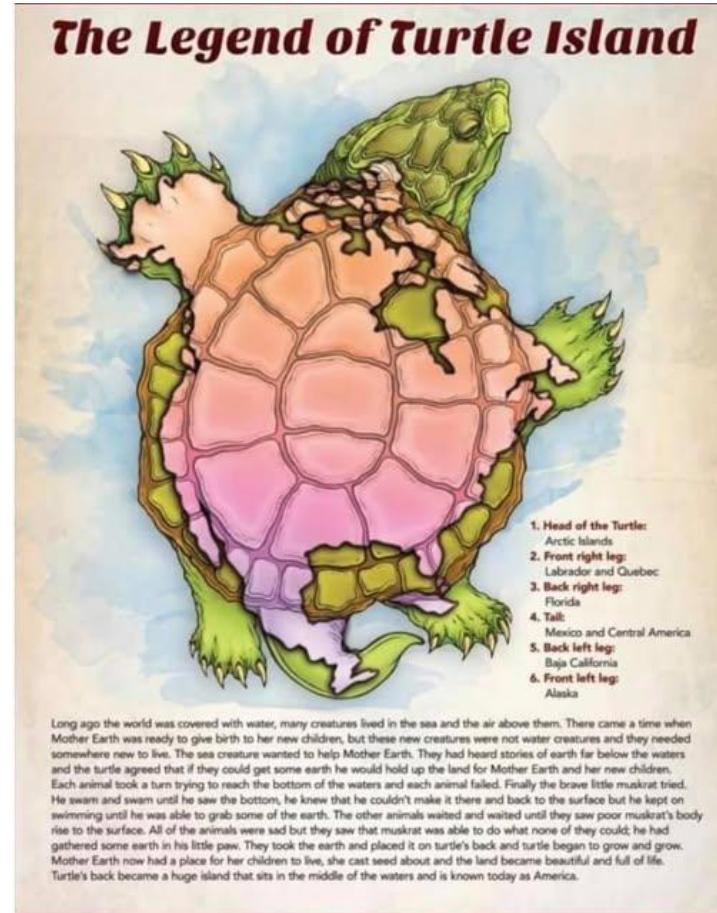
Oratory’s relation to nature: “Words are sacred, they are breath, breath is wind, and wind is power. Wind is earth’s bellow transforming land, water, sea, and weather. Breath is human wind, our bellows urging us in the direction of transformation and relationship forming” (244-5).

Goal: “Oratory is a human story in relation to the story of other beings, and so it is fiction, for it takes place in, while engaging, the imagination of ourselves in relation to all beings. Oratory informs the stories of our nations in relation to beings of all life” (241).

How does this idea of oratory help us to understand creation stories and cosmogonies?

Story of Skywoman and Turtle Island (common to Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples)

- if we can't know intentions, what can we see?
- what cultural values?
 - interspecies collaboration
 - interconnectedness of the animate and inanimate worlds
 - natural balance (left and right, day and night)
- Mother Earth
- the place of humans
- modern moral?
- ends by saying that this is the “short version”



“Indigenous Reflections” poster incorporating the Lenape / Haudenosaunee Confederacy concept

Mohawk story of Skywoman and Turtle Island

vs. 1680 story of Turtle Island in *The Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*

-Orature vs literature

-How do we put them in conversation with one another?

-What is present in the Mohawk story that is not present in Danckaerts' account?

-How do these stories embody Maracle's view that we do not speak for other things, whether animate or inanimate things?



Bruce King, *Skywoman, Moment in Flight*

Is the Mohawk version of Skywoman an environmental text according to the criteria set forward by Lawrence Buell? Why or why not?

According to Buell, a text can be considered "environmental" if it meets the following four criteria:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a significant presence that suggests human history is implicated in natural history;
2. Human interest is not understood as the only legitimate interest;
3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation;
4. There is some sense of the environment as a process, not just a static backdrop.

A dense forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees.

2. European Creation Stories and Cosmogonies

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Classical Greek Creation Stories and Views of Nature

Plato vs. Aristotle

Plato's *Timaeus*

“Demiurge”= the divine craftsman who creates the universe and all life within it according to perfect divine “forms”

- Plato imagines the world as not just animate but as having its own “soul”

- Creation of man by the lesser gods according to a prototype of the Demiurge

- man has a material ‘house’ created for the immaterial ‘soul’; the 2 are not attached

- reason in the head and passions in the chest with the liver as the messenger between the two

- human reproduction

Plato's *Timaeus*: Reproduction

“Wherefore also in men the organ of generation becoming rebellious and masterful, like an animal disobedient to reason, and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway ; and the same is the case with the so-called womb or matrix of women ; the animal within them is desirous of procreating children, and when remaining unfruitful long beyond its proper time, gets discontented and angry, and wandering in every direction through the body, closes up the passages of the breath, and, by obstructing respiration, drives them to extremity, causing all varieties of disease, until at length the desire and love of the man and the woman, bringing them together and as it were plucking the fruit from the tree, sow in the womb, as in a field, animals unseen by reason of their smallness.”

Plato's *Timaeus*: The Creation of Animals

-order of creation: man, plants, animals (from man)

-Animals:

1. Birds: "But the race of birds was created out of innocent light-minded men, who, although their minds were directed toward heaven, imagined, in their simplicity, that the clearest demonstration of the things above was to be obtained by sight ; these were remodelled and transformed into birds, and they grew feathers instead of hair."
2. Quadrupeds: made from humans who "had no philosophy in any of their thoughts, and never considered at all about the nature of the heavens" in consequence their arms became front legs and their heads faced downwards to the earth
3. Legless Creepy crawlies: "And the most foolish of them, who trail their bodies entirely upon the ground and have no longer any need of feet, he made without feet to crawl upon the earth.
4. Aquatic creatures (fishes, oysters, etc): made from "the most entirely senseless and ignorant of all, whom the transformers did not think any longer worthy of pure respiration, because they possessed a soul which was made impure by all sorts of transgression." because of this they don't breathe air but water.

"These are the laws by which animals pass into one another, now, as ever, changing as they lose or gain wisdom and folly."

-Metempsychosis=transmigration of the immortal soul

Platonic View of Natural World

1. 2 realms: phenomenal (what we see) and noumenal (invisible spiritual world-the world of universals and forms)
2. Material phenomenal world is less “real” than the immaterial noumenal world
3. Duality of human nature: body vs soul
4. The Great Chain of Being=the hierarchy of life from divinity down to lower gods then to humans to animals to plants to minerals

Aristotelian View of the Natural World

1. Contra Plato: No Universals, no separate world of forms (“what you see is what you get”)
2. All nature is change ('physis'). Definition of nature is a principle of rest and motion that inheres within things
 - change is not a sign of corruption (as in Plato) but is the usual course of nature
3. Inextricable link between matter and form
4. Matter provides the potentialities that are actualized by the form
5. Humans are a combination of matter and form, body and soul—this is known as “hylomorphism”

Aristotle on Causation and Teleology

Causation--why? provides an account of natural change (contra Plato)

-4 causes: For example, according to Aristotle, the four causes for a statue are:

Material cause: The substance the statue is made of, such as bronze or marble

Formal cause: The shape, design, or appearance of the statue (i.e. it's a statue of the biblical figure of David)

Efficient cause: The force that sets the change in motion, such as the sculptor chiseling the statue (Michaelangelo at work)

Final cause (in Greek, telos): The purpose or goal of the statue, such as commemorating a hero or decorating a chapel

-Who cares? Because Aristotle imagined natural change by analogy with human artisanal work

-the natural was explained by comparison with the human

-In Aristotle, nature is an active cause vs. Plato's nature as a fallen and a passive copy of a divine original

Teleology (from 'telos'): explains how the acorn becomes the oak

-explains the evolution of matter over time and in regular ways

-The idea of telos is the end to which a natural thing tends

-i.e. stones fall to earth not because of gravity but because of inclination to return to earth

Aristotle on the Unmoved Mover

“Since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. ... [that mover] produces motion by being loved [i.e. by the things below it], and it moves the other moving things.”

-Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7

-Aristotle's Unmoved Mover vs Plato's Demiurge

- an intellectual idea vs an active creator

- always at work as the ultimate goal of things vs creates and out



Raphael, The School of Athens (1509-11)



Detail of Plato and Aristotle. Raphael, *The School of Athens*
(1509-11)

Genesis: The Creation and the Fall of Man

-Hexaemeron, literally "six days": the creation of the light (day 1); the sky (day 2); the earth, seas, and vegetation (day 3); the sun and moon (day 4); animals of the air and sea (day 5); and land animals and humans (day 6)

-in Genesis, God is the sole creator; not deputized to lesser gods or supernatural beings

-intentional vs contingent creation

- cf God implements a clear vision for creation

- language is the method of creation and it is performative ("let...let ... let")

Genesis 2: "Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth."

- is this dominion or stewardship?

The Fall in Genesis-offers a theory of man's competitive place in the natural world

- nostalgia for an Edenic time when the human-nature relationship was frictionless

- creation stories are often about naturalizing gender hierarchies (Genesis, Salinan creation story)

Is the Creation Story as recounted in Genesis an environmental text according to the criteria set forward by Lawrence Buell? Why or why not?

According to Buell, a text can be considered "environmental" if it meets the following four criteria:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a significant presence that suggests human history is implicated in natural history;
2. Human interest is not understood as the only legitimate interest;
3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation;
4. There is some sense of the environment as a process, not just a static backdrop.

NATIONAL BESTSELLER



Robin Wall Kimmerer (1953-), “Skywoman Falling” from
Braiding Sweetgrass

A hymn of love to the world.

—ELIZABETH GILBERT

BRAIDING SWEETGRASS



Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge,
and the Teachings of Plants

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Skywoman vs. Eve

Like Creation stories every where, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are. We are inevitably shaped by them no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness. One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banish-ment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven (7).

-Robin Wall Kimmerer (1953-), “Skywoman Falling” from *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Medieval Images of Lady Nature

Why Personify?



Nature surrounded by planets and stars;
historiated initial 'Q' from the opening of
Aristotle's *Physics*, Book 3 (ca. 1270).

London, British Library Harley MS
3487, f. 16v

3. Animacy, Animal Voices, and Anthropomorphism

Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*,
Or the Invention of Valentine's Day

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Nirvana, “In Bloom”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbgKEjNBHqM>

Sell the kids for food
Weather changes moods
Spring is here again
Reproductive glands
. . .
Nature is a whore
Bruises on the fruit
Tender age in bloom

“Now Welcome Summer”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m02DYcDYyDA>

Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
Now welcome summer, with your balmy sun
That hast this wintres weders over-shaker,
Which has shaken off the winter storms
And driven awey the longe nightes blake!
And driven away the long dark nights!

Seynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on lofte,
Saint Valentine, who sits on high,

Thus singen smale foules for thy sake.

Is the one who the little birds sing for!

. . . .
Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
They have a good reason to rejoice

Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make:
Since each is reunited with its mate –
Ful blisful (may) they singen whan they wake.
They will sing blissfully together when they awake.

Today's Class

- Why personify nature?
- How did Nature lose her clothes between the medieval and early modern eras?
- Why do we celebrate Valentine's Day?
- How do poets in different time periods imagine the boundaries between humans and animals?
- How do they imagine nature?
- Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and Keat's “Ode to a Nightingale”

Medieval Images of Lady Nature

Why Personify Nature?
-in science?
-in philosophy?



Nature surrounded by planets and stars;
historiated initial 'Q' from the opening of
Aristotle's *Physics*, Book 3 (ca. 1270).

London, British Library Harley MS
3487, f. 16v

Alan of Lille, *The Complaint of Nature* (ca. 1180)

Narrator:

“Alas! Whither has the loveliness of Nature, the beauty of character, the standard of chastity, the love of virtue departed? Nature weeps, character passes away, chastity is wholly banished from its former high station, and become an orphan. The sex of active nature trembles shamefully at the way in which it declines into passive nature. Man is made woman, he blackens the honor of his sex, the craft of magic Venus makes him of double gender.” (Meter 1.2)

Major theme for Alan: the animal / natural world all follow Nature's laws but only humans do not follow her laws

Lady Nature:

“Me, then, He appointed a sort of deputy, a coiner for stamping the orders of things, for the purpose that I should form their figures on the proper anvils, and should not let the shape vary from the shape of the anvil, and that through my activity and skill the face of the copy should not be changed by additions of any other elements from the face of the original. ...

[Nature goes on vacation]

I stationed Venus who is skilled in the knowledge of making, as under-deputy of my work, in order that she ... with the assisting activity of her husband Hymen [i.e. Marriage] and her son Cupid, by ... regularly applying their productive hammers to their anvils, might weave together the line of the human race in unwearied continuation.” (Prose 4.7)

Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose* (Paris, ca. 1270)



Nature forging a baby from the *Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1270s). British Library, Harley 4425, f. 140 r (Bruges, c.1490-c.1500).

Major theme for Jean's Nature: the animal / natural world all follow Nature's laws but only humans do not follow her laws

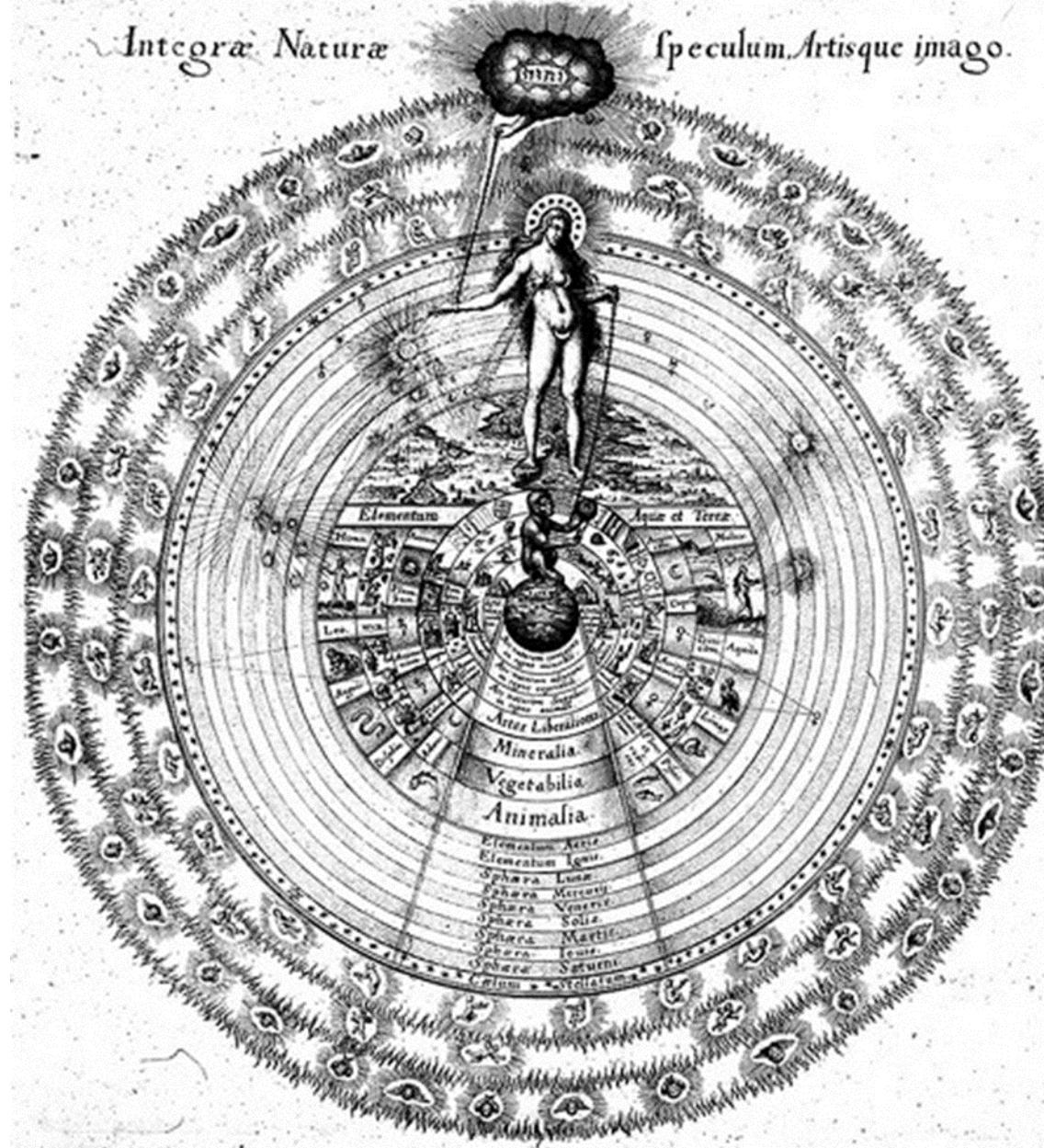
Crowned Nature at her forge, from *Romance of the Rose*. University of Chicago Library, Ms. 1380



Early Modern Images of Nature Or, How Nature Lost Her Clothes

Integrae Naturae

speculum Artisque imago.



The Mirror of All Nature and the Image of Art

(Frontispiece of Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmic maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica atque technical historia*, Oppenheim: 1617-1619.)

Detail from *The Mirror of All Nature and the Image of Art*. A nude Nature linked to God the creator and then to art (the monkey) who copies her.





Medieval Nature vs Early Modern Nature

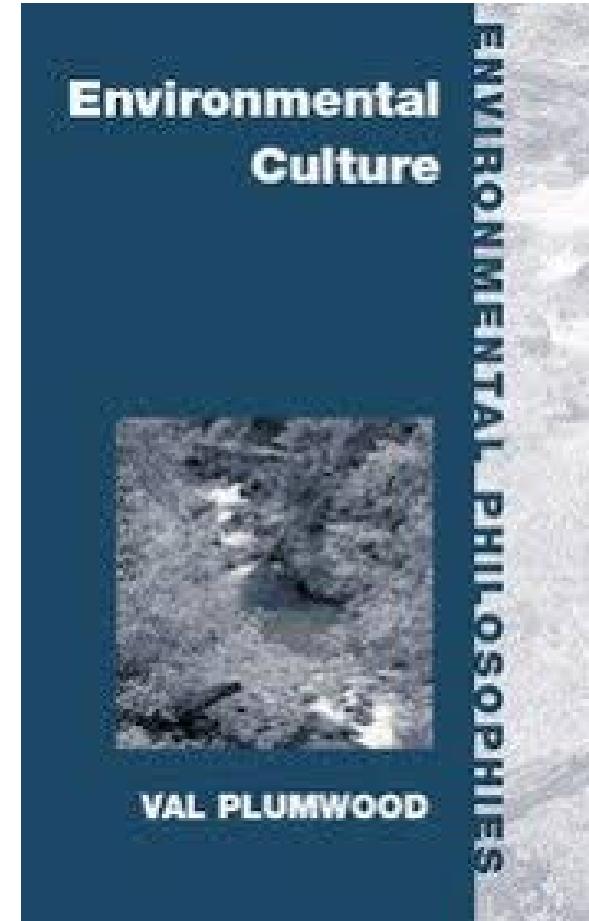
Anthropomorphism vs Anthropocentrism

-Anthropomorphism = “attribut[ing] to non-humans characteristics only humans have” while acknowledging the potential for human and nonhuman behavior overlap

-Anthropocentrism, on the other hand, means “centered around humans;” especially when the human is used as the measure of everything else.

-Why have scientists and animal studies critics tended to reject anthropomorphism?

-Anthropomorphism can be an anthropocentric practice, but it can also (according to Plumwood) be employed in ways that respect the independence of nonhuman identity to various degrees.



Val Plumwood *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*

[Animal] representations must always raise questions about simplifying and assimilating the other. However there can be no general argument that such cross-cultural perspectives representing another's viewpoint are deceptive or illegitimate. Cross-species representation, like cross-cultural representation, is not automatically colonizing or self-imposing, and may express motives and meanings of sympathy, support and admiration. Rather, specific cases have to be argued on their merits. ... Representation should keep in mind the distinction between claiming to *be* the other rather than to represent another's perspective, to see or speak as the other rather than to see or speak *with* or in support of the other (Plumwood 60).



Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s-1400),
The Parliament of Fowls (ca.
1380)

What is Chaucer's avian class system?

-4 groups based on their eating habits (ll. 323ff):

1. birds of prey
2. worm fowl
3. seed fowl
4. water fowl



310
make,

lake

315

For this was on Seynt Valentynes day,
Whan every foul cometh ther to chese his
Of every kinde, that men thynke may;
And that so huge a noyse gan they make,
That erthe and see, and tree, and every
So ful was, that unnethe was ther space
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place.

320

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde,
Devyseth Nature of aray and face,
In swich array men mighten hir ther finde.
This noble emperesse, ful of grace,
Bad every foul to take his owne place,
As they were wont alwey fro yeer to yere,
Seynt Valentynes day, to stonden there.

For this was Saint Valentine's day, when every bird of every kind that men can imagine comes to this place to choose his mate. And they made an exceedingly great noise; and earth and sea and the trees and all the lakes were so full that there was scarcely room for me to stand, so full was the entire place.

And just as Alan [of Lille], in *The Complaint of Nature*, describes Nature in her features and attire, so might men find her in reality. This noble empress, full of grace, bade every bird take his station, as they were accustomed to stand always on Saint Valentine's day from year to year.

(Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls*, ll. 309-322)



The Queen Mary Psalter, [Royal MS 2 B VII](#), f. 243r

Who was the historical St. Valentinus (236-269 CE)?

The female eagle's response to Lady Nature

650

"Almighty quene, unto this yeer be doon
I aske respite for to avysen me.
And after that to have my choys al free;
This al and sum, that I wolde speke and
seye;
Ye gete no more, al-though ye do me
deye.

I wol noght serven Venus ne Cupyde
For sothe as yet, by no manere wey."

"Almighty queen, until this year comes
to an end I ask respite, to take counsel
with myself; and after that to have my
choice free. This is all that I would say. I
can say no more, even if you were to slay
me.

In truth, as yet I will in no manner serve
Venus or Cupid."

What questions about nature are posed by Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*?

- To what extent are animals like humans and vice-versa? Are they governed by the same sets of rules?
- Is heterosexuality natural and inevitable (Nature's internal 'prikke')?
- Or is it a choice? (and therefore potentially optional)
- Are Nature's rules laws or just suggested guidelines?

Why Talking Animals in the *Parliament of Fowls*?

- Why doesn't Chaucer use humans? What would be the difference if this was a human parliament? How would it feel different?
- How do animals work here?
 - helps us to explore the limits of both humans *and* animals
 - also helps us to understand how nature works
- What are the dangers and possibilities of this?

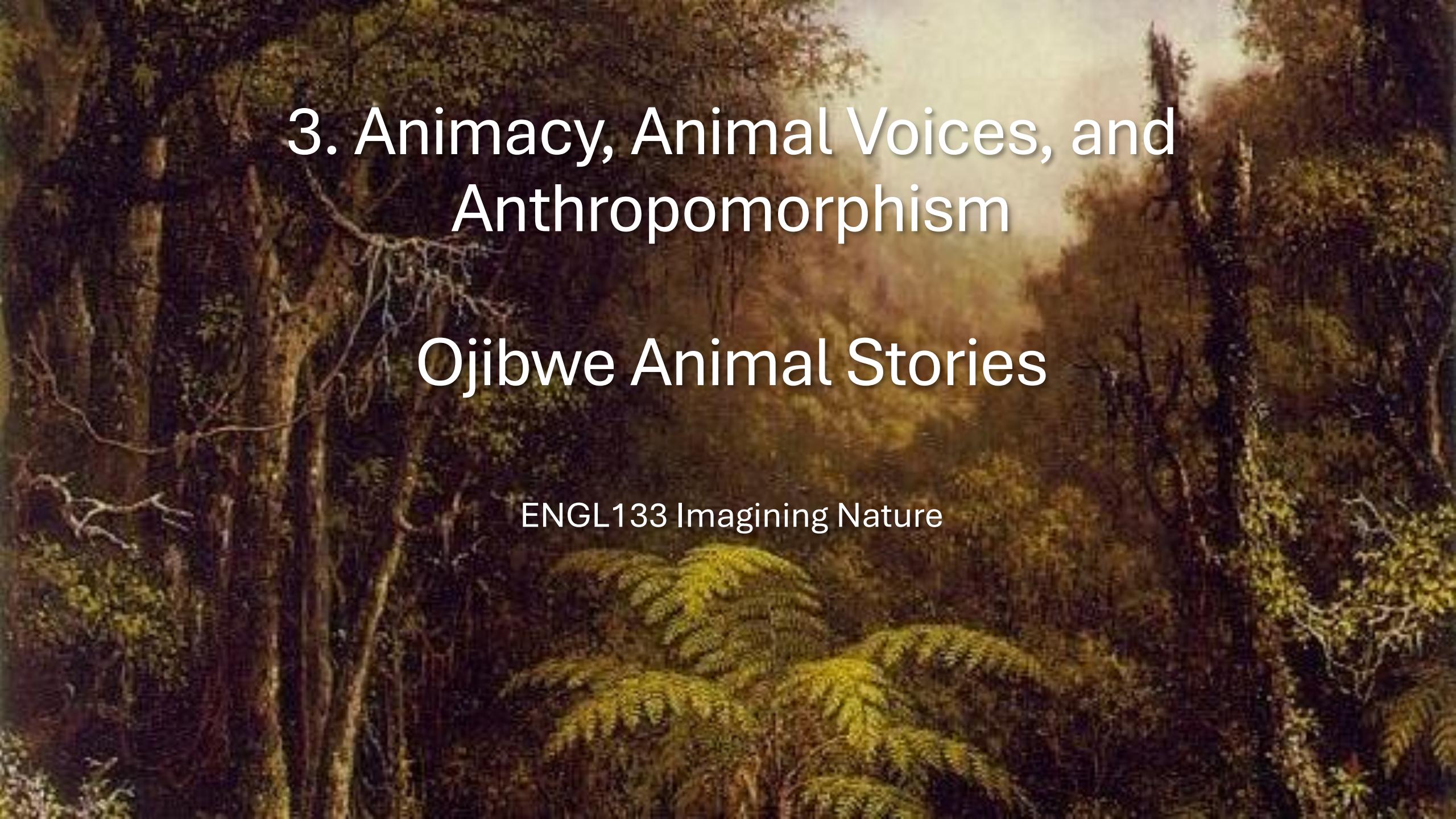
John Keats (1795-1821), “Ode to a Nightingale”

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou [i.e. the nightingale] among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs, 25
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

Birds in Chaucer vs Keat's Nightingale

According to Val Plumwood's definitions, what is going on in each poem? Is this anthropomorphism or anthropocentrism? Why?

A photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The colors are rich and earthy.

3. Animacy, Animal Voices, and Anthropomorphism

Ojibwe Animal Stories

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

From the *Oxford English Dictionary*

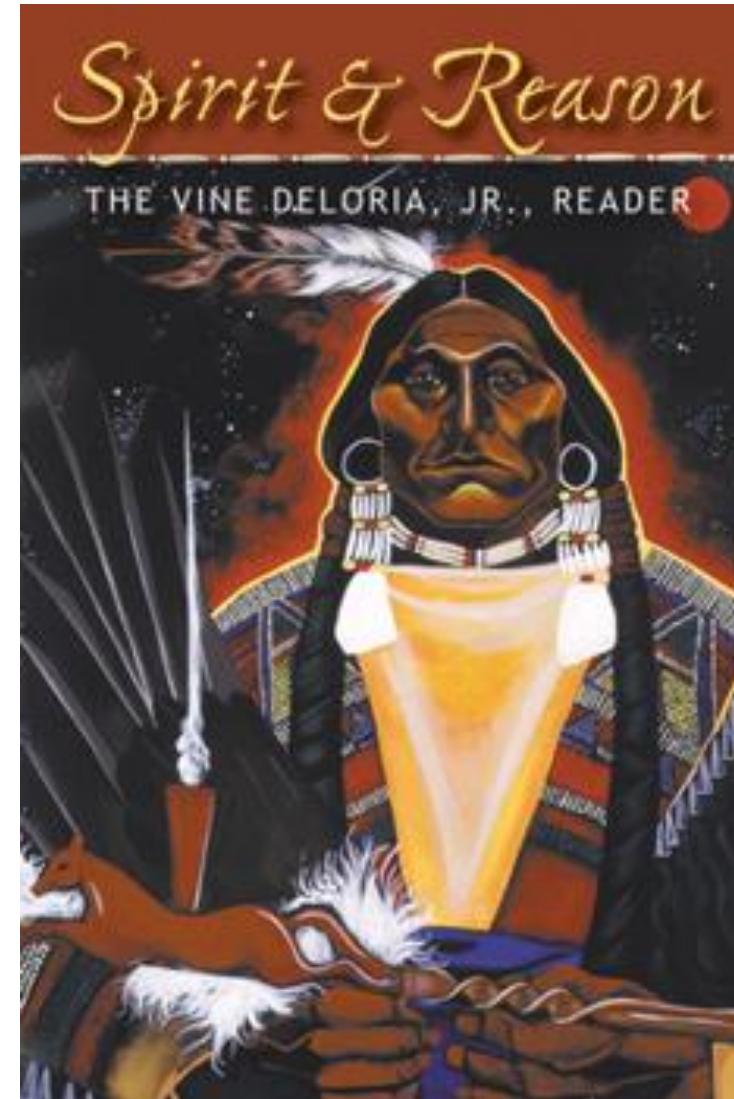
Animate

1. Endowed with life, living, alive; (esp. in later use) alive and having the power of movement, like an animal.

- ...
4. Lively; with the full activity of life; = *animated* adj.



Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005,
Standing Rock Sioux)



Vine Deloria, “Kinship with the World”

- the modern Western philosophical tradition makes several assumptions about the human and the nonhuman worlds that indigenous communities do not, such as
 - There is a spiritual realm that is separated from the world that we see around us (e.g. Platonic thought that posits a more “real” world of forms that is elsewhere or like medieval Neoplatonic Christianity—like Alan of Lille)
 - There is a separation between the human and the rest of the nonhuman world (this results in a disciplinary split between sciences (object=the world beyond the human) and social sciences/ humanities (object=the human, whether politics, history, art, psychology, etc)

On the kin relationships between animals and human:

“It is not a relationship of conquest or of imperialism. It is a relationship in which both basic divisions of the world look back to a time when they had to find some means of allocating responsibilities in the world. Kin are extremely important in this view of the universe. There are those animals that approach specific human beings and give them specific powers.”

-Vine Deloria, “Kinship with the World” 227.

To whom does our language extend the grammar of animacy? Naturally, plants and animals are animate, but as I learn, I am discovering that the Potawatomi understanding of what it means to be animate diverges from the list of attributes of living beings we all learned in Biology 101. In Potawatomi 101, rocks are animate, as are mountains and water and fire and places. Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even stories, are all animate. The list of the inanimate seems to be smaller, filled with objects that are made by people [for example, a table]. Of an inanimate being, like a table, we say, “What is it?” And we answer *Dopwen yewe*. Table it is. But of apple, we must say, “Who is that being?” And reply *Mshimin yawe*. Apple that being is. ... The language reminds us, in every sentence, of our kinship with all of the animate world.

-Kimmerer, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy,” 55-56

The arrogance of English is that the only way to be animate, to be worthy of respect and moral concern, is to be a human.

A language teacher I know explained that grammar is just the way we chart relationships in language. Maybe it also reflects our relationships with each other. Maybe a grammar of animacy could lead us to whole new ways of living in the world, other species a sovereign people, a world with a democracy of species, not a tyranny of one. ... Imagine walking through a richly inhabited world of Birch people, Bear people, Rock people, beings we think of and therefore speak of as persons worthy of our respect, of inclusion in a peopled world.

-Kimmerer, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy,” 57-58

What models of animacy and anthropomorphism do we find in the Ojibwe narratives that we read for today?



Ojibwe Peoples

Ojibwe Stories: Archive

Who wrote it down? Who was their imagined audience? How did this audience shape what got written down?

- narrated by Charles and Charlotte Kawbawgam (Ojibwe) and Charles's brother-in-law Jacques LePique
- all of these stories were told to a Harvard-trained anthropologist Homer H. Kidder
- these stories are not neutral
 - they reflect a nostalgia for a lost hunting and fur trapping culture that was ended by the decline of the fur trade and a series of land cessation treaties with the US government in the 19th c.

Nanabozho

-an Ojibwe trickster spirit and shape shifter

-the wolf is his “nephew”

Charles Kawbawgam’s “Remarks on Nanabozho” (30):

“[Nanabozho] called the animals his brothers; men he called his uncles; women and trees and all that grows and all that flies he called his brothers and sisters.”

-Deloria’s idea of ‘kinship with the world’

Nanabozho as Creation Stories



Nanabozho and Transcorporeality

-Nanabozho's shape shifting: a tree stump and “wearing” the Frog Woman

-a model of transcorporeality

Transcorporeality is the idea that humans are not separate from the natural world, but are instead deeply connected to it. Transcorporeality emphasizes the fluidity between the material and theoretical bodies. It challenges the idea of a “bounded human subject,” the idea that humans self-contained are separate from their environment.

-a different model of transcorporeality would be Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*

-cf. Keats' “Ode to a Nightingale” that is not an example of transcorporeality

The Robin

The next day he said: "Mother, I have fasted too long. I can no longer be a man. I shall become a bird and must leave you.

His face and throat were painted black, with a few white specks, his breast was painted red, and on his back he had a covering of grey. All these marks he kept when he became a bird. He flew out, and perching on the lodge, gave the beautiful call of the robin.

He said: "Whenever you hear me at the top of a tree, you will know spring is coming and will come always to the end of the world. Farewell, mother. I am going to spread throughout the earth."

The Beast Men

So they had another race the next moon. This time the old man and his ring were painted blue. He raced against the winter hawk, and won again, flying through the air after his ring. The brothers had now won the lives of all their enemies, but the old man would not let them kill. He made all the animal party pass before him, one by one. He forbad them ever again to take the form of man, and told each kind how they should live and what they should eat. And that is how the animals got the habits that they have to this day.

Medieval European Theories of Transcorporeality: the Universe and the Human Body

The Four Elements and the Four Bodily Humors

The Four Elements

1. Air
2. Water
3. Fire
4. Earth

Theory of 4 natural humors that make up the human body:

1. blood (hot and moist--air)
2. phlegm (cold and moist--water)
3. choler or yellow bile (hot and dry--fire)
4. melancholy or black bile (cold and dry--earth)

Zodiac in relation to the elements

Bartholomeus Anglicus, *Le Livre des propriétés des choses*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale

http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/images/jpeg/i4_0049.jpg



The human bodily humors related to the elements.

Bartholomeus Anglicus, *Le Livre des propriétés des choses*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale

http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/images/jpeg/i4_0057.jpg

tez du corps humain. Et y comeut le
m^e liue des qualitez des elemens &
des quatre humeurz desquellez sont
composes les corps tant des hom-
mes comme des Bestes. /



The human body

Bartholomeus Anglicus, Le Livre des propriétés des choses

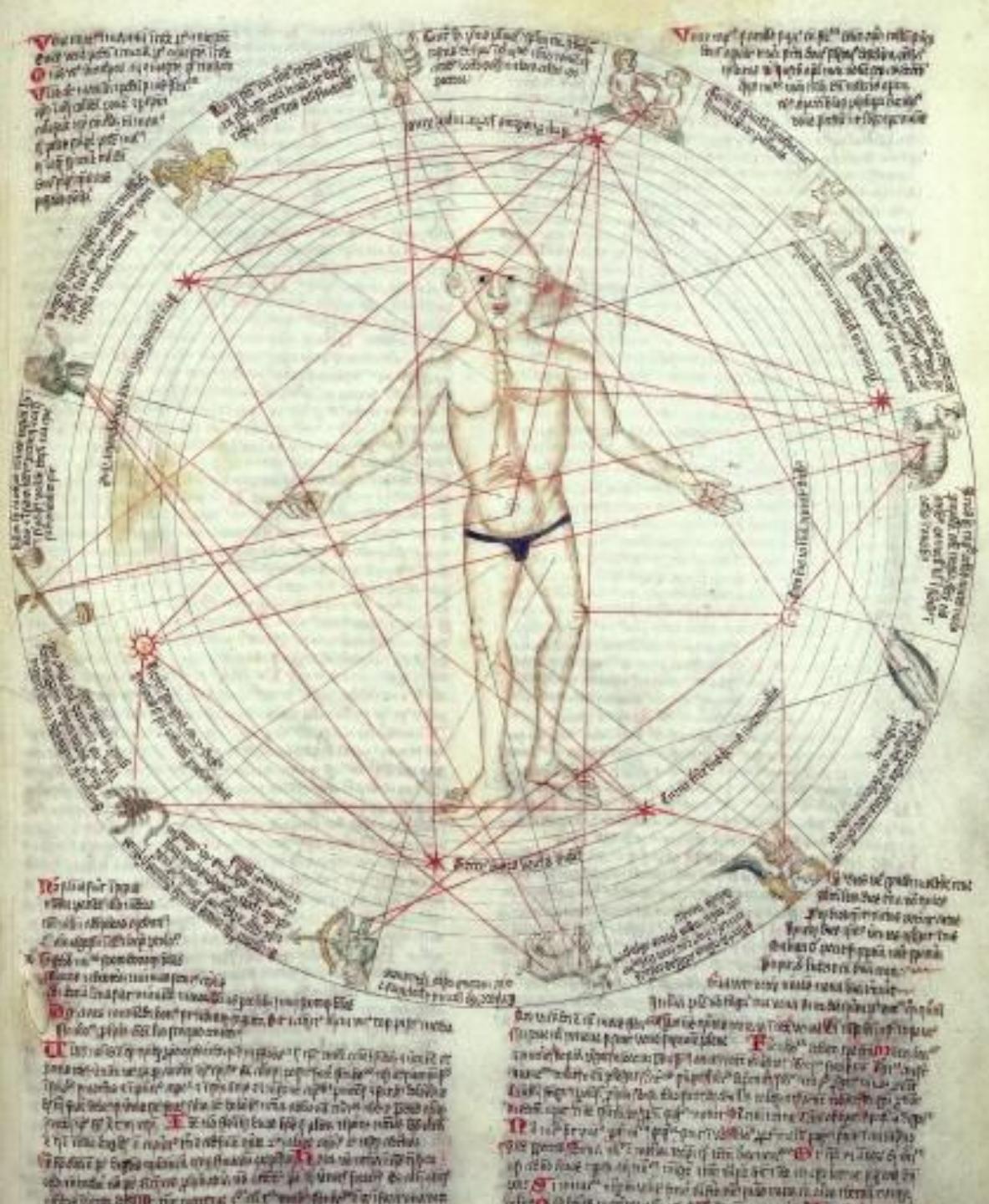
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale



Cy gment le v^e suive q^{ue} ples du corps de l'oe
et de ses parties desquelles la saincte
estruption fait mention. p^{re}niere chappie.

Medieval Zodiac Man

London, Welcome Library



Lost whites come to the West to love the environment, and they end up paving the damn thing and subdividing it. ... You have got to look back into your own culture. Why did people six thousand or seven thousand years ago determine that heaven is good and "down here" is bad? Why did they decide to go out and conquer things? Then why did the Greeks later make that other division between history and nature? And why, after Newton and Darwin, did you grab that one quadrant [i.e. the hard sciences] and say that is what the world is about?

-Vine Deloria, “Kinship with the World,” 229.

4. Origins, Monsters, and Becoming Human

Medieval Bestiaries
and Darwin's *Origin of Species*

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course stuff

- Tiny Ecologies #2: due by 5 pm Friday 2/21 to Canvas
 - Goal: A speculative “history” of your tiny place
- Midterm: in Friday sections in person on 3/7
 - rubric is on Canvas under “Modules”
- Why are we doing what we are doing?

How did Western philosophy and science get from the Book of Nature to the Tree of Life?

- Why do the different analogies that we use for nature over the centuries matter?
- What is the difference of imagining nature as books, as ladders, as machines (as Descartes does), as trees (as Darwin does), or as phylogenetic trees (as we do today)?
- Why should we care? Aren't they just pretty images?
 - The different natural analogies that we use influence what we see when we look at nature
 - they also determine the types of questions that we ask of it, whether scientific and philosophical

The Medieval Book of Nature

- Every creature of the world is like a book, a picture, and a mirror for us. [Omnis mundi creatura,/ Quasi liber, et pictura/ Nobis est, et speculum].
-the twelfth-century Neoplatonist Alan of Lille,
“Every Creature in the World”
- What are the effects of thinking about nature as a book?



The Medieval Ladder of Life (*scala naturae*) or the Great Chain of Being

- the Ladder of Life (*scala naturae*) or, after the work of Arthur Lovejoy, what came to be called the Great Chain of Being
- the ladder or stairway of nature divides the world into ascending degrees of being
- stones have existence, plants have life and existence, animals add motion, humans add reason—all the way up to God
- this is a “sliding scale of sentience”
- man is a crucial category because he possesses both a material body and an immaterial soul
- man is also imagined as a microcosm of the universe (macrocosm)

Great Chain of Being (*Scala naturae* or ladder of nature)

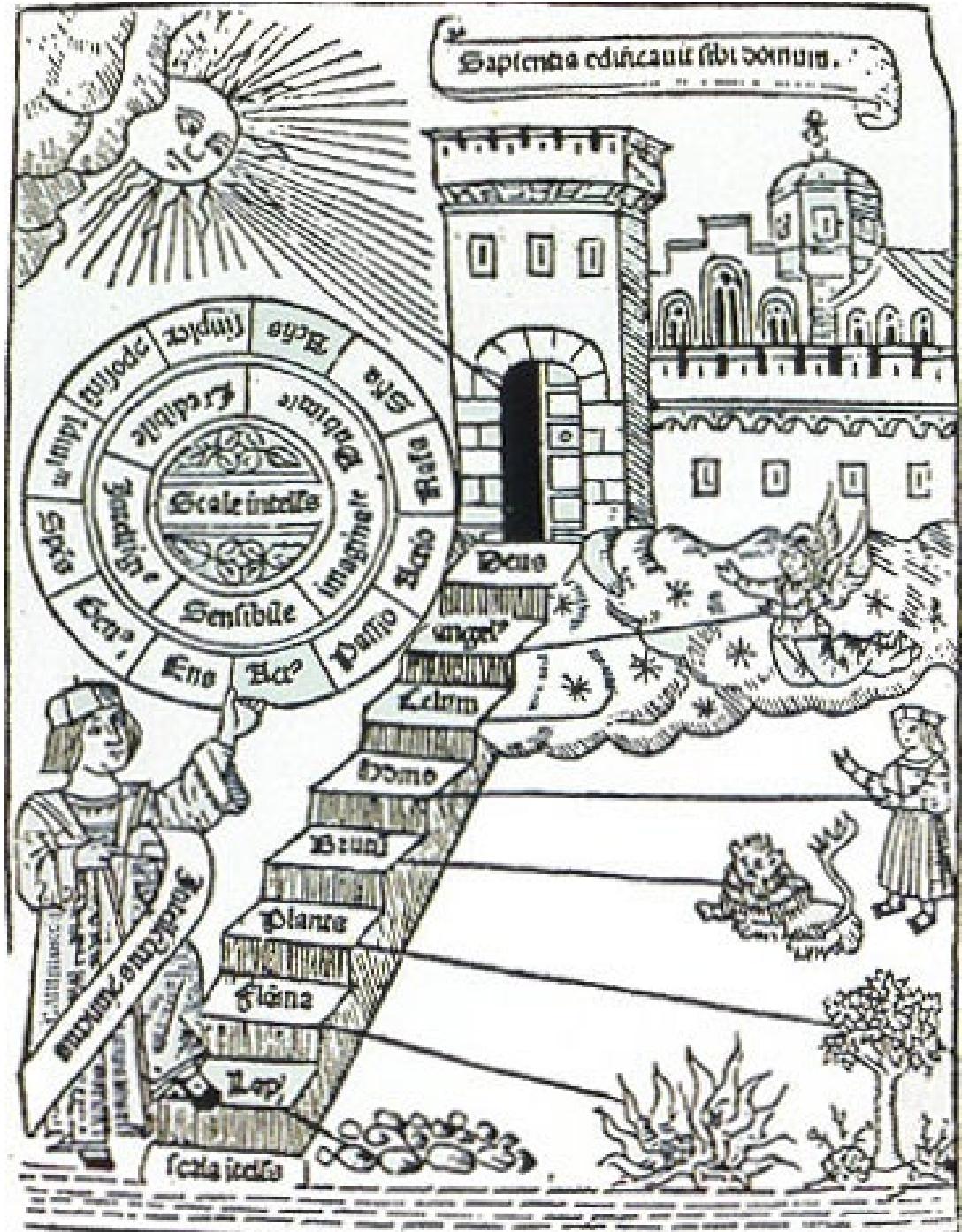
- God as Spirit
- Spiritual Beings (like angels)
- Human Beings
- The Animal Kingdom
- The Plant Kingdom
- The Material (Inert) World

Image of the Ladder of Life (*scala intellectus*) as represented in Raymond Lull, *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus* [The Ladder of Ascent and Descent of the Intellect] (1305) (Printed in Valencia: Jorge Costilla, 1512).

Note ascending steps labelled: rocks (lapis), fire (flama), plants (planta), animals (brutus), man (homo), heavens (celum), angels, god (Deus).

HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM

- definition?
- does this image encourage it?

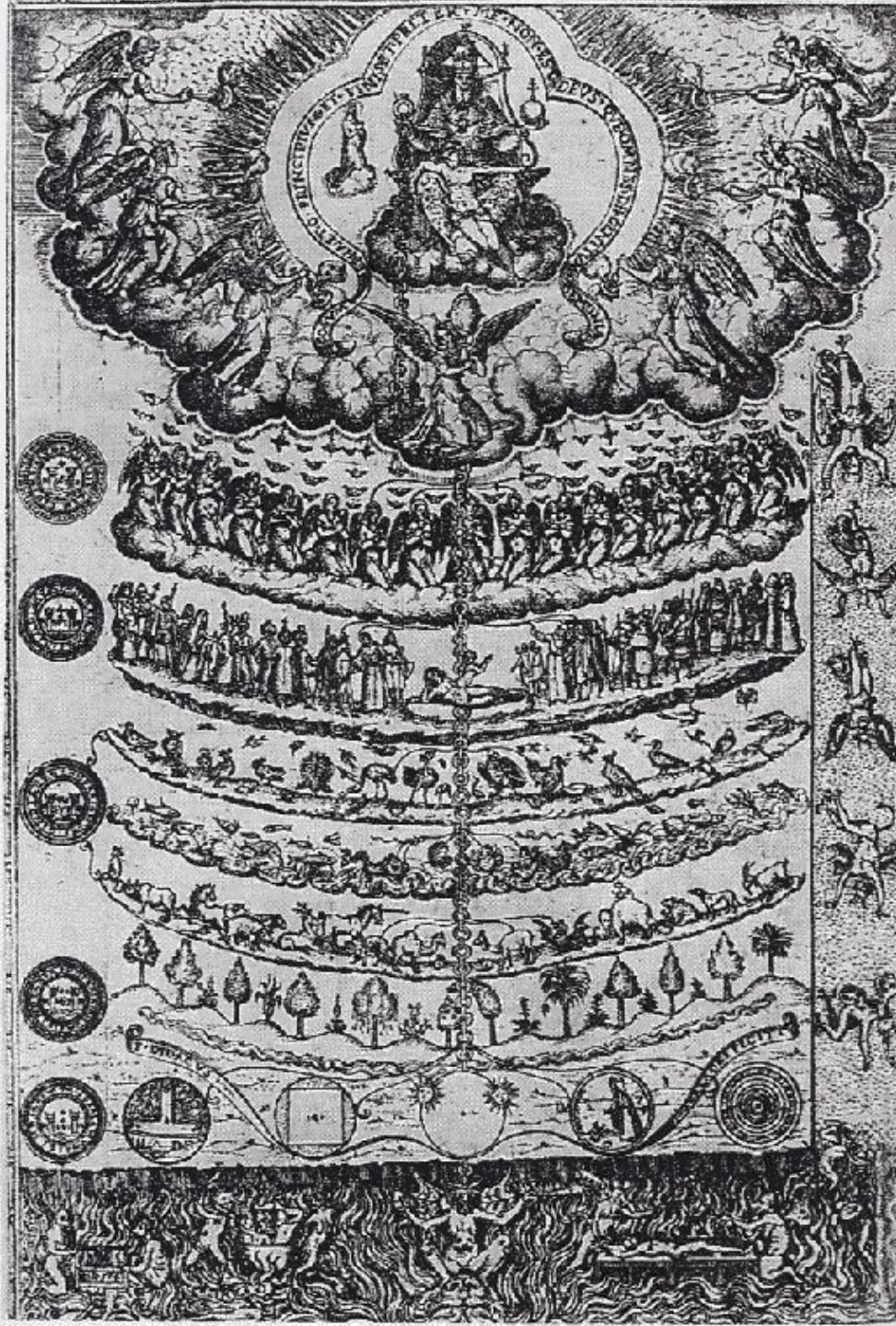


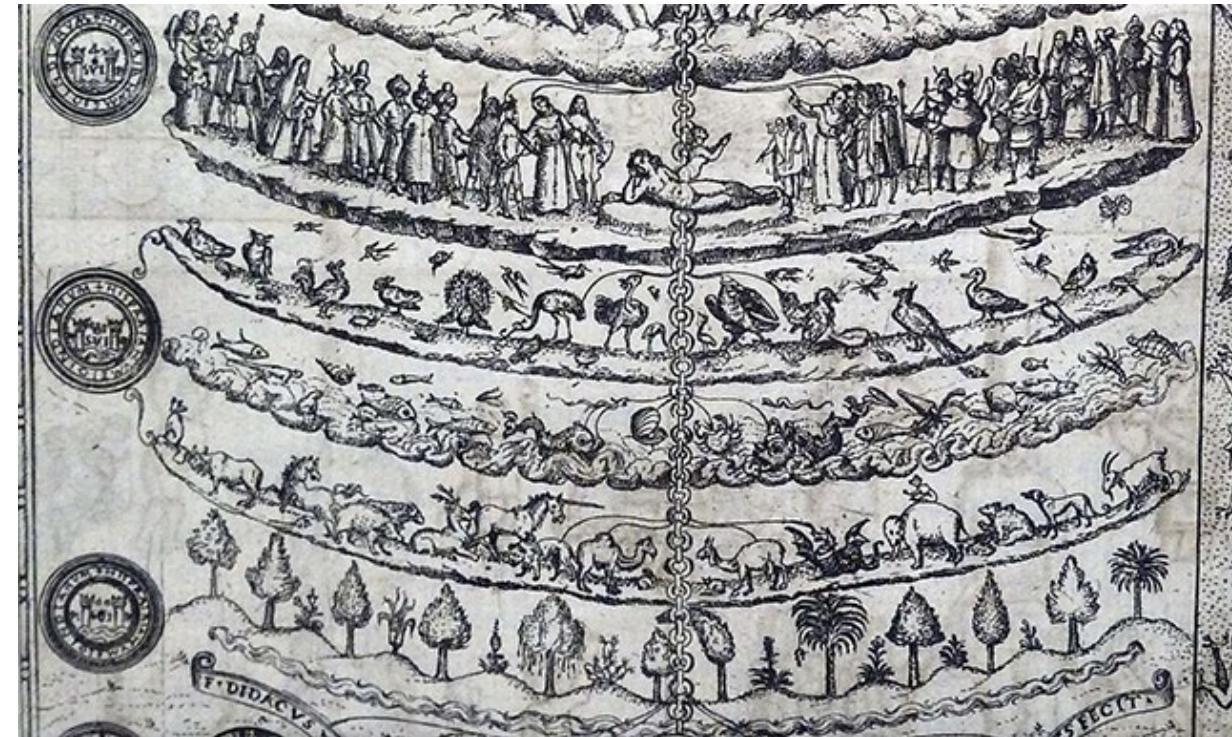
How do Animal Bodies relate to Human bodies?

That carefulness on the part of Nature which is reflected in man is not found in other animals. For an imbalanced mixture of humors all too often leads to a distorted complexion in brute beasts. The donkey is made stupid by phlegm, the lion wrathful by choler; the dog is wholly pervaded by his aerial sense of smell. The human condition is utterly unique. A balance is created among qualities and quantities by the mingling of the humors. Human nature has been wrought with all possible care into a whole ... For it would have been improper for the future abode of intellect and reason to suffer imbalance or disruption through any uncertainty in its design.

-Bernardus Silvestris, *Microcosmos*

Great Chain of Being, from Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579).





Details from Great Chain of Being, from Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579).

How does this *scala naturae* from the 18th c. differ from the two preceding ones from several centuries earlier?

What are the effects of thinking about nature as a ladder/ chain?



The Great Chain of Being, from Charles Bonnet, *Œuvres d'histoire naturelle et de philosophie*, 1779-83

Scientific Revolution (17th c): Nature as Machine

-“There is no difference between the machines built by artisans and the diverse bodies that nature alone composes.”

-René Descartes, *Treatise on Man* (c. 1632-1640)

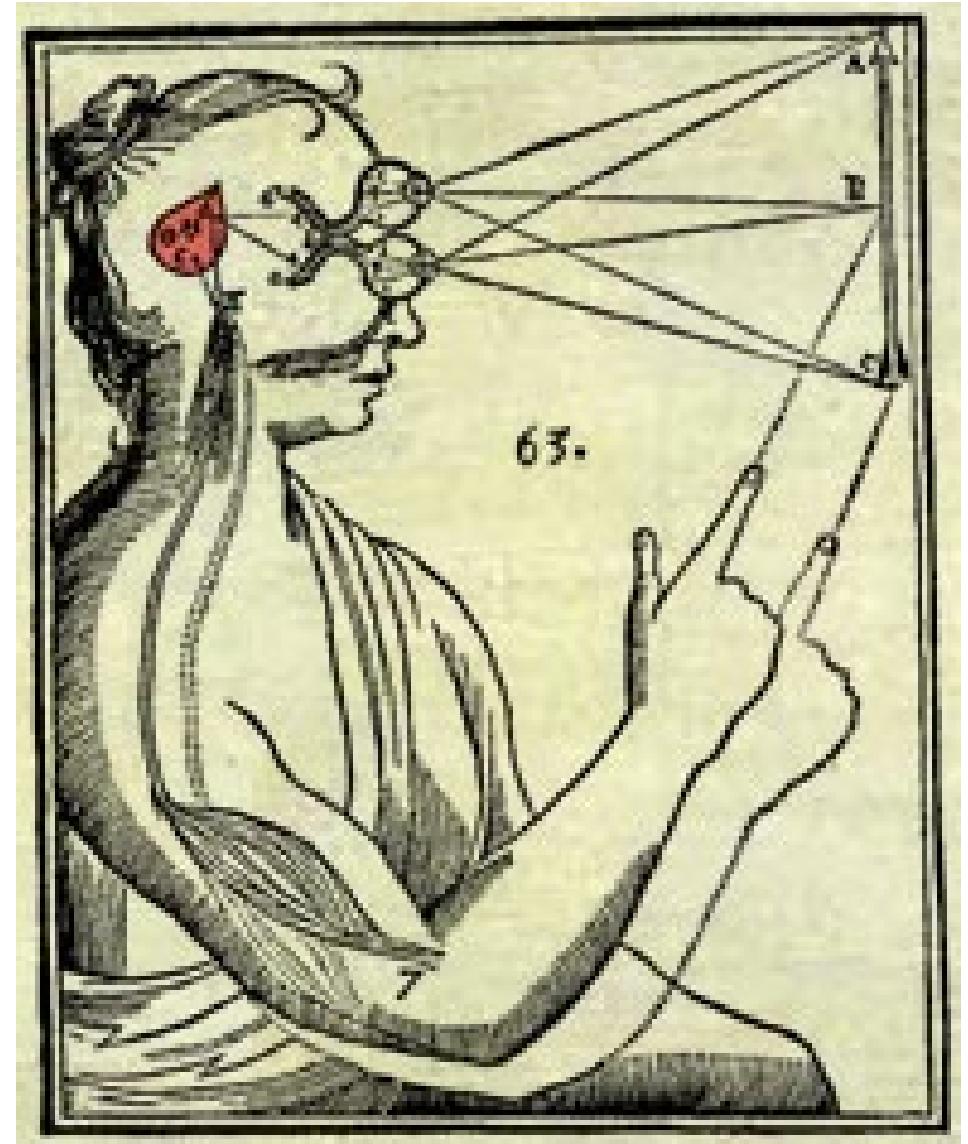
-Descartes compares the movements of all natural bodies, including the human body, to mechanical clocks: “we see that clocks...and other machines of this kind, although they have been built by men, do not for this reason lack the power to move by themselves in diverse ways.”

-what are the effects of comparing all natural bodies to machines?

 -only humans have souls and can feel

 -animals are automata and lacked feelings.
They are “beast machines,” lacking consciousness
and act only according to physical stimulus

 -What would Robin Wall Kimmerer think?



Bestiaries and the Book of Nature

- Bestiaries were books documenting both the literal and symbolic associations of animals
- often describes their physical characteristics and actual habits and then offeres a moralized, allegorical reading of these
- ex. The pelican is allegorized as Christ since it was thought to feed its young from its own body (what they were actually seeing was the bird regurgitating its food and then offering it to its young)
- this allegory was licensed by the analogy of the Book of Nature, the belief that the whole of the material world was a reflection of God's divine purpose written out in the visible world



Pelican feeding its chicks in Bestiary, Museum Meermanno, MMW, 10 B 25, folio 32r

Eagle

Natural observation: "When an eagle is old, its eyesight dims and its feathers and wings become heavy. To rejuvenate itself, the eagle flies up to the region of the sun, which burns away the mist over its eyes and burns off its old feathers. The eagle then plunges three times into water, and its youth is restored...The eagle can look directly into the sun."

Allegory: "As the eagle renews its youth, so too can the man with "old clothes and dim eyes", who should seek the spiritual spring and raise the eyes of his mind to God. ... The eagle's ability to look directly at the sun represents Christ's ability to look directly at God."



Bestiaries and the Ladder of Life

- Despite its name, most medieval bestiaries do not contain only animals
- plants, stones, and humans also appear
- a bestiary is a way to make visible the order of nature
- it was an encyclopedia that laid out
- it is literally and figuratively a “book of nature”
- many begin with Adam naming the animals; showing human dominion over the animal kingdom
- BUT humans and their parts appear at the end of some bestiaries, suggesting that they are also an animal among animals



Adam Names the Animals. Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 1511, f9r.

Plants in Bestiaries: The Mandrake

- it was thought to grow in human form, male and female, and shriek when torn from the ground.
- the shriek could send people mad so a hungry dog tied to a cord and lured by meat was used to pull the plant out of the ground
- thought to improve fertility and act as an aphrodisiac



Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 14969 (Bestiaire of Guillaume le Clerc), folio 61v

Rocks and Minerals in Bestiaries: The Magnet

- quasi-animate powers of self-locomotion because of the movement caused by its two poles
- Albertus Magnus argued that magnetic attraction proved the existence of the great chain of being
- Also according to Albertus, a husband could place a magnet under his sleeping wife's pillow. If faithful, she would automatically put her arms around her husband; if not, she would be cast out of the bed, repelled by the stone's powers.



Bestiaries and Anthropomorphism

- is this just anthropomorphizing? what purpose did it serve?
- not just that medieval people thought plants screamed and rocks new whether women were faithful
- *-rather it witnesses the ways in which people were on a continuum with the animal and inanimate worlds
- the descriptions of plants, animals and minerals blurs the line between inanimate and animate things as well as humans and the rest of nature
- an example of how a shared model of animacy (and being) influences what a scientist sees in nature

Imaginary Animals in Bestiaries: The Manticore

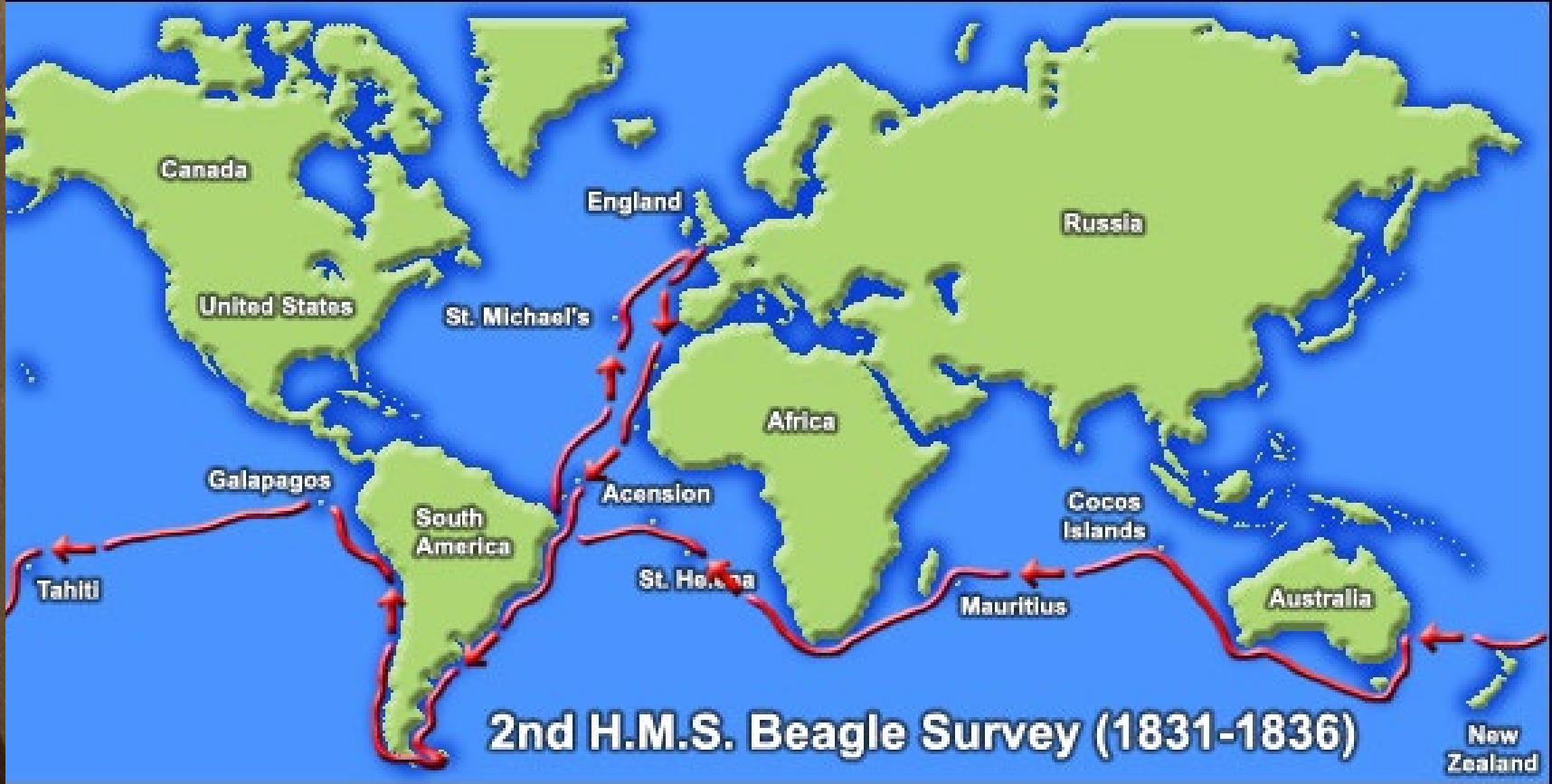
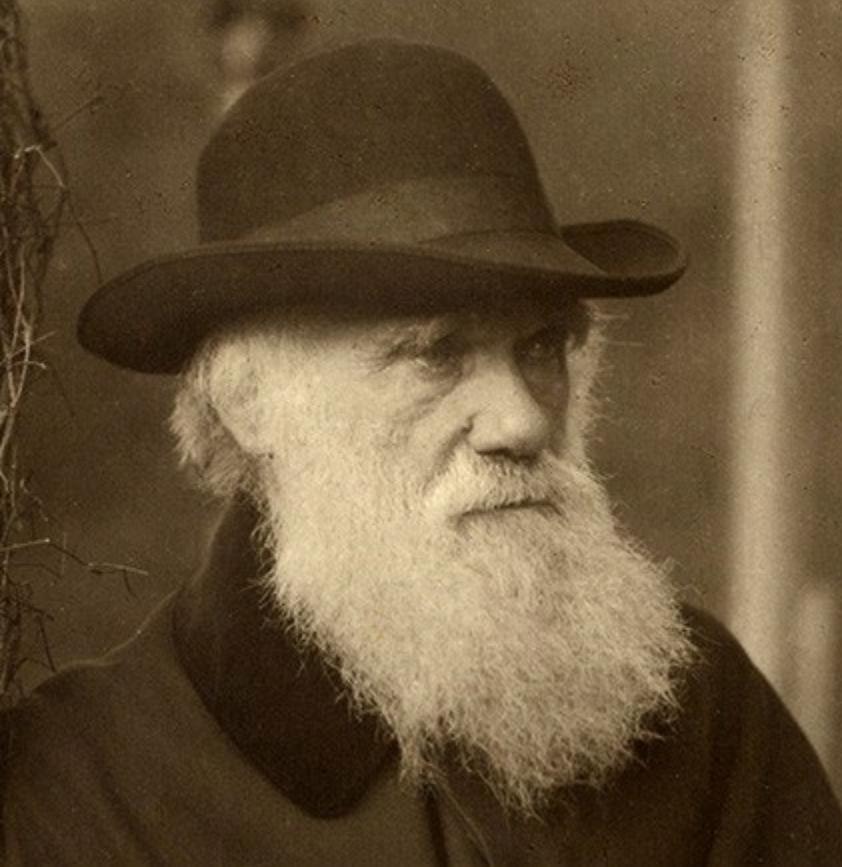
- “A beast with a man's face, a lion's body, and the stinger of a scorpion ... some say it can shoot spines from its tail.”
- Its name derives from ‘man eater’
- a different kind of hybrid: one that has a humanoid creature eating humans
- anthropophagy or cannibalism collapses the boundary between human and animal



Bibliothèque Municipale de Douai, Ms. 711 (De Natura animalium), folio 12r

Monsters, Prodigies and the Order of Nature

- In Aristotle's Physics a monster is a mistake of nature, something that failed to attain its natural end.
- for Aristotle, monsters (particularly monstrous births) are important because they prove the otherwise regular laws of nature ("the exception proves the rule")
- in the medieval and early modern period they were also thought to be jokes (or "sports") of nature (L "lusus naturae")
- like the Green Children of Woolpit
- Etymology of 'monster': from the Latin, 'monstrare' meaning 'to demonstrate' combined with 'monēre' to warn
- what do they demonstrate? How nature can go awry but also moral lessons about what is "natural" and what "unnatural"
- monsters are tools for policing morality
- the monster reinforces social boundaries: the manticore tells us that cannibalism is bad



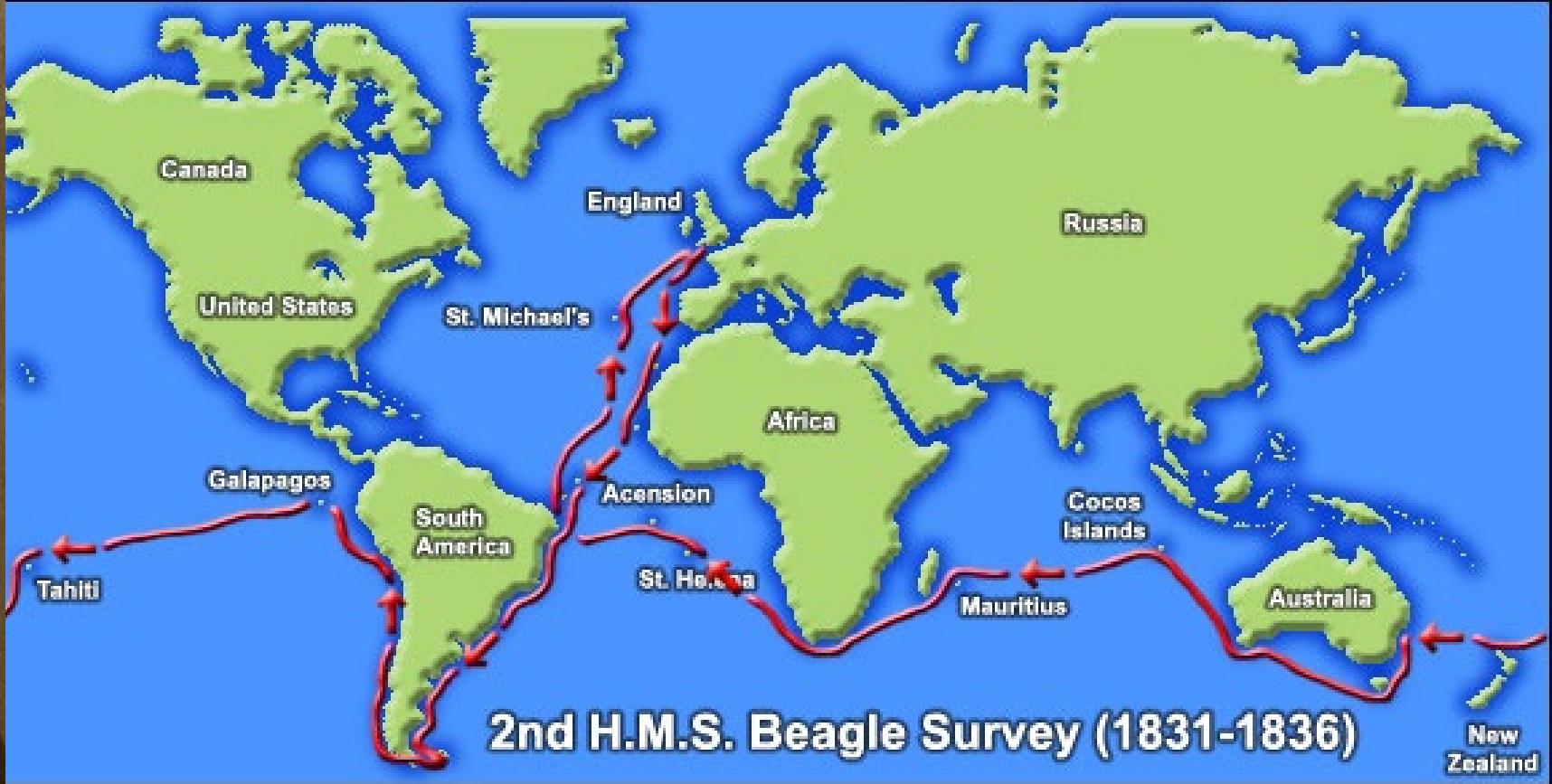
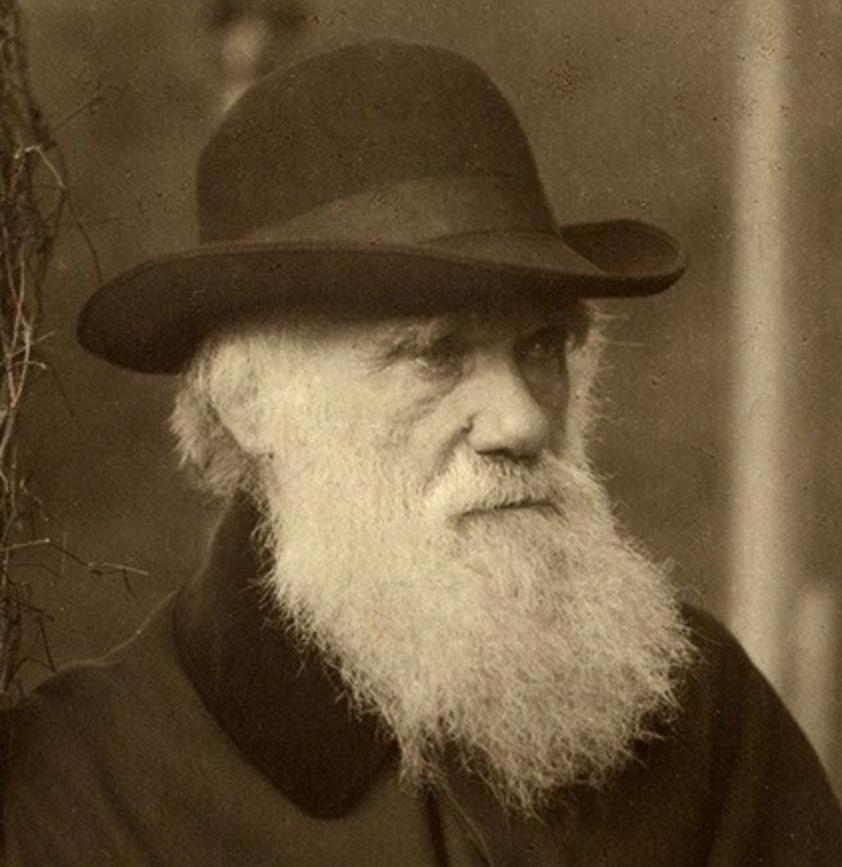
Charles Darwin (1809-1882), *The Origin of Species* (1859)



4. Origins, Analogies, and Learning to Be Human

Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Learning to Be Human

ENGL133 Imagining Nature



Charles Darwin (1809-1882), *The Origin of Species* (1859)

Darwin, Excerpt from *Origin of Species*

Chapter 4: “Natural Selection”

Key terms:

- Adaptation-a heritable trait that allows an organism to better survive and reproduce in its environment; not just a random mutation
 - ex. different beak shapes of Galapagos finches
- Natural selection- the “preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations”
 - this process leads to gradual changes in a population over time
- Survival of the fittest-not the strongest or smartest that survive but the one that can most readily adapt to its environment
 - variations occur over generations “in the great and complex battle of life”
- Phylogeny-the history of organism’s lineage as they change through time

But who (or what) is doing the (natural) selecting?

“As man can produce and certainly has produced a great result by his methodical and unconscious means of selection, what may not nature effect? Man can act only on external and visible characters: nature cares nothing for appearances, except in so far as they may be useful to any being. She can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life. Man selects only for his own good; Nature only for that of the being which she tends. ... He [i.e. man] often begins his selection by some half-monstrous form; or at least by some modification prominent enough to catch his eye, or to be plainly useful to him. Under nature, the slightest difference of structure or constitution may well turn the nicely-balanced scale in the struggle for life, and so be preserved. How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will his products be, compared with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods. Can we wonder, then, that nature's productions should be far 'truer' in character than man's productions; that they should be infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and should plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?” (2)

Darwin's primary analogy

- the similarity between artificial selection (in domestic breeding of animals and plants) and natural selection
- compare to Aristotle on causation (the four causes explained in terms of a statue and a sculptor)

Darwin's personification of Nature

- what does ventriloquizing nature do for Darwin, as opposed to say, Alan of Lille in his 12th c. *Complaint of Nature*?

-Similarities:

- nature is imagined as the higher power in both Alan and Darwin; it is “truer”—a moral yardstick where man is deficient
- both appeal to the laws of nature
- “the stamp of far higher workmanship”-cf. Lady Nature in her medieval forge

-Differences:

- Alan has embodied nature in human form vs. Darwin's disembodied nature (process)
 - Darwin claims that natural selection has no final causes: adaptation eliminates final causes because nature can get to the same point from different routes
 - ex. both bats and birds have wings

YET the mechanism of a personified natural selection remains unclear:

“It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.” (Darwin, “Natural Selection”2-3)

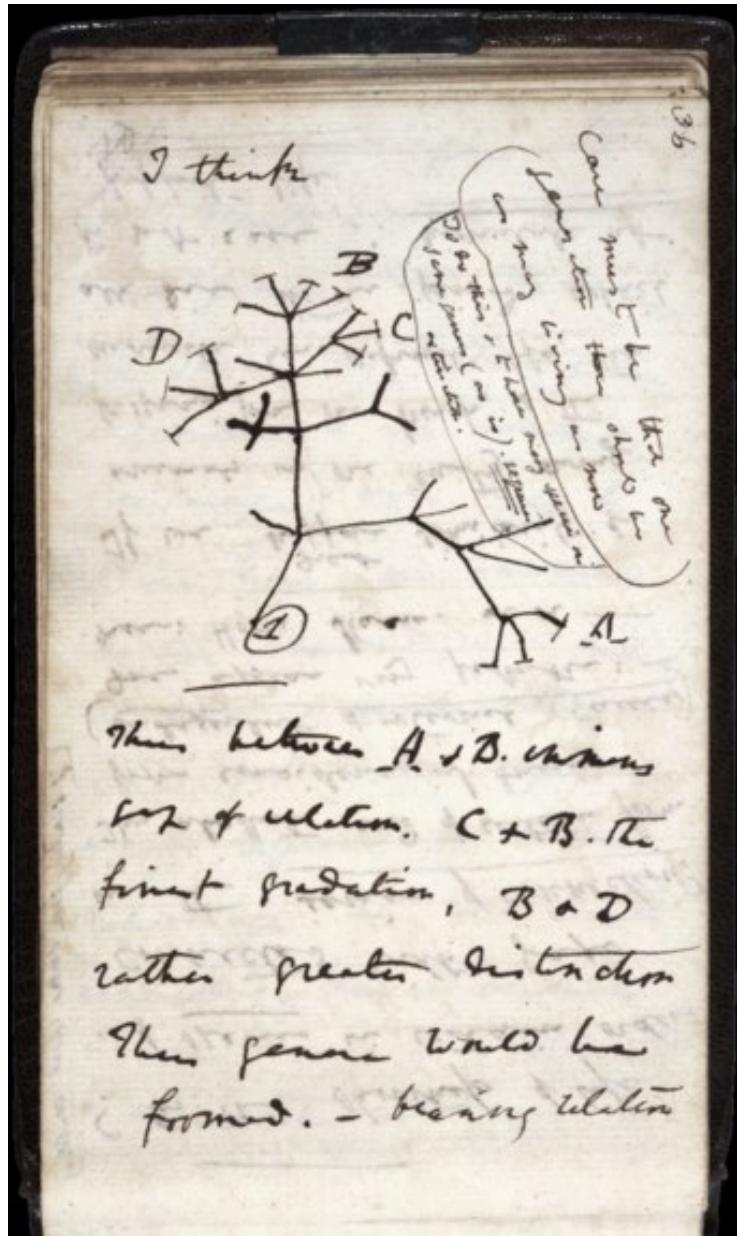
-Nature “scrutinizes,” “rejects” and “preserves”

-‘survival of the fittest’ transposes a human-based model of striving and fighting onto the natural world

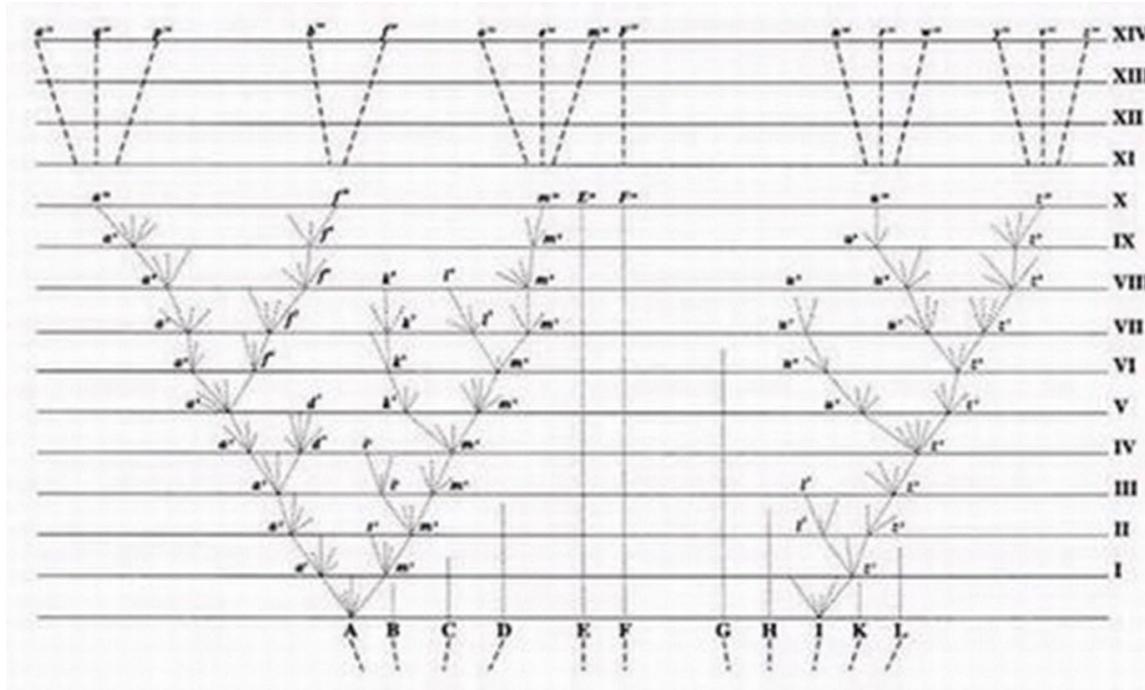
-some argue that Darwin simply installs sex where god had formerly been

 -creatures strive not toward their perfect preordained end (teleology) or form but instead strive to reproduce

 -the engine in previous views of personified nature is god, in Darwin’s personified nature it is sex



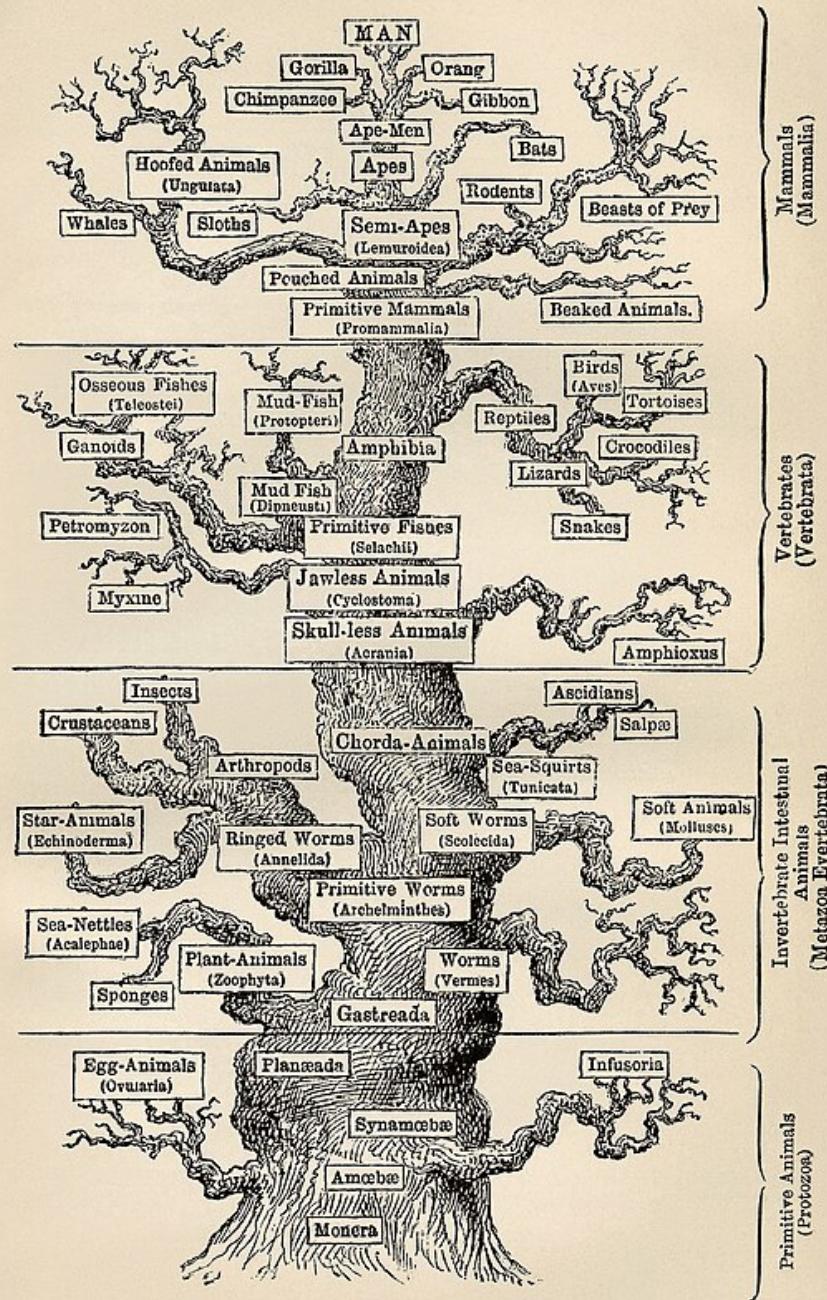
Initial sketch of Tree of Life, Darwin's notebook, July 1837



Tree of Life Image as it appeared in *On the Origin of Species* (1859)

- the Tree of Life shows how species are related to each other based on similarities and differences
- each fork represents the most recent common ancestor of the subsequent branches
- includes both living and extinct species

PEDIGREE OF MAN.



-Ernst Haeckel's version of Darwin's Tree of Life from an English translation of *The Evolution of Man* (1879)

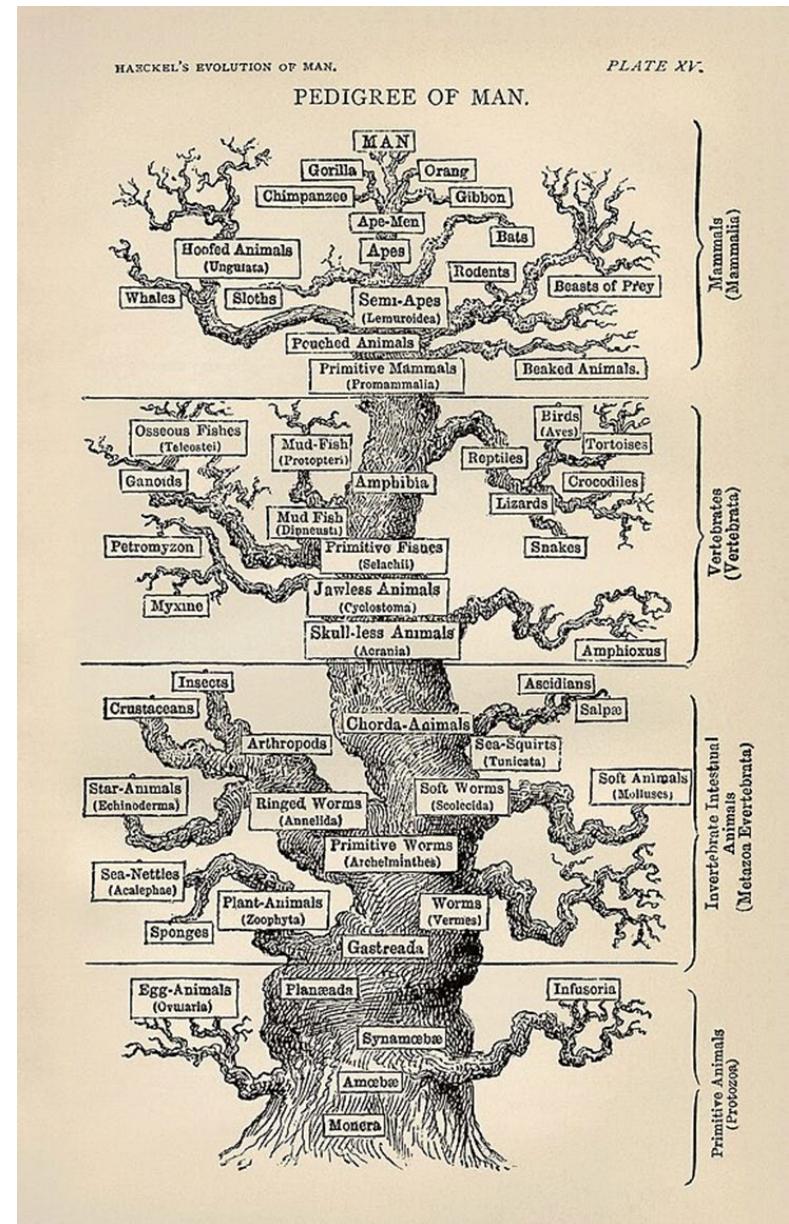
-Haeckel was Darwin's greatest popularizer in Western Europe

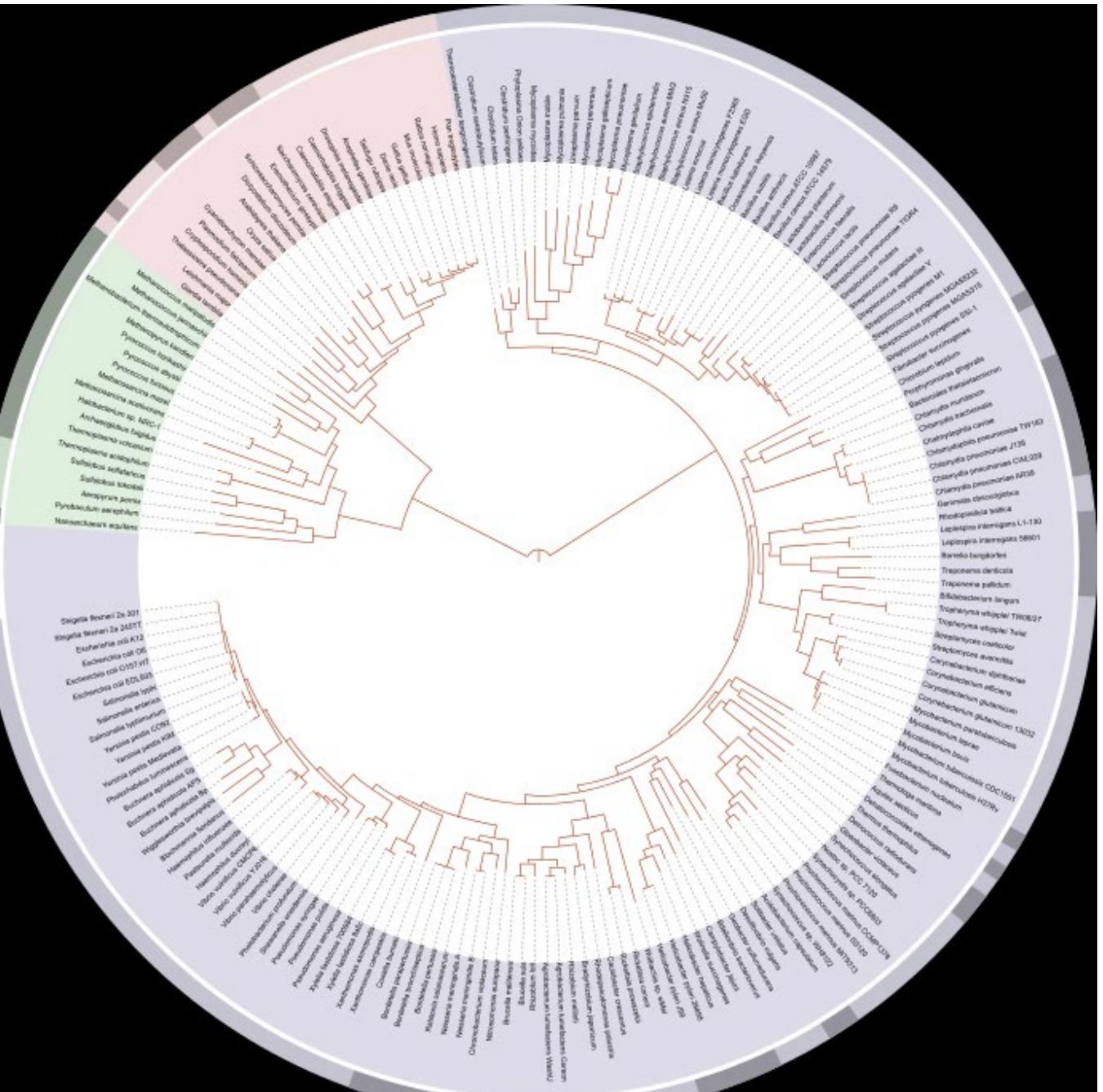
--what does this value? What does it make visible?

Vertical relationships through time; the separation of species from each other (i.e. no cross breeding across species)



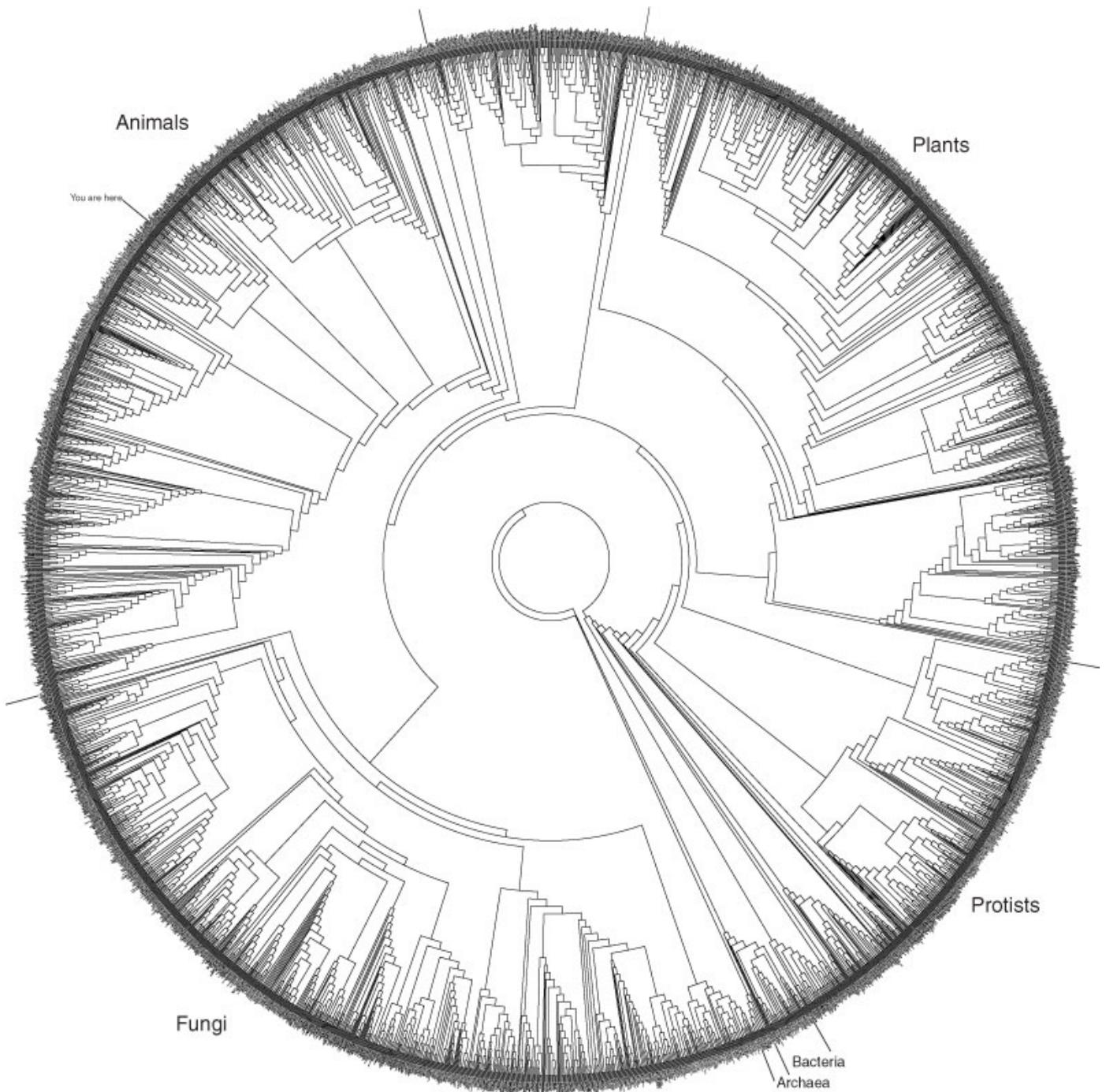
How does the medieval Ladder of Life compare to the Darwinian (Haeckel) Tree of Life? How are they same/ different?





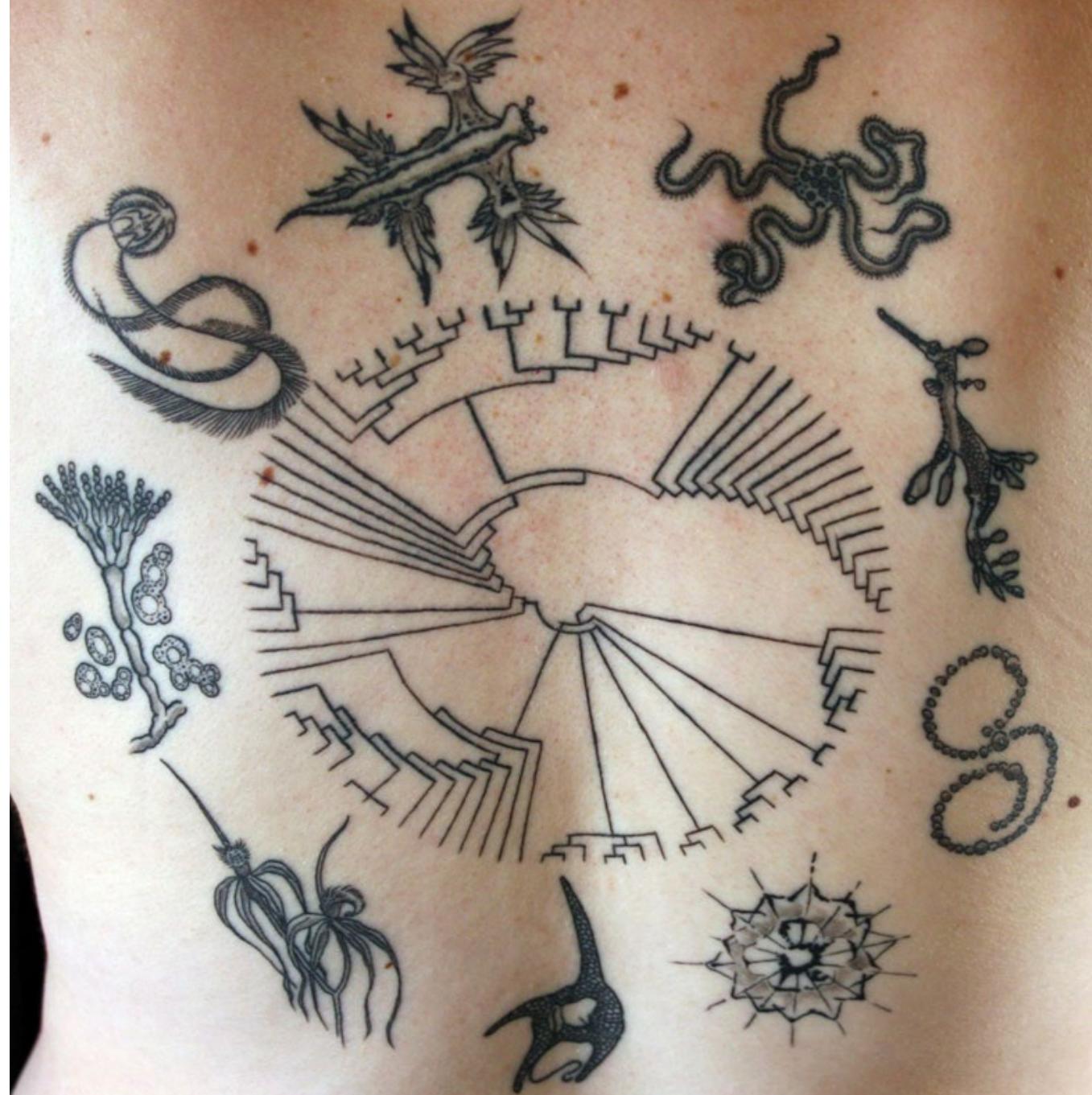
Hillis plot of the Tree of Life, based on completely sequenced genomes.

A phylogenetic tree of life, showing the relationship of a sample of species whose genomes had been sequenced as of 2006.



Hillis Phylogenetic Tree of Life

Source: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcapcglclefindmkaj/http://www.zoas.edu/faculty/antisense/tree.pdf



Why Should We Care about Analogies for Nature and How They Change Over Time?

- analogies are not just decoration; they are theories of knowledge and they determine the types of questions that we ask about nature
 - all analogies suppress some things in order to make others clearer
-
- for example:
 - the medieval book of Nature and Ladder of Life allow us to see the shared animacies between humans and the rest of nonhuman nature but also inscribes the hierarchy of human over the rest of nature; imagines it as theological
 - the Renaissance machine analogy explains regular processes of nature by analogy with recent technological advances but it also introduces an intractable divide between the human and the rest of nature; nonhuman nature is made available for human exploitation rather than stewardship
 - Darwin's Tree of Life explains how different species relate to one another but most of the non-animate world drops off; emphasizes a vertical hierarchy with little cross species similarity (or cross breeding); only the agonistic principle of adaptation is valued; nature is a cage fight; also suggests genetic determinism in both human and animal kingdom
 - Hillis's Phylogenetic Tree of Life values horizontal connections among different levels of being; emphasizes what humans share with the nonhuman world as well collaboration among genes / species

How do we become human?

- one answer is the one given by Darwin: we become human through evolution: adaptation and natural selection
- but we also *learn* to be human
- there are many other answers beyond the biological

Daniel Heath Justice, “How Do We Learn to be Human?”

-How does the term ‘human’ gets weaponized?

“[In the western tradition,] there is a fiercely maintained boundary between human and nonhuman, and even in the former category, there is a clear hierarchy: men are more human than women, European colonizers are more human than Indigenous and other colonized peoples, the rich and titled are more human than the poor and oppressed, Christian capitalists are more human than animist traditionalists, and so on.” (Justice 40)

-humanity is not a static state

-“Our biology is only a very small part of our humanity the rest is a process of becoming.” (Justice 33)

-becoming human in many indigenous communities is about **kinship**

-cf. Vine Deloria “Kinship with the World?

“Kinship isn’t just a thing, it’s an active network of connections, a process of continual acknowledgement and enactment. To be human is to practise humanness.” (Justice 41-2)

Robin Wall Kimmerer, “In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place”

- Nanabozho= the Original Man and, according to RWK, “our great teacher of how to be human” (205)
- Kimmerer’s Sitka Spruce grandmother

Kimmerer’s question:

“But can Americans, as a nation of immigrants, learn to live here as if we were staying? With both feet on the shore? What happens when we truly become native to a place, when we finally make a home? Where are the stories that lead the way?” (207)

In class Writing Assignment on Robin Wall Kimmerer, “In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place” (Canvas)

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section). Feel free to consult Kimmerer’s essay but no other resources.

1. What does Nanabozho, as Original Man, learn from his kinship network? What model of kinship is this? Give at least one example.
2. What does Kimmerer mean when she encourages non-indigenous people to become “indigenous to place”?
3. What are the drawbacks of this model that Kimmerer acknowledges? What is the difference between being “indigenous” to place and being “naturalized” to place?



5. Ecological Knowledges Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment Natures Alexander von Humboldt's *Views on Nature*

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

-Midterm Friday 3/7

- rubric under 'Modules' and 'Assignments'

- list of concepts and titles by 2/25 under 'Modules' and 'Assignments'

-Writing Assignment #1

- due Friday 3/14, uploaded to Canvas as a 'doc' file by 5 pm

- guidelines under 'Assignments'

This week: What forms does knowledge about nature take? Why are they important?

Today: Why is Alexander von Humboldt important for modern natural sciences? What model of nature did he originate?

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), *Views of Nature [Ansichten der Natur]* (1808)

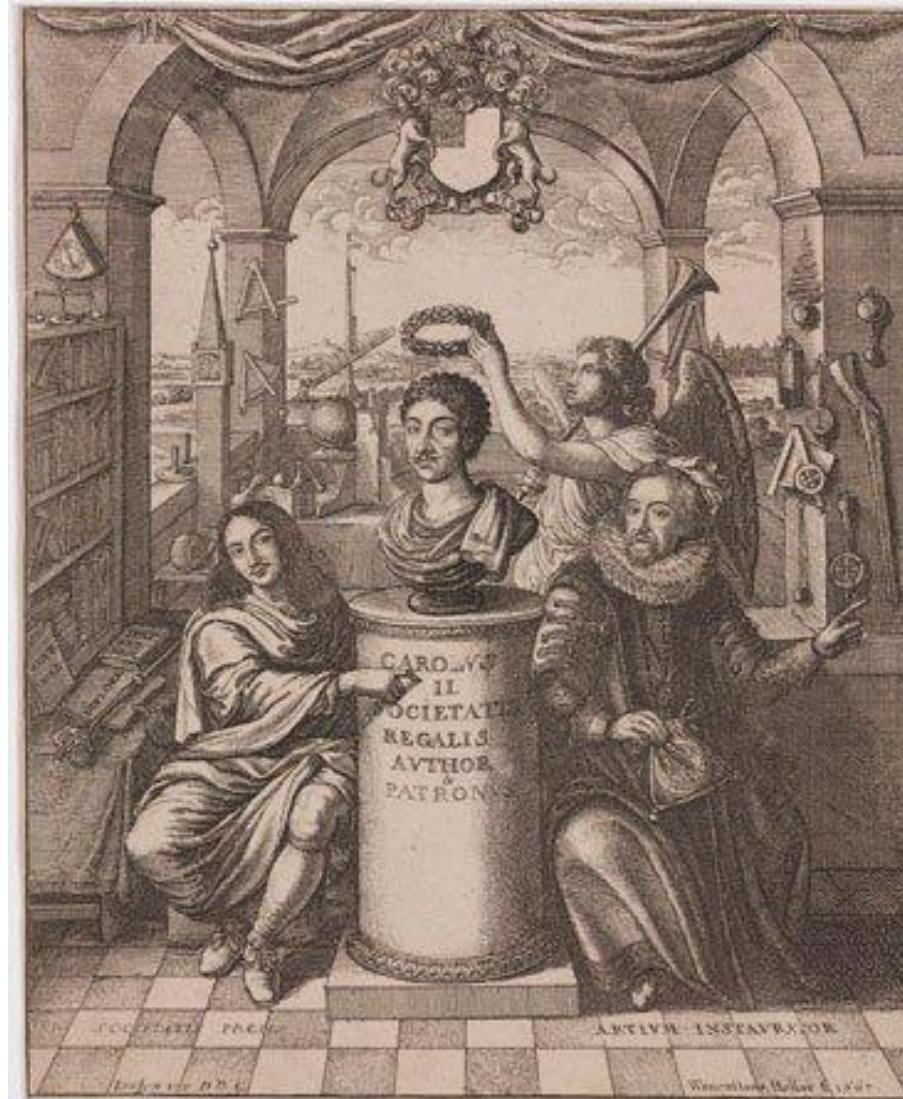
- Humboldt was a geographer, naturalist, and explorer
- called the “father of modern environmentalism”
- Humboldt’s 1799–1804 research expedition to Central and South America with botanist Aimé Bonpland is documented in *Views of Nature*
- the voyage into the tropics, an area that he describes as “the early age of humanity and its simple grandeur” (118)
- this book set the agenda for 19th c. scientific studies of nature that followed, such as Darwin, and in the literary world of the British Romantics and the American Transcendentalists
- Humboldt’s ideas emerge from the context of European science: Scientific Revolution (17th c.) and the Enlightenment (18th c.)



Frédéric Christophe de Houdetot. *Alexander von Humboldt*, in Berlin (1807).

16th and 17th c. Scientific Revolution Attitudes toward Nature

- nature is a predictable and orderly system that can be understood through empiricism
- empiricism=a scientific method that emphasizes careful observation and experimentation; became the primary tool for understanding nature
- rejection of the models of Plato and Aristotle and their medieval interpreters
- rejection of Aristotelian teleology, the idea that nature is purposeful and that natural things come to be and are present for the sake of a particular end (for example, wings are present in birds for the sake of flying)
- effect: the animacy of nature leaches out of the world; nature is imagined as inert and as an object
- only humans are subjects in their own right
- the animate models of the Book of Nature and the Ladder of Life are replaced by Cartesian rationalism
 - rationalism=a belief that the human intellect can deduce truths about the exterior world through abstract reason alone
- nature is a machine like a mechanical clock
- hence, Descartes (1596–1650) and other 17th c. natural philosophers are described as “mechanists” with respect to nature
- Descartes espoused “mind-body dualism,” where the mind is seen as a distinct entity separate from the physical body and from the rest of nature
- For Descartes, humans are the “masters and possessors of Nature”



Frontispiece to *The History of the Royal-Society of London*, 1667

After the Scientific Revolution: The Enlightenment (late 17th and 18th c)

“Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* [Dare to know!]”

-Immanuel Kant, from “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)



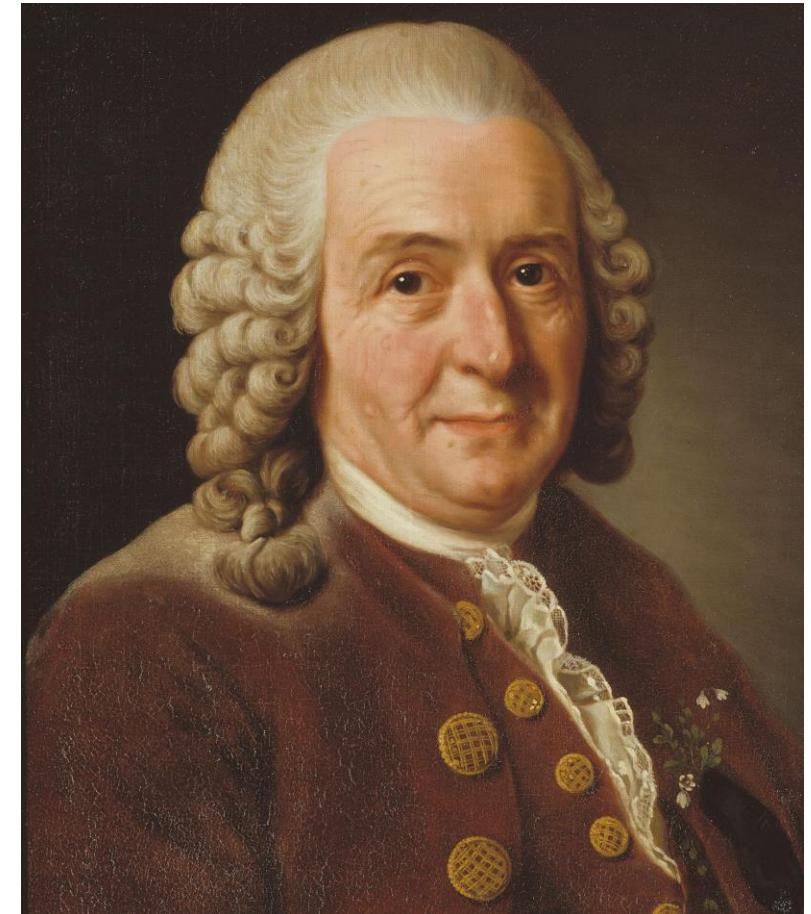
IMMANUEL KANT (1784)

Enlightenment Nature (late 17th c and 18th c in western Europe)

- the study of observable nature was divorced from the study of human beings (cf. Deloria, "Kinship with Nature")
- wild nature is a force that needs to be controlled and harnessed for human use= instrumentalism
- but, at the same time, nature represented an ideal state of affairs that people should strive towards
- the laws of nature were discoverable and could be appealed to for models of human behavior: "natural law"
 - for example, the philosopher John Locke argued that all people are naturally free and equal under the law of nature
 - Locke believed that these "natural laws" were universal and applicable to all people, regardless of their culture or society
- Paradox 1: nature is divorced from the human but still serves as a universal model for behavior
- Paradox 2: slavery and the oppression of Amerindians

Enlightenment Nature: Linnaean Taxonomy

- Taxonomy = a hierarchical classification system
- Linnaeus's *System of Nature [Systema Naturae]* (1735)
- Linnaeus classified living things according to observable characteristics
- Binomial Nomenclature = naming of plants and animals according to the Latinate names of their genus and species
 - Linneaus was not the first to invent this system, but was the first to implement it consistently
- Included classifications for humans into distinct races. These races were based on skin tone and outlined the innate characteristics of members of each group.
- Believed that "all things [in nature] are made for the sake of man"=instrumentalism



The Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus
(1707-78)

CAROLI LINNÆI

REGNUM ANIMALE.

The kingdom of animals ('Regnum Animale') in Linnaeus' first edition of *Systema naturae*, 1735

C A R O L

I. QUADRUPEDIA.

Corpus hirsutum. Pedes quatuor. Feminae viviparæ, lactiferæ.

Dentes primordiæ 4. II. trinque: vel nulli. ANTHROPOPO- MORPHÆ.	Homo.	Nosce te ipsum.	Europæus albesc. Americanus rubesc. Asiaticus fuscus. Africanus nigr.
	Simia.	ANTERIORES. POSTERIORES. <i>Digiti</i> 5. . . . 5. Posteriores anterioribus similes.	
	Bradypus.	<i>Digiti</i> 3. vel 2. . . 3.	
			Simia cauda carens. Papio. Satyrus. Cercopithecus. Cynocephalus.
			Ai. Ignavus. Tardigradus.

- Humans ("homo) differ from other mammals because of their ability to "know thyself"
- Humans divided into 4 groups based on skin colors

Linnaeus Classifies Us



Carolus Linnaeus
(1707-1778)

Amerind: Obstinate, contented, free.
Ruled by custom

European: Active, clever, inventive.
Ruled by laws

East Asian: Severe, haughty,
desirous. *Ruled by opinion*

Sub-Saharan African: Crafty, slow,
foolish. *Ruled by caprice*

— *System of Nature* (1758)

“[Nanabozho] walked the land, handing out names to all he met, an Anishinaabe Linnaeus. I like to think of the two of them walking together. Linnaeus the Swedish botanist and zoologist, in his loden jacket and woolen trousers, with felt hat cocked back on his forehead and a vasculum under his arm, and Nanabozho naked but for his breechcloth and a single feather, with a buckskin bag under his arm. They stroll along discussing the names for things. They’re both so enthusiastic, pointing out the beautiful leaf shapes, the incomparable flowers. Linnaeus explains his *Systema Naturae*, a scheme designed to show the ways in which all things are related. Nanabozho nods enthusiastically, “Yes, that is also our way: we say, ‘We are all related.’” He explains that there was a time when all beings spoke the same language and could understand one another, so all of Creation knew each other’s names. Linnaeus looks wistful about that. “I ended up having to translate everything into Latin,” he says of binomial nomenclature. “We lost any other common language long ago.” Linnaeus lends Nanabozho his magnifying glass so he can see the tiny floral parts. Nanabozho gives Linnaeus a song so he can see their spirits. And neither of them are lonely.”

-Kimmerer, “In The Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place”

Humboldt, *Views of nature, or, Contemplations on the sublime phenomena of creation: With scientific illustrations* (1850)

Alexander von Humboldt's "Physical Geography"



- physical geography: "an idea of the whole, in terms of area"
- the world as integrated, unified, interconnected whole
- against the idea of dividing off parts of nature, esp humans from the rest of nature (against mechanist philosophers and Linnaeus in this respect)
- often referred to as the "Father of ecology" or the "Father of environmentalism"

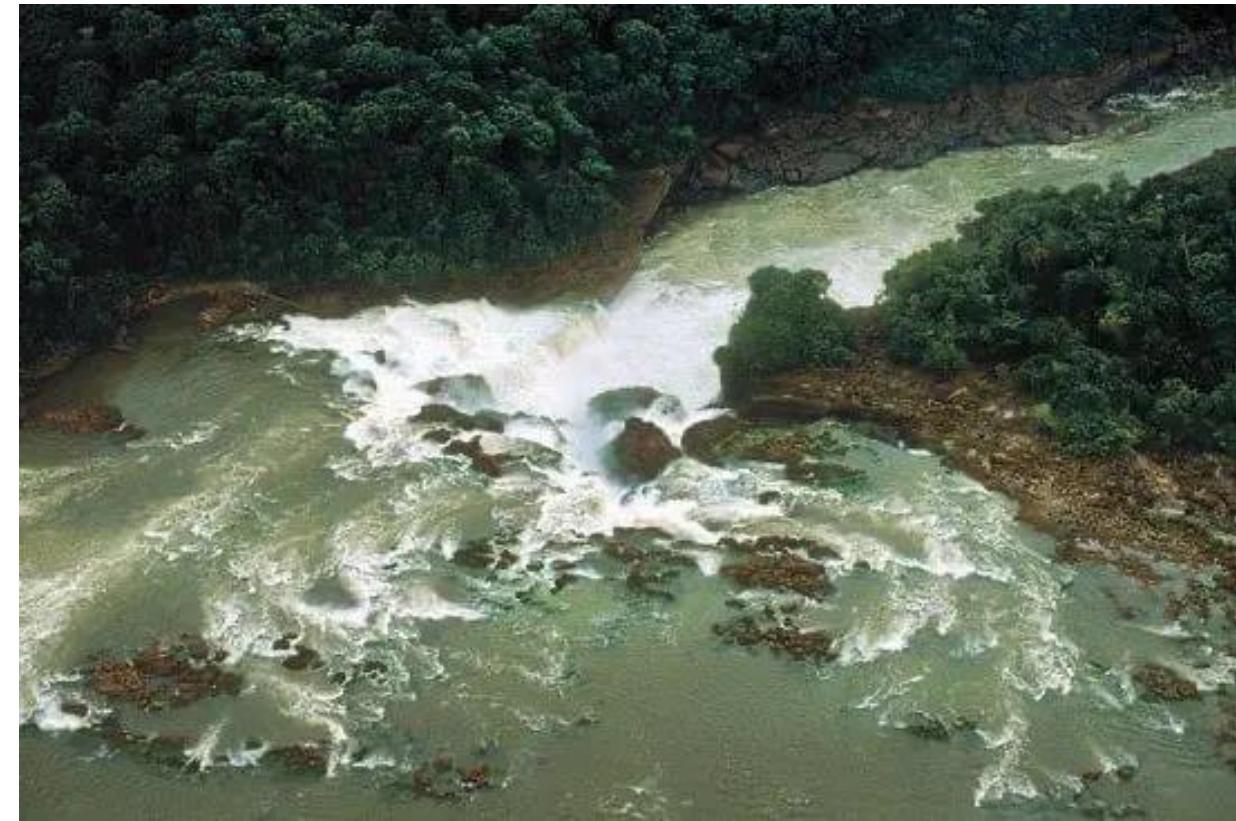




Eduard Ender, *Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland in the Amazon jungle* (ca. 1850)

Orinoco River and the Atures and Maypures rapids

“Concerning the Waterfalls of the Orinoco near Atures and Maypures” from Humboldt’s *Views of Nature*



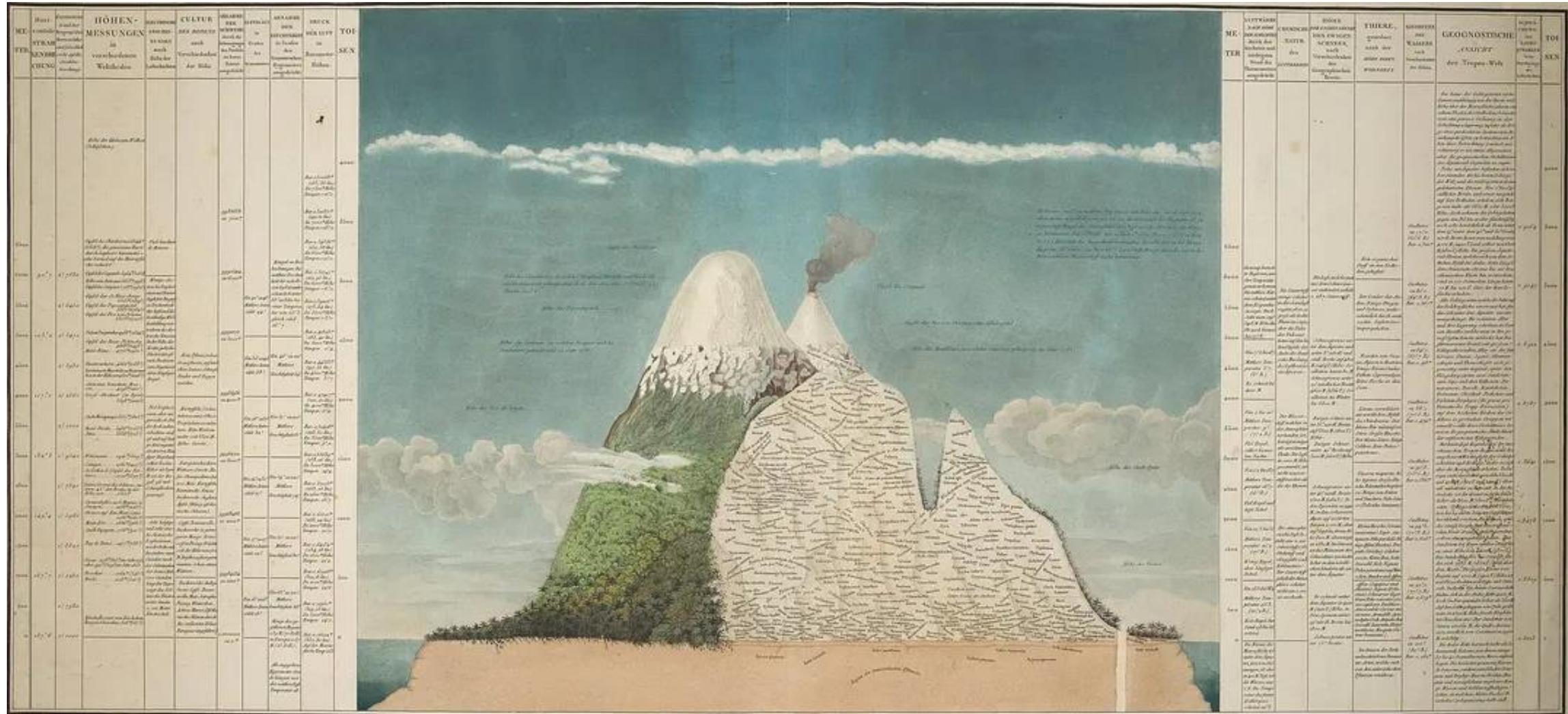
Views of Nature, or, Contemplations on the sublime phenomena of creation

What is the Sublime?

“Descriptions of Nature more strongly or weakly affect us depending upon the greater or lesser extent to which they correspond to the needs of our feelings. For in the innermost receptive mind, the physical world is reflected, living and true. That which designates the character of a landscape—the profile of the mountains that border the horizon in the hazy distance, the darkness of the fir forests, the roaring forest river that plummets between overhanging cliffs—all of it stands in an ancient and mysterious association with the disposition of human temperament. Upon this association rests the nobler part of the enjoyment that Nature provides.”

-“Concerning the Waterfalls of the Orinoco near Atures and Maypures” from Humboldt’s *Views of Nature* 117-118

Humboldt's *Naturgemälde* ["painting of nature, unification"] Mt. Chimborazo in Ecuador (19,000+ feet)



Humboldt's way of visualizing his theory that all of nature is connected. From *Essai sur la géographie des plantes* (1805).



- a cross-section of Chimborazo showing which different plants grew at different altitudes and temperatures
- on the sides were comparisons to other mountains around the world and their plants and climate zones at similar heights.
- first comparative visualization of climates and geography for biological and meteorological climate zones
- demonstrates that plants, animals, and climate are related in global ecosystems organized by altitude and rock type
- cf. Linnaeus's divided taxonomy that is interested in how things differ rather than what they have in common

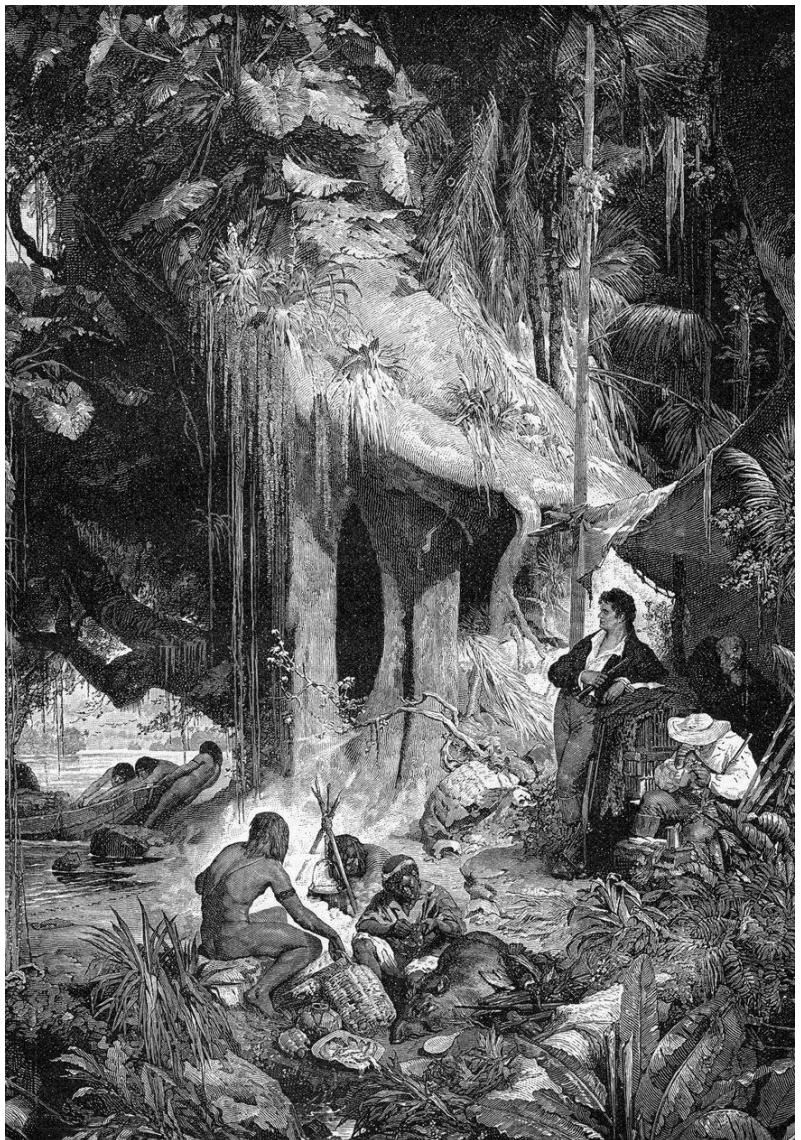
Humboldt's Views of Nature

- the unity of nature
- Humboldt's ideas laid the foundation for modern concepts of ecosystems, climate science, and geography
- Comparative (he often compares what he sees in South America to Europe and other parts of the world)
- holistic web of connections where all organisms are related
- Against the dominant paradigm (such as that of Carl Linnaeus) that focused on organisms at the level of the individual, with humans set apart
- Humboldt resisted the notion of human exceptionalism
- he was one of the first Europeans to highlight the effects of human-induced land-use and climate change on the natural world
- He lamented that European colonial draining of wetland and forest clearance for agriculture— particularly the production of cash crops for the European and American textile markets —scarred the landscape and destroyed natural vegetation;

Humboldt on Slavery

“Nowhere else in the world seems more appropriate to dissipate melancholy and restore peace to troubled minds than Tenerife and Madeira. These effects are due not only to the magnificent situation and to the purity of air, but above all to the absence of slavery, which so deeply revolts us in all those places where Europeans have brought what they call their 'enlightenment' and their 'commerce' to their colonies.”

-Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, During the Year 1799-1804*



Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland on
the Orinoco River, 1800-1804 (Engraving,
ca.1900)

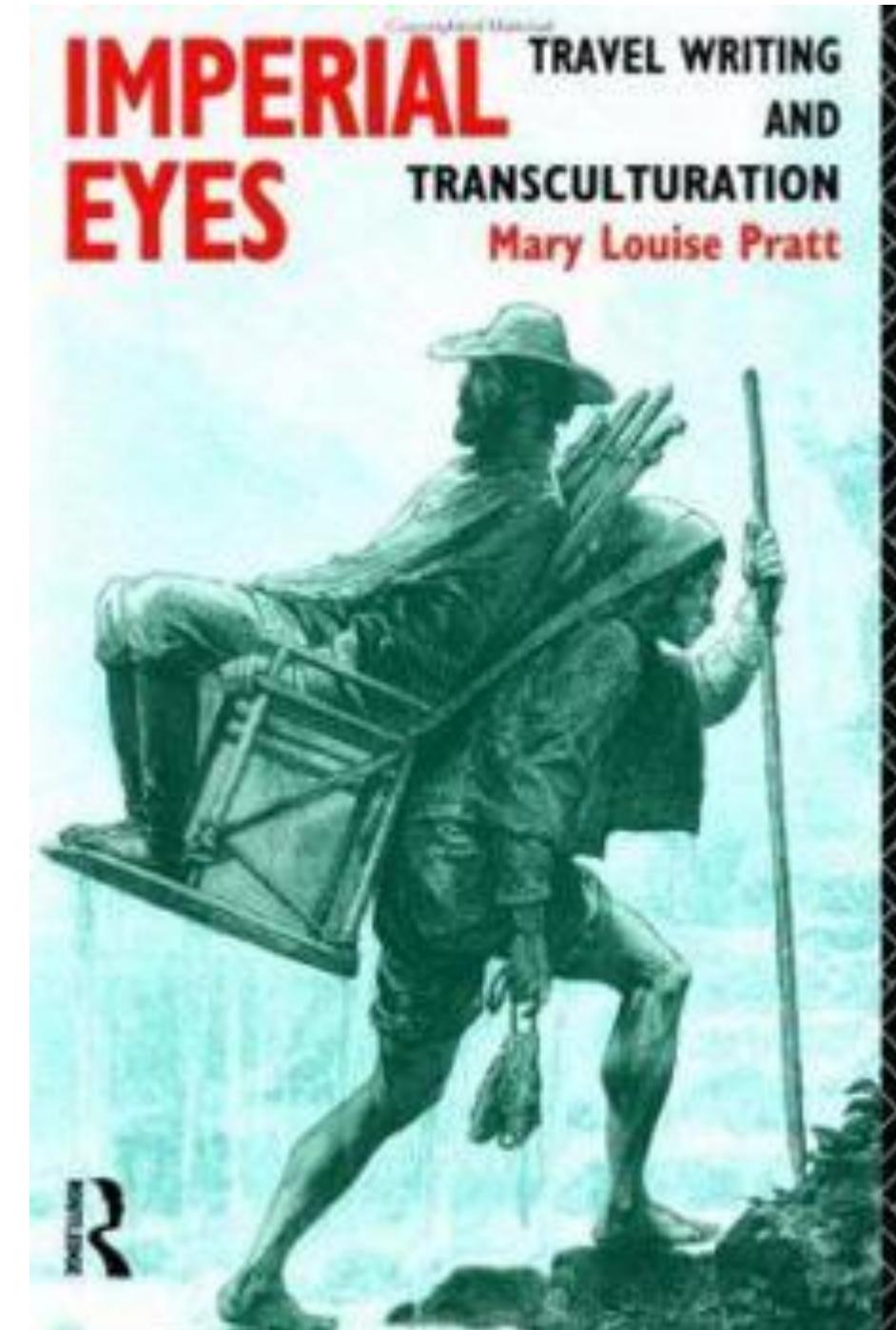
Contradictions: Humboldt and his Indigenous guides

“On the right bank of the river, is the cavern of Ataruipe, famed far and wide amongst the Indians. The surrounding region is Nature of a great and solemn character, making it a suitable place for a national cemetery. ... We counted approximately 600 well-preserved skeletons, each in a basket woven from the stalks of palm fronds. ... We left the cavern at nightfall, after collecting several skulls and the complete skeleton of an older man, much to the great irritation of our Indian guides. ... [I]t was in a somber mood that we left behind us this tomb of an extinct tribe. ...

Thus do the races of men die away. The admirable lore of the different peoples fades away. But with the wilting of each blossom of the spirit, whenever, in the storm of the times, the works of creative art are scattered so forever will new life sprout forth from the womb of the Earth. Restlessly, procreative Nature opens her buds: unconcerned whether outrageous humanity (a forever discordant race) should trample the ripening fruit.” (*Views of Nature*, 129-130)

European Enlightenment science and the invisibility of indigenous people

- Humboldt's *Views of Nature* as a document of Euroimperialism
- the “seeing-man is the protagonist of the anti conquest”
- the scientific hero is usually a European male subject whose “imperial eyes ... passively look out and possess” (7)
- the landscape must be evacuated of humans
- Humboldt does this by focusing largely on flora and fauna
- also the wistful thoughts on the “extinct tribe” of the cemetery at Ataruipe



The ending of *Views of Nature*

Humboldt asks his young guide: “Do you and your parents not feel ... an occasional desire, in light of your want, to dig for the treasures that lie so near? The boy’s answer was so simple, so much the expression of the quiet resignation that characterizes the aboriginal people of this land, that I put it down in my journal in Spanish: “Such a desire .. Does not come to us; my father says that it would be a sin ... If we had all of the golden branches with all of their golden fruite, then our white neighbors would hate us and harm us. We possess a little field and good wheat.” (*Views of Nature* 280-281).

What is the effect of this as an ending?

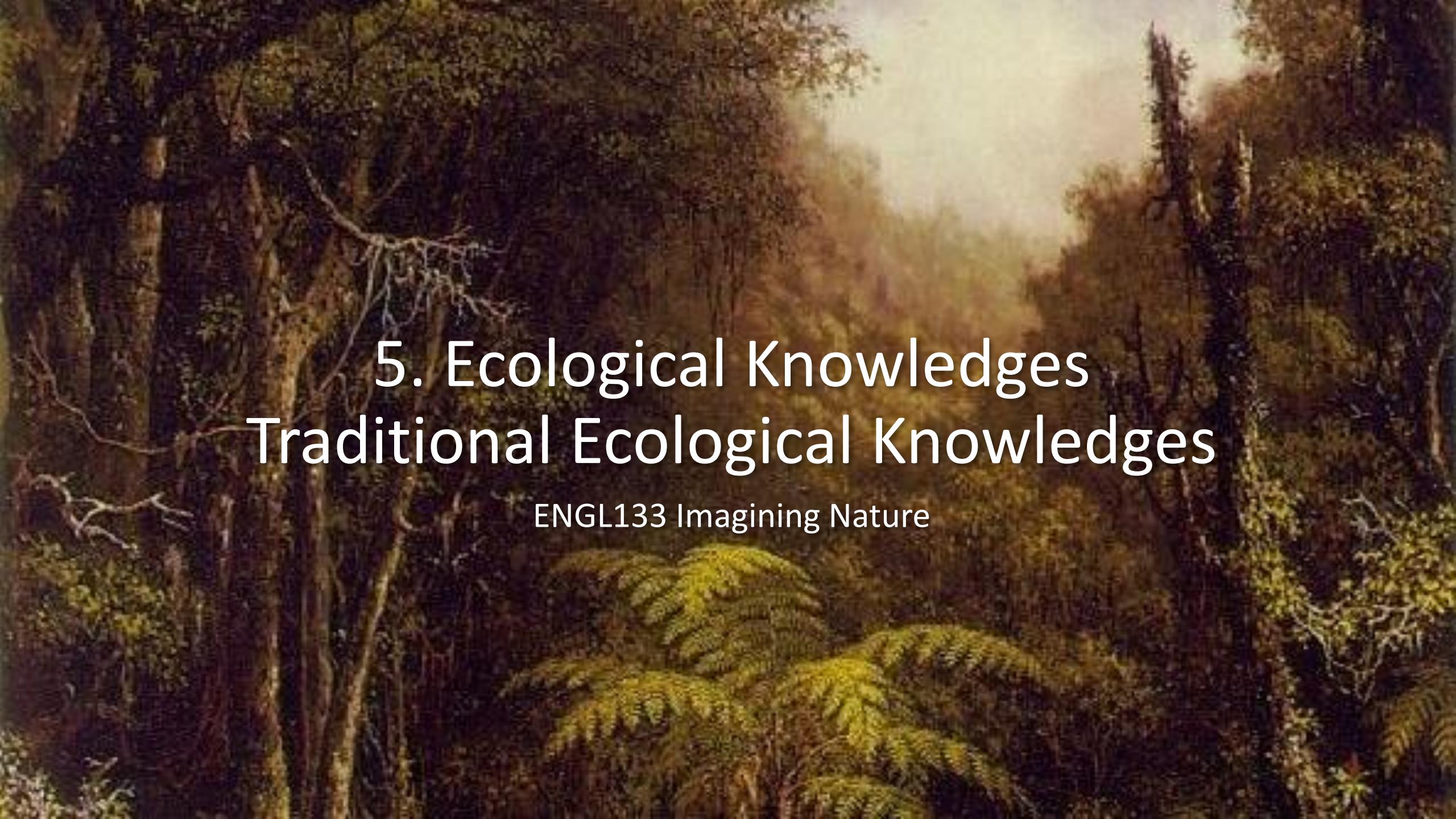
- Humboldt ends not with a paeon to science and natural collecting but a personal anecdote
- he reminds us of the extinction of a formerly powerful people and the extractive goals of European colonialism
- seems to be some awareness of how his scientific exploration contributes to both of these

Indigenous Survivance

- how the ending of *Views of Nature* acknowledges ‘survivance’ of indigenous peoples of Central and South America
- Survivance= survival + resistance
 - “Survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name.”
- from Gerald Robert Vizenor, ed., *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008)

Why should we care about Alexander von Humboldt and the contradictory legacy of European Enlightenment science that he largely shaped?

- He was characterized by liberalism (anti-slavery and highlighted the plight of indigenous peoples), love of adventure, obsession with quantification of nature, and awe at its beauty even as he sometimes treated indigenous knowledge and artifacts with a lack of respect
- first to see nature as a global force since climate zones were similar in different parts of the world
- his observations become the model for subsequent natural history, biology, and botany
- his fusion of literature and science was an argument for how science had to spark the imagination not just quantify or describe nature
- he influenced not just scientists like Darwin but poets and artists (British Romanticism and American Transcendentalism)

A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, dark evergreen trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the textured bark and branches of several trees. In the background, more trees are visible through a misty or hazy atmosphere.

5. Ecological Knowledges

Traditional Ecological Knowledges

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

Midterm on 3/7

-Study guide is posted on Canvas

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

- oral accounts and stories of natural phenomena in the context of local community
- combines extraction model (humans take animals as prey) with respect for nonhuman nature as existing independently of human needs and ends
- how does TEK differ from western natural science?
 - founded on the idea that all things are connected (“kinship of the world”)
 - based in an idea of community that links human and beyond human community members in a given place
 - does not prioritize the human at the expense of other community members
 - nature exists on its own terms, independent of human use value
- how does TEK do more than “confirm” Western scientific hypotheses? How can it be a an alternative framework for understanding the natural world?

Some examples of North American TEK and Land Management

- Indigenous burn practices in California have suppressed wildfires and contributed to increased biodiversity
- The knowledge of Inuit Inupiaq hunters made possible a study of Alaskan wolf ecosystems to understand population numbers
- TEK has proved that mixed species hunting groups of marine birds and mammals forage cooperatively rather than competitively (sea lions, whales, and dolphins use gulls to locate prey and then both groups feed more successfully)

Source: Pierotti, Raymond, and Daniel Wildcat. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge: The Third Alternative (Commentary)." *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000): 1333–40.



Kimmerer, “Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass”

TEK: What is an experiment?

“To me, an experiment is a kind of conversation with plants: I have a question for them, but since we don’t speak the same language, I can’t ask them directly and they won’t answer verbally. But plants can be eloquent in their physical responses and behaviors. Plants answer questions by the way they live, by their responses to change; you just need to learn how to ask. I smile when I hear my colleagues say “I discovered X.” That’s kind of like Columbus claiming to have discovered America. It was here all along, it’s just that he didn’t know it. Experiments are not about discovery but about listening and translating the knowledge of other beings.” (158)

-cf Val Plumwood on cross species representation as an act of translation
(speaking *with* not *for*)

What is the lesson of sweetgrass?

“We are all the product of our worldviews— even scientists who claim pure objectivity. Their predictions for sweetgrass were consistent with their Western science worldview, which sets human beings outside of “nature” and judges their interactions with other species as largely negative. They had been schooled that the best way to protect a dwindling species was to leave it alone and keep people away. But the grassy meadows tell us that for sweetgrass, human beings are part of the system, a vital part.” (163)

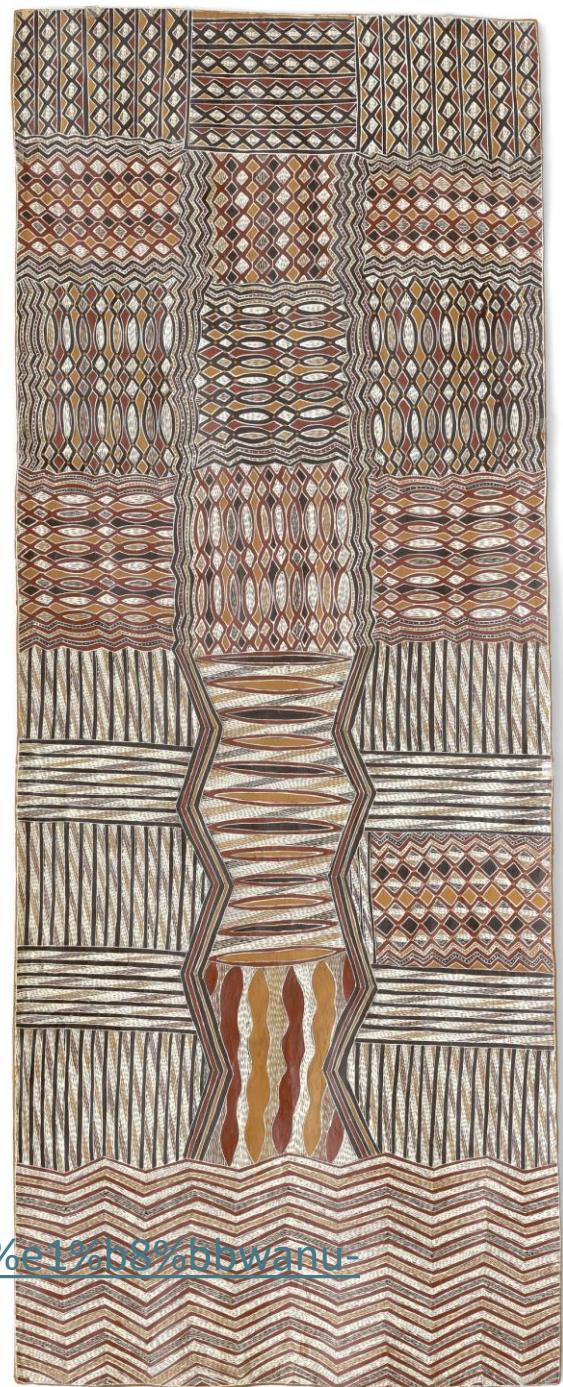
- “Sweetgrass thrives where it is used and disappears elsewhere”
- “If we use a plant respectfully it will stay with us and flourish. If we ignore it, it will go away.”
- “the question was, how do we show respect?”

Forms of Natural Knowledge: Indigenous bark paintings

“Each pattern in this painting represents a different body of water belonging to the Dhalwanju clan. At the top, tight rows of diamonds refer to the sacred freshwaters of Gulutji, from which Barama emerged to deliver Yirritja Law. At the base, the zig-zag lines signify the rolling waves of the saltwater estate of Garrapara. In the central section, Waturr has depicted the site where the floodplain of Baraltja flows into the bay.”

Waturr Gumana, “Dhalwanju Law” (2004)

Source: <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/dha%e1%b8%bbwanu-rom-dha%e1%b8%bbwanu-law/>





Bark paintings of the Yolŋu people who live around Yirrkala in northern Australia's Arnhem land. Eucalyptus bark is stripped during the wet season. Artists learn their clan songlines and their clan motifs from older artists in the community.

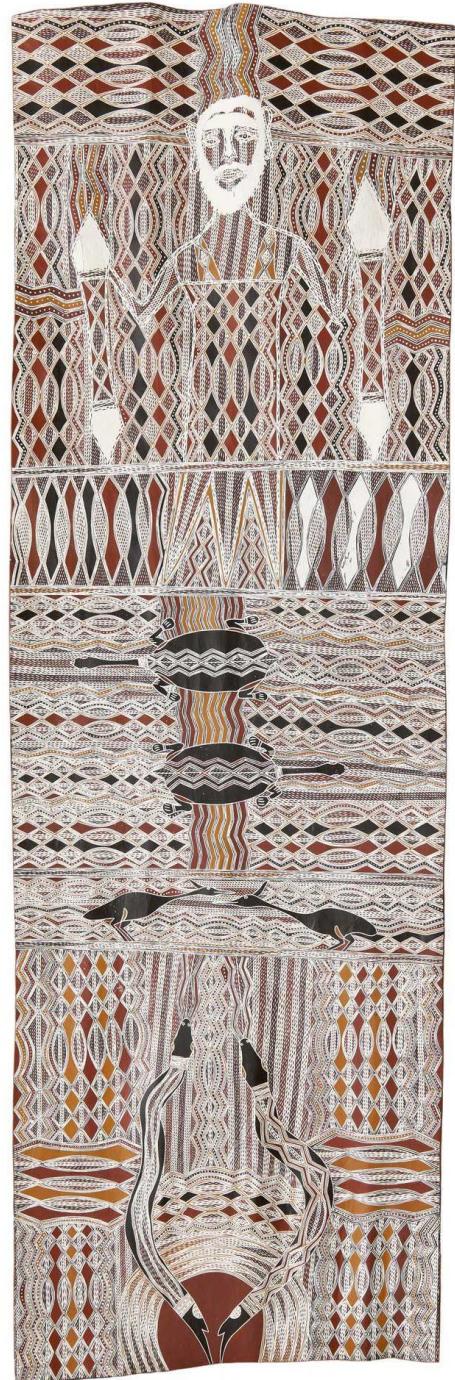
Bark Paintings as Creation Stories

“You can see Barama at the top, the central creator, thinking our Country into being, distributing different sacred objects, Law and ownership to the Yirritja clans. Barama was living in Gängän, and that is how we maintain the Law that he passed on to our ancestors, through our forefathers, for generation after generation. We carry on this legacy of the leadership that Barama laid down in our Country.

And down the bottom, you can see minhala, the long necked turtle. It is an important animal that we sing. It holds a story that has been sung for thousands of years by my people. And then there is gany'tjurr, the heron, looking down to the Gängän waterhole. And you can see the two lightning snakes, burrut'ji, meeting each other, their tongues coming together and communicating to each other, as well as to others across Arnhem Land.”

— YINIMALA GUMANA

Source: <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/dha%e1%b8%bbwanu-minytji-dha%e1%b8%bbwanu-clan-designs/>



Archive: Yolnu Bark Painting

- some of the clan designs are found in rock paintings in the region that go back 28,000 years
- the designs were also used in body painting and ceremonial objects
- most of the aboriginal bark paintings date only from the early 20th c. when the Yolnu began painting their clan designs on bark so that *balanda* (non-Indigenous people) could understand the essential bond that they have with their land



Bark Painting as Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Country

- the aboriginal concept of “Country”
- based on the Dreaming, the ancient stories of Ancestors, who created the landscape and all living things
- clans have different songlines
- Yolnu communities include humans, animals and features of the landscape as equal members
- cf. Deloria’s idea of Kinship

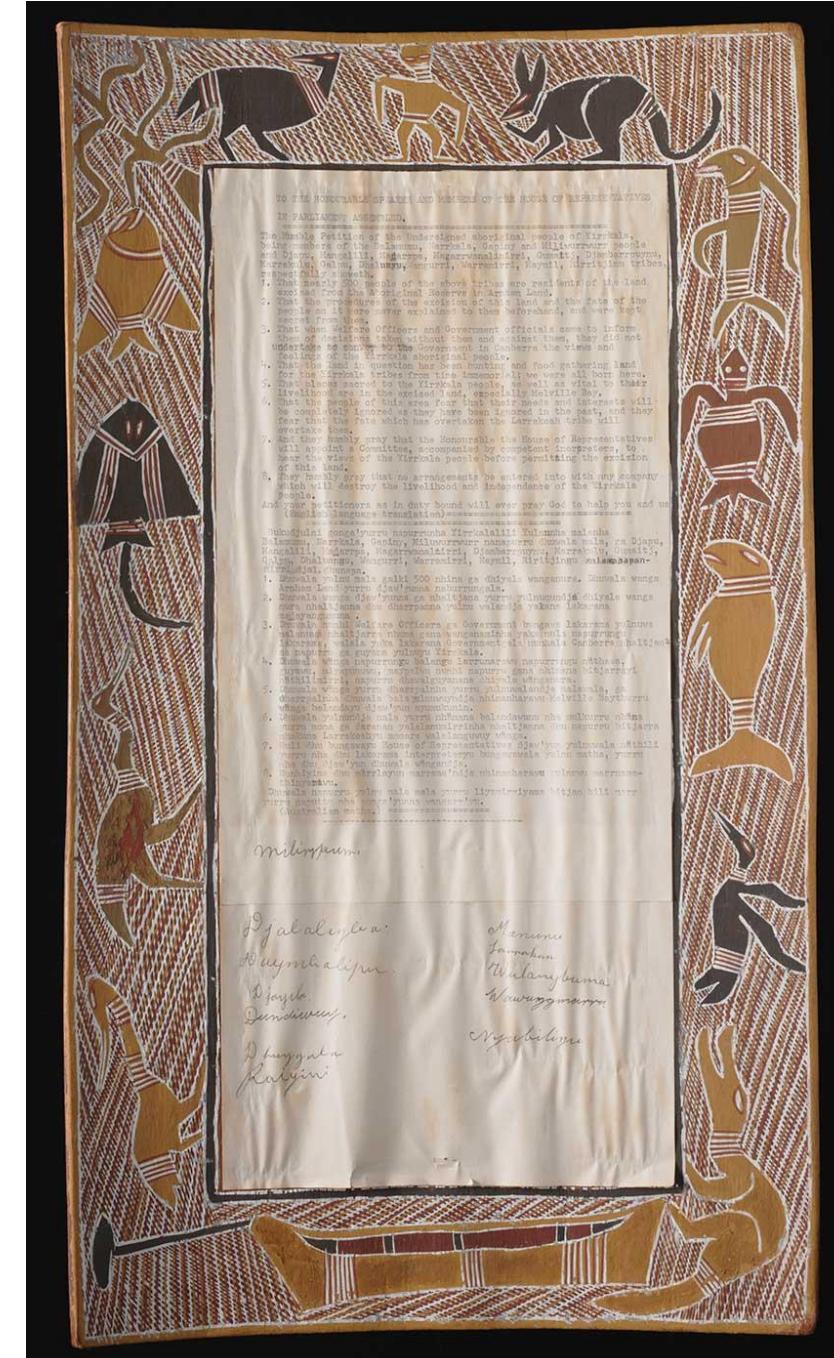
“For Yolŋu, the term Country encompasses land, sea, sky and everything therein. It includes plants, animals, soil, seasons, weather, constellations and all relationships in the natural world. Country was shaped during the wanjarr (creation period) by ancestral beings, who left their spiritual essence in the land. This essence is innately perceptible and observable to Yolŋu people today.

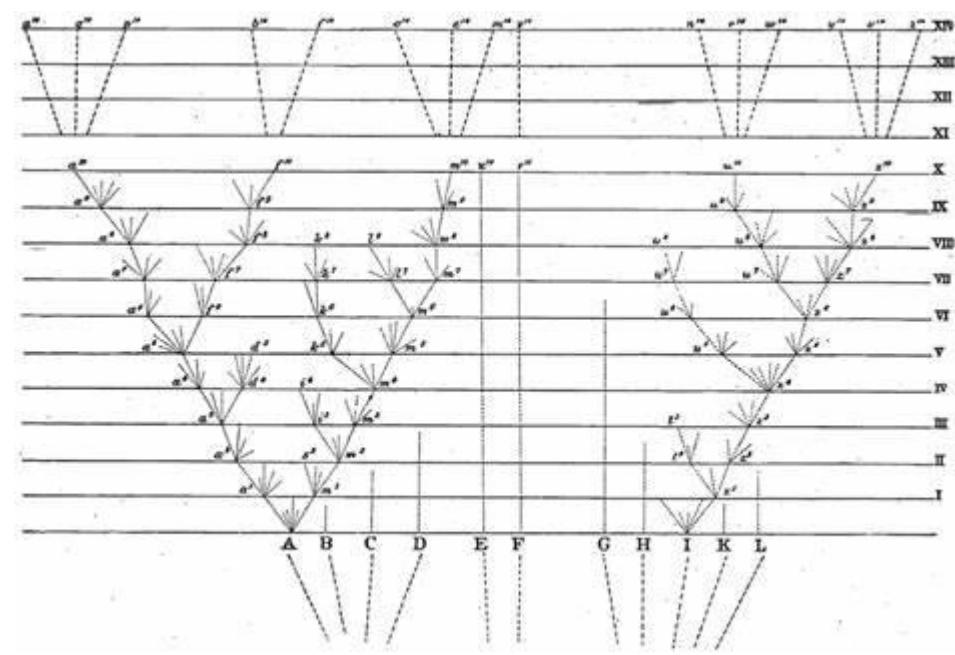
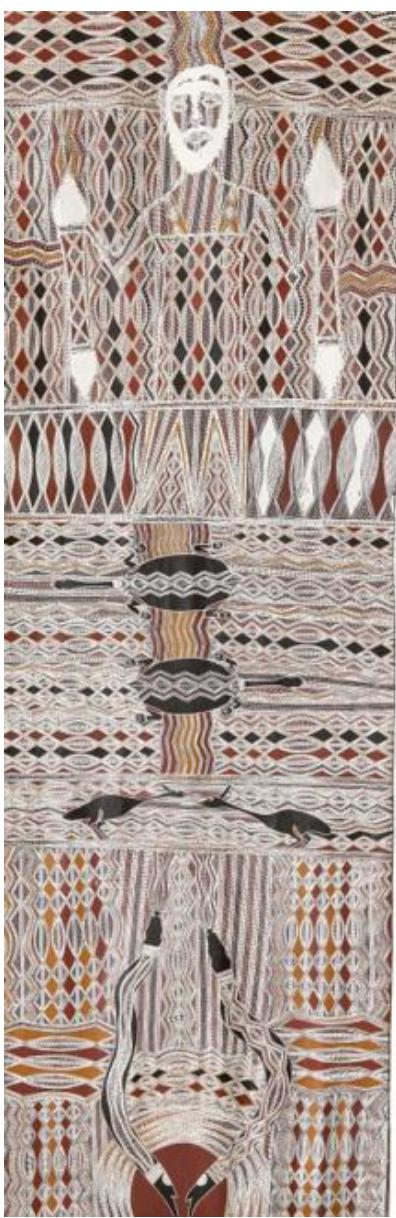
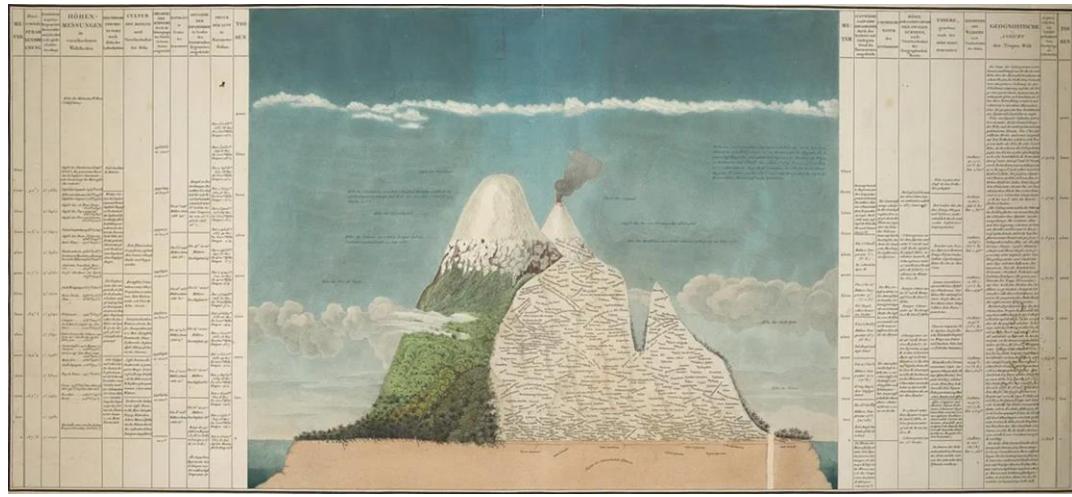
Yolŋu belong to Country and Country belongs to Yolŋu.”

Source: <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/country/>

Bark Painting: Environmental Justice and Land Rights

- documents land claims and generational familial succession
- Legal function: establishes indigenous rights and sovereignty
- In 1963, aboriginal people used two signed bark paintings to try to convince the Federal Government to stop bauxite mining on their lands
- the government did not stop the mining but excluded certain sacred sites and set up a monitoring commission
- in 1976, the first aboriginal land rights laws were passed





Traditional Ecological Knowledges

- not “dominion over nature” because not based on instrumental use value of nature
- not a “stewardship” model because humans are not in a superior position to the rest of nature
- the goal of TEK is often to motivate humans to show respect for nonhuman nature
- this respect is one way of preventing overexploitation of natural resources
- but also of imagining shared human-nonhuman relationships for the flourishing of all (“the lesson of sweetgrass” and country)



**Cruikshank, “Are glaciers ‘good to think with’?
Recognising indigenous environmental knowledge”**

In class writing: How to read a critical article (and, how to write an argumentative essay)

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section). Feel free to consult Cruikshank's essay but no other resources.

1. What is Cruikshank's thesis? How do you know where to find it? What visual clues tell you where to find it? What made finding it easy or difficult?
2. Identify two major pieces of evidence that the author puts forward in support of this thesis. How did the essay signpost their importance and where to find them?
3. Name at least two of the essay's major conclusions. At what places in the essay do you find them?

A landscape painting of a forest. The foreground is dominated by the dark trunks and branches of tall trees, some leaning at angles. Sunlight filters down from the top right, creating bright highlights on the leaves and a hazy glow in the upper right corner. The background shows more trees receding into the distance.

6. Nature as Spectacle

British Romanticism

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

Midterm *this week*: Friday 3/7

-see 2 documents (rubric and study guide) on Canvas under 'Modules'>'Assignments'>'Midterm'

-Writing Assignment: due Friday 3/14 by 5 pm

-on Canvas under 'Assignments'>'Writing Assignment #1'

-On that Friday 3/14: No meeting of Friday discussion sections

- TAs will instead have more office hours should you wish to discuss your papers

British Romanticism: Romantic how?

Caspar David Friedrich,
Wanderer above a Sea of Mist
(1818)



Revolutionary Romanticism (1780s to the 1830s)

-Romanticism stretched across a period of historical revolutions: in US (1776) and France (1789) as well as the so-called Industrial Revolution (1750-1850 in Europe first and then in the US)

-values: political reforms (anti-monarchical), expanded suffrage, abolitionism, atheism

-British Romantic poets (like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley) saw themselves as making a revolution in art

-What are artists revolting against? Previous 18th c. poets believed that poetry should reflect nature as it is (neoclassicism); the Romantics instead believed that poetry could show nature as it could and should be, filtered by their own subjective experience



Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People* (1830)

Romanticism and Nature

Humboldt, *Views of Nature, or, Contemplations on the sublime phenomena of creation*

The Sublime: The Scientific Model

“Descriptions of Nature more strongly or weakly affect us depending upon the greater or lesser extent to which they correspond to the needs of our feelings. For in the innermost receptive mind, the physical world is reflected, living and true. That which designates the character of a landscape—the profile of the mountains that border the horizon in the hazy distance, the darkness of the fir forests, the roaring forest river that plummets between overhanging cliffs—all of it stands in an ancient and mysterious association with the disposition of human temperament. Upon this association rests the nobler part of the enjoyment that Nature provides.”

-“Concerning the Waterfalls of the Orinoco near Atures and Maypures”
from Humboldt’s *Views of Nature*, 117-118

Edmund Burke on the Sublime

(from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* 1757)

“Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (11).

-Beauty vs. the Sublime:

“For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great [i.e. the sublime], rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure” (12).

Characteristics of British Romanticism

- Dissolution of self
- Awe at nature's powers
- admiration for the unpredictability of nature with its potential for disastrous extremes; stands as an alternative to the ordered world of Enlightenment science
- this emphasis on subjective and individual feeling opposes the Enlightenment assertion of rationality and universally applied laws
- for example, in Constable's *Hadleigh Castle* the dramatic sky and architectural ruins evoke a sense of melancholic reverie; the insignificance of the human in relation to the vastness of nature; the inevitable passage of time and brevity of human life



John Constable, *Hadleigh Castle: The Mouth of the Thames--Morning after a Stormy Night* (1829)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)



William Wordsworth (1770-1850)



Lyrical Ballads (1798) published anonymously by Coleridge and Wordsworth together

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “To Nature”

It may indeed be fantasy when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
5 Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
10 And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

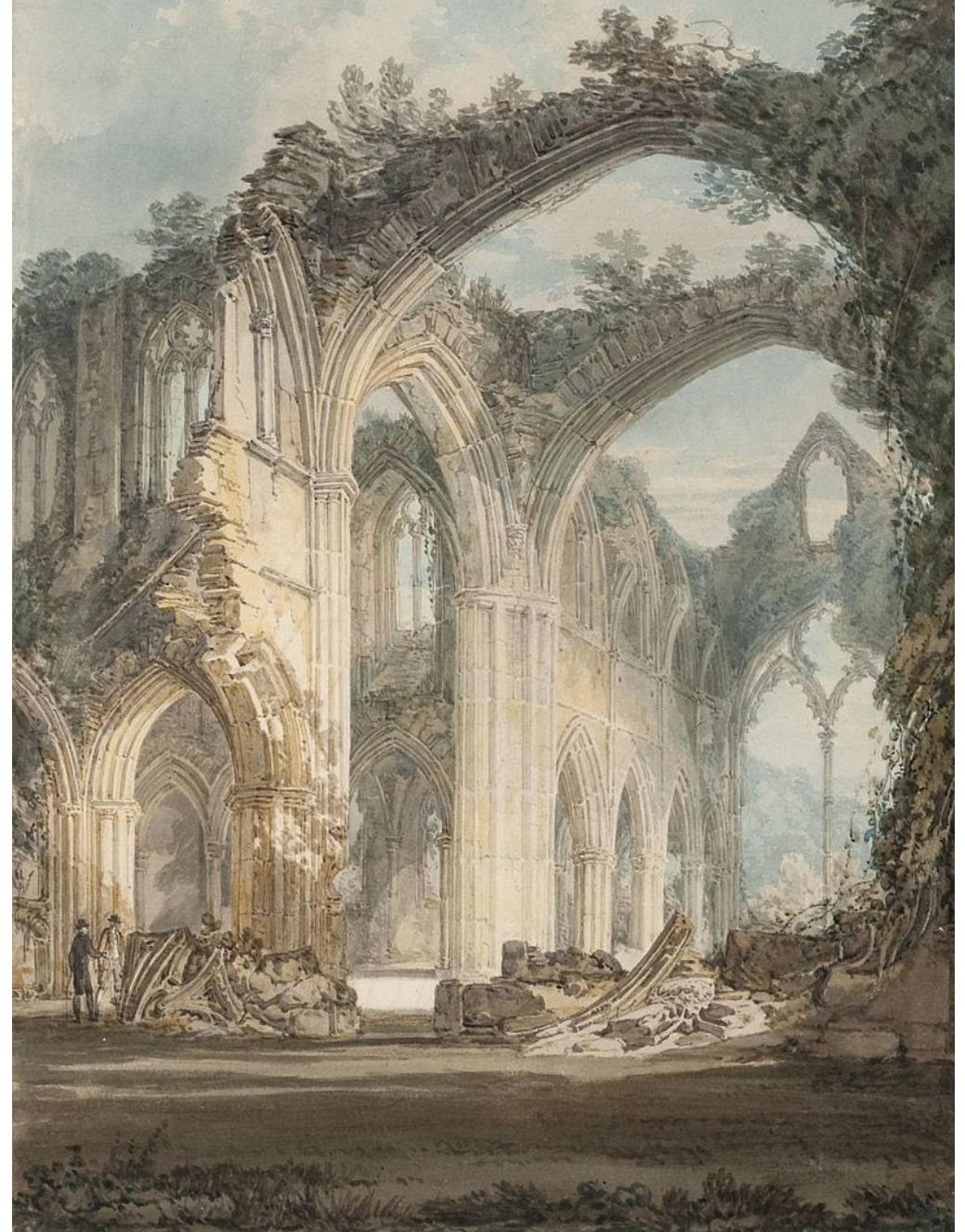
What is the relationship
between the poet and nature?

What is the relationship
between the poet and the rest
of the “wide world”?

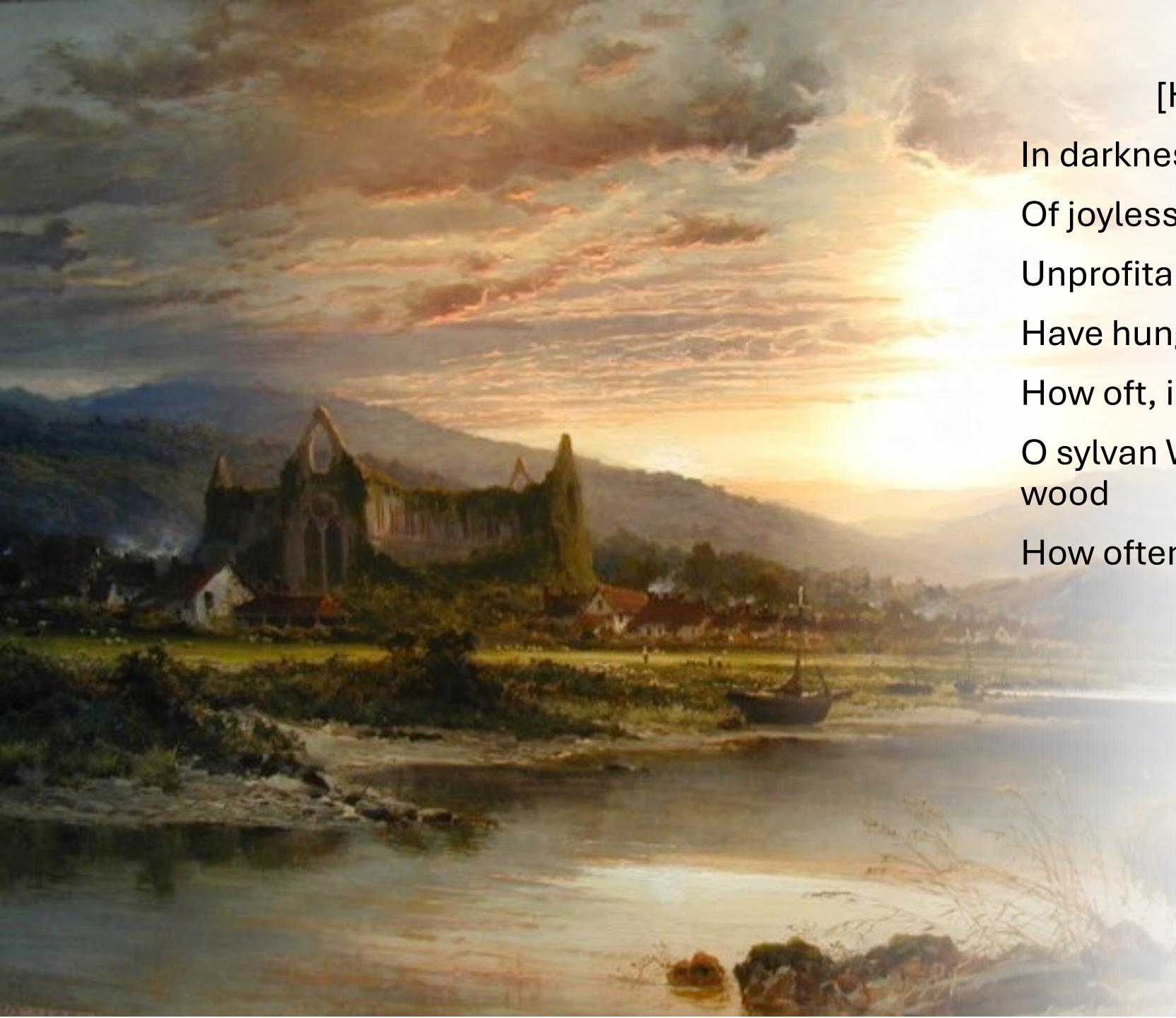
What happens at the end?

How would you describe the
tone of this poem?

William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798”



J.M.W. Turner, *Tintern Abbey* (1794)



[H]ow oft,

50

In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless day-light; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee 55
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the
wood
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

Benjamin Williams Leader,
Tintern Abbey at Sunset (1889)

And so I dare to hope

65

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when
first

I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led; ...

For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by,)

To me was all in all. — I cannot paint 75
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite: a feeling and a love, 80

That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past ...

What is the poet like as a youth?

And so I dare to hope

65

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when
first

I came among these hills; when like a roe

I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides

Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,

Wherever nature led; ...

For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,

And their glad animal movements all gone by,)

To me was all in all. — I cannot paint 75

What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite: a feeling and a love,

80

That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, or any interest

Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past ...

What was his relationship to nature like
when he was younger?

And so I dare to hope

65

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when
first

I came among these hills; when like a roe

I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides

Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,

Wherever nature led; ...

For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,

And their glad animal movements all gone by,)

To me was all in all. — I cannot paint 75

What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite: a feeling and a love,

80

That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, or any interest

Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past ...

What is the mature poet's relation to his
younger self?

— That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.
For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes 90
The **still, sad music of humanity**,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime 95
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels 100
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

What do you think the “still, sad music of humanity” means?

— That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.
For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes 90
The still, sad music of humanity,
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And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels 100
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

What is the contrast that the poet draws between how he understood nature in his youth and in the present day?

What is the “sense sublime”?

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world 105
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul 110
Of all my moral being.

What is the relationship of
nature and the human senses?

What is nature's role for the
mature poet?

A dense forest scene with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy.

6. Nature as Spectacle

American Transcendentalism

ENGL133 Imagining Nature



“Romanticism is the primitive, the untutored, it is youth, the exuberant sense of life of the natural man, but it is also pallor, fever, disease, decadence, the *maladie du siècle*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the Dance of Death, indeed Death itself.”

-Isaiah Berlin, “The Roots of Romanticism”

-Why did Berlin think that Romanticism was the most important intellectual movement in the West?

-the Romantics resisted “objectivity” and Enlightenment models of reason

Critique of Romanticism: Ruskin on the Pathetic Fallacy (1856)

“They rowed her in across the rolling foam—The cruel, crawling foam.

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the 'Pathetic Fallacy'.”

-John Ruskin, from *Modern Painters* (1856)

- ‘Pathetic’ from the Greek *pathos* or emotion
- The poet’s desire to see their feelings reflected in nature was a type of bad anthropomorphism for Ruskin (opposite of Coleridge, “To Nature”)
- effect? Ruskin seeks to demarcate a ‘humans only’ zone, to put back up the dividing wall between humans and nature that the Romantics tore down

American Transcendentalism: Transcendental how?

Asher B. Durand, *Kindred Spirits* (1849)



American Transcendentalism (ca. 1820s-1850s)

- extends British Romanticism's belief that nature is created in the subjective experience of human encounters
 - similarly opposes the primacy of the imagination to Enlightenment rationality and objectivity
 - emphasizes the importance of individuality and personal freedom
 - spontaneity over artificiality and restraint
- associated with New England and the tradition of Unitarian thought there as well as its progressive social reforms (abolition, suffrage)
- as well as the Hudson River School of painting (cf the British Romantic painters who were interested in the sublime)



Thomas Cole (1801-1848) *Evening in Arcady* (1843)

How does American Transcendentalism differ from British Romanticism?

Much common ground between the two but a difference in emphases:

1. Transcendentalism was rooted in the American experience of a new, utopian society out of the American wilderness compared to British Romanticism that often explored themes of memory and nostalgia (cf. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey")
2. Emerson and Thoreau emphasized "self-reliance"
 - Transcendentalists believe that society and its institutions—particularly organized religion and political parties—could potentially corrupt the purity of the individual
 - instead of organized religion, Transcendentalists believed in the inherent divinity within each person and the importance of living in harmony with nature to achieve self-realization
3. Transcendentalism often admires the individuated hero who breaks free of social convention; the poet is frequently recast as prophet or visionary

Transcendentalism and the Hudson River School of Painting

-the Hudson River painters such as Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, and Frederic Edwin Church embodied the desire to unite humans and nature that was expressed in the writings of Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau

-The goal of observing nature is to transcend its physical structure in order to uncover the eternal and divine within it

-often contrasted idyllic landscapes with rapidly industrializing America (spot the train!)

-So what?

- these painters were the first important American landscape painters

- they helped shape an emerging national identity by convincing Americans that they had a unique relationship to their land

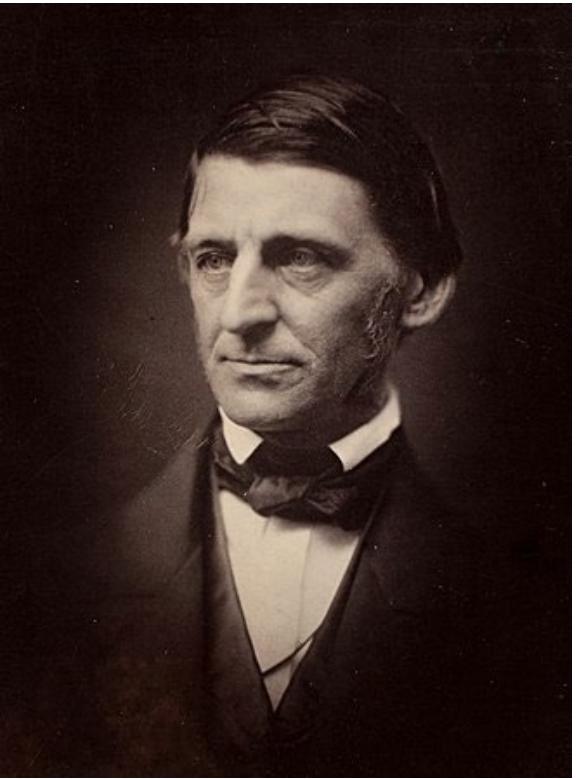
- Cole was a conservation advocate

- the Hudson River School's images convinced Americans that they had something that Europe did not: pristine forests that needed protecting



Thomas Cole, *River in the Catskills* (1843)

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

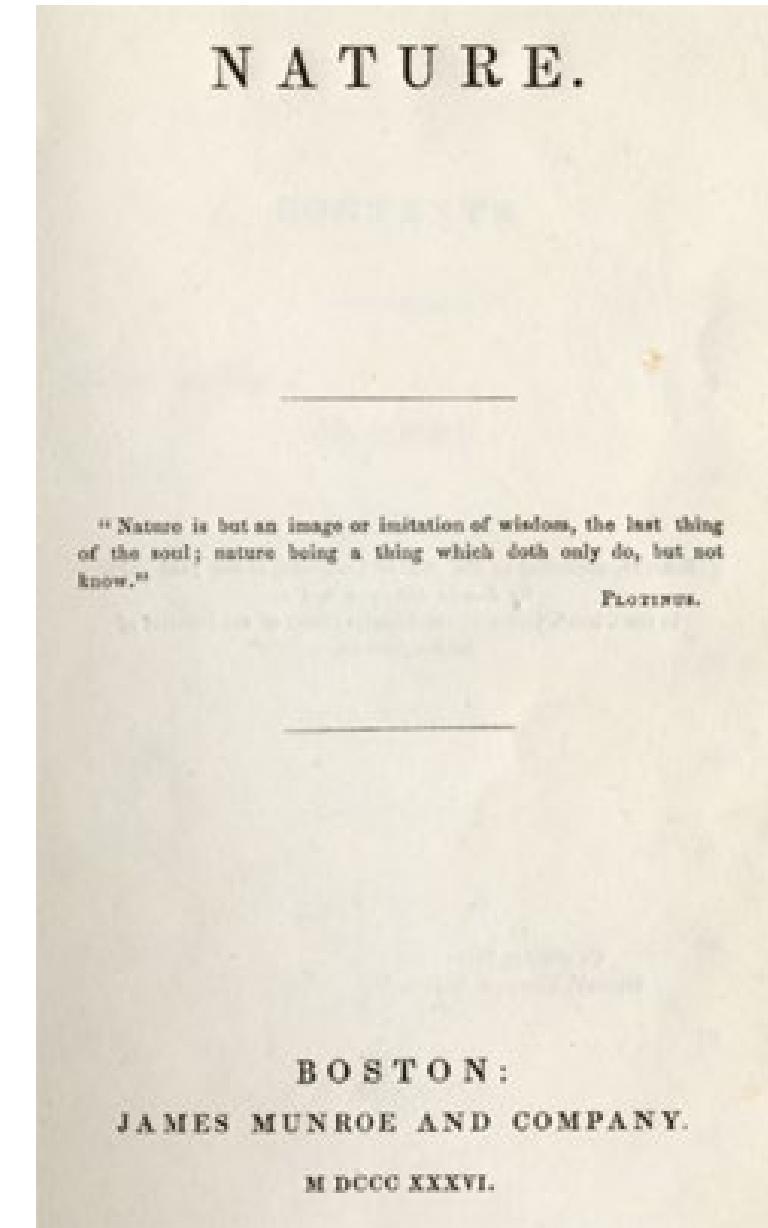


Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)



Emerson's 1836 essay "Nature"

- sets out the foundations of Transcendental philosophy
- Look at the world!
- Emerson believed in a "radical correspondence of visible things and human thoughts."
 - nature is like a mirror of the human mind
 - cf Alan of Lille in the 12th c.: "nature is a book, a picture, a mirror."
- Nature makes man feel accompanied and acknowledged: "Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both." (7)



There [in Nature] I feel that nothing can befall me in life, -- no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, -- master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty.

-Emerson, “Nature” (6)



I expand, and live in
the warm day, like corn
and melons.

(Nature. p. 73.)

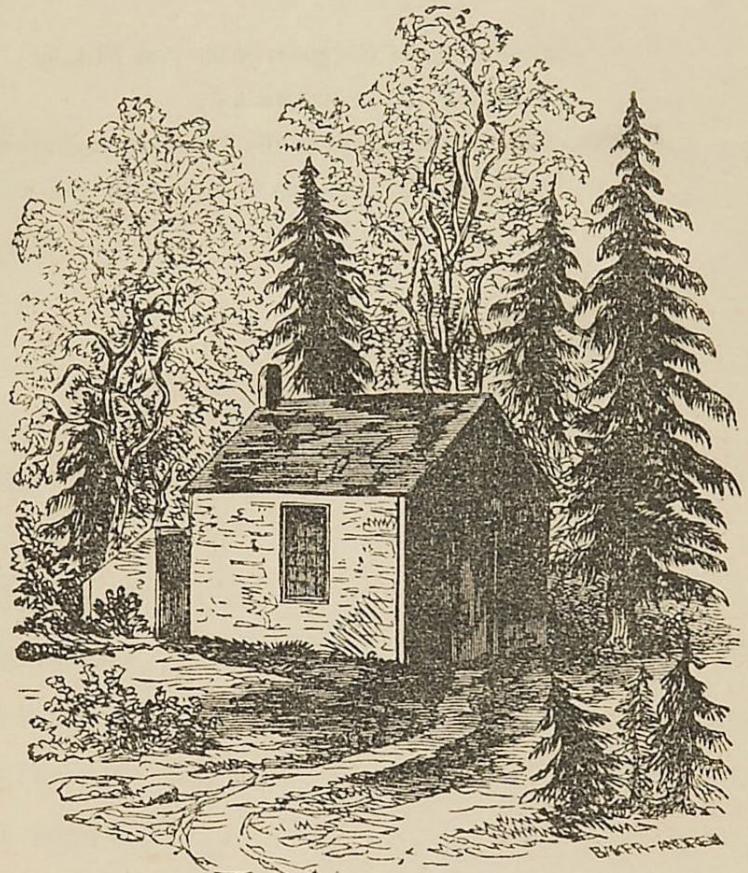
"Standing on the bare ground - my head
bathes in the blithe air, & uplifted into
infinite space - all mean egotism vanishes.
I become a transposed Epitome." Nature. p. 73.

Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–1892) | c. 1840

WALDEN;
OR,
LIFE IN THE WOODS.

By HENRY D. THOREAU,

AUTHOR OF "A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS."



Thoreau's Walden experiment (1845-57)

- in 1845, Thoreau built a small one-room house on land owned by Emerson near Walden Pond, not far from Concord MA
- he lived there for 2 years
- Walden* is part memoir and part spiritual polemic
- it compresses his experience into a single year that follows the seasons
- this is not wilderness but ex-urban land

In class writing: Thoreau's *Walden*

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section). Feel free to consult the excerpts from Thoreau but no other resources.

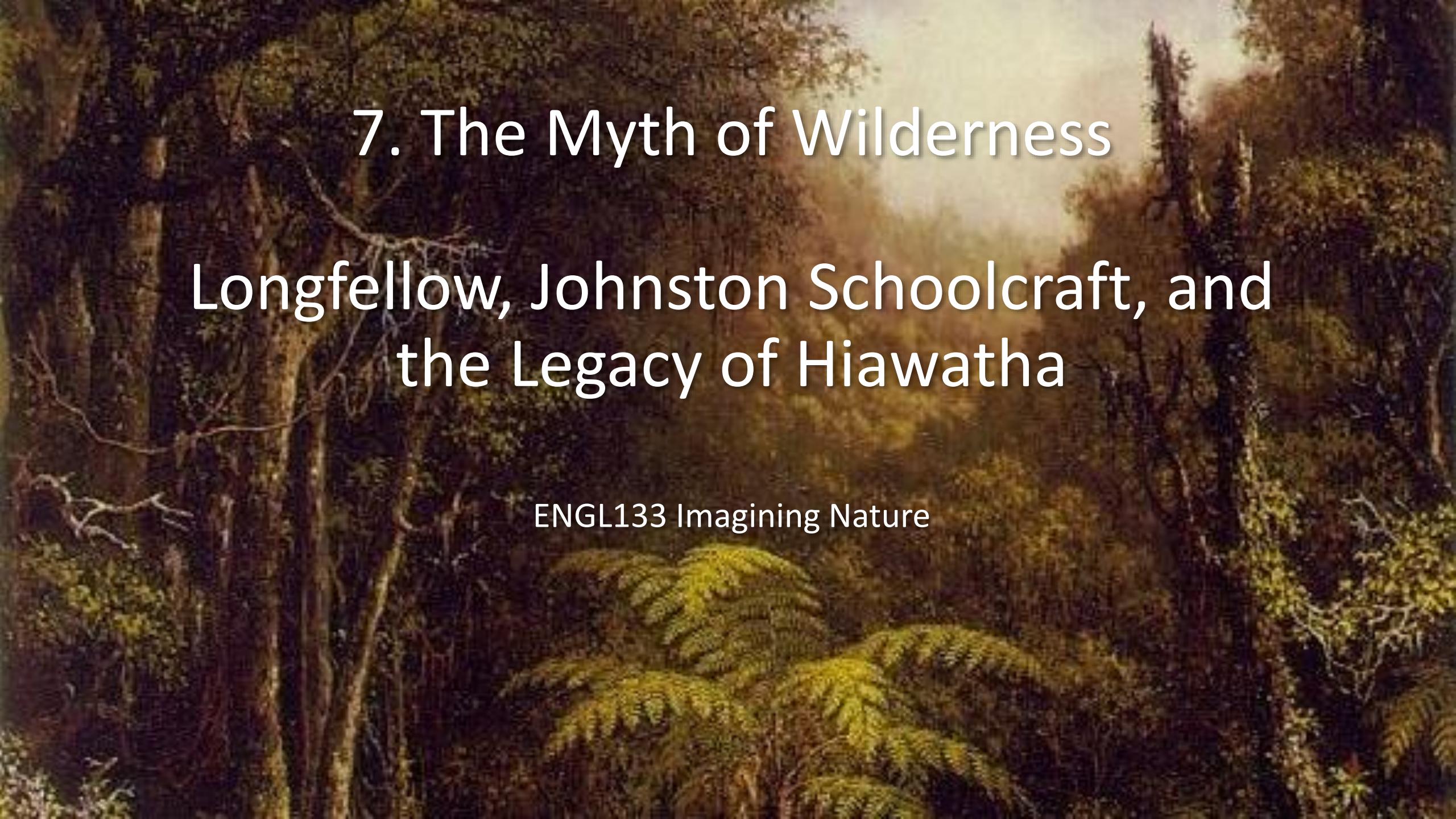
1. What are the values that nature has taught Thoreau? Why does he find them important?

2. What institutions does Thoreau critique?

3. Thoreau published this book in 1854. What would he critique in 2025, particularly about our attitudes toward nature?

American Transcendentalism: So What?

- the beginning of American nature writing tradition
- articulates the importance of nature for the American national creation story
- their reverence for nature is often cited by later environmental movements and set the stage for the establishment of a national park system
- their view of nature—that it is created partially within the mind—still influences us to this day
- its emphasis on individualism and self-reliance becomes central to the myth of American identity



7. The Myth of Wilderness

Longfellow, Johnston Schoolcraft, and the Legacy of Hiawatha

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

- Writing Assignment due Friday 3/14 uploaded to Canvas by 5 pm
- On that Friday 3/14: No meeting of Friday discussion sections
 - TAs will instead have more office hours should you wish to discuss your papers
 - these office hours were posted as an announcement on Canvas last week
- Since we won't be having discussion sections this Friday, your midterm exams will be returned and discussed in section on Friday 3/28
- Reading for Week 9: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*-I've cut out one of the critical articles
- optional extra credit (counted toward your Engagement grade): short response to Zoom lecture 3/26 from 4-5 pm by Professor Shannon Gayk on "After Apocalyptic Ecologies"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

-in his own time, he was the most popular 19th c. poet

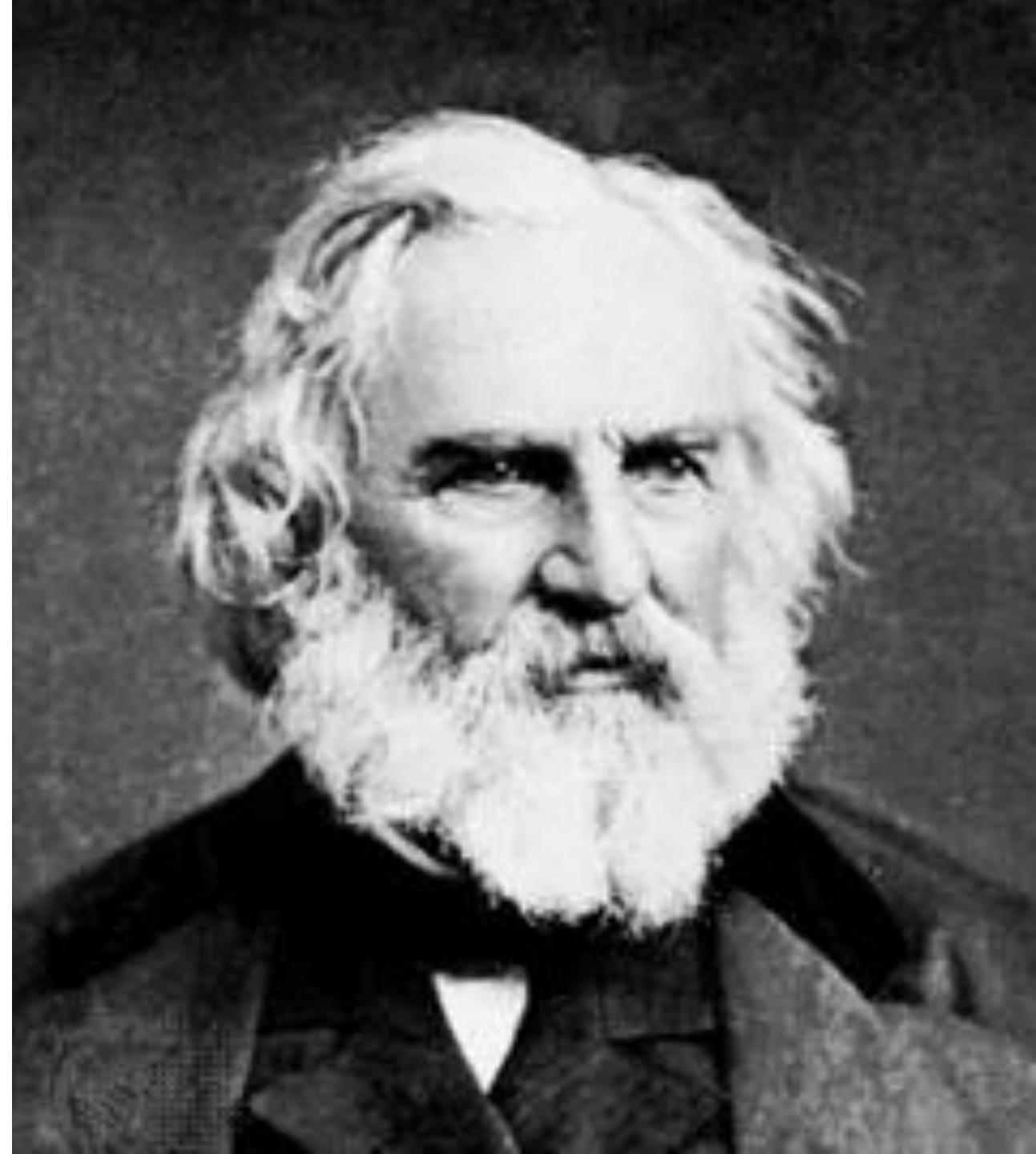
-a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson and was influenced by the Transcendentalists

The Song of Hiawatha (1855)

-*Hiawatha* was an immediate bestseller, selling around 50,000 copies in its first six months in print

-Longfellow thought America needed a great epic because Europe claimed its descent from the epics of the Greeks (Homer) and the Romans (Vergil)

-he thought ancient Native American stories could provide this same sense of historical tradition





Albert Bierstadt, "The Departure of Hiawatha," presented to Longfellow by the artist in 1868

Archive: Where did Longfellow's *Hiawatha* come from?

-Longfellow's primary source was a collection of myths and stories edited by the geographer and ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft entitled *Algic Researches, Comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians* (1839)

-by "Algic," Schoolcraft referred to a group of Native American peoples originally from east of the Allegheny mountains, though the Algonquin peoples had largely been forced to relocate to the Western plains by the time he was writing

-Schoolcraft began his interest in Native American culture when he was appointed as an "Indian agent," or American government delegate to Native American tribes

-the unacknowledged source of many of these stories was his Ojibwe wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and her mother, from whom Henry had heard these stories and learned the Ojibwe language



What vision of nature emerges from Longfellow's Hiawatha?

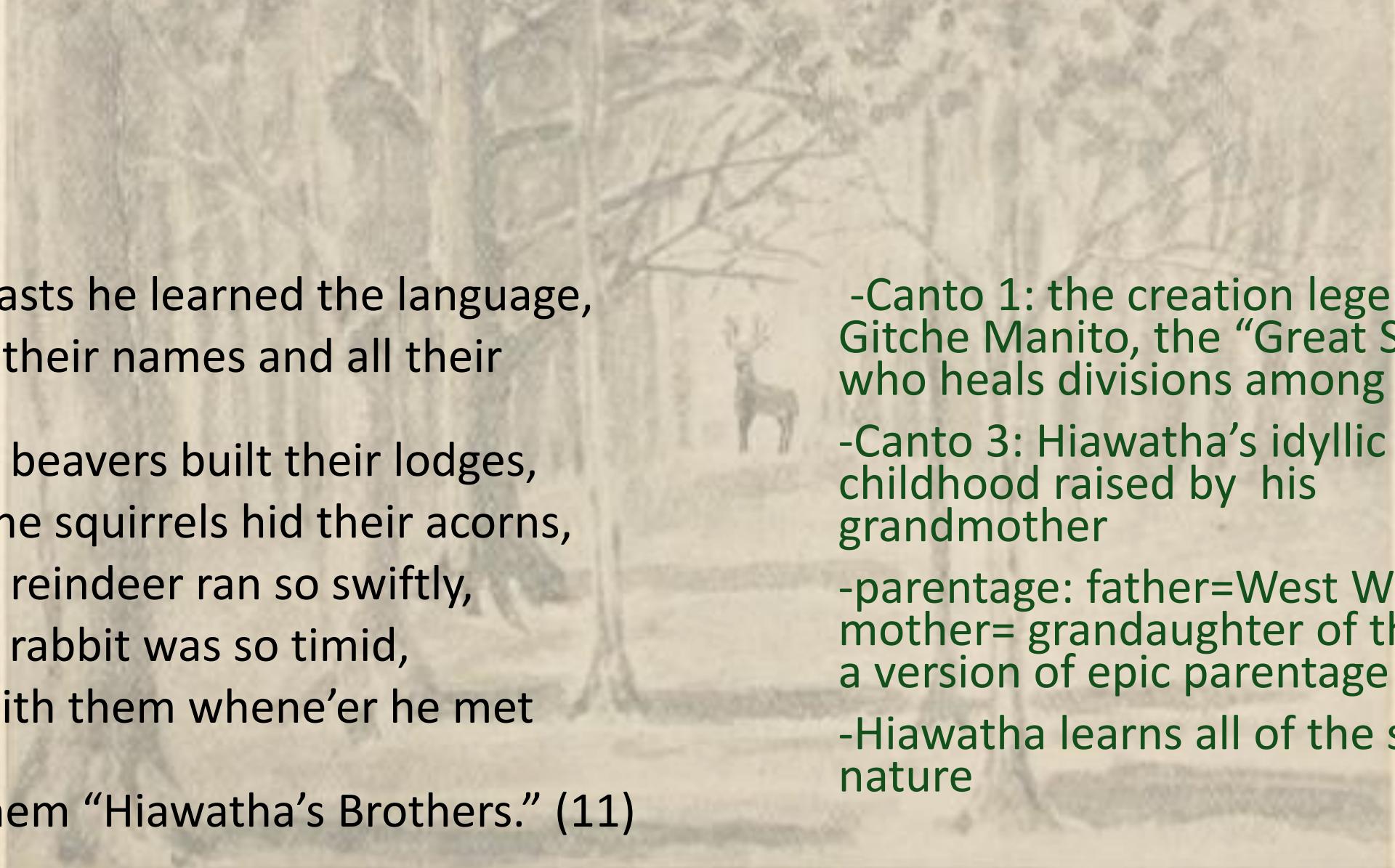
Should you ask me, whence these stories?

Whence these legends and traditions,
With the odors of the forest
With the dew and damp of meadows,
With the curling smoke of wigwams,
With the rushing of great rivers,
With their frequent repetitions,
And their wild reverberations
As of thunder in the mountains? (1)

-the Introduction establishes the necessary connection between nature and nation

-songs come from the land directly and from a Native American bard who learned them from birds

-audience is imagined as "ye who love the haunts of Nature" and "ye who love a nation's legends" (2-3)



Of all beasts he learned the language,
Learned their names and all their
secrets,
How the beavers built their lodges,
Where the squirrels hid their acorns,
How the reindeer ran so swiftly,
Why the rabbit was so timid,
Talked with them whene'er he met
them,
Called them "Hiawatha's Brothers." (11)

-Canto 1: the creation legend of Gitche Manitou, the "Great Spirit" who heals divisions among tribes

-Canto 3: Hiawatha's idyllic childhood raised by his grandmother

-parentage: father=West Wind; mother= granddaughter of the moon; a version of epic parentage (9)

-Hiawatha learns all of the secrets of nature



With both hands his face he covered.

What is Longfellow's Hiawatha like? How does Longfellow transform his Ojibwe subject matter?

- Hiawatha's courtship and marriage of Minnehaha was Longfellow's addition to his sources
- contrary to Anishinaabe family life that was based on commonly recognized relationships (something like modern common-law marriages) rather than formal, licensed marriages
- the powerful trickster Nanabozho becomes the sentimental Hiawatha
- cf. the Ojibwe stories that we read earlier in the term with Nanabozho
- Hiawatha confirms the stereotype of the 'noble savage'
- turns Hiawatha into a national folk hero

What options are there for reading Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* today?

- ‘redface’ and settler colonialism
- should we read it today? (cf. Shakespeare’s *Othello*)
- if so, how do we read it?
- a model of decolonial reading:
 - a critical approach to interpreting texts, where the reader actively challenges and deconstructs colonial narratives embedded within the material, by questioning the assumed universality of Western knowledge and centering marginalized perspectives, (such as that of the critic Sylvia Wynter)
 - this is to contextualize an artwork
- how to read a settler colonial narrative such as *Hiawatha* from a decolonial perspective?
 - analyze how it portrays Indigenous peoples
 - examine how it reinforces the concept of “terra nullius” (empty land)
 - address the text’s assumptions about a settler narrative of progress and civilization
 - explore the author’s (and audience’s) positionality
 - seek out counter-narratives from Indigenous voices to understand the full picture of historical events and experiences

Historical 19th c. Models of Nature and Native Americans: Manifest Destiny

- what are the most important details of the painting?
- the figure of Columbia?
- how is nature envisioned?
- how is this a rationale for settler colonialism?



John Gast, *American Progress* (1872)

The Ending of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*



-The civilizing and development of 'terra nullius' (empty land)
-assumptions about progress?

"Let us welcome, then, the strangers,
Hail them as our friends and brothers,
And the heart's right hand of friendship
Give them when they come to see us.
Gitche Manitou, the Mighty,
Said this to me in my vision.

"I beheld, too, in that vision
All the secrets of the future,
Of the distant days that shall be.
I beheld the westward marches
Of the unknown, crowded nations.
All the land was full of people,
Restless, struggling, toiling, striving,
Speaking many tongues, yet feeling
But one heart-beat in their bosoms.
In the woodlands rang their axes,
Smoked their towns in all the valleys,
Over all the lakes and rivers
Rushed their great canoes of thunder." (15-16)

Historical 19th c. Models of Nature and Native Americans: Indian Removals

Removal Act of 1830

- President Andrew Jackson passed an act that granted land west of the Mississippi River to Indian tribes that agreed to give up their homelands. He then passed more than 70 mostly coerced treaties that displaced Native American peoples to this land, including the forced displacement of the Cherokee in the Southwest known as the “Trail of Tears”
- the land opened up by these displacements was then settled by Euroamericans

Treaty of Washington (1836)

- Among Jackson’s treaties was one in the Northern Plains that saw the Ojibwe cede to the United States a huge territory of more than 13 million acres
- a small amount of land was set aside for the Ojibwe to live and to replace their traditional hunting lifestyle with farming but the government subsidies that were to fund the transition were often late and underfunded
- the agent who negotiated this treaty for the US government was Henry Rowe Schoolcraft

Treaty of 1855

- same year that *Song of Hiawatha* is published, the Ojibwe under duress gave up land and rights for money and US citizenship, a treaty that weakened the Ojibwe nation
- replaced larger tracts of communally held land with individual farm ownership on small plots

Song of Hiawatha's legacy: the Vanishing Indian Stereotype

-the ‘Vanishing Indian’ stereotype
(cf. The Crying Indian of Make America Beautiful ad campaign)

-The legacy of Longfellow: *Hiawatha* Pageants
-large outdoor performances from ca 1900 to the 1950s in the NY and Great Lakes region
-the plays romanticized Native American life even as it provided income for Native actors

What are the effects of the “vanishing Indian” stereotype?

- used to justify the eradication of Indigenous culture
- Indian boarding schools run by religious and government orgs throughout the West from 1869 to the 1960s
- “Kill the Indian, Save the Man”
- in these schools young Native Americans would often put on plays of “Hiawatha,” a story that demonstrated Indigenous people support assimilation into Angloamerican culture



Theatrical portrayal of Hiawatha proposing to Minnehaha. NPS Photo, Longfellow Family Photograph Collection, LONG Collections

9. Storms and the Colonial Imagination

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Acts 1-3

Strachey, *The True Reportory of the Wracke and
Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates*

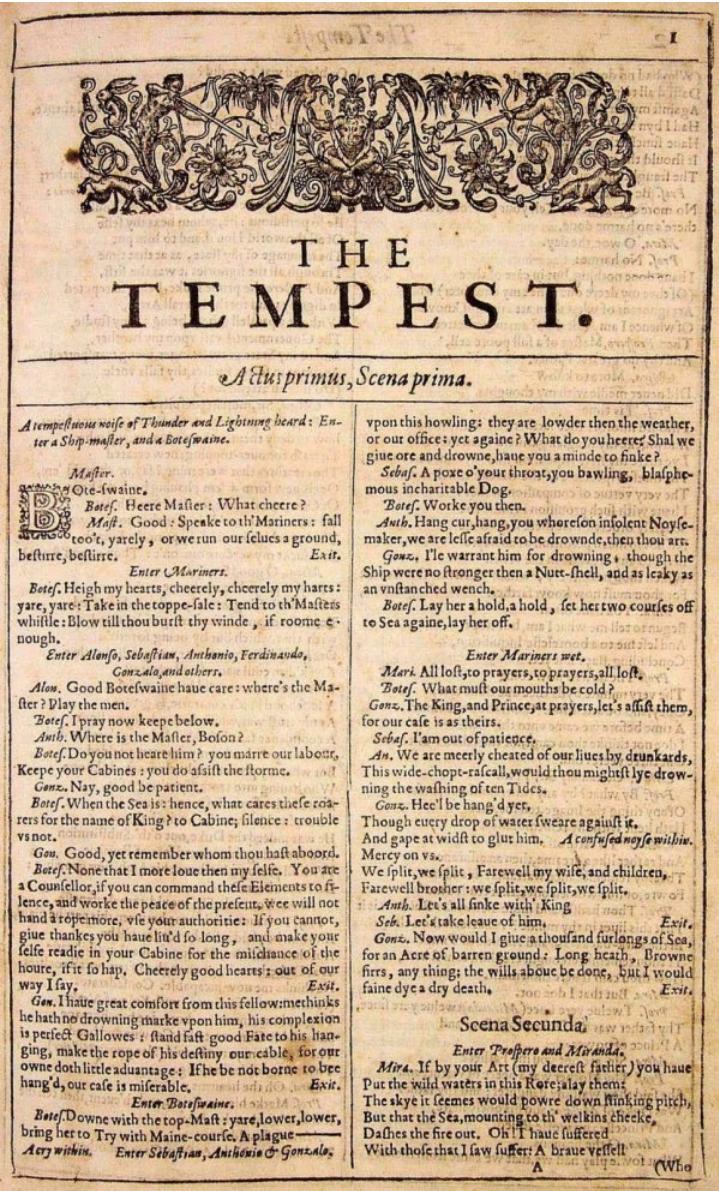
ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

- Tiny Ecologies #3: extension—now due Sunday 3/30 by 5 pm uploaded to Canvas
- Midterms
- Reminder: Optional extra credit (counted toward your Engagement grade): short response to Zoom lecture on Wednesday 3/26 from 5-6 pm by Professor Shannon Gayk on “After Apocalyptic Ecologies”- details and Zoom link in Canvas Announcement



William Shakespeare (1554-1616), *The Tempest* (1611)



- one of Shakespeare's late plays
- first performed before King James on 'Hallowmas nyght' (1 November) 1611
- the storm becomes the catalyst for imagining how human and nonhuman worlds interact
- the play's themes suggest that Shakespeare wants his audience to think about nature and the “New World”
- what does it mean to live in a state of nature? What is the difference between civilization and savagery?

Shakespeare and the Archive: Shipwrecks, Storms, and Colonialism

- while the play suggests a Mediterranean location, scholars have long pointed out that most of its details come from two accounts of a famous shipwreck in Bermuda that happened the year before this play was first performed
- cf. Ariel tells Prospero that the rest of the shipwrecked crew have been set in a harbor in the “still vexed Bermudas” (1.2.229)
- shipwreck of the *Sea Venture* in 1609 on the coast of Bermuda on its way to Virginia to resupply Jamestown
- there were 150 people on board; they were shipwrecked for over a year but managed to build 2 vessels and then continue on to Virginia in 1610
- 2 eyewitness accounts of this shipwreck that Shakespeare would most likely have known:
 - William Strachey, *The True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates*
 - wrote a letter back to England describing the wreck and its aftermath (not printed until 1625)
 - Gates was the governor of the Virginia colony and a founding member of the Virginia Company, also on board the *Sea Venture*
 - Silvester Jourdain, *A Discovery of the Bermudas*
 - first printed in 1610
- both narratives are documents of Britain’s early colonial activities in North America as both men were part of the Virginia Company-sponsored voyage
- the *The Tempest* is therefore also part of this colonial archive

The Tempest

Dramatis personae [Characters in the play]

The Scene, an vn-inhabited Island	
<i>Names of the Actors.</i>	
<i>Alonso, K. of Naples:</i>	
<i>Sebastian his Brother.</i>	
<i>Prospero, the right Duke of Millaine.</i>	
<i>Anthonio his brother, the usurping Duke of Millaine.</i>	
<i>Ferdinand, Son to the King of Naples.</i>	
<i>Gonzalo, an honest old Councillor.</i>	
<i>Adrian, & Francisco, Lords.</i>	
<i>Caliban, a salvage and deformed slave.</i>	
<i>Trinculo, a Iester.</i>	
<i>Stephano, a drunken Butler.</i>	
<i>Master of a Ship.</i>	
<i>Boate-Swaine.</i>	
<i>Marriners.</i>	
<i>Miranda, daughter to Prospero.</i>	
<i>Ariell, an ayrie spirit.</i>	
<i>Iris</i>	<i>Spirits.</i>
<i>Ceres</i>	
<i>Juno</i>	
<i>Nymphes</i>	
<i>Reapers</i>	

Dramatis non personae?

-Nonhuman characters play just as important a role in the play

- the storm

- the island

- Prospero's magic books

-also note that several important characters are not “human” persons

- Sycorax

- Ariel

- Caliban

The Tempest as Character



BBC The Tempest (via UMD library):

https://www.ambrosevideo.com/index.php?option=com_tpc&view=resource&Itemid=230&id=331339

“On St. James' day, July 24, being Monday ... the clouds gathering thick upon us and the wind singing and whistling, a dreadful storm and hideous began to blow from out the northeast, which swelling and roaring it were by fits, some hours with more violence than others, at length did beat all light from Heaven; which, like an hell of darkness, turned black upon us, so much the more fuller of horror, as in such cases horror and fear use to overrun the troubled and overmastered senses of all, which taken up with amazement, the ears lay so sensible to the terrible cries and murmurs of the winds.

-Strachey, *The True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates* (1)

Strachey, *The True Reportory*

Then men might be seen to labor ... for life; and the better sort (even our governor and admiral themselves), not refusing their turn and to spell each the other, to give example to other. [All working in order to testify] how mutually willing they were yet by labor to keep each other from drowning, albeit each one drowned whilst he labored (3).

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

BOATSWAIN You mar our labor. Keep your cabins. You do assist the storm.

GONZALO Nay, good[man], be patient.

BOATSWAIN When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not.

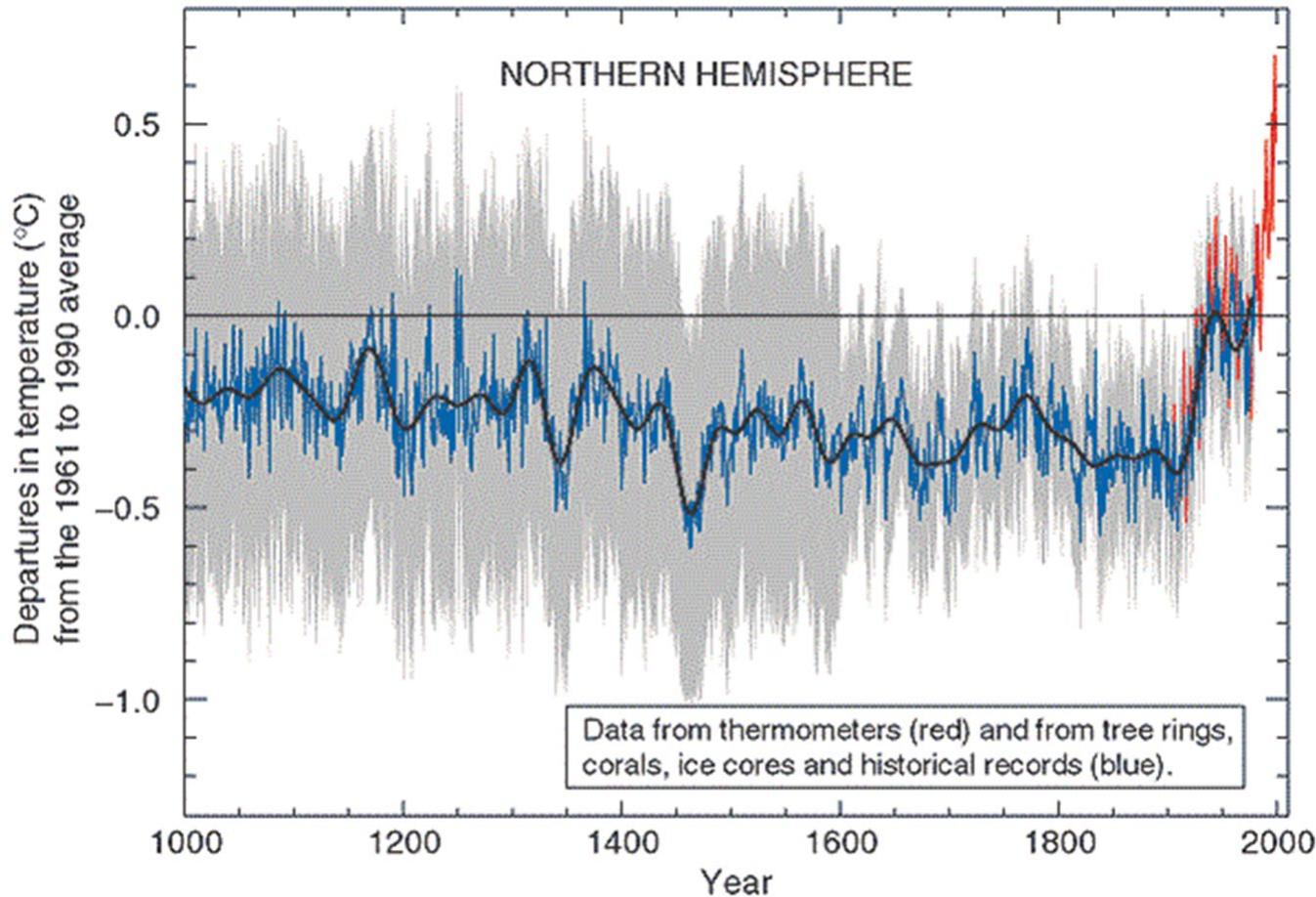
GONZALO Good[man], yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

BOATSWAIN None that I more love than myself. You are a councillor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.—Cheerly, good hearts!—Out of our way, I say! (1.1.13-28)

-in the play, the storm sets up the themes of division, rebellion, and disloyalty

Humanmade: How do storms create meaning in the premodern period?

- What causes storms in the premodern period? Multiple causes work together
- Aristotelian meteorology said that storms come from 'dry exhalations' in the ground
- But also human causes
- 'anthropogenic'=humanmade
- cf. contemporary "anthropogenic climate change"
- The Anthropocene= age of humanmade climate shift that follows on from the Holocene
- most stratigraphers date this from the mid-19th c. Industrial Revolution that began to release carbon into the atmosphere and contributed to global warming



Source: Mann, Michael E.; Bradley, Raymond S.; Hughes, Malcolm K. (1999), "Northern hemisphere temperatures during the past millennium: Inferences, uncertainties, and limitations" *Geophysical Research Letters* 26 (6): 759–762.

What does anthropogenic weather look like before the Anthropocene?

The Great Wind of 1362

The great, terrible, and unprecedented wind. In the year of Our Lord [1362] ... a public proclamation having been issued everywhere on behalf of the king that jousts would be held at Cheapside in London on Monday 17 January (ostensibly against all comers, but inwardly and figuratively through the agency of the devil and his mother and the seven deadly sins), the great devil Satan sending in advance as warnings his evil angels and signs of his malice, on the Saturday before these jousts, namely, on the feast of St Maurus the abbot (15 January), around the hour of vespers on that day, dreadful storms and whirlwinds such as had never been seen or heard before occurred in England, causing houses and buildings for the most part to come crashing to the ground, while some others, having had their roofs blown off by the force of the winds, were left in that ruined state and fruit trees in gardens and other places, along with other trees standing in woods and elsewhere, were wrenched from the earth by their roots with a great crash, as if the Day of Judgement were at hand, and fear and trembling gripped the people living in England to such an extent that no one knew where he could safely hide, for church towers, windmills, and many dwelling-houses collapsed to the ground, although without much bodily injury. Many extraordinary and prodigious stories are told about what happened during those storms.

-The Chronicle of the Anonymous of Canterbury (119)

And the southwestrene wynd on Saterday at euen
Was pertliche for pride and for no point ellis.
Pyries and plumtrees were puffed to the erthe
In ensample, ye segges, that ye shulden do the bettre.
Beches and brode okes were blowen to the grounde
And turned upward here tail in tokenyng of drede
That dedly synne er domisday shal fordoon hem alle.

-*Piers Plowman*, B. 5. 14-20 (ca. 1370s)

[And the southwest wind of last Saturday evening
Occurred manifestly on account of pride and for no other reason.
Pear trees and plum trees were blasted to the earth
As an example—you men!—that you should live better.
Beech trees and broad oaks were blown to the ground
And their roots were turned upward as an omen of judgement
That mortal sin would destroy them all before Domesday.]

So what?

There was no such thing as a “natural” disaster in the premodern period because all storms were caused by human moral and ethical behaviors



Paris, c. 1410-1430, London, BL Additional MS 18850



Joe Romm [Follow](#)

Dr. Joe Romm is Founding Editor of Climate Progress, "the indispensable blog," as NY Times columnist T...
Oct 28, 2013 · 3 min read

Superstorm Sandy's Link To Climate Change: 'The Case Has Strengthened' Says Researcher



BOTTOM LINE: Manmade climate change significantly worsened the chances a unique superstorm like Sandy would devastate New Jersey and New York. If humanity's unrestricted emissions of carbon pollution continue unabated, however, Sandy-type storm surges will become the norm on the East Coast.

-storms are a place where the category of the natural gets interrogated: to what extent are these natural causes? To what extent are they human caused?

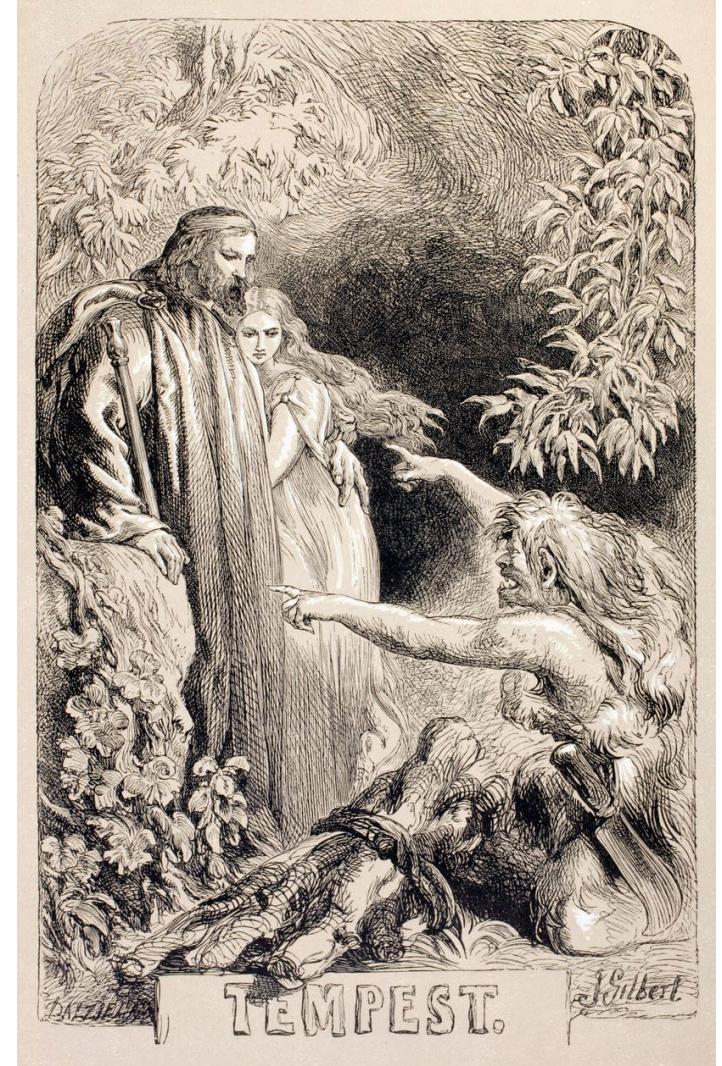
-same questions today as in the premodern period, just different answers

Prospero's Tempest

- not “natural” but a storm created by Prospero’s “art”
- Prospero’s desire to cosplay divinity and to master nature and the non-human
- it is the catalyst that sends the characters back into history because it prompts Prospero to tell Miranda her own family history (1.2)
- Miranda? From Latin ‘miror’= to wonder and the theme of amazement

Colonial Encounters: Caliban

CALIBAN. This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in 't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee,
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax--toads, beetles, bats--light on you,
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island. (1.2.332-44)



- Caliban's nonhuman status—described as fish, monster, beast, tortoise, etc.
- the competing narratives about sovereignty of Prospero and Caliban

Caliban and the Figure of the Savage

- an anagram of “cannibal”
- Indigenous peoples of North and South America were sometimes portrayed as cannibals
- Caliban described in list of characters as ‘a savage and deformed slave’
- Caliban’s ‘earthiness’ contrasted Ariel’s “airiness”
- the designation ‘savage’ sets up a contrast between civilization and savagery
- Caliban seems to be a hybrid of early modern stereotypes of indigenous people
- for Shakespeare, he seems to be a thought experiment



Cannibalism in Brazil in 1557 as described by Hans Staden. Etching by Théodore de Bry, 1562

Native Peoples in Early Modern England

What would Shakespeare have known about Native Americans and from where?

- between 1500 and 1615, about 35 native peoples were brought to England
- most were brought as captives and cynically displayed
- for ex. in 1576, explorer Martin Frobisher sailed to Canada and captured several Inuits after luring them to his ship ringing bells
- Frobisher transported them (with a canoe) back to England where all 3 died of injuries and illness
- but sometimes sent as ambassadors
- Chief Powhatan sent 2 emissaries to London, Namontack and Machumps, who were subsequently wrecked on the *Sea Venture*. Machumps killed Namontack in a dispute while they were shipwrecked.

"This year [1502] also were brought unto the king three men taken in the Newfoundland Island. These were clothed in beasts' skins, and did eat raw flesh, and spake such speech that no man could understand them, and in their demeanour were like to brute beasts, whom the king kept a time after. Of the which upon two years after I saw two, apparelled after the manner of Englishmen in Westminster Palace, which at that time I could not discern from Englishmen till I was learned what they were."

-Robert Fabian, *Chronicle*

Source: Vaughan, Alden, "American Indians in England (act. c. 1500–1615)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

9. Storms and the Colonial Imagination

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Acts 4-5

Jourdain, *A Discovery of the Bermudas*

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

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How Are Shipwrecks Good to Think With?

- in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the shipwreck provided a philosophical laboratory to test out ideas about savagery and civilization
- but shipwrecks are also documents of climate change for modern environmental scientists
- how do you reconstruct the history of climate when there is little widespread instrumental data before the 19th and 20th c.?
- Valerie Trouet study correlates Spanish shipwrecks in the Caribbean (1495–1825 CE) with a tree-growth rings from the Florida Keys in order to model the correlations between the two
 - Source: Trouet V., Harley, GL, and Domínguez-Delmás, M. "Shipwreck rates reveal Caribbean tropical cyclone response to past radiative forcing." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113.12 (22 Mar 2016): 3169-74.
- narrow tree rings coincide with weather patterns of strong storms because high winds destroy foliage and storm surges inundate roots with salt water
- in this way, historical records of shipwrecks and dendrochronology provide a parallel record of past climate events
- tropical cyclones and hurricanes (like the one that wrecked the Sea Venture in 1609) are fewer when there is less solar activity
- in this study, nature is not just a nonhuman actor with strong effects in the human world
- there are several nonhuman witnesses (trees, shipwrecks) to the human world that is shaped by shipwreck

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-Robert Fabyan, *Chronicle*

Source: Vaughan, Alden, "American Indians in England (act. c. 1500–1615)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

CALIBAN. All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall and make him
By inchmeal a disease! His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,
Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i' th' mire,
Nor lead me like a firebrand in the dark
Out of my way, unless he bid 'em. But
For every trifle are they set upon me,
Sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount
Their pricks at my footfall. Sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness. Lo, now, lo!
Here comes a spirit of his, and to torment me
For bringing wood in slowly. I'll fall flat.
Perchance he will not mind me.

Enter Trinculo. (2.2.1-17)

Caliban in the Storm, 2.2

- what is the role of nature here?
- Prospero?
- like a divinity, Prospero uses nature as an intermediary or a scourge to perform his will
- the island as natural dystopia?

Trinculo's First Encounter with Caliban, 2.2

TRINCULO. What have we here, a man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish, he smells like a fish—a very ancient and fishlike smell, a kind of not-of-the-newest poor-John. A strange fish. Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. (2.2.24-32)

-Caliban and Trinculo's mutual incomprehension? What does Caliban think he is?

-What is Trinculo's response?

-category confusion

-”this monster would make a man”

-reflection on European values

Nature, Utopia, and Sovereignty in *The Tempest*

CALIBAN. I'll show thee the best springs. I'll pluck
thee berries.

I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough.
I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow,
And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts,
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee
To clustering filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee
Young scamels from the rock. Wilt thou go with me?

STEPHANO. I prithee now, lead the way without any
more talking.—Trinculo, the King and all our
company else being drowned, we will inherit here.
—Here, bear my bottle.—Fellow Trinculo, we'll
fill him by and by again.

CALIBAN. (*sings drunkenly*)
Farewell, master, farewell, farewell.

TRINCULO A howling monster, a drunken monster.
(2.2.157-175)

-what is the island like?

-cf. to Caliban's description of
nature as Prospero's scourge at
the beginning of 2.2?

-how does Caliban's indigenous
knowledge of the island work
here?

-can Caliban be seen as a
'steward' of the island?

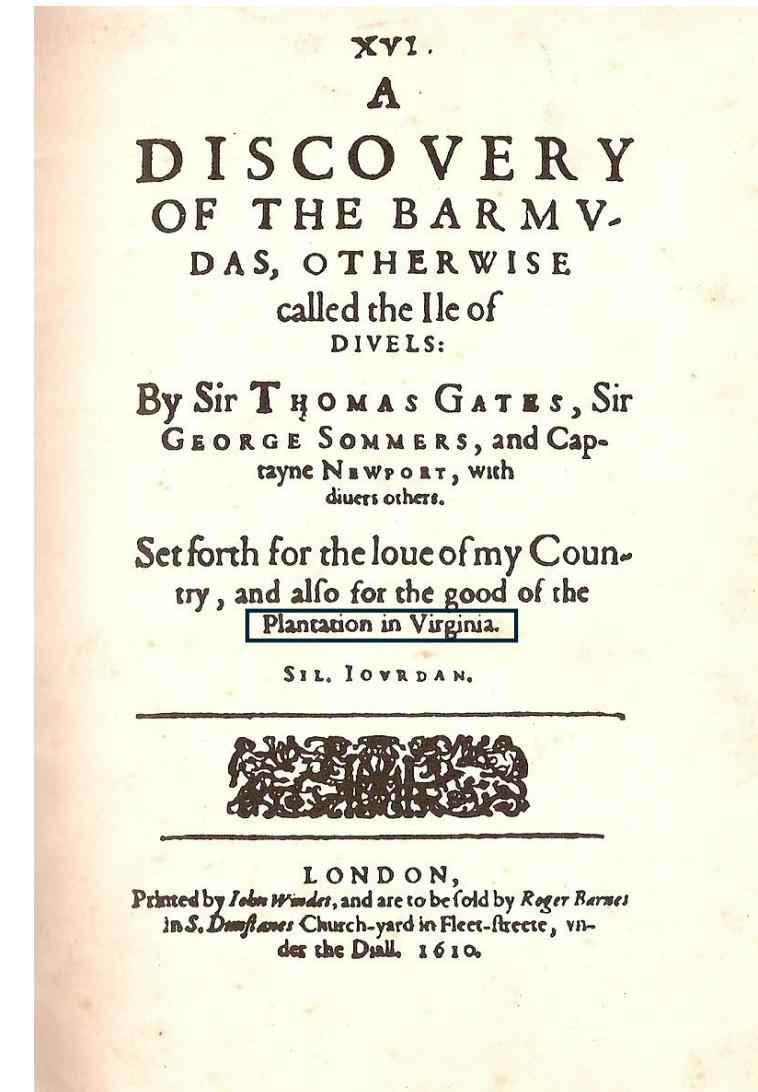
The Island as a Character

- described in the cast of characters as “an uninhabited island”
- how Prospero frames the island: the logic of “terrae nullius”
- “Then was this island / (save for the son that she did litter here/ A freckled whelp, hag-born) not honored with/ a human shape.” (1.2.281-84)
- the colonial trope of “terrae nullius” [empty land]
- cf Longfellow’s Hiawatha, the paintings of Albert Bierstadt, and the photographs of Ansel Adams)



The Bountiful Island trope in Jourdain's *A discovery of the Bermudas*

Fish is there so abundant that if a man step into the water they will come round about him, so that men were fain to get out for fear of biting. ... There is fowl in great number upon the islands where they breed, that there hath been taken in two or three hours a thousand at the least. ... The country yieldeth divers fruits, as prickled pears, great abundance, which continue green upon the trees all the year. ... The country affords no venomous creature, so so much as a rat or mouse or any other thing unwholesome. ... [The entrance to the harbor] is so narrow and strait between the rocks as that it will with small store of munition be fortified and easily defended with all advantage the place affords against the forces of the potentest king of Europe (Jourdain 110-113).



Nature, Utopia, and Politics in *The Tempest*

GONZALO. Had I plantation of this isle, my lord ...
And were the king on 't, what would I do? ...
I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty—
SEBASTIAN Yet he would be king on 't.

ANTONIO The latter end of his commonwealth
forgets
the beginning.

GONZALO
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor; treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth
Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
T' excel the Golden Age.
SEBASTIAN 'Save his Majesty!
ANTONIO
Long live Gonzalo!
GONZALO And do you mark me, sir?
ALONSO
Prithee, no more. Thou dost talk nothing to me.
(2.1. 147-173)

- What is the counselor Gonzalo's vision for the island?
- How does it compare to the political rule that Prospero has established on the island?
- utopia= 'no place'

Love Island: Miranda and Ferdinand

-they both are unsure whether or not the other is human or divine on first sight

-Prospero impedes their courtship by pretending to accuse Ferdinand, son to Alonso King of Naples, of trying to usurp the island from him (1.2.454-57)

-The Iris (the rainbow), Ceres (goddess of earth), and Juno (goddess of childbirth) pageant (4.1)

-Why does Prospero stage this pageant for the lovers? Effect?

-What does the interruption of this pageant mean?



Joseph Wright, “Ferdinand and Miranda in Prospero’s Cell” (Engraving, 1800).

The End of *The Tempest* 5.1: Who is the Most Unnatural of All?

-What is Prospero's relation to nature as expressed in 5.1?

-cf. to Caliban's “nimble marmoset” speech (2.2.157ff)

-Prospero accuses his brother Antonio of having “expelled remorse and nature” and of being “unnatural” (5.1.76; 79)

-To what extent is Caliban natural or unnatural?

PROSPERO. You elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
And you that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrumps, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
Weak masters though you be, I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure. ... I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book. (5.1.33-57).

Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals” (1580): Savagery vs. Civilization

I do not find that there is anything barbaric or savage about this nation [i.e. Brazil], according to what I've been told, unless we are to call barbarism whatever differs from our own customs. Indeed, we seem to have no other standard of truth and reason than the opinions and customs of our own country. There at home is always the perfect religion, the perfect legal system--the perfect and most accomplished way of doing everything. These people are wild in the same sense that fruits are, produced by nature, alone, in her ordinary way. Indeed, in that land, it is we who refuse to alter our artificial ways and reject the common order that ought rather to be called wild, or savage. In them the most natural virtues and abilities are alive and vigorous, whereas we have bastardized them and adopted them solely to our corrupt taste. Even so, the flavor and delicacy of some of the wild fruits from those countries is excellent, even to our taste, better than our cultivated ones. After all, it would hardly be reasonable that artificial breeding should be able to outdo our great and powerful mother, Nature. We have so burdened the beauty and richness of her works by our innovations that we have entirely stifled her. Yet whenever she shines forth in her purity she puts our vain and frivolous enterprises amazingly to shame.

-Montaigne reverses the polarity of Amerindian savagery and European civilization

-he argues that Amerindians live in accordance with nature vs. European civilization that has corrupted nature by trying to improve upon it

-What does the play say about savagery and civilization?

A dense forest scene with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy.

10. Moralizing The Weather

Defoe's *The Storm*

(journalism and eye-witness accounts)

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) and the Storm of 1703



- writer, merchant, and political propagandist
- his fictional account of a castaway, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), is often credited with being one of the first novels in English
- he was imprisoned for both bankruptcy and religious and political libel (critical of the Church of England and the ruling Tory party)
- just after his release from prison in 1703, the November hurricane hit England
- he immediately set to work documenting the storm and speculating on its causes, work that became his 1704 book *The Storm*

Storm of 1703

- November 1703 hurricane that is still considered to be the biggest natural disaster in English history
- for 7 days, the storm and winds destroyed houses and churches, drowned tens of thousands of pasture animals
- in East Anglia, hundreds of windmills caught fire apparently due to the friction of their “wildly spinning sails.”
- the storm decimated the Royal Navy, the bulk of which was anchored off the southern coast near Goodwin Sands: more than 300 ships and 8,000 sailors were lost.
- historians estimate that approximately 15,000 people died as a result of the storm and subsequent flooding



‘The Great STORM, November 26th, 1703 wherein Rear-admiral Beaumont was lost in the Goodwin Sands’ (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich).

Defoe's Archive, or Three Ways of Looking at a Storm

Defoe's three writings on the 1703 storm:

1. *The Storm* (July 1704)

- genre: journalism and science reporting
- combines description of the causes of storms generally, his own experience in the storm, and solicited eye-witness accounts of the 1703 storm, and his own journalistic commentary on them
- just after the storm, Defoe placed newspaper ads asking readers to submit personal accounts
- he edited about 60 of them into this book which also includes his own commentaries plus scientific matter on the cause of storms
- described as one of the first modern journalistic accounts of a natural disaster
- it remains a resource for historians and climatologists

2. *The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late Storm* (February 1704)

- genre: polemical treatise
- attributes the cause of the storm to the civil and religious divisions in English society

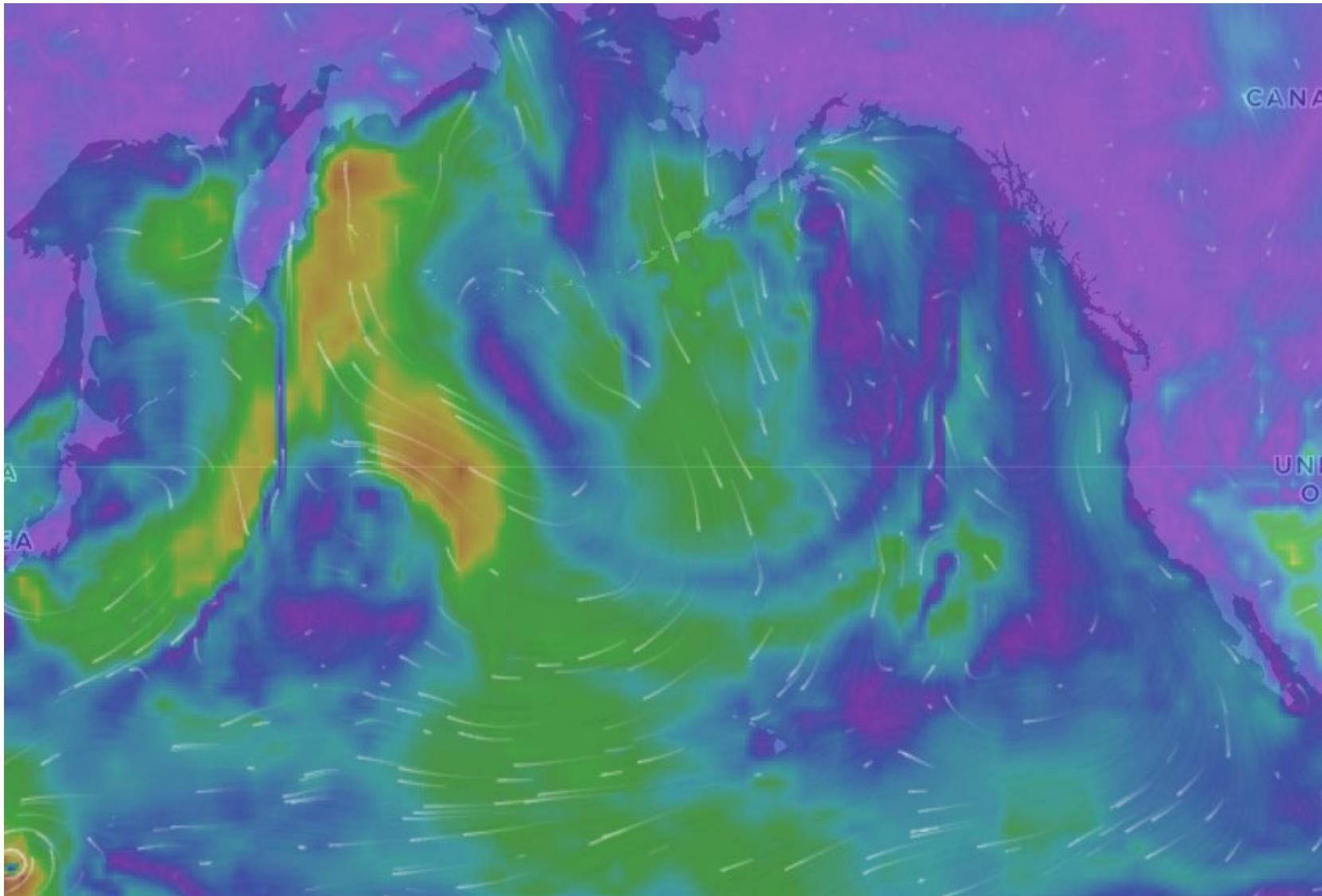
3. "An Essay on the Late Storm" (August 1704)

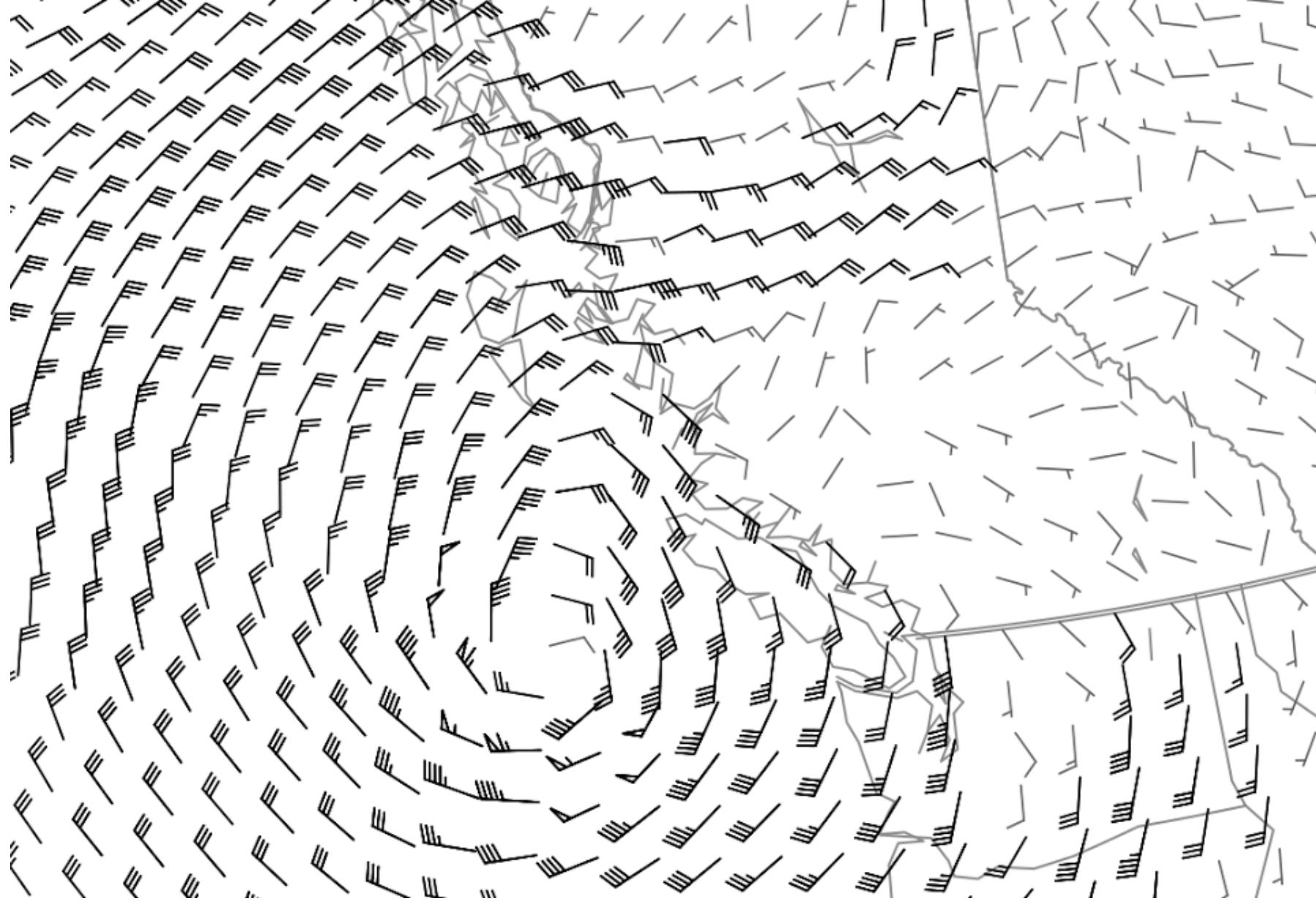
- genre: 345-line poem
- like The lay-Man's Sermon, a work of political and religious criticism

What Caused the Storm? Defoe's Natural Philosophy

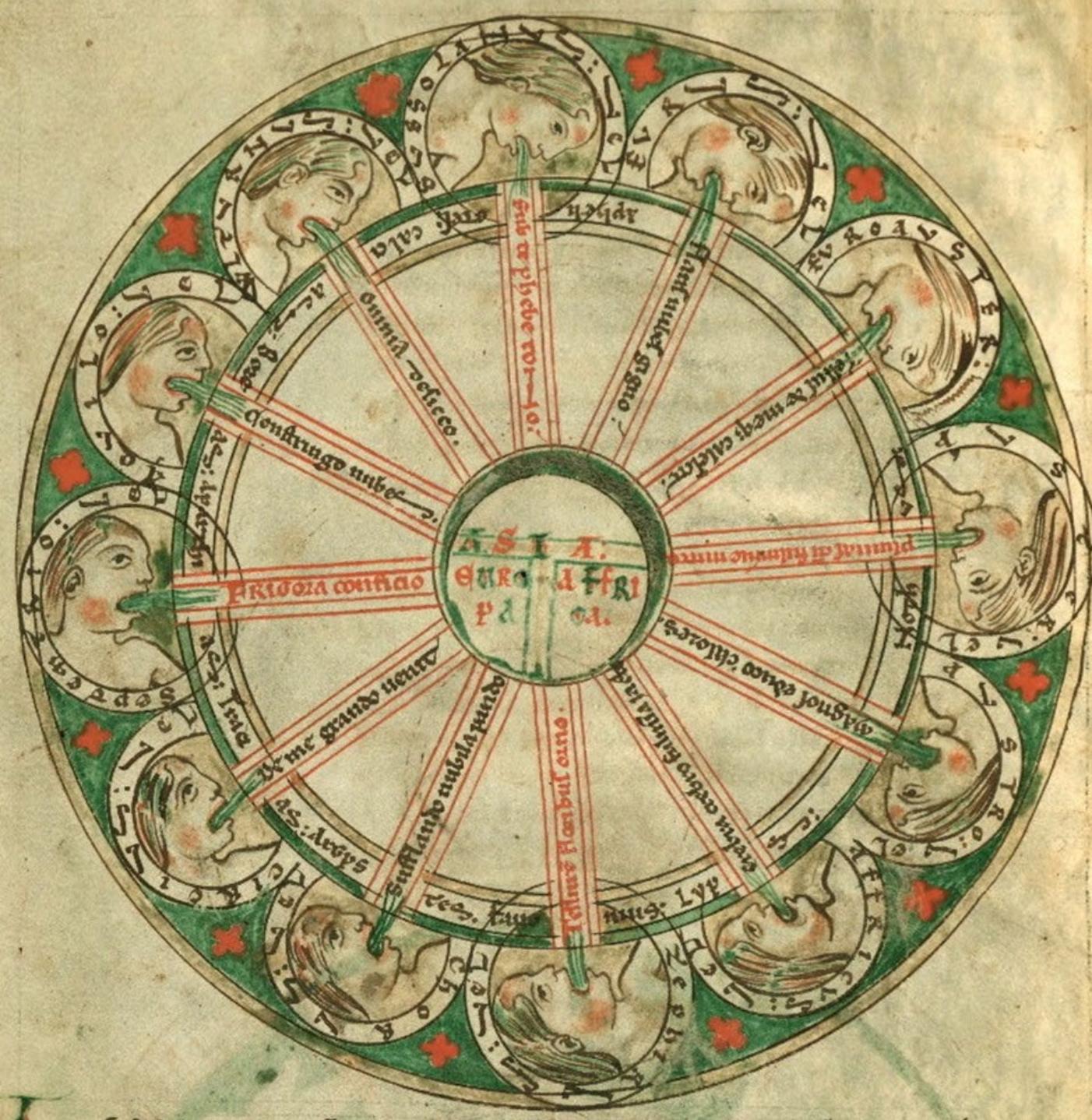
- what happens when we can't find an immediate physical cause for a natural occurrence?
- p. 11: "Nature plainly refers us beyond her Self, to the Mighty Hand of Infinite Power, the Author of Nature, and Original of all Causes."
- p. 16: "Other things are left to the Common Discoveries of Natural Inquiry, but this [i.e the cause of winds] is a thing he holds in his own Hand, and has conceal'd it from the Search of the most Diligent and Piercing Understanding: This is further confirm'd by the Words of our Saviour, *The Wind blows where it listeth, and thou.hearest the Sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh;* 'tis plainly express' d to signify that the Causes of the Wind are not equally discover'd by Natural Enquiry as the rest of Nature is."
- Defoe cites Ralph Bohun, *A Discourse Concerning the Origine and Properties of Wind* (1671): storms result when deep in the earth "Subterraneall Storms break prison, to disturb the peace of the Atmosphere, and raise mutinyes, and commotions in the whole body of the Air"
- why anthropomorphize wind?

How do we make visible the invisible forces of nature?





Synoptic wind chart with wind barbs. Northeast Pacific Ocean, British Columbia, and Washington state.

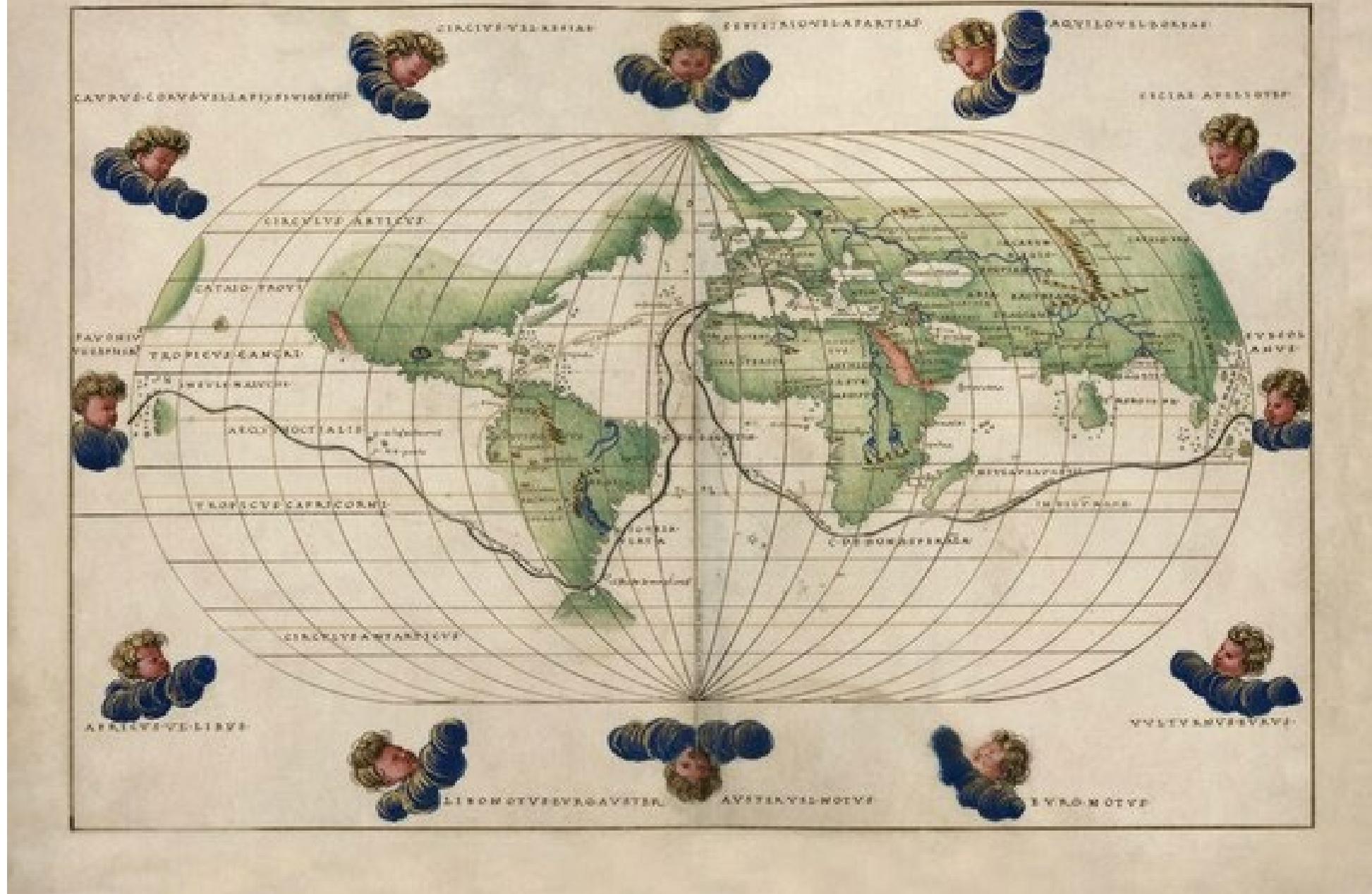


How did premoderns imagine these invisible natural forces like wind?

- one way was to give them a human body
- anthropomorphism of weather

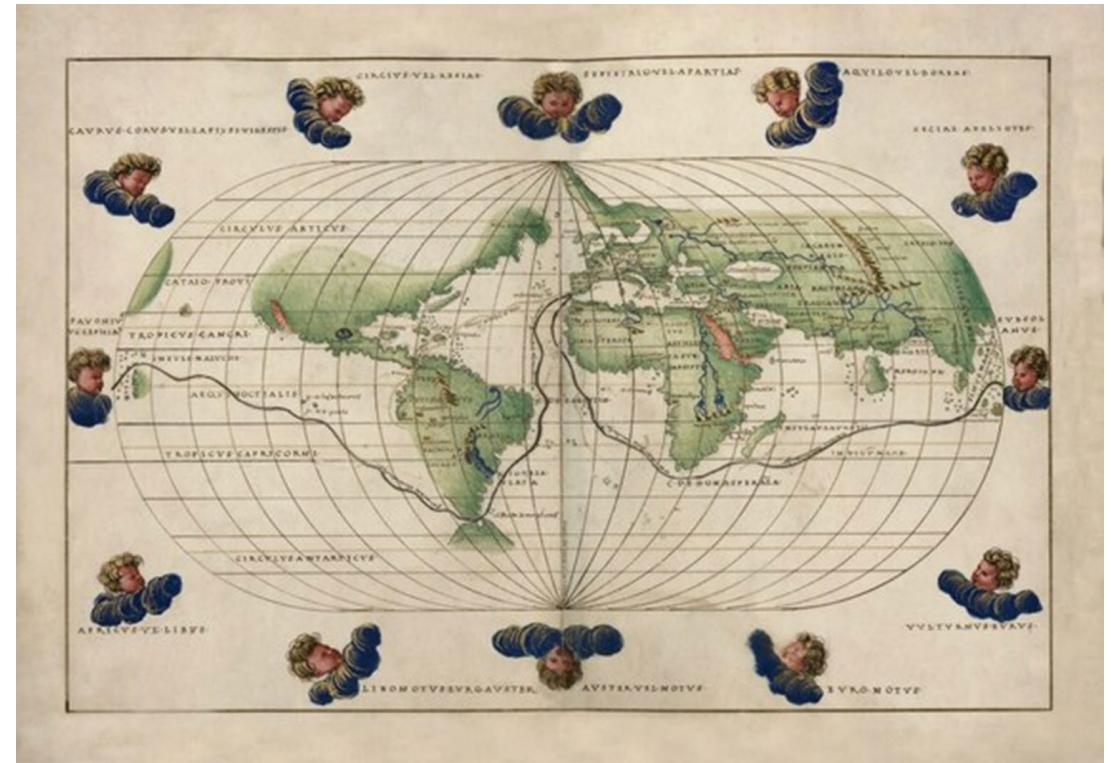
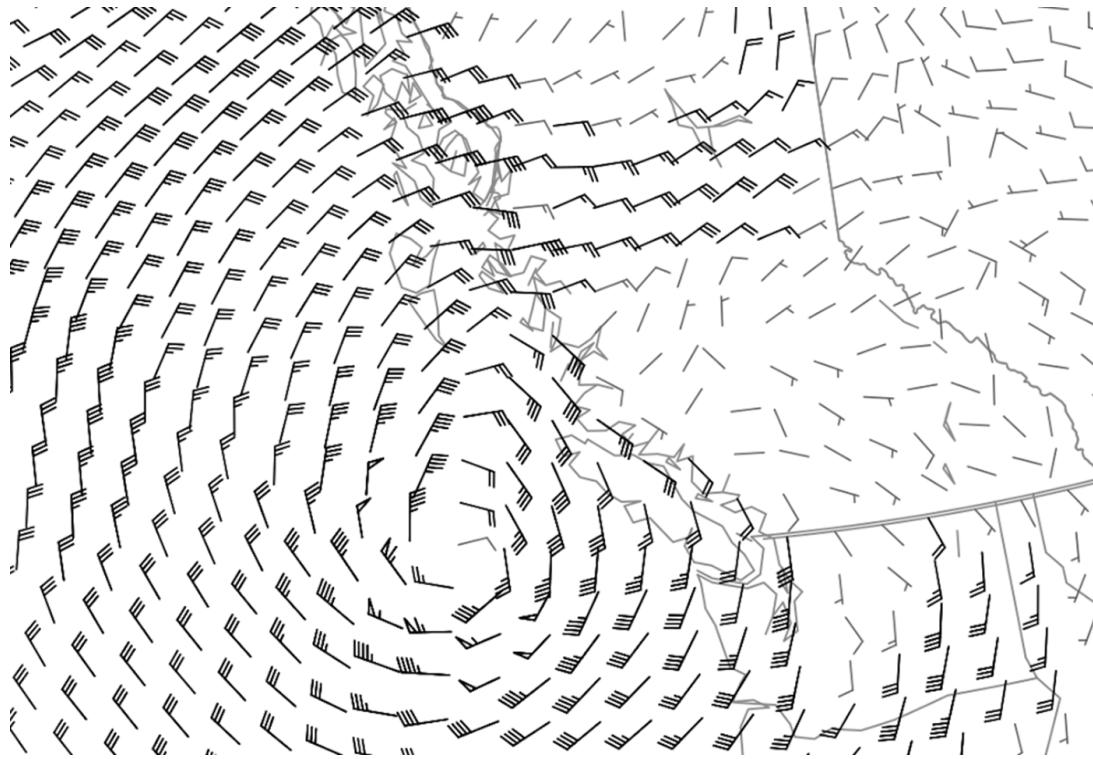
Zephyrus: “I adorn the earth with flowers”
(Tellurem floribus orno).

Twelve Aristotelian winds from a treatise of scientific and cosmographical items.
Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W.73, f. 1v (England, ca. late 12th-century).



Portolan Atlas of Battista Agnese, 1542. Morgan Library.

Abstraction vs. Anthropomorphism?





Aeolipile (“Jack of Hilton”), height 304 mm. Oxford,
Ashmolean Museum AN2013.1 (ca. 1300).

-The aeolipile was known in philosophical circles from late antiquity; yet it only acquired an anthropomorphic form in the later medieval period.

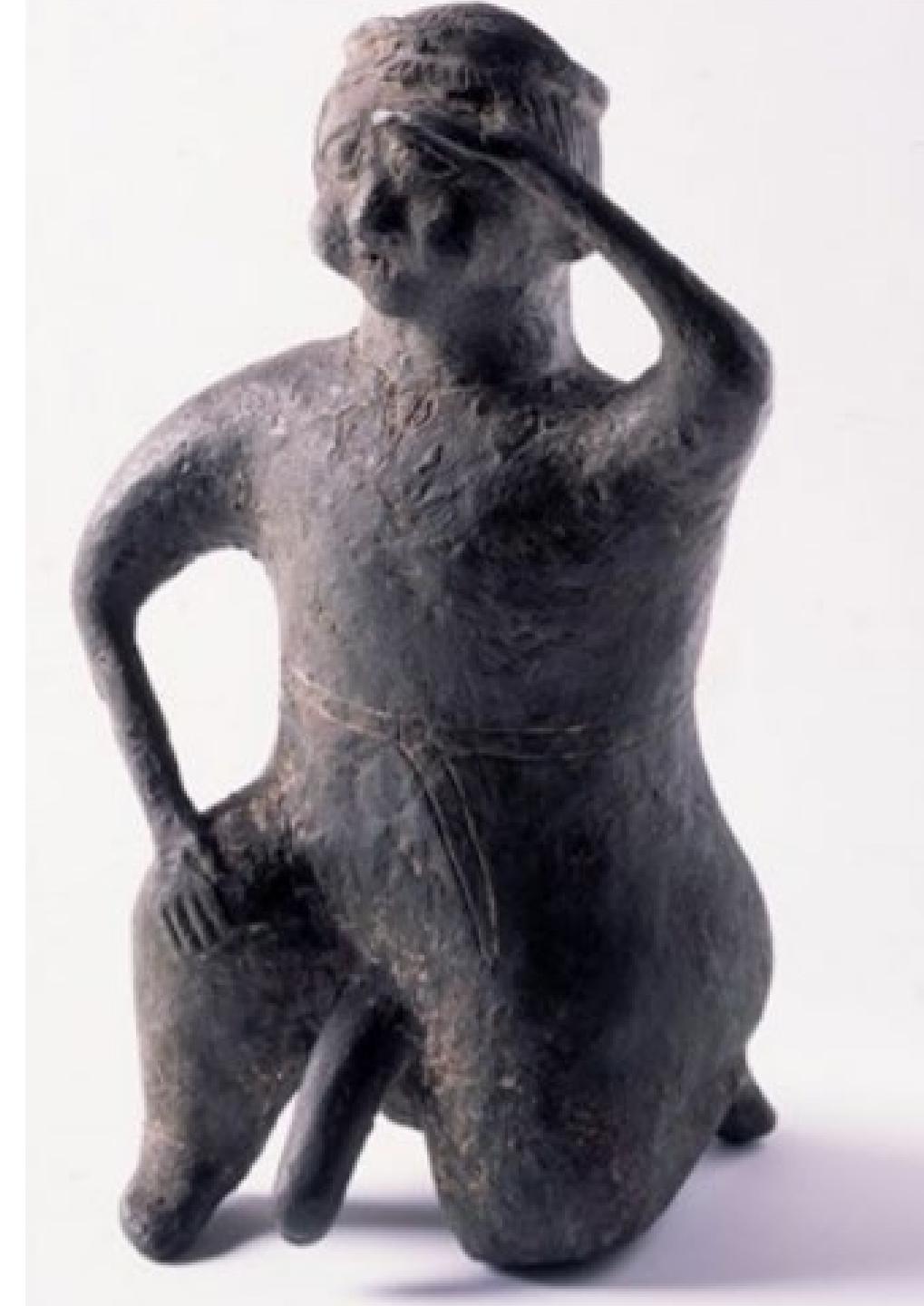
-Albertus Magnus describes its operations, noting that it was commonly called a sufflator since “it is customarily given the shape of a blowing man.”

-For Albertus, the device explained how water was expelled from the ground during earthquakes, a phenomena thought to be caused by a dry windy exhalation within the earth itself.

-In these anthropomorphic instruments, the human breath was used to simulate the winds that move the sublunary world

-why do this? not because they were naïve or primitive but because this embodiment lent concrete form to urgent philosophical problems: How to model and hence understand the invisible forces that shape our world?

Basingstoke aeolipile, height 27 cm. London, Society of Antiquaries (Hampshire, ca. 1400?).



How does weather like winds affect humans?

As the wind preserves with its moderating power all life in the world, this breath gives also to human beings a changing existence because of the state of our humors. If we human beings, whose natural disposition may correspond to that breath of the world, inhale this altered air and exhale it once again so that the soul can receive this breath and carry it even further into the body's interior, then the humors of our organism are altered. Often such humors may bring us ... either illness or good health.

-Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum* 3:1





Influence of the winds on the seasons and human activity. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum*. Lucca, Biblioteca Governativa, Ms. 1942, f. 38r (ca. 1230).

Regional ambient temperature is associated with human personality

Wenqi Wei^{1,2}, Jackson G. Lu³, Adam D. Galinsky³, Han Wu¹, Samuel D. Gosling^{4,5}, Peter J. Rentfrow⁶, Wenjie Yuan¹, Qi Zhang⁷, Yongyu Guo⁸, Ming Zhang⁹, Wenjing Gui¹, Xiao-Yi Guo¹, Jeff Potter¹⁰, Jian Wang¹¹, Bingtan Li¹, Xiaojie Li¹, Yang-Mei Han¹, Meizhen Lv¹, Xiang-Qing Guo¹, Yera Choe¹, Weipeng Lin¹², Kun Yu¹³, Qiyu Bai¹, Zhe Shang¹⁴, Ying Han¹ and Lei Wang^{1*}

Human personality traits differ across geographical regions^{1–3}. However, it remains unclear what generates these geographical personality differences. Because humans constantly experience and react to ambient temperature, we propose that temperature is a crucial environmental factor that is associated with individuals' habitual behavioural patterns and, therefore, with fundamental dimensions of personality. To test the relationship between ambient temperature and personality, we conducted two large-scale studies in two geographically large yet culturally distinct countries: China and the United States. Using data from 59 Chinese cities ($N = 5,587$), multilevel analyses and machine learning analyses revealed that compared with individuals who grew up in regions with less clement temperatures, individuals who grew up in regions with more clement temperatures (that is, closer to 22 °C) scored higher on personality factors related to socialization and stability (agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability) and personal growth and plasticity (extraversion and openness to experience). These relationships between temperature clemency and personality factors were replicated in a larger dataset of 12,499 ZIP-code level locations (the lowest geographical level feasible) in the United States ($N = 1,660,638$). Taken together, our findings provide a perspective on how and why personalities vary across geographical regions beyond past theories (subsistence style theory, selective migration theory and pathogen prevalence theory). As climate change continues across the world, we may also observe concomitant changes in human personality.

A wealth of evidence suggests that human personality traits differ across geographical regions^{1–5}. Such geographical variation in personality has been shown to predict a broad array of psychological, political, economic and health outcomes^{3,4,6}. However, one important question remains: What generates these geographical differences in personality?

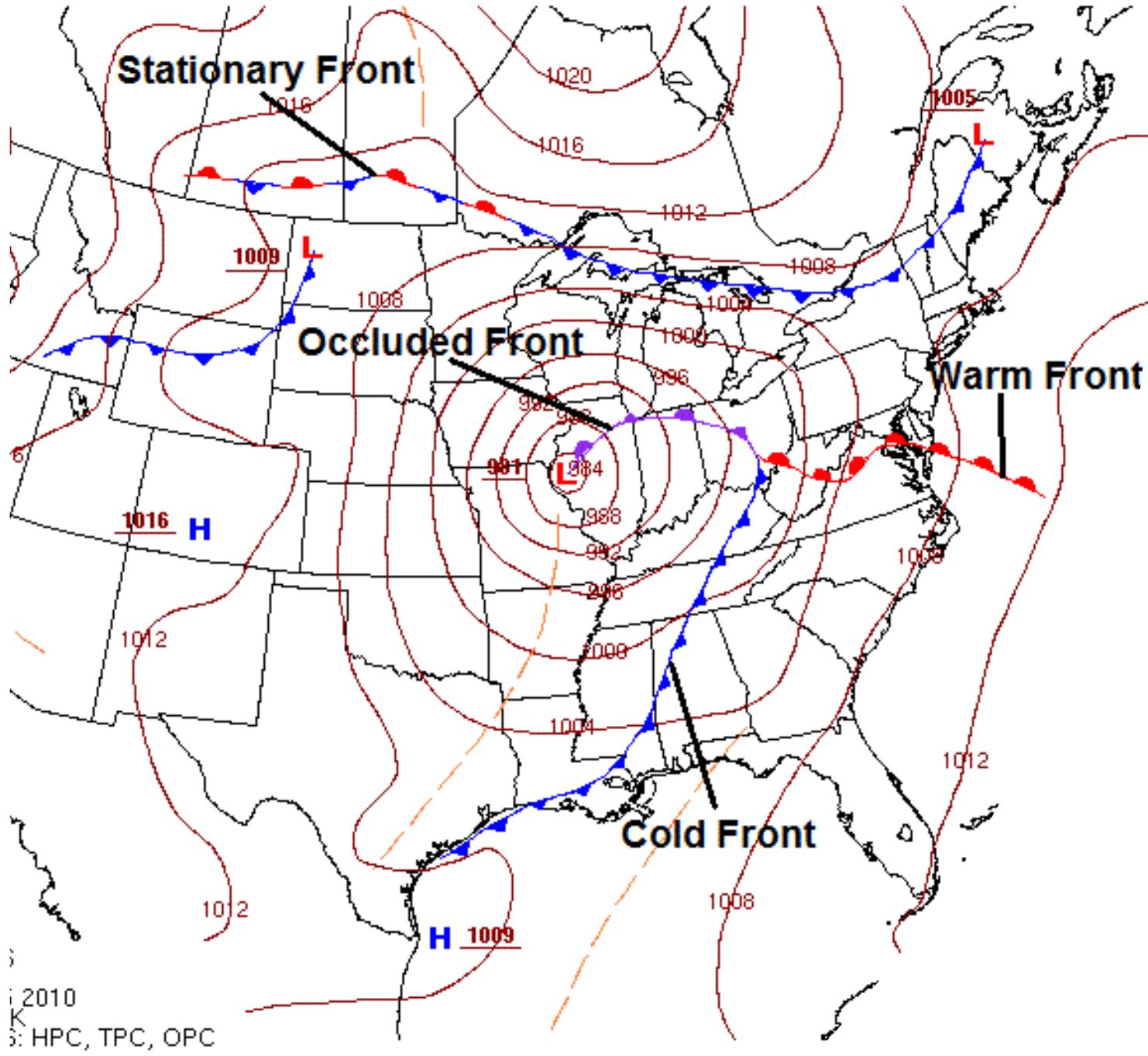
Humans constantly experience and react to ambient temperature. Because temperature varies markedly across the world, it is conceivable that temperature shapes the fundamental dimensions

of personality by affecting the habitual behaviours that underlie personality traits. Temperature may shape personality directly by influencing individual behaviours (for example, exploring outdoors versus staying indoors), and less directly by influencing collective activities (for example, agriculture) that guide individual behaviours⁷. Consequently, regions with different ambient temperatures may result in different patterns of personality traits.

Personality is defined as “the interactive aggregate of personal characteristics that influence an individual's response to the environment”⁸. The hundreds of personality traits used to describe humans are largely captured by five broad dimensions, often called the Big Five: agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and openness to experience⁹. These five personality factors can be further aggregated into two higher-order factors: ‘Alpha’ (agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability), which represents a socialization and stability factor, and ‘Beta’ (extraversion and openness to experience), which represents a personal growth and plasticity factor^{10,11}.

We propose that ambient temperature clemency is a key factor that relates to personality. This proposition is rooted in the fact that, as a warm-blooded species, humans have the existential need for thermal comfort^{12–15}. Clement (that is, mild) temperatures encourage individuals to explore the outside environment, where both social interactions and new experiences abound; by contrast, when the ambient temperature is either too hot or too cold, individuals are less likely to go outside (for example, to meet up with friends, or to try new activities)¹⁶. This perspective is consistent with attachment theories, which state that individuals are more likely to explore their environments when they feel psychologically secure^{17,18}.

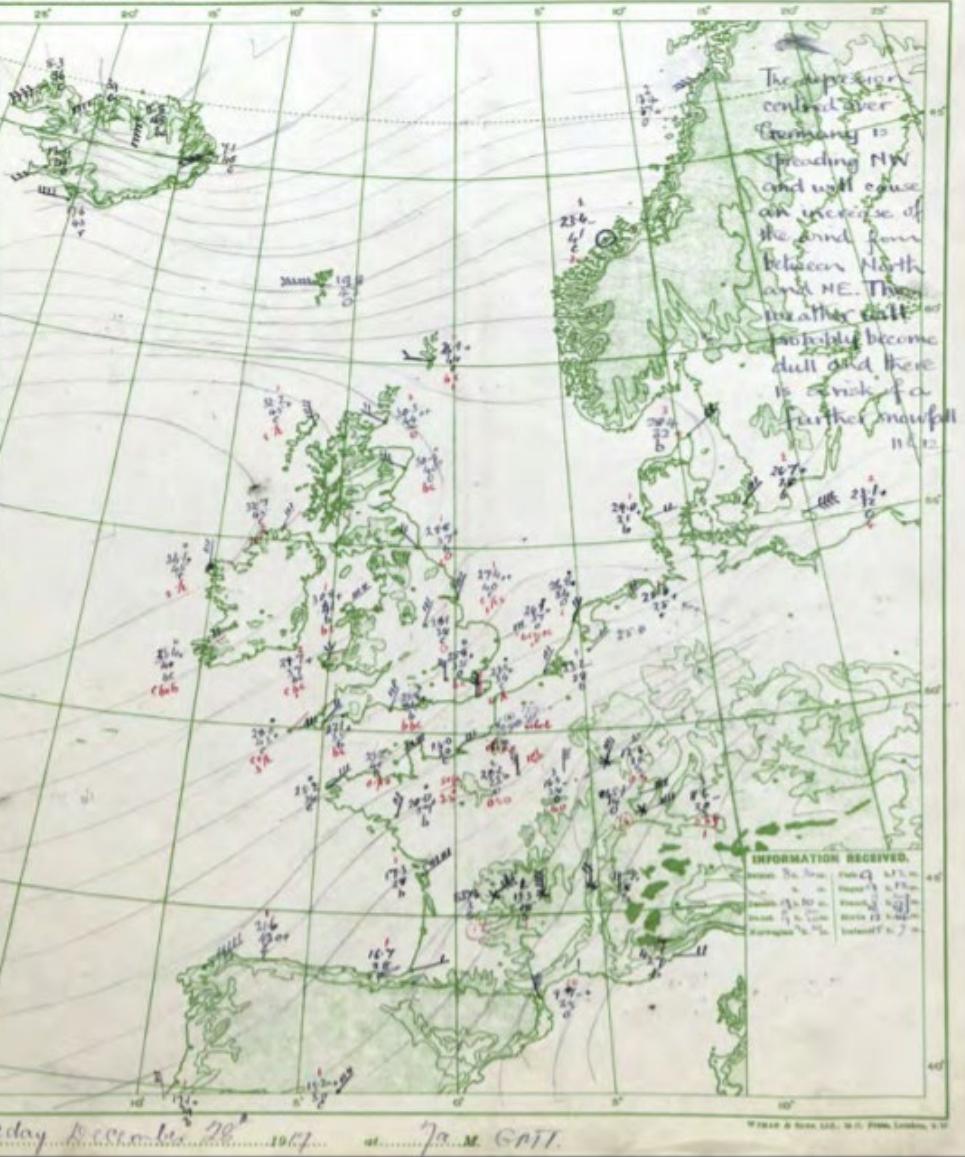
Based on this reasoning, we hypothesize that individuals who grow up in more clement temperatures will be higher on both the socialization factor (Alpha) and the personal growth factor (Beta). Regarding the socialization factor Alpha, research has found that personality traits develop partly through social interactions^{19,20}. More clement temperatures facilitate social contact¹⁶, for which agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability are important²¹. Moreover, clement temperatures have been shown to enhance



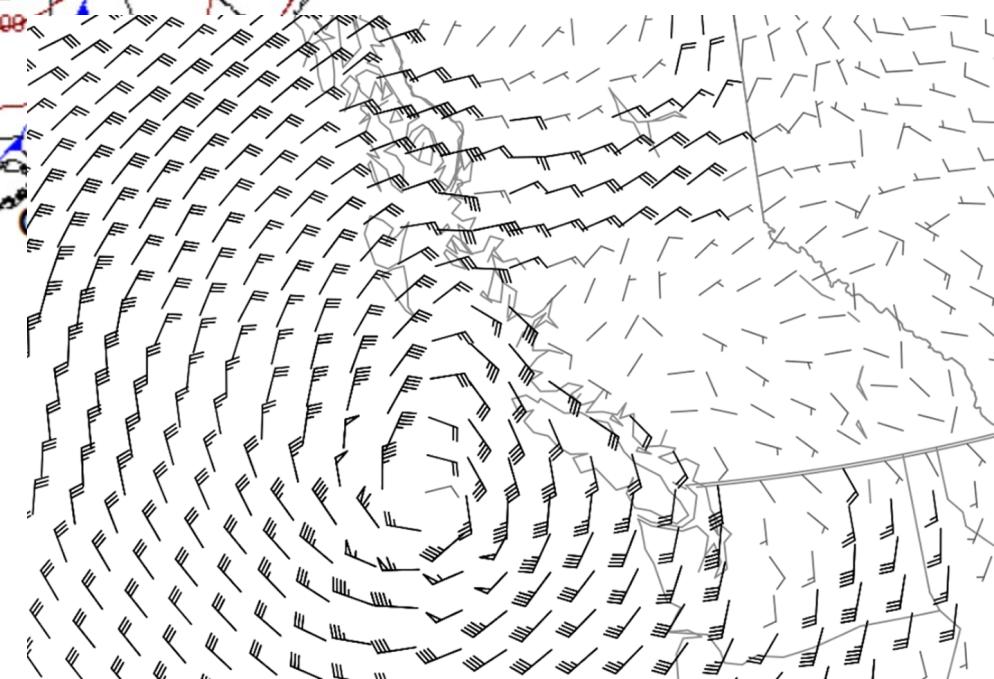
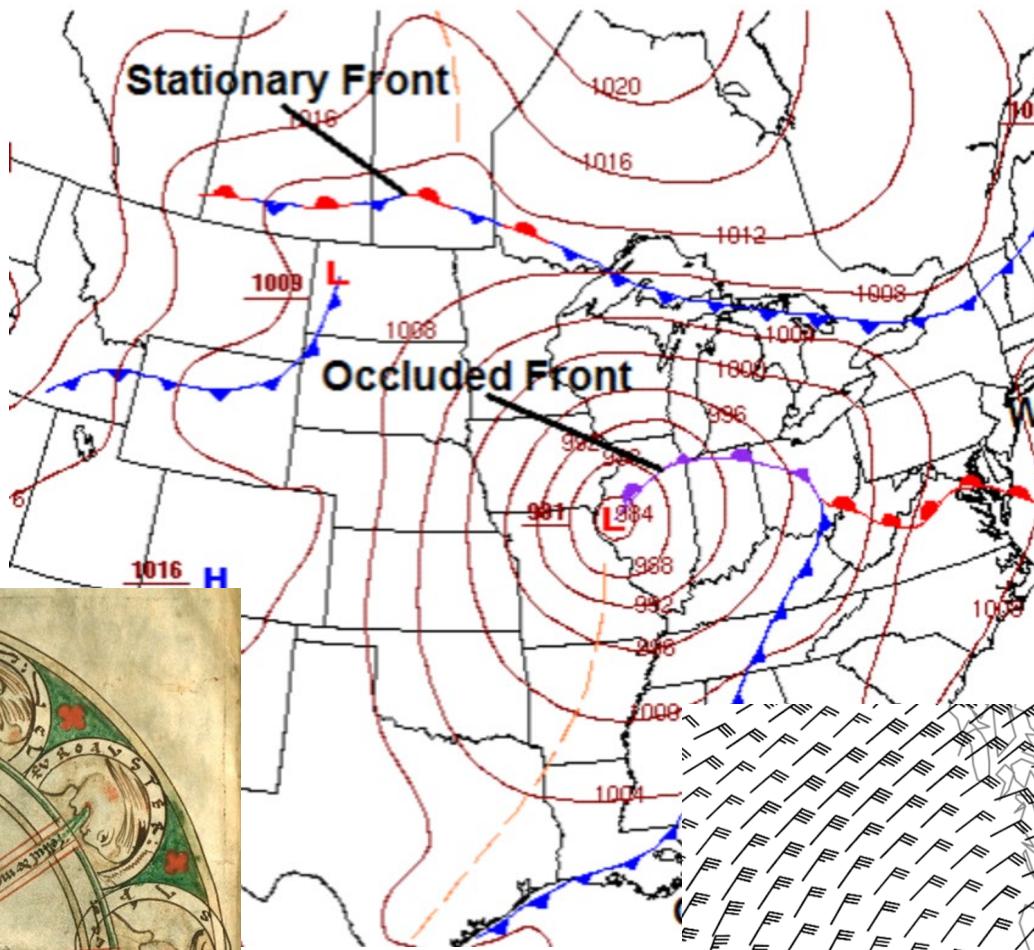
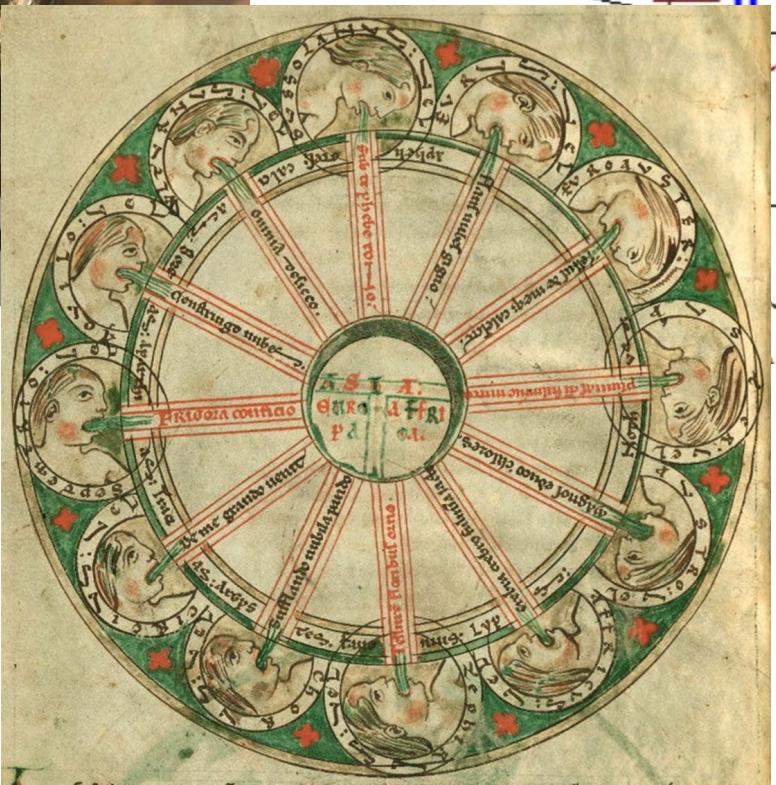
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CHART OF WEATHER IN NORTH-WESTERN EUROPE.



Synoptic wind chart for North-Western Europe, 28 December 1917.



Defoe's *The Storm*: The invisible force of the winds known by their damage

In London: “The houses looked like Skeletons, and an universal Air of Horror seem'd to sit on the Countenances of the People” (63)

- roof tiles blown off of every house and turned into lethal projectiles
 - toppled chimneys fallen that destroy the houses on to which they fall (21 deaths)
 - topped brick walls
 - lead sheet roofs “roll'd up like a Roll of Parchment”
 - trees blown down; he says he counted 17,000 himself in Kent (56)
 - the destruction of church spires and large weather vanes
-
- Defoe documents the urban destruction vs the countryside of his correspondents

The cost in human life, particularly on ships

-more than 100 ships sank and 8,000 sailors dead

"It was a Sight full of terrible Particulars, to see a Ship of eighty Guns and about Six Hundred Men in that dismal Case; she had cut away all her Masts, the Men were all in the Confusions of Death and Despair; she had neither Anchor, nor Cable, nor Boat to help her; the Sea breaking over her in a terrible Manner, that sometimes she seem'd all under Water; and they knew, as well as we that saw her, that they drove by the Tempest directly for the Goodwin, where they could expect nothing but Destruction. The Cries of Men, and the firing their Guns, One by One, every Half Minute for Help, terrified us in such a Manner, that I think we were half dead with the Horror of it." (174)

A LIST of such of Her Majesty's Ships, with their Commanders Names, as were cast away by the Violent Storm on Friday Night the 26th of November 1703. the Wind having been from the S. W. to W. S. W. and the Storm continuing from about Midnight to past Six in the Morning.

Rates.	Ships.	Number of Men before the Storm.	Guns.	Commanders.	Places where lost.	
Fourth —	Reserve —	258	54	John Anderson —	Yarmouth Roads	Her Captain, Purser, Master, Chyrsurgeon, Clerk and Sixteen Men were Ashore, the rest drowned.
Third —	Northumberland —	253	70	James Greenway —	———	All their Men lost.
	Restoration —	386	70	Fleetwood Emes —		
—	Sterling Castle —	349	70	John Johnson —	Goodwin Sands	Third Lieutenant, Chaplain, Cook Chyrsurgeon's Mate; four Marine Captains, and sixty-two Men saved.
Fourth —	Mary —	273	64	Rear Admiral Beaumont, Edward Hopson	———	Only one Man saved by Swimming from Wreck to Wreck, and getting to the Sterling Castle; the Captain Ashore, as also the Purser.

- what is the relation of the narrative?
- what is the effect of the table?
- relation to how natural disasters are reported on today?

The ending of *The Storm*

One unhappy Accident I cannot omit, and which is brought us from good Hands, and happen'd in a Ship homeward bound from the West-Indies. The Ship was in the utmost Danger of Foundring; and when the Master saw all, as he thought, lost, his Masts gone, the Ship leaky, and expecting her every moment to sink under him, fill'd with Despair, he calls to him the Surgeon of the Ship, and by a fatal Contract, as soon made as hastily executed, they resolv'd to prevent the Death they fear'd by one more certain; and going into the Cabbin, they both shot themselves with their Pistols. It pleas'd God the Ship recover'd the Distress, was driven safe into — and the Captain just liv'd to see the desperate Course he took might have been spar'd; the Surgeon died immediately. (180)

-what is the moral of this story?

-what is the effect of placing it at the end of the work of reporting?

10. Moralizing The Weather

Defoe, The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late
Storm (polemic)

Defoe, “An Essay on the Late Storm” (poem)

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

Heads up for next week:

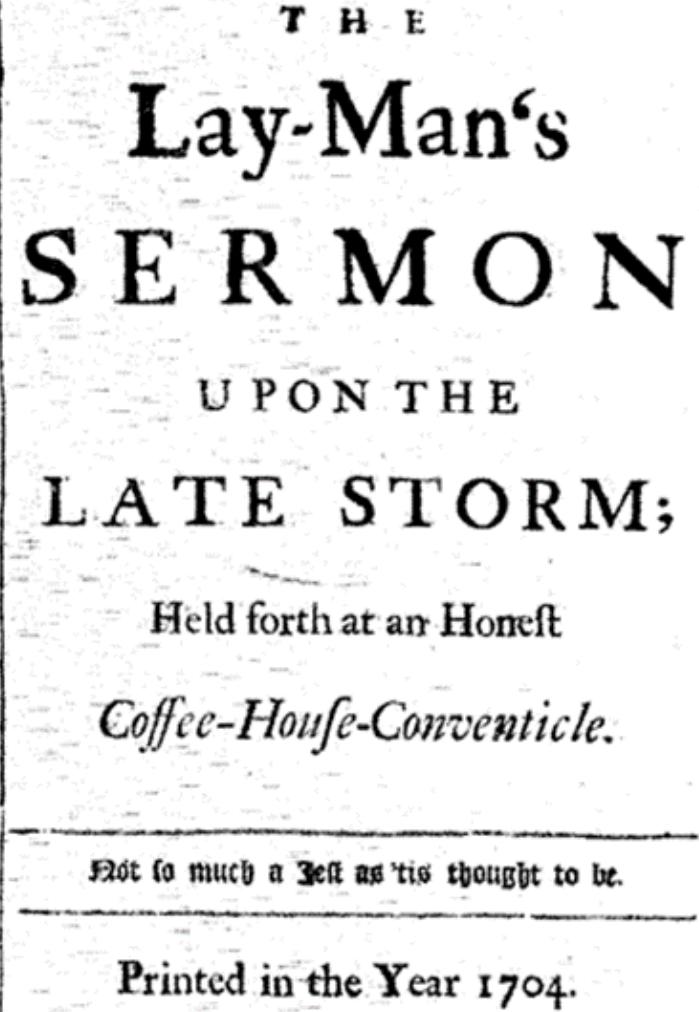
we'll be starting Jesmyn Ward's novel *Salvage the Bones* (1-57)

Smith, Selections from Blood Dazzler (Canvas)

Not required but Recommended reading:

Meneley and Taylor, Introduction to *Anthropocene Reading* (Canvas)

-We'll spend 2 weeks on the Ward novel then move on to Octavia Butler's novel, *Parable of the Sower* for 2 weeks

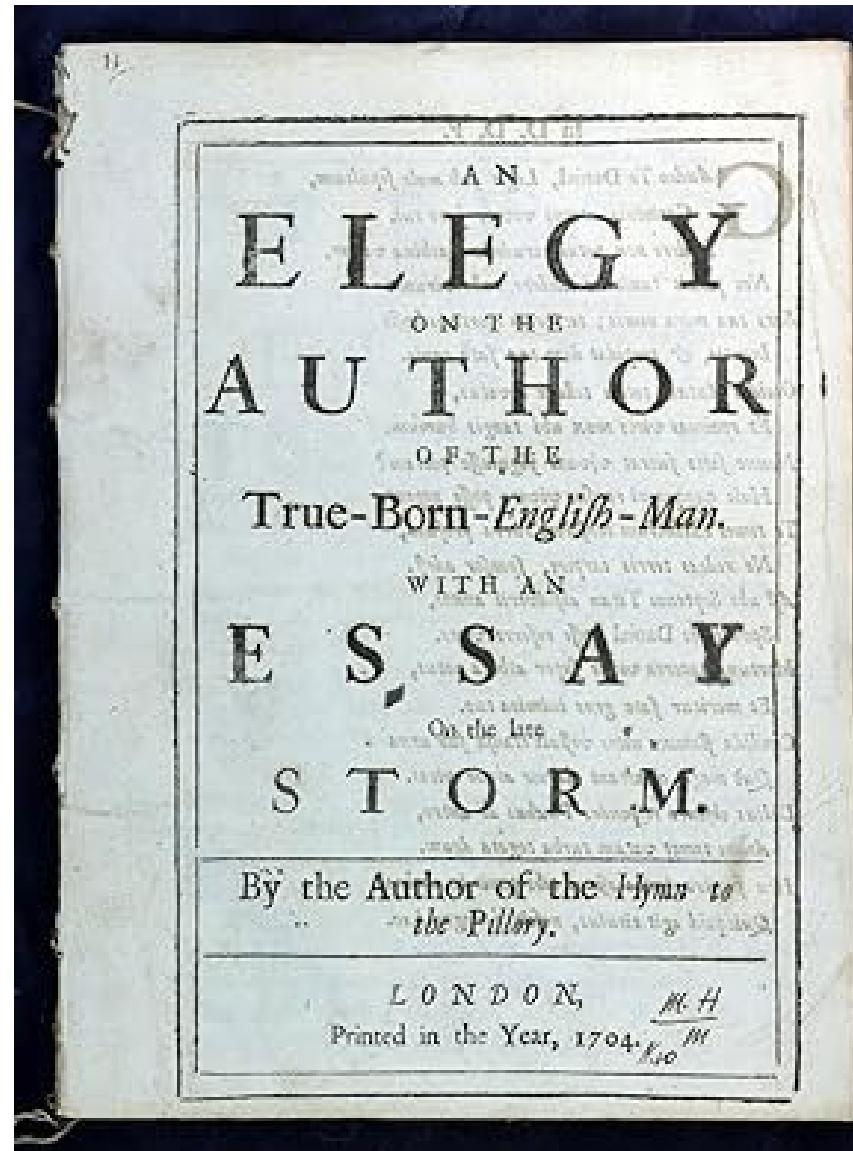


The Lay-Man's Sermon Upon the Late Storm

- published in February 1704
- unlike the journalistic treatise *The Storm* which dramatized many voices in the eye-witness accounts, the *Lay-Man's Sermon* speaks in a single voice: that of the political moralist
- a “layman” as opposed to a cleric, a “sermon” as opposed to an opinion piece

An Essay on the late Storm

- published with *An Elegy on the Author of the True-Born-English-Man* later in 1704
- not a prose “essay” but a poem
- “essay” meaning “to test out a hypothesis”



Genre and Natural Disaster

- Defoe wrote a secular “sermon” and a satiric poem that outlined what he thought were the causes and the blame associated with the storm
- In the poem “An Essay on the Late Storm” he talks about himself as the “Satyr”—that is, the satiric writer who has been legally “silenced” by having agreed to a 7 yr “good behavior” clause as part of his libel settlement
- what genres do we associate with this type of writing / media today?

Daniel Defoe's Politics and the Storm of 1703

-he was a supporter of the staunch Protestant King William III (William and Mary) who had deposed his Catholic predecessor James II in 1689

-King William III died in 1702 and was succeeded by his cousin/ sister-in-law Anne

-in religion, Defoe was a Dissenter, that is, a “low church” Protestant who believed in reforming the contemporary Church of England (the “high church”)

-he believed in religious freedom for different strains of Protestants (not for Catholics)

-he thought that English Protestants should stop fighting each other at home and instead should fight Catholics in France and Spain abroad

-how do storms get moralized? what pre-existing ethical systems do storms make apparent?



“The Lay-Man’s Sermon” and the Voice of the Storm

The shatter'd Palaces of our Princes Preach to us, and tell us aloud, that without respect to Dignity, he is able to put that Dreadful Text in Execution; That if a Nation does wickedly they shall be destroy'd both they and their King.

The fallen Oaks, which stood before to tell us they were the longest liv'd of all God's Creatures, Preach to us, and tell us that the most towring object of humane Beauty and strength must lye humble and prostrate, when he is pleased to give a Check to that Splendor which was deriv'd from his Power.

The Wrecks of our Navies and Fleets Preach to us, that 'tis in vain we pretend to be Wall'd about by the Ocean, and ride Masters of the Sea: And that, if he who bestow'd that Scituation upon us thinks fit, he can make that Element which has been our Strength, and the Encreaser of our Wealth, be the Grave of our Treasure, and the Enemy of our Commerce; he can put it into so violent Agitation, by the blast of his Mouth, that all our Defence and the Naval Strength we have vallued our selves so much upon, shall at once be swallow'd up in the Mouth of our Friend the Sea; and we shall find our Destruction in the very thing from which we expected our Defence.

Our Seamen and Soldiers, whose Dead Bodies Embrace the English Shores, Preach aloud to us, that whenever we think fit to Embark them on any Design, which Heaven approves not of, he can blast the Embrio, and devour those People whose Hands are lifted up against Justice and Right.(4)

-pronouns? repetition?

What Language Do Writers Use to Convey the Storm's Moral? Figures of Speech: *The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late Storm* and Prosopopoiea

“The Voice of his Judgements is heard in the Voice of Nature, and if we make our selves Deaf, he is pleas'd to make them speak the Louder, to awaken the stupifyed sences, and startle the World” (3).

“In publick Callamities, every Circumstance is a Sermon, and every thing we see a Preacher” (4).

- The idea of non-human witnessing
- the physical world testifies about the causes in the human world

Prosopopoiea=A rhetorical figure that gives a human voice to an inanimate thing

- a species of personification
- the Greek prosopon poien is “to confer a mask or a face.”
- cf. to Emerson’s poem “Song of Nature” that spoke in nature’s voice

What Language Do Writers Use to Convey the Storm's Moral? Satire and “An Essay on the Late Storm”

I'm told, *for we have News among the Dead,*

Heaven lately spoke, but few knew what it said;

The Voice, in loudest Tempests spoke,

And Storms, which Nature's strong Foundation shook.

I felt it hither, and I'd have you know

I heard the Voice, and knew the Language too.

Think it not strange I heard it here,

No Place is so remote, but when _he speaks_, they hear.

Besides, tho' I am dead in Fame,

I never told you where I am. (ll. 1-10)

-who is the narrator? What do we learn about him?

-he says in the next stanza that he is in limbo

-goes on to explain how political and religious divisions are the causes of the storm

Who or What is Responsible? How Does Responsibility Work? Collective vs. Individual Responsibility

Every one thinks it to be a Judgment upon the Person or Parties they see touch'd with it. W—— the Carpenter was knock'd on the head with a Stack of Chimneys, and his Wife saved; all the Neighbours cried out 'twas a Judgment upon him for keeping a Whore; but if Stacks of Chimnies were to have fallen on the Heads of all that keep Whores, *Miserere Dei.* ...

'Tis plain to me, who ever are Punish'd by the Storm, we that are left have a share in the Judgment, and a Trebble [i.e. triple] concern in the Cause. ... [We] have all had a hand in the general provocation, though not an equal share in the general Calamity. (*Lay-Man's Sermon*, 5-6)

-how does responsibility work?

-Guilt vs innocence?

-The moral problem of the unevenness of effects: weather/ climate change does not punish everyone according to their guilt/ responsibility

What is the Moral of the Storm for Defoe? I

The Storms above reprove the Storms below,
And 'tis too often known,
The Storms below do Storms above
Forerun;

-what do these lines mean?

They say this was a High-Church Storm,
Sent out the Nation to Reform;
But th' Emblem left the Moral in the Lurch,
For't blew the Steeple down upon the
Church.

-how does the analogy between different types of storm work?

From whence we now inform the People,
The danger of the Church is from the
Steeple. (Defoe, "An Essay on the Late Storm"
ll. 293-300)

-what does it mean that the "Emblem left the Moral in the Lurch"?

What is the Moral of the Storm for Defoe? II

When ever our rulers think fit to see it [i.e. moderation], and to employ the Men and the Methods which Heaven approves, then we may expect success from abroad, Peace at home, prosperity in Trade, Victory in War, plenty in the Field, Mild and Comfortable Seasons, Calm Air, Smooth Seas, and safe Habitations.

Till then we are to expect our Houses Blown down, our Pallaces Shatter'd, our Voyages broken, our Navys Ship-wreck'd, our Sailors Drown'd, our Confederates Beaten, our Trade ruin'd, our Money spent and our Enemies encreased.

. . .

'Tis plain Heaven has suited his Punishment to the Offence, has Punish'd the Stormy Temper of this Party of Men with Storms of his Vengeance, Storms on their Navies, Storms on their Houses, Storms on their Confederates, and I question not will at last with Storms in their Consciences.

(*Lay-Man's Sermon*, 7-8).

- “natural” disasters always have human referents
- they are only given meaning once they are inserted into human social narratives

Modern Prosopopoeia and Nature

2019 Climate Action Summit

Opening remarks of UN Secretary-General António Guterres

“Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Nature is angry.

And we fool ourselves if we think we can fool nature.

Because nature always strikes back.

And around the world, nature is striking back with fury.

Consider the last few months.

July — the hottest month ever.

June through August — the hottest summer in the Northern hemisphere ever; and the second hottest winter in the Southern hemisphere ever.

The years 2015 to 2019 — the five hottest years on the books ever.

Our warming earth is issuing a chilling cry: Stop.”

In Class Writing: Moralizing Modern Storms

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section).

1. Choose a modern storm or natural disaster that has hit in the last 5-10 years, such as January 2025 LA wildfires, 2024 Hurricane Milton, or 2022 Hurricane Ian (or any storm of your choosing). Do a quick on-line search about it looking at at least 2 different kinds of sources. Note them down.
2. How is the storm/ natural disaster described? Give an example of rhetorical language. What makes it vivid?
3. How is responsibility for the disaster discussed (collective vs. individual)?
4. What is the moral of the storm? Is it the same in both sources?

11. Katrina and Anthropocene Thinking

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*
Smith, Blood Dazzler

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

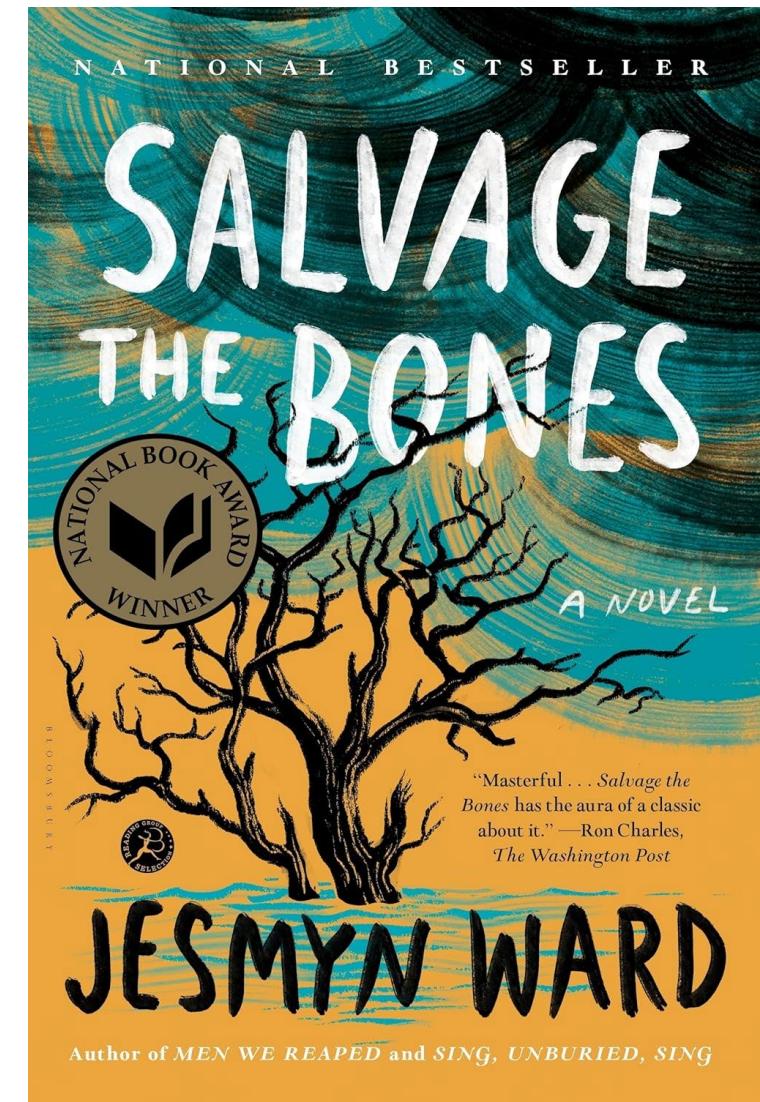
Course Stuff

- Writing Assignment 1 grades have been posted
- Tiny Ecologies 3 will be returned in the next week
- Make sure to bring your hard copy of Ward's *Salvage the Bones* to class with you for the next 2 weeks

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (2011)



- Ward is a professor of English and Creative Writing at Tulane University
- she grew up in De Lisle, Mississippi on the Gulf Coast and was the first in her family to attend college and then went on to get an MFA at U Michigan
- two of her novels (including *Salvage the Bones*) have won the National Book Award, arguably the most prestigious award in US literature
- but *Salvage the Bones* was also the subject of attempted book bans in high schools due to its portrayal of difficult subjects like dogfighting, teenage pregnancy, and poverty

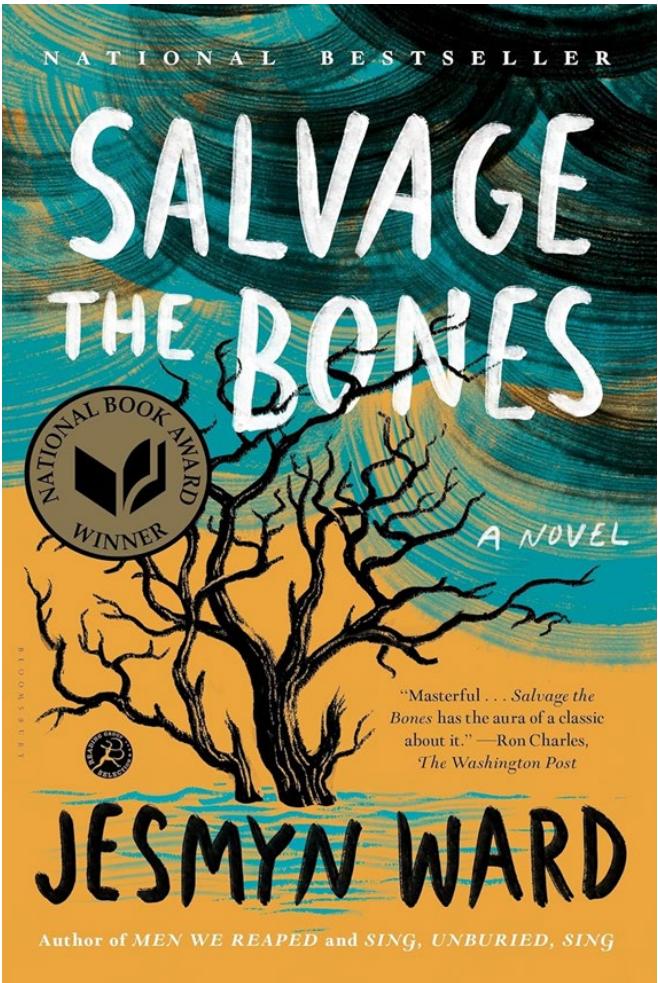


What's the basic plot?

- tells the story of a poor African American family in the fictional Mississippi Gulf town of Bois Sauvage in the days leading up to Hurricane Katrina
- focuses on 15-year-old Esch who is pregnant and her brothers Skeetah, Randall, and Junior, and their alcoholic father, who struggles to provide for them
- these events unfold against the family's attempt to prepare for Hurricane Katrina and to survive it

So why are we reading it?

- the novel imagines complex relationships among nature, the nonhuman world, and the members of this family
- the force of nature becomes a character in the novel
- the novel offers a modern perspective on the natural disaster that builds on the storm stories we have seen in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Defoe's multiple accounts of the 1703 Storm
- How do humans deal with natural forces that they cannot control and to which they are necessarily subject?
- How does the moral of the storm change over time?



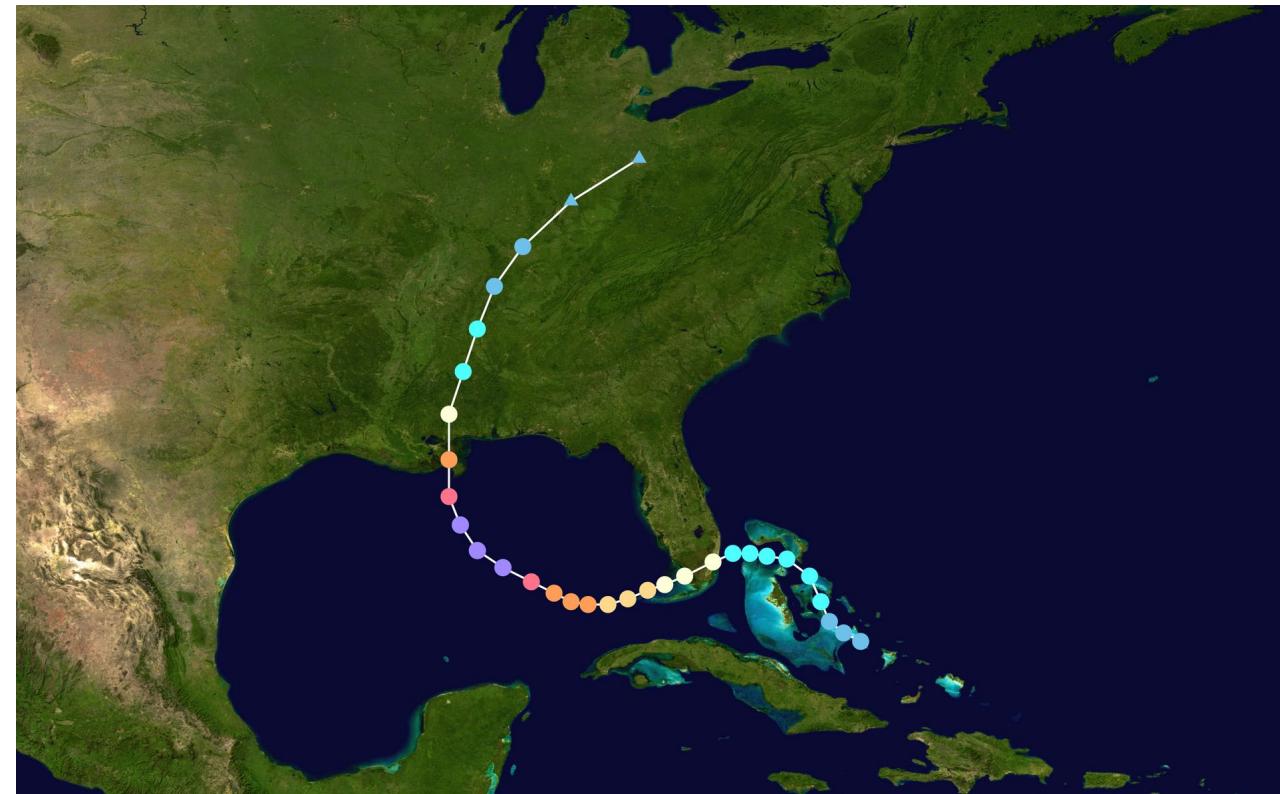
Archive 1: *Salvage the Bones* (2011) and Hurricane Katrina (2005)

-the novel is based in part on Ward's first-hand experience of living through Katrina in DeLisle MS, the town on which Bois Sauvage is based

-Katrina came ashore twice the second time on August 29-first made landfall on August 25, 2005 in FL then went out into the Gulf where it picked up strength

-August 29, it made landfall again as a Category 4 hurricane, 50 miles southeast of New Orleans with winds of over 160 mph with storm surges of up to 30 feet

-while NO was spared a direct hit, its levee system failed causing the waters of Lake Pontchartrain to flood over 80% of the city by August 30th



Impacts of Hurricane Katrina



- it took almost a week to mobilize aid and rescue operations
- an estimated 30,000 people sought shelter at the damaged NO Superdome with an additional 25,000 at the NO convention center
- shortages of food and water, daily temperatures in the 90s, and bacteria-laden floodwaters contributed to a public health emergency
- the storm resulted in 1,300 deaths and 190 billion dollars in property damage
- the largest single loss in the history of insurance
- Katrina led to the largest and the fastest mass migration in modern U.S. history with about 1.2 million people displaced in a matter of weeks
- one commentator wrote that it was “as if the entire Dust Bowl migration occurred in 14 days, or the dislocations caused by the Civil War took place on fast-forward.”
- the storm also caused significant environmental damage, including coastal erosion, habitat destruction, oil spills, and the release of other toxic chemicals



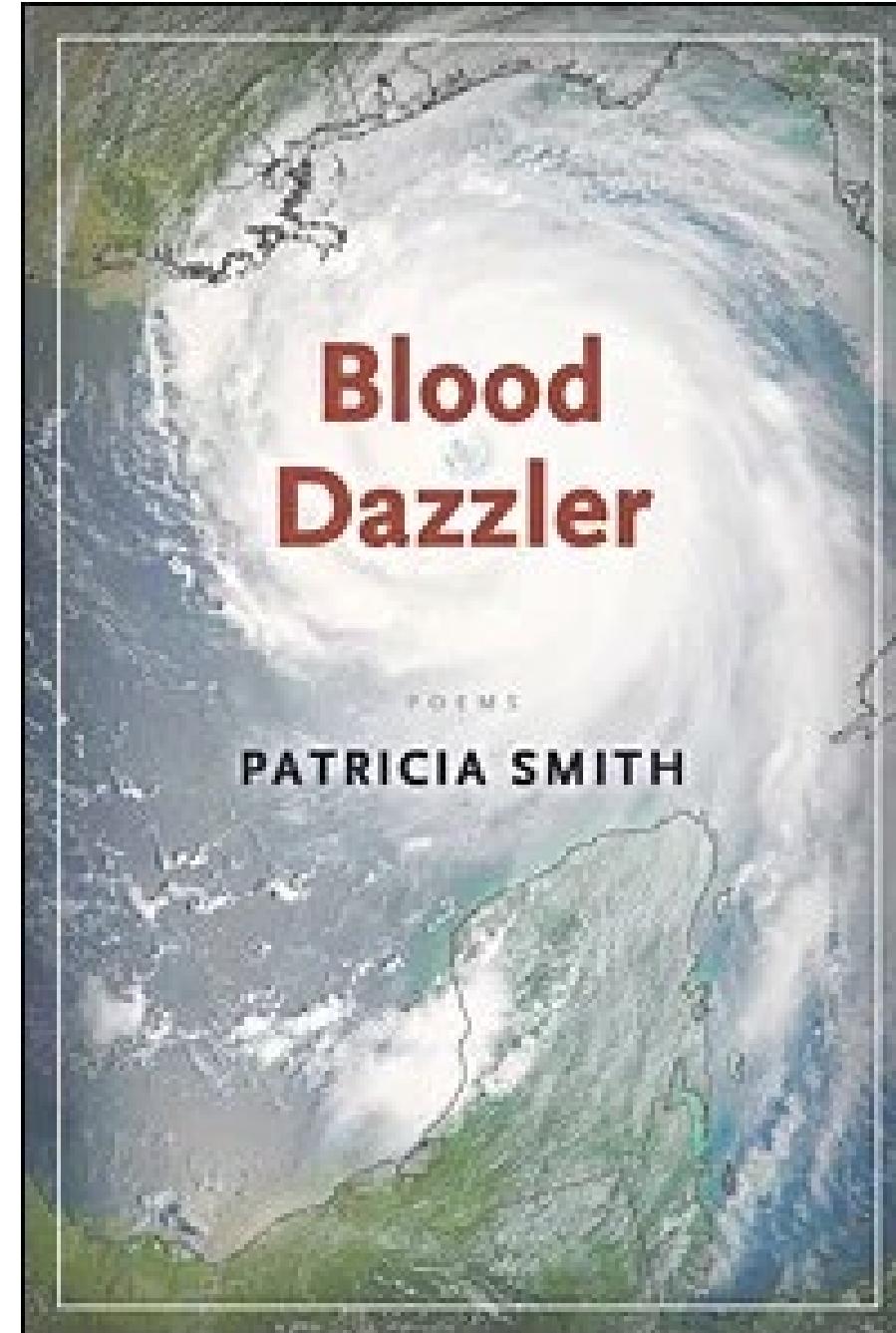
Who or What was Responsible for the Storm Damage?

- Katrina was both a natural and a humanmade disaster
- lack of government preparation for a catastrophe of this scale, even though it had been predicted for over a decade
- multiple major investigations concluded that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had not adequately built or maintained the breached levees and floodwalls
- most deaths were attributed to flooding caused by failed levees
- after the storm, emergency response was too slow and disorganized, especially FEMA and NOPD
- the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities in MS and LA
- the storm of immense strength with 160 mph winds
- the role of global warming? While there is natural variability in storm strength, climate scientists cite higher temps in gulf and sea level rise as contributing factors

Katrina Archive 2: Patricia Smith's *Blood Dazzler*

- a Finalist for the National Book Awards 2008 for Poetry
- a series of poems that tracks Katrina from a tropical depression to Category Five hurricane to its aftermath
- the poems assume a variety of voices, both human (politicians, the dying, survivors) and nonhuman (Katrina herself, the Superdome)
- she writes in the persona of the suffering and the dead, including in the voice of 91 yo Ethel Freeman, who dies outside of the Convention Center and her body sits there for days in her wheelchair
- Smith: "I'm writing as a witness, not as a journalist, and I strove to point to the experiences that were so frightening because they so closely parallel our own. Writing about Ethel Freeman, I wasn't saying "Look at her." I was saying "Look at us.""

Source: <https://modernamericanpoetry.org/index.php/patricia-smith-blood-dazzler-hurricane-katrina-excerpted-interview-moira-richards>



For days, I've been offered blunt slivers
of larger promises — even flesh,
my sweet recurring dream,
has been tantalizingly dangled before me.
I have crammed my mouth with buildings,
brushed aside skimpy altars,
snapped shut windows to bright shatter
with my fingers. And I've warned them, soft:
You must not know my name.

Now officially a bitch, I'm confounded by words —
all I've ever been is starving, fluid, and noise.
So I huff a huge sulk, thrust out my chest,
open wide my solo swallowing eye.
You must not know

Scarlet glare fixed on the trembling crescent,
I fly. (11-12)

Smith, “8 A.M., SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*

Katrina becomes a Category 5 storm, the highest possible rating.

- if the environment could talk, what would it say about this disaster?
- How does the nonhuman witness the natural disaster?
- Smith uses personification and prosopopoeia (giving a mask or a face to a nonhuman thing)
- how does personification work in this poem? What is the hurricane like?

How We Consume the Weather: Katrina in 2005



- unprecedented not just because of the devastation of the storm but how the media and social media covered it
- 2004-5 saw the expansion of social networks like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube
- weather information on the web fueled Americans desire to consume disasters in real time
- “the first blog post about Katrina appeared the afternoon the storm struck New Orleans (August 29). From there, blogs became a source of first-person accounts” of the storm’s damage, the evacuation, and recovery efforts
- cf Defoe’s eyewitness storm accounts solicited by mail in 1703 to 2005 Katrina blogs
- 24-hour television news coverage combined with online debate made Katrina one of the first media event storms

Source: Skilton, Liz. *Tempest: Hurricane Naming and American Culture*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019.

Katrina: Race, Response, and Reporting

Response: the storm's disproportionate impact on black communities

- most who lost their homes or were displaced were African Americans living in lower-income areas of New Orleans that were in more flood-prone areas
- Why didn't they leave? many did not have the resources to go elsewhere in advance of the storm and the mandatory evacuation order was only issued after the storm hit
- after the storm, "Black residents received on average \$8,000 less in government aid than white homeowners because of differences in housing values"

(Source: Padgett, T. (2010). New Orleans' Lower Ninth: Katrina's forgotten victim? Time Magazine)

Reporting: racial stereotypes in the news media

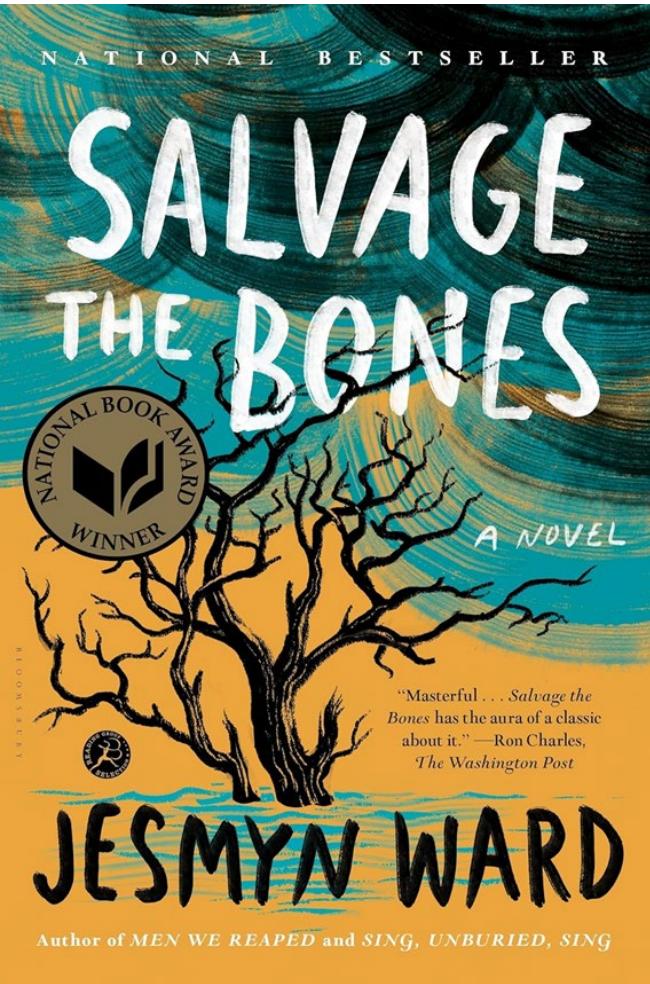
- blacks were described as "looting" while whites were "searching for food to feed their families"
- people left in upper class white neighborhoods were described as "victims" while those left in poorer black neighborhoods were "criminals taking advantage of the chaos"
- At the Superdome, largely filled with poor African Americans who could not evacuate, media reported looting, rape, and murder—none of which turned out to be substantiated
- For example, media initially reported 200 deaths in the Superdome
 - the real total? 6 (4 died of natural causes; 1 overdose; 1 suicide)
- What is true is that the rumors of racialized crime, as much as the reality of public disorder, shaped police and emergency response to the disaster



Why Name Nature? Why Anthropomorphize Hurricanes?



- naming hurricanes is a type of anthropomorphism
- storms not named in US before the 1950s when the National Weather Service started doing it regularly
- the gender politics of hurricane naming:
 - all hurricane names were female up to 1978- now they alternate
 - hurricanes with feminine names have higher casualties because people perceive them as less threatening and take fewer precautions
 - modeling: changing a storm's name from Charley to Eloise could triple its predicted death toll
- the names of deadly storms are retired (no more Katrina, Milton, Ian)
- storm names and human names
 - In 2005 1,326 babies called Katrina
 - in 2014, only 230 named Katrina
 - no one in Louisiana has used the name since 2006



Why do we read a novel like *Salvage the Bones*?

- this is a novel about a hurricane but also about all things beyond themselves that people are subject to
 - weather and intergenerational poverty
- this is a novel about what choice means
 - to what extent do these characters have free will?
- it is also a novel about what America means
 - how is this an American epic?

How do we read a novel?

- reading for the plot as well as reading for the art
- the promise of a novel-experiences beyond the self
 - the gift of time and respecting the story

Animals Are People Too (and Vice Versa)

China's turned on herself. If I didn't know, I would think she was trying to eat her paws. I would think that she was crazy. Which she is, in a way. ... She is birthing puppies.

What China is doing is nothing like what Mama did when she had my youngest brother, Junior. Mama gave birth in the house she bore all of us in. ... Junior came out purple and blue as a hydrangea: Mama's last flower. She touched Junior just like that when Daddy held him over her: lightly with her fingertips, like she was afraid she'd knock the pollen from him, spoil the bloom. She said she didn't want to go to the hospital. Daddy dragged her from the bed to his truck, trailing her blood, and we never saw her again. (1-2)

-the opening of any work sets out a “horizon of expectations”—that is, a contract between author and audience that raises certain expectations. These may be fulfilled or resisted but the expectations are always there.

-what expectations are raised here?

-reproduction

-nature

-what metaphor is used here?

-metaphor vs. simile

-what analogies are assumed here?

-interspecies equivalencies (animals, plants, people)

How is the landscape a character in the novel?

-the town of Bois Sauvage?

-“wild wood” in the French creole

-What is The Pit? What do we learn about it?

-17 acres of woodland that her grandfather owned

-it is a site of environmental degradation

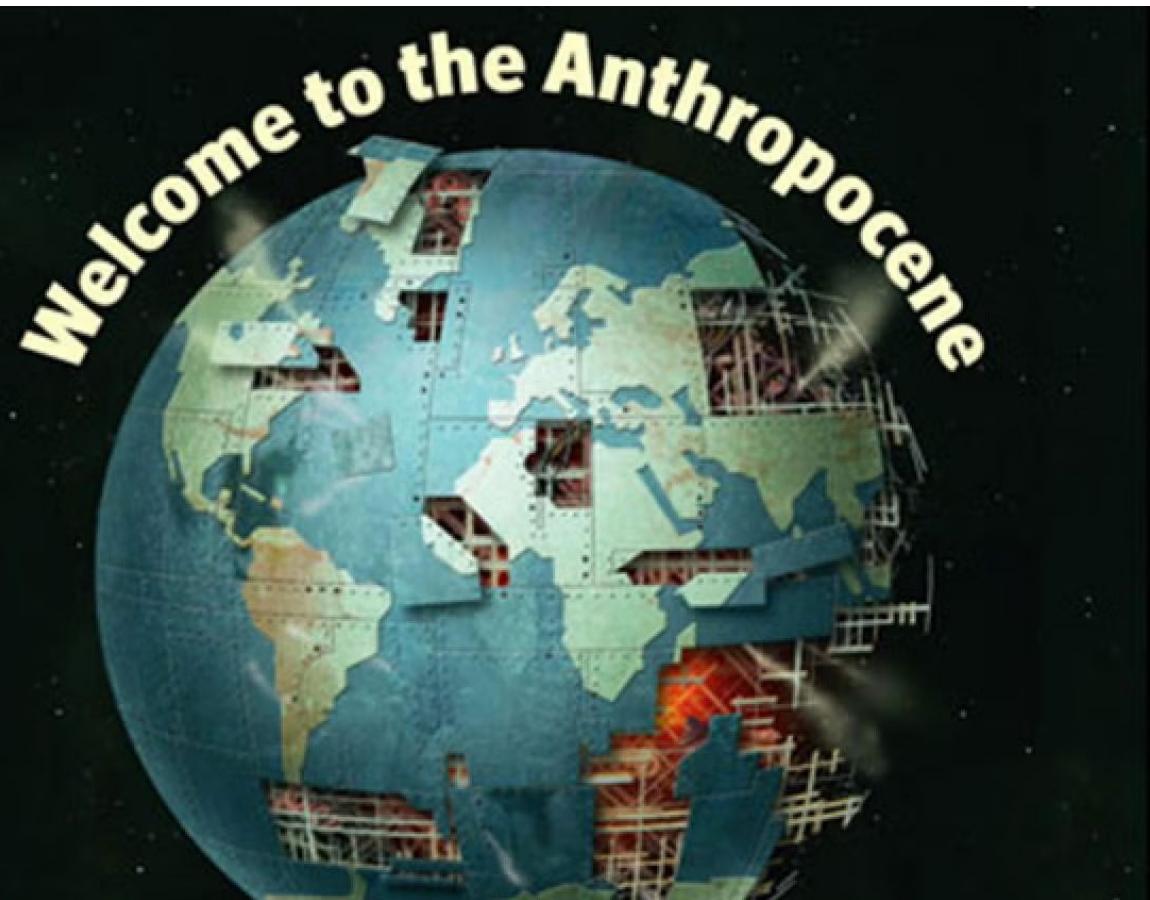
-also the effect of the homographs ‘the Pit’ and ‘pit’?

It was Papa Joseph nicknamed it all the Pit, Papa Joseph who let the white men he work with dig for clay that they used to lay the foundation for houses, let them excavate the side of a hill in a clearing near the back of the property where he used to plant corn for feed. Papa Joseph let them take all the dirt they wanted until their digging had created a cliff over a dry lake in the backyard, and the small stream that had run around and down the hill had diverted and pooled into the dry lake, making it into a pond, and then Papa Joseph thought the earth would give under the water, that the pond would spread and gobble up the property and make it a swamp, so he stopped selling earth for money. (14)

11. Katrina and Anthropocene Thinking

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*
and the Anthropocene Storm

ENGL133 Imagining Nature



Reading in the Anthropocene

- definition of Anthropocene
- first proposed as a geological epoch by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and limnologist Eugene Stoermer in 2000
- when did the human start influencing climate? Several “golden spike” candidates:
 - ca 1452/ 1610 transatlantic colonialism (the Colombian Exchange and a dip in carbon monoxide)
 - mid 19th c. Industrial Revolution (begins largest release of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere)
 - Nuclear fallout of plutonium ca. 1950 (a distinct geological signature in sediments)
- most environmental and literary critics use the Industrial Revolution as the ‘golden spike’

Why Anthropocene Reading?

In the Anthropocene, “the wall between human and natural history has been breached. We may not experience ourselves as a geological agent, but we appear to have become one at the level of the species. And without that knowledge that defies historical understanding there is no making sense of the current crisis that affects us all. ... [T]here are no lifeboats here for the rich and the privileged (witness the drought in Australia or recent fires in the wealthy neighborhoods of California).”

-Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter 2009): 197-222; 221.

[T]he Anthropocene presents a challenge not only to the arts and humanities, but also to our commonsense understanding and beyond that to contemporary culture in general. ... [T]his is perhaps the most important question ever to confront culture in the broadest sense—for let us make no mistake: the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination.

-Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

-reading in the Anthropocene makes us think about how the human and the nonhuman worlds are necessarily intertwined

-what is the role of realist fiction in the Anthropocene?

-it encourages us to visualize how human stories are shaped by beyond-the-human forces that are hard to see (biophysical processes such as geologic shifts and climate change)

-while we have seen this entanglement in earlier works we’ve read, the realist novel (like Ward’s) makes it conspicuous in its figurative language

How is the coming storm a character in the novel?

“If one of Daddy’s drinking buddies had asked what he’s doing tonight, he would’ve told them he’s fixing up for the hurricane. It’s summer, and when it’s summer, there’s always a hurricane coming or leaving here. Each pushes its way through the flat Gulf to the twenty-six-mile manmade Mississippi beach, where they knock against the old summer mansions with their slave galleys turned guesthouses before running over the bayou, through the pines, to lose wind, drip rain, and die in the north. Most don’t even hit us head-on anymore; most turn right to Florida or take a left for Texas, brush past and glance off us like a shirtsleeve. We ain’t had one come straight for us in years, time enough to forget how many jugs of water we need to fill, how many cans of sardines and potted meat we should stock, how many tubs of water we need. But on the radio that Daddy keeps playing in his parked truck, I heard them talking about it earlier today. How the forecasters said the tenth tropical depression had just dissipated in the Gulf but another one seems to be forming around Puerto Rico.” (4)

-how does it serve to characterize others? (Manny; Skeetah)

-how linked to family and memory? (Mama’s bbq during the last hurricane6)

Figuring Esch's Pregnancy

- “Maybe it’s China that made me get it.” (30)

“My belly is solid as a squash, because there is this baby inside me, small as Manny’s eyelash in mid-sex on my cheek.” (57)

“There it is. It is not a watermelon curve. It is not that large. It is not a cantaloupe curve; it is not that insistent. The closest I can get to it is a honeydew curve; it is long and slight. I push with my hands, and it will not sink to dense pearls like fat. It pushes back, water flush and warm.” (87-88)

“In the bathroom, I bend over standing and knead my stomach, knead the melon to pulp, but it just keeps springing back: ripe. Intent on bearing seed.” (102)

- How does figurative language work?

- metaphor (identity; something is the thing) vs. simile (something is similar to the thing)
- how do similes work here?
- how is this a “kinship of the world” model (Kimmerer/ Vine Deloria)?

Esch's Pregnancy: What Are Her Options?

"I could find something big enough and hard enough to jump on: Daddy's dump truck hood, Daddy's tractor, one of the old washing machines out in the yard. We have bleach in the laundry room. Only thing I wouldn't be able to find is the birth control pills; I've never had a prescription, wouldn't have money to get them if I did, don't have any girlfriends to ask for some, and have never been to the Health Department. Who would bring me? Daddy, who sometimes I think forgets I am a girl? Big Henry, one of the few of our friends who has a car? Manny? Teeth-in-the-dark Manny? *If I took care of it, he would never know, I think, never know, and then maybe it would give him time. Time to what? I push. Be different. Love me.*

These are my options, and they narrow to none. (102-3)

-What does choice mean here?

-Parallels between Medea and Esch? What are is the relationship between fate and choice?

Esch's Reading *Mythology*: Medea and Jason

Medea's mythological backstory:

- the gods make Medea fall in love with Jason so that she will help him on his quest to gain the Golden Fleece
- Medea helps Jason who achieves his quest; then she betrays her family in order to help him escape
- she flees with him, marries him, and bears his children though Jason ultimately callously abandons her and the children for another woman
- her revenge includes killing their children

“When Medea falls in love with Jason, it grabs me by my throat. I can see her. Medea sneaks Jason things to help him: ointments to make him invincible, secrets in rocks. She has magic, could bend the natural to the unnatural. Bet even with all her power, Jason bends her like a young pine in a hard wind; he makes her double in two. I know her.” (38)

- epic similes-an extended comparison of two dissimilar things
- cf. Medea and Jason in Hamilton's *Mythology* as pine trees
- like the classical story, Esch's story asks questions about the relation between fate and choice, motherhood and love



John William Waterhouse, “Jason and Medea” (1907)

Animals are People Too (and Vice Versa)

“Skeetah kneels, runs his hand down China’s chest. She looks up and her whole body shimmies like a woman dancing down at the Oaks, a blues club set on six acres of woods and a baseball diamond in the middle of Bois.” (92)

“Mama had been on the dance floor. ... She had shook like China, threw her head back so water glistened down her throat, and her body ran in curves when normally she was all solid. She was beautiful.” (93)

“Manny is like China when she is beset by mites in her ear. She runs in circles, chasing her tail, lashing her head against bushes, hoping to shake them out until Skeetah clasps her between his knees, holds her head abasits bushes, hoping to shake them o ut until Skeetah clasps her between his knees, holds her head and treats them. Manny runs like that up and down the court, weaving through Big Henry and Marquise for layups.” (119)

“[Randall] puts his hand on Manny, who is on his toes before Big Henry, and with a squeeze to Manny’s shoulder, he is Skeetah to China. Manny calms.” (120)

- how do similes work here? contrast
- ontological permeability
- how is this a model of trancorporeality?
- what is the effect in the novel?
- How does novel encourage us to see the relationship between humans and animals? (cf bestiaries, *Parliament of Fowls*)

Analyzing Literary Language

1. Read carefully and take notes. What is the author's purpose in this scene? Come up with a hypothesis for how the language works to support the author's purpose or produce the emotional or logical effect.
2. Find textual evidence (brief quotations from the text that back up your argument) and then analyze them. Do not quote and run.
3. Evidence can take the form of figurative language, diction (unusual vocabulary or word choice), or style. Look for what's unusual or vivid to discuss in Ward's language, such as:
 - Metaphor / similes (or other analogies)
 - Hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)
 - Personification / prosopopoeia
 - Anthropomorphism
 - Repetition
 - Unusual word choice
4. Then ask: What is the effect of each instance of this language? How does a comparison or other rhetorical figure work? What is its effect on us?

In-class Writing Assignment: Ward's Literary Language

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section).

Look at the scene at the very end of the chapter entitled “The Sixth Day: A Steady Hand” (pp. 128-130). The culmination of this chapter ends with a pair of violent events that are narrated together, each weaving in and out of the other: China’s killing of her puppy and the tractor accident that injures Daddy.

1. What emotional effect is Ward trying to create in this scene with the description of either China or Daddy? Analyze the scene and provide textual evidence (that is brief quotations for the text, with page numbers) to back up your observations. Discuss at least 2 concrete examples.
2. Why does Ward cross-cut these two plot lines together? How does the animal one reflect on the human one (or vice versa)?
3. How do descriptions (of either China or Daddy) connect to other relevant moments or themes in the wider narrative?

12. Katrina and Anthropocene Thinking

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*
and Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or
None*

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

-Tiny Ecologies #4: Due date extension to Sunday 4/20 at 5 pm

Animals are People Too 2 (and Vice Versa)

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“Mama had been on the dance floor. ... She had shook like China, threw her head back so water glistened down her throat, and her body ran in curves when normally she was all solid. She was beautiful.” (93)

~ ~ ~

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- what is the effect in the novel?
- How does the novel encourage us to see the relationship between humans and animals? (cf bestiaries, *Parliament of Fowls*)

Good Feelings: What Does Interspecies Love Look Like?

“Skeetah ... is focused on China like a man focuses on a woman when he feels that she is his, which China is.”
(3)

“[China stands] on one side and Skeetah on the other like a pair of proud parents.” (17)

“You giving China a floor?’ Daddy had started on our house once he and Mama got married. ... I always thought it was something a man did for a woman when they married: build her something to live in.” (60)

“Skeetah pulls China to him by her haunches and pries open her jaw, sniffing at her tongue. He has turned from lover to father. She, his doting daughter.” (98)

At the dogfight: “China is white as the sand that will become a pearl, Skeetah black as an oyster, but they stand as one before these boys who do not know what it means to love a dog the way that Skeetah does.” (162)

When Randall finds out that Skeetah has spent all their money at the store on dog food rather than human food: “We ain’t no dogs, Randall says, And you ain’t either.” (193)

How many models of love are there?

How does Esch characterize their relationship?

How is Skeetah’s relationship to China also an economic relationship?

Ward's Environmental Epic Similes

What is an epic simile? An extended comparison that usually provides a jarring image that fixes the scene in the audience's mind

- often compares an unfamiliar thing to a more familiar thing

- builds up energy for emotional impact

- for example, in Homer's *Iliad*, Bk 16, when Patroclus kills Sarpedon with an arrow to the chest:

Sarpedon fell
As a tree falls--oak, or poplar, or spreading pine--
When carpenters cut it down in the forest
With their bright axes, to be the beam of a ship,

And he lay before his horses and chariot,
Groaning heavily and clawing the bloody dust,

Like some tawny, spirited bull a lion has killed
In the middle of the shambling herd, groaning
As it dies beneath the predator's jaws.

"His hand wrapped up to the wrist in gauze and tape so that it looked like a webworm moth nest wound tight in a pecan tree, a yarn of larvae eating at the ripe green leaves beneath to burst forth in black-winged fury in the throat-closing heat of fall. Only Daddy's hand would not emerge whole and quivering. Daddy's hand would be not the moths but the bare branches, like bones, left under the husk." (132-133)

- for Ward, they are almost always environmental analogies

- how do they work?

- effect? challenges the idea of a separate, dominant human sphere and the inert environment

The Eighth Day: Make Them Know Setting Up the Dog Fight

-Ward's father also raised and fought pit bulls when she was young (though never sold them)

-How does the novel's structure set up this scene?

- structurally the novel pairs often events as contrasts
- 1st dog fight between China and Twist, the white farmer's dog?
- the human fight at the basketball game anticipates the dog fight in the woods
- one event often prefigures another and heightens the stakes
 - Why does Skeetah feel he needs to fight China? Randall

-“The boys have been drawn by gossip of the fight between Kilo and Boss to the clearing like the Argonauts were to Jason at the start of his adventure. They will throw their own dogs into the ring, each hoping for a good fight, a savage heart, a win, to return home from the woods, their own dangerous Aegean Sea.” (160)

-Maybe Daddy is right; maybe Katrina is coming for us. ... did Medea bless the heroes before they set out on their journey? Did she stand on the deck of that ship like I stand in this clearing, womanly ripe, and weave spells for rain to cloak her betrayal? Had Jason told her he loved her? Manny holds Kilo’s leash and stares at China. Skeetah and China do not move.” (163)

-Dog fight //s the basketball game fight but also //s a Greek battle--effect?

The Fight Between Kilo and China

-why is this fight so important in the novel?

-Skeetah and Rico

-Kilo and China

-Esch and Manny
(172. Manny whispering to Rico is “Jason betraying Medea”)

[China] is fire. China flings her head back into the air as if eating oxygen, gaining strength, and burns back down to Kilo and takes his neck in her teeth. She bears down, curling to him, a loving flame, and licks. She flips over and is on top of him, even though he still has her shoulder. He roils beneath her. She chews. Fire evaporates water.

Make them know make them know make them know they can't live without you, Skeetah says. China hears.

Hello, father, she says, tonguing Kilo. *I don't have milk for you.* China blazes. Kilo snaps at her breast again, but she shoulders him away. But I do have this. Her jaw is a mousetrap snapped shut around the mouse of Kilo's neck. When Kilo screams, it is loud and high, as if the wind whistles when it slides past China's teeth.

Skeetah smiles.

Skeetah calls, “Come, China!”

China spins, takes away part of Kilo's throat.
China comes.

“Hold! Hold!” Rico screams. (175-6)

Why Are the Dog Fighting Scenes So Terrible to Read?

- in addition to the terrible violence to animals, it is because of the human/ animal analogy that Ward has set up throughout the novel
- the //s between China and Esch
- the interspecies love between Skeetah and China

Why Should We Stay With the Bad Feelings?

- literature that cultivates attention to terrible facts focuses our mind on things we cannot always see clearly because of their scale: the hidden effects of intergenerational poverty and climate change, for instance
- literary language that resists ecstasy (such as that employed by the Romantics and Transcendentalists) or catharsis helps keep us grounded in the everyday and the discomfort we feel as witness, a discomfort that we, if given a choice, would normally avoid

***Salvage the Bones* as Climate Fiction Ward's Landscape as Character: The Bayou as Eden**

-swimming at the Bay of Angels:

“Daddy used to take us swimming there when we were younger, in a little cove. The water was murkier than the river, and colder, and the bottom was a landscape of oyster shells. We dug up oysters, threw them out farther away from the cove. Marsh grass waved at the edges, and pines leaned out over the water. Pelicans floated in rows.” (84-85)

-the bayou forest in Bois Sauvage:

“There are clusters of magnolias that are so tall and green and glossy, they are impossible to climb, and the air around them always smells like peaches. There are oaks so big and old that their arms grow out black and think as trunks, which rest on the ground. There are ponds that are filled with slime and tall yellow grasses and at night frogs turn them teeming, singing a burping chorus. There are clearings where deer feed, startle white, and kick away.” (158)

-cf. *The Tempest*, Jourdain, *A discovery of the Bermudas*

Ward's Landscape as Character: The Bayou and Environmental Degradation

Slow Violence vs the Spectacle of the Storm

In an age when the media venerate the spectacular, when public policy is shaped primarily around perceived immediate need, a central question is strategic and representational: how can we convert into image and narrative the disasters that are slow moving and long in the making, disasters that are anonymous and that star nobody, disasters that are attritional and of indifferent interest to the sensation-driven technologies of our image-world? How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time?

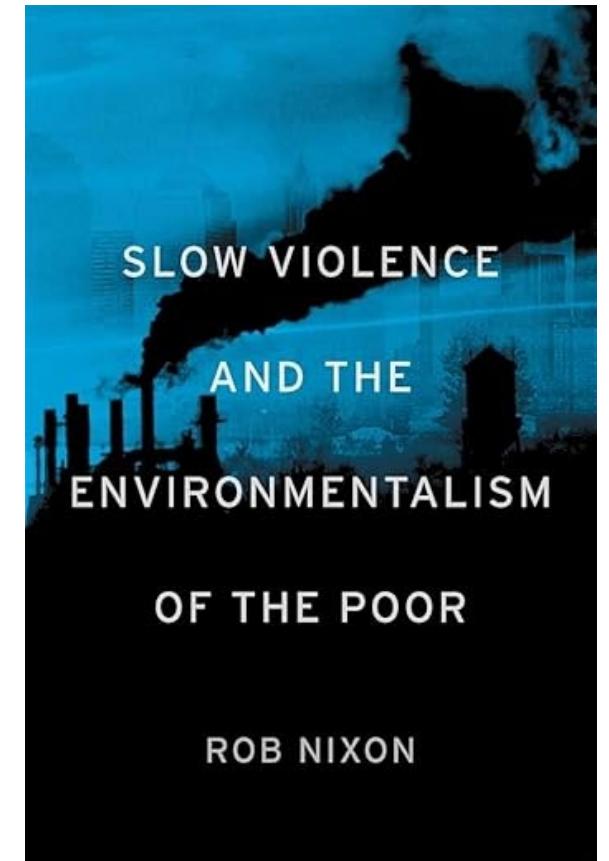
-Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 3

Environment degradation and its effects in Ward's novel:

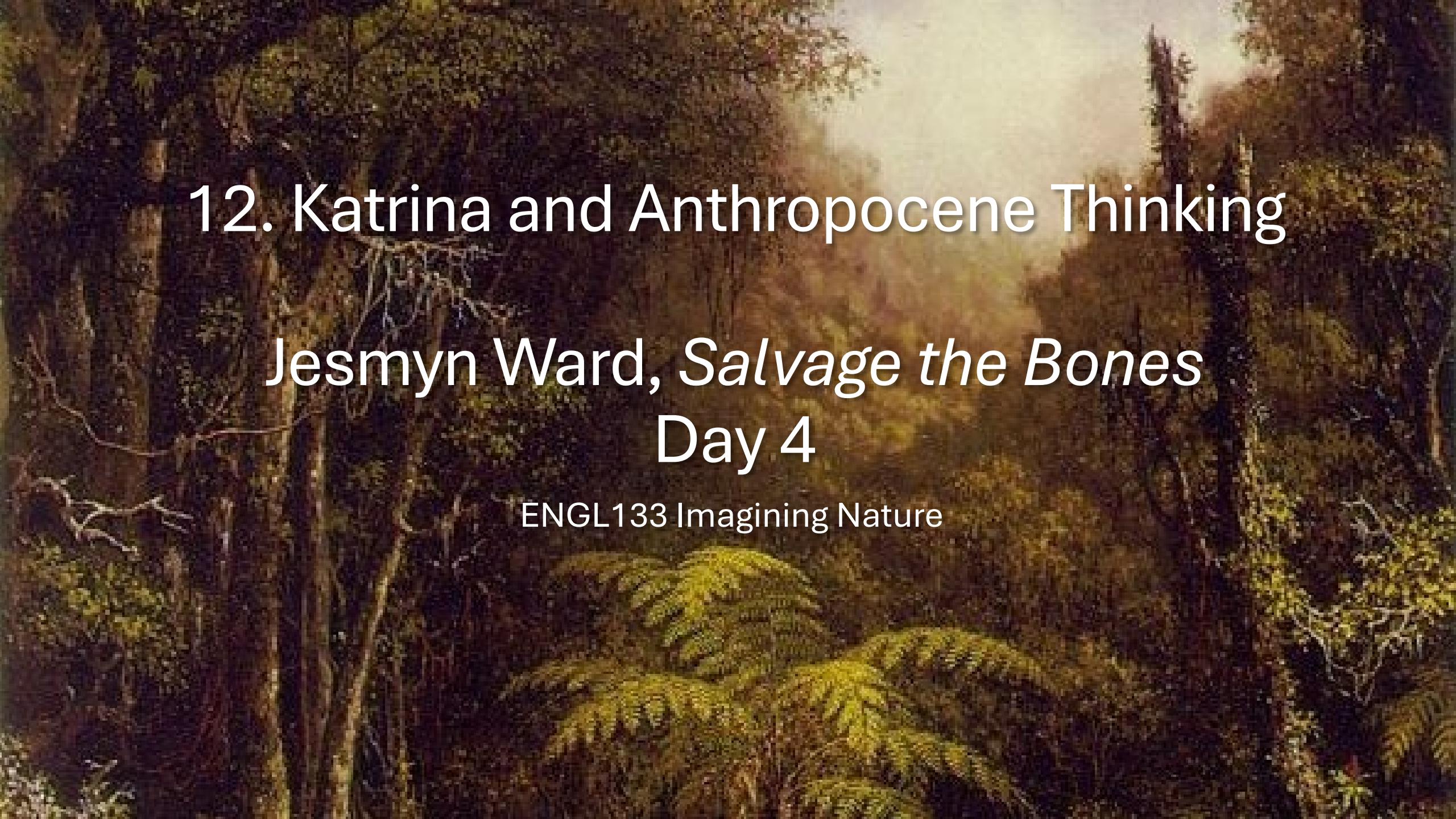
-the history of the Pit

[Skeetah] stumbled into a clearing where the pines has been cut brutally away so that stumps dotted the field beyond the fence like chairs that no on would ever sit on. ... When I came crashing out of the woods, I forgot to touch Skeetah, startled at the way the sky opened up at the field, the way the land looked wrong. There was too much blue" (64)

-clear cutting for resource extraction and for cattle grazing



- slow violence is hard to represent because its effects occur over long time scales and to populations that are often invisible to society at large
- harder to see and address because the agent behind slow violence cannot always be identified with certainty
- it is harder to have empathy with victims of slow violence vs. easier to have sympathy with victims of spectacular natural disasters
- how does Ward's novel contrast the slow violence of environmental degradation and the spectacular violence of the storm?

A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured trunks and branches of the trees.

12. Katrina and Anthropocene Thinking

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*
Day 4

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

-Tiny Ecologies #4: Due date extension to Sunday 4/20 at 5 pm

How Katrina Enters the Narrative

“Katrina has made landfall in Florida ... miles from Miami.”

It is the local news. The weatherwoman is speaking with the anchor, and she is pointing at the interactive screen before her, but the television is so old and resolution so bad that the map looks like concrete, and the storm, an oil stain.

“Early reports say that there are some dead. Does anyone ... idea of where ... projection of storm?” Mike’s voice is even, smooth, when we catch it through the static.

“... unclear. The storm is currently a category one ... could weaken ... could change.” The woman’s hair is light; she may be blonde. ...

“So what does this mean?”

“This means that our viewers may ... preparations to remain in their homes for the hurricane, and instead may want to begin ... possible evacuation.” Rachel appears to be smiling. (135)

-the effect of this scene? the ellipses?

-media coverage and the consumption of disasters

-race and the hurricane: white news personalities vs the reception in Bois Sauvage?

-to what extent is this scene about slow violence as well as the quick, spectacular violence of Katrina?

-evacuation and the illusion of choice

How is *Salvage the Bones* an Anthropocene novel? And Whose Anthropocene?

-the Anthropocene is imagined by geologists as the period when *anthopos* (the human) changes the environment

Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*

-Yusoff is a geographer who focuses on “inhuman geographies”

-she uses black feminist methods to understand environmental change, past geologic practices, and contemporary politics

-in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* she argues that the Anthropos (man) of the Anthropocene is assumed to be white and whiteness becomes the color of universality

-why does this matter?

-it matters because we often think of geology (the defining of geological eras such as the Holocene and the Anthropocene) as “neutral” scientific facts

-instead she shows how they are based on racialized assumptions as well as an extractive economy that relies on the work (free or enslaved) of black, brown, and indigenous peoples

“If the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization, and capitalism. The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence.”

-Yusoff, from the “Preface” to *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*

-the goal for Yusoff is to break out of the cycle that assumes universal whiteness of the Anthropocene so that the future can be fairer to black, brown, and indigenous peoples, peoples of the Global South as well as the Global North

-the goal is to think through a multiplicity of Anthropocenes that take Blackness/ Brownness/ Indigeneity as their basis rather than just assuming that the Anthropocene subject is white

***Salvage the Bones* as an Anthropocene Novel**

What is Jesmyn Ward's environmental vision? How does it engage the idea of a Black Anthropocene?

- Ward shows us a Black subject dealing with the dangers of anthropogenic climate change
- there is the spectacular danger of the hurricane
- but juxtaposed with it, there are the everyday dangers of being a Black girl in the American South: the poverty, the potential unwanted pregnancy, and the racism
- Ward's weather is twofold: there is the literal weather event and there is the “weathering” of Esch's body caused by neglect, hunger, and lack of access to basic shelter and health services
- Ward shows us the effects of climate and climate change on Esch's body and her family

The Eleventh Day: Katrina Animals and the Ontological Mixer of the Storm

The fight about whether the dogs can stay inside the house during the storm.
Randall before the storm: “This is a house, Skeetah. For humans. Not for dogs” (211)

Skeet’s response: “Everything need a chance.” (214)

In the middle of the storm after the tree falls in through their roof: “Then [Skeetah] and China step as one, a new animal, toward the light opening of the hallway where the wind whistles in a thin sheet under Daddy’s door.” (224)

“There is a lake growing in the yard. It moves under the broken trees like a creeping animal, a wide-nosed snake. Its head disappears under the house where we stand, its tail wider and wider, like it has eaten something greater than itself, and that great tail stretches out behind it in the woods, toward the Pit. China barks. The wind ripples the water and it is coming for us.” (226-7)

The Eleventh Day: Katrina Voices of/in the Storm

- the chapter open with Esch imagining what animals do in the storm:
“When Mama first explained to me what a hurricane was, I thought that all the animals ran away. ... But now I think that other animals, like the squirrels and the rabbits, don’t do that at all. Maybe the small don’t run. Maybe the small pause on their branches, the pine-lined earth, nose up, catch the coming storm air that would smell like salt to them, like salt and clean burning fire, and they prepare like us.” (215)
- then the recorded government message announcing the mandatory evacuation: “A man’s voice speaks; he sounds like a computer, like he has an iron throat. ... You have been warned. And these could be the consequences of your actions. There is a list. .. You can die.” (217)

The Eleventh Day: Katrina Voices of/in the Storm

“The storm screams, I have been waiting for you. It is terrible. It is the flailing wind that lashes like an extension cord used as a beating belt. It is the rain, which stings like stones, which drives into our eyes and beds them shut. It is the water, swirling and gathering and spreading on all sides, brown with an undercurrent of red to it, the clay of the Pit like a cut that won’t stop leaking. It is the remains of the yard, the refrigerators and lawn mowers and the RV and mattresses, gloating like a fleet. It is trees and branches breaking, popping like Black Cat firecrackers in an endless crackle of explosions, over and over and again and again. It is us huddling together on the roof, me with the wire of the bucket handle looped over my shoulder, shaking against the plastic. It is everywhere.” (230-231)

- what are the effects of these descriptive strategies?
- personification?
- how do similes work here?

The Eleventh Day: Katrina

How do the storm plotline and the Batiste family plotlines intersect in this chapter?

- Ward often intercuts and juxtaposes different plotlines to make a point
 - the height of the storm as the Batistes are forced to abandon their attic and try to get to the higher ground of Mother Lizbeth and Papa Joseph's house
 - the narration of Mama's death and Junior's birth (220-221)
 - Esch's mythological reading: Jason abandons Medea and remarries (225)
 - Skeetah telling Daddy that Esch is pregnant (234)
 - Skeetah must choose between saving Esch and saving China (235)
- What is the effect of intercutting these plotlines?
 - how does climax and resolution work here?

Fate, Tragedy, and Hurricanes

- The storm serves as an amplifier about human ideas about choice and free will
- The inexorable logic of Greek tragedy in the Medea analogy //s the inexorability of the coming hurricane

Did Daddy have to use the truck to pull down the chicken coop at night?

Before we judge a drunk for his own injuries, Ward asks us to remember that he's trying to board up his house to save his family

Did Skeet have to fight China?

he's trying to send Randall to basketball camp because there's no money otherwise

Do we judge Esch for getting pregnant?

Remember that she is a motherless girl looking for love in the male-dominated world of The Pit

-Ward has dignified a community that some might judge harshly or dismiss and instead elevate them to the status of Greek myth

Mothers in *Salvage the Bones*

-What is the relation between motherhood and nature? What models of maternity does the novel offer? How are they interrelated?

-the discussion between Skeet and Manny early in the novel about whether motherhood makes China weak or strong (95-96)

-the ghost of Esch's mother who died in childbirth-the absent mother

-China as mother (both nurturing and murderous)

-Medea as mother (China as Medea)

-Katrina as a mother:

Katrina is “the mother that swept into the Gulf and slaughtered. Her chariot was a storm so great and black the Greeks would say it was harnessed to dragons. She was the murderous mother who cut us to the bone but left us alive, left us naked and bewildered as wrinkled newborn babies, as blind puppies, as sun-starved newly hatched baby snakes. She left us a dark Gulf and salt-burned land. She left us to learn to crawl. She left us to salvage. Katrina is the mother we will remember until the next mother with large, merciless hands, committed to blood, comes. (255)

-Esch as mother in the novel's last lines, the fantasy of China's return after the hurricane:

“[China] will look down on the circle of light we have made in the Pit, and she will know that I have kept watch, that I have fought. China will bark and call me sister. In the star-suffocated sky, there is a great waiting silence.

She will know that I am a mother.” (258)

-how do the last lines refer back to the novel's opening?

What Survives?

-community survives: Big Henry and Marchese help the Batistes

-Esch's baby survives:

-The naming of the child either after her mother Rose Temple Batiste or after her brother Skeetah: Jason Aldon Batiste.

-the naming says that family survives despite the storm, despite the poverty, despite the betrayals.

-the family that will raise the baby survives:

“Who the daddy?” Big Henry asks. There is no blazing fire to his eyes, no cold burning ice like Manny’s. Only warmth, like the sun on the best fall days when the few leaves that will turn are starting and the air is clear and cloudless.

“It don’t have a daddy,” I say. ...

“You wrong,” Big Henry says. ... “This baby got a daddy, Esch. ... This baby got plenty daddies.”
(254-55)

-effect of the environmental epic simile used to describe Big Henry?

-the replacement of the naturalized romantic nuclear family with an assembled family

***Salvage the Bones* as an American Environmental Epic**

- how do storms shape our national consciousness? How do they lay bare issues in our society?
What is Katrina to Ward and her characters?
- it is a nonhuman force that turns the human world inside out and lays bare its hidden structures
 - the poverty and lack of resources
 - Esch's pregnancy
 - but also the community that becomes apparent in the wake of the storm
- What is particularly American about it?
 - Ward turns a national disaster into a national epic
- Ward imagines a Black Anthropocene subject in Esch whose story shows us what is usually hidden when we speak of anthropogenic climate change and its dangers (like Kathryn Yusoff)
- what does Esch's perspective on this event add to the media portrayals of Hurricane Katrina that we discussed last week?

The Voices of the Storms

What can we take away from the 3 storms that we've encountered over the last several weeks?

-**Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:** a 16th c. fictional storm created by art but based on a real hurricane that wrecked a ship on the coast of Bermuda

- storms are an agent of transformation (personal and political)
- storms reveal the inner workings of power (Prospero's power; Caliban's subjugation)

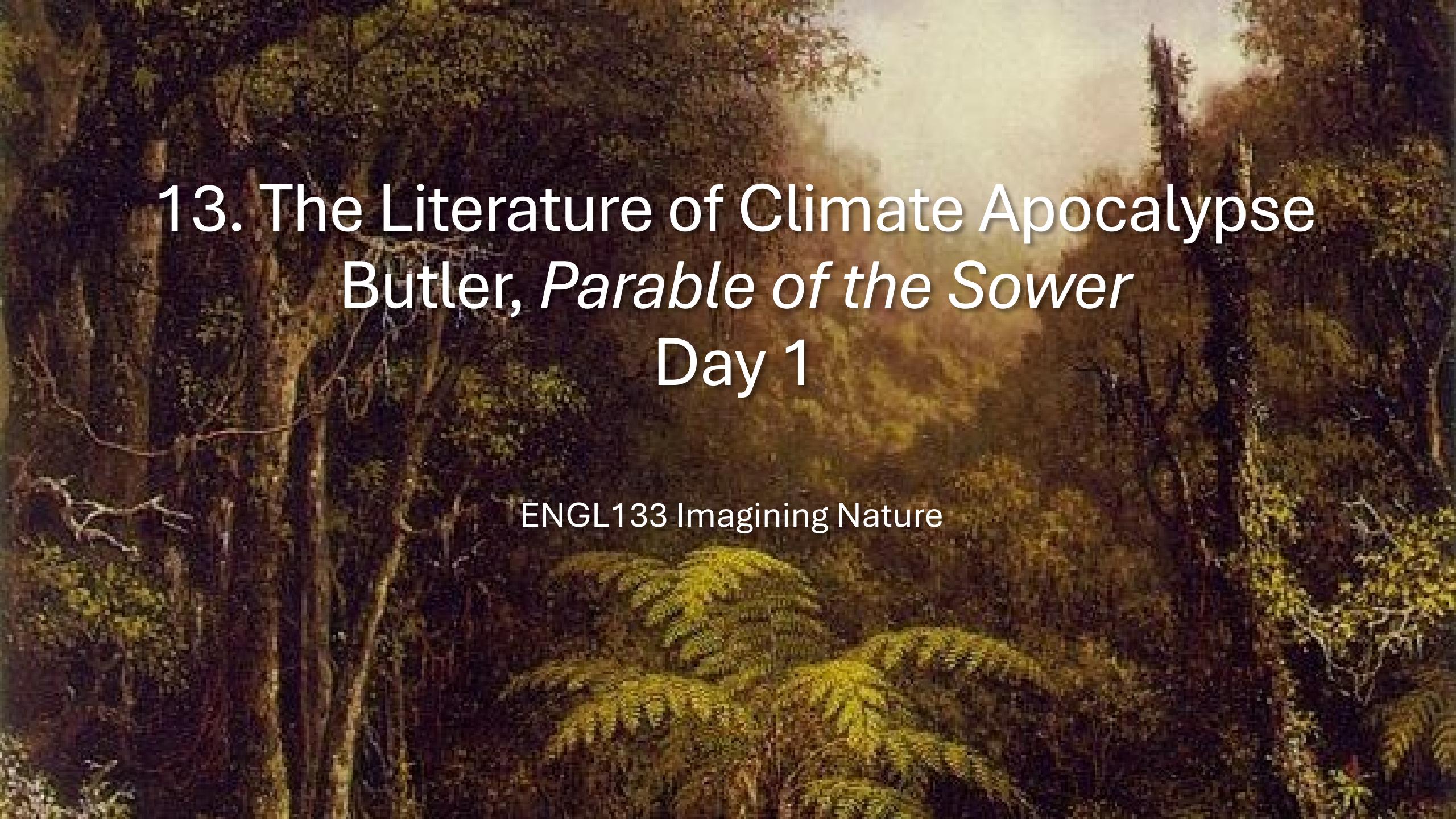
Daniel Defoe's three accounts of the 1703 storm: the reporting is an early 18th c. Enlightenment model of documenting and quantifying storm damage

-but in the sermon and the poem, the storm is placed in its providential context: what was the divine message? For Defoe, it was that human provoked the storm through religious and political partisanship

-Ward's *Salvage the Bones*: shows us both the spectacular violence of the storm but also the slow violence of intergenerational poverty, structural racism, and environmental degradation

- it shows us the beauty of the bayou and its potential dangers
- like *The Tempest*, *Salvage the Bones* reveals how power works in America

-these 3 accounts are all models of anthropogenic weather events, just with different messages



13. The Literature of Climate Apocalypse

Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Day 1

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

- Writing Assignment 2 due to Canvas on Friday May 2 by 5 pm
 - counterarguments and textual evidence
- Reminder that the Final Exam is scheduled for Monday May 19 from 4-6 pm in Tawes 1100 (this classroom)



"February 1, 2025.

There's a fire today...again."

-Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower* (1993)

Palisades Fire, January 2025

Octavia Butler (1947-2006)

***Parable of the Sower* (1993)**

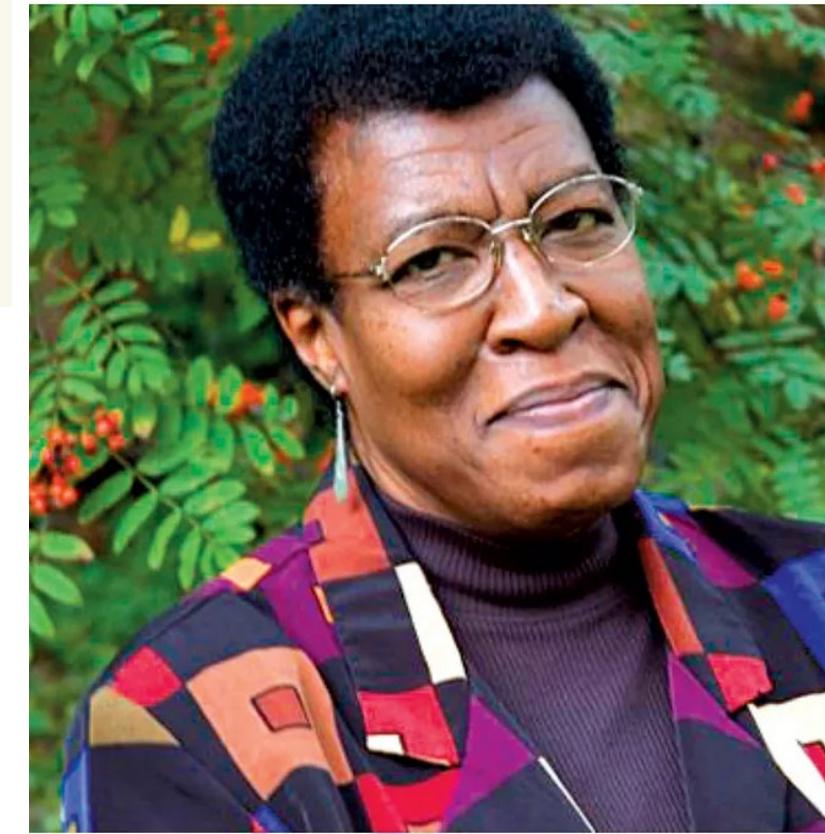
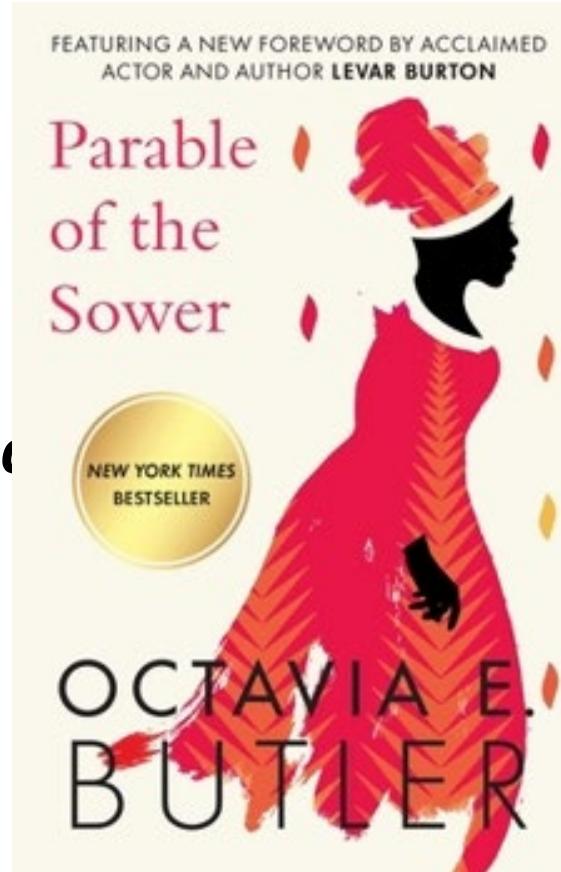
-grew up in Pasadena

-wrote speculative fiction in the 1980s and 1990s (including *Kindred*)

-in 1995, she became the first science fiction writer to win a MacArthur “genius” award

-*Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998)

-*Parable of the Sower* is a story about a young woman in a Southern California ravaged by the effects of climate change, who tries to survive environmental apocalypse



What is Apocalypse? Biblical Accounts of the Apocalypse

- Where does apocalyptic thinking come from?
- Greek *apokalypsis* means 'unveiling' or 'revelation'
- in the Christian Bible, the *Book of Revelation* or *Book of the Apocalypse* is the final book of the New Testament
- endings have particular weight as a key through which to view what has come before
- Christianity is an ardently apocalyptic religion because it focuses on the “Second Coming” of Christ, who will preside over the Last Judgment and the end of the world
- the genre of apocalypse also functions as prophecy
- eschatology is the branch of theology that is concerned with death, judgment, and the final end of humankind
- Butler’s novel is eschatological science fiction



Detail of the Rider on a pale horse, emerging from a hell-mouth, with John and the Lamb, Royal MS 15 D II, f. 129r

How does the environment signal the coming of apocalypse?



-*Revelations 6: 12-17* depicts the signs of the coming apocalypse including natural disasters (such as earthquakes, eclipses, and comets):

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold,[e] there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon[f] became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders,[g] the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The Opening of the *Parable of the Sower*

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.

God

Is Change.

EARTHSEED: THE BOOKS OF
THE LIVING

-what horizon of expectation
is set up here?

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2024

I had my recurring dream last night. I guess I should have expected it. It comes to me when I struggle—when I twist on my own personal hook and try to pretend that nothing unusual is happening. It comes to me when I try to be my father's daughter.

Today is our birthday—my fifteenth and my father's fifty-fifth. Tomorrow, I'll try to please him—him and the community and God. So last night, I dreamed a reminder that it's all a lie. I think I need to write about the dream because this particular lie bothers me so much.

[Lauren dreams that she is teaching herself to fly and she flies through the house]

The wall before me is burning. Fire has sprung from nowhere, has eaten in through the wall, has begun to reach toward me, reach for me. The fire spreads. I drift into it. It blazes up around me. I thrash and scramble and try to swim back out of it, grabbing handfuls of air and fire, kicking, burning! Darkness. (3-4)

The Opening of the *Parable of the Sower*

- Butler set the novel 30+ years in the future from its date of publication in 1993
- form? the journal of the 15 yr old Lauren Oya Olamina describing her birthday
- her family: Cory, her stepmother; her father, Rev. Olamina; and her siblings Keith, Marcus, Bennett, and Gregory
- genre: speculative fiction vs. science fiction
 - potential futures and alternate realities vs. fictions based on scientific advancement and imagined technology
- the opening scenes in Ward vs Butler
- realist fiction (Ward) vs speculative fiction (Butler)
- like Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, this novel thematizes slow violence as opposed to spectacular violence

Community and Environment in the *Parable of the Sower*

-What is Southern California like?

- income disparity
- ineffective politicians
- no rule of law
- environmental degradation

-What is Lauren's community like?

- a gated 11-household compound
- multiracial
- inside vs outside (baptism, Rev. Olamina's work)

-What are the threats to this community?

- Inner vs outer (Amy Dunn)

-What vision of the environment is this?

- scarcity driven (lack of water, food)
- the first rain in 6 years (48)
- the role of fire (wild fires, arson, 'pyro')

-How does Butler's vision relate to the biblical apocalyptic imagination?

Lauren's Views on Climate Change

-Lauren's discussion with her best friend Joanne (56ff)

-the analogy with the medieval bubonic plague:

"Things are changing now, too. Our adults haven't been wiped out by a plague so they're still anchored in the past, waiting for the good old days to come back. But things have changed a lot, and they'll change more. Things are always changing. This is just one of the big jumps instead of the little step-by-step changes that are easier to take. People have changed the climate of the world. Now they're waiting for the old days to come back."

"Your father says he doesn't believe people changed the climate in spite of what scientists say. He says only God could change the world in such an important way."

"Do you believe him?"

She opened her mouth, looked at me, then closed it again. After a while, she said, "I don't know." "My father has his blind spots," I said. "He's the best person I know, but even he has blind spots."

"It doesn't make any difference," she said. "We can't make the climate change back, no matter why it changed in the first place. You and I can't. The neighborhood can't. We can't do anything."

I lost patience. "Then let's kill ourselves now and be done with it!"

She frowned, her round, too serious face almost angry. She tore bits of peel from a small navel orange. "What then?" she demanded. "What can we do?" (March 5, 2025; Chap. 5; 57)

Lauren on God and Nature

A lot of people seem to believe in a big-daddy-God or a big-cop-God or a big-king-God. They believe in a kind of super-person. A few believe God is another word for nature. And nature turns out to mean just about anything they happen not to understand or feel in control of.

Some say God is a spirit, a force, an ultimate reality. Ask seven people what all of that means and you'll get seven different answers. So what is God? Just another name for whatever makes you feel special and protected?

There's a big, early-season storm blowing itself out in the Gulf of Mexico. It's bounced around the Gulf, killing people from Florida to Texas and down into Mexico. There are over 700 known dead so far. One hurricane. And how many people has it hurt? How many are going to starve later because of destroyed crops? That's nature. Is it God? Most of the dead are the street poor who have nowhere to go and who don't hear the warnings until it's too late for their feet to take them to safety. Where's safety for them anyway? Is it a sin against God to be poor? We're almost poor ourselves. There are fewer and fewer jobs among us, more of us being born, more kids growing up with nothing to look forward to. One way or another, we'll all be poor some day. The adults say things will get better, but they never have. How will God—my father's God—behave toward us when we're poor? ...

I wonder if the people on the Gulf Coast still have faith. ... Maybe God is a kind of big kid, playing with his toys. If he is, what difference does it make if 700 people get killed in a hurricane—or if seven kids go to church and get dipped in a big tank of expensive water? But what if all that is wrong? What if God is something else altogether? (Chap 2; 15-16)

Earthseed's Belief System: Kinship with the World

Consider: Whether you're a human being, an insect, a microbe, or a stone, this verse is true.

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.

God
Is Change.

(April 26, 2025; Chap 7; 79)

- “Earthseed” is the religion that Lauren develops based on the idea that “God is Change”
- name?
- Why “The Books of the Living”? as opposed to “The Books of the Dead”
- forward rather than backward looking
- cf Aristotle’s idea that the one constant in nature (physis) is change
- how is this an alternative to the “big daddy god” or the “big kid god”?

Keith

-how is he a foil for Lauren?

- inside vs outside the compound

- conflict with her father?

- Lauren's dislike of Keith?

-what vision of masculinity does he embody?

Someone had cut and burned away most of my brothers skin. Everywhere except his face. They burned out his eyes, but left the rest of his face intact—like they wanted him to be recognized. They cut and they cauterized and they cut and they cauterized... Some of the wounds were days old. Someone had an endless hatred of my brother. (Chap. 10; 113)

-What is his role?

-slow violence: the effects of addiction, drug dealing, familial conflict, and poverty

Lauren's Hyperempathy

Lauren suffers from “hyperempathy syndrome” which causes her to share pleasure and pain, or perceived pain, with other creatures

- origin= her mother's addiction to a prescription drug during her pregnancy
- empathy with the human but also the nonhuman world (the dog she has to kill to end its suffering)
- why does she keep her “sharing” a secret?

If hyperempathy syndrome were a more common complaint, people couldn't do such things. They could kill if they had to, and bear the pain of it or be destroyed by it. But if everyone could feel everyone else's pain, who would torture? Who would cause anyone unnecessary pain? I've never thought of my problem as something that might do some good before, but the way things are, I think it would help. I wish I could give it to people. Failing that, I wish I could find other people who have it, and live among them. A biological conscience is better than no conscience at all.
(Chapter 10, p. 115)

- the geo-engineering of morality through empathy

A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured trunks and branches of several trees.

14. Apocalypse Now (and Then)

Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Day 2

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course Stuff

- Writing Assignment 2 due to Canvas on this Friday May 2 by 5 pm
 - counterarguments and textual evidence
- Rubric for the Final Exam is posted on our Canvas site under ‘Modules’
- Exam will be held on Monday May 19 from 4-6 pm in Tawes 1100 (this classroom)

The Title: The Parable of the Sower



- What does the title mean?
- What is a parable? Why does Christ speak in parables in the New Testament?

Matthew 13: 11

10 And the disciples came and said to Him,
“Why do You speak to them in parables?”

He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

-cf. parables to apocalypse as revelation

Matthew 13: The Parable of the Sower (New King James Version)

13 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. 2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”



- What is the meaning of the seed in relation to Earthseed?
- Why does Butler choose this parable?
- How does Butler use parables in her novel?

Something new is beginning—or perhaps something old and nasty is reviving. ...

Parts of [Olivar] sometimes crumble into the ocean, undercut or deeply saturated by salt water. Sea level keeps rising with the warming climate and there is the occasional earthquake. Olivar's flat, sandy beach is already just a memory. So are the houses and businesses that used to sit on that beach. ... The voters and the officials of Olivar permitted their town to be taken over, bought out, privatized. KSF will expand the desalination plant to vast size. That plant will be the first of many. The company intends to dominate farming and the selling of water and solar and wind energy over much of the southwest. ... Anyone KSF hired would have a hard time living on the salary offered. In not very much time, I think the new hires would be in debt to the company. That's an old company-town trick—get people into debt, hang on to them, and work them harder. Debt slavery. That might work in Christopher Donner's America. Labor laws, state and federal, are not what they once were. (Oct 20, 2026; Chap 11; 118-121).

Olivar, A Parable for Butler

-what is a company town?

-the company that buys an environmentally fragile coastal town, taking over its resources in exchange for giving its educated workforce some security

-why do Lauren's parents argue over Olivar?

-what is the ethical message of Olivar?

-its racial politics

-the relation of slow violence to economic dependence

-for Butler, what is the relation between economic, racial, and environmental justice?

-Are there places like Olivar today or is this still in the realm of fantasy?

Pyro and Paints

Then there's that fire drug with its dozen or so names: Blaze, fuego, flash, sunfire... The most popular name is pyro—short for pyromania. It's all the same drug, and it's been around for a while. From what Keith said, it's becoming more popular. It makes watching the leaping, changing patterns of fire a better, more intense, longer-lasting high than sex. Like Paracetco, my biological mother's drug of choice, pyro screws around with people's neurochemistry.

Pyro worked its way west without making nearly as much trouble as it could have. Now its popularity is growing. And in dry-as-straw Southern California, it can cause a real orgy of burning. "My God," Cory said when the radio report was over. And in a small, whispery voice, she quoted from the Book of Revelation: "'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils...' And the devils set fire to the Payne-Parrish house. (December 24, 2026; Chap 13; 143-144)

Keith: "Paints. They shave off all their hair—even their eyebrows—and they paint their skin green or blue or red or yellow. They eat fire and kill rich people. ... They take that drug that makes them like to watch fires. Sometimes a camp fire or a trash fire or a house fire. Or sometimes they grab a rich guy and set him on fire." (June 15, 2026; Chap 10; 110)

-how do the drugs highlight economic disparities?

-Effect of pyro? Parable/ allegory? Reaction of readers in the 1990s?

The Burning of Lauren's Neighborhood

Everything was chaos. People running, screaming, shooting. The gate had been destroyed. Our attackers had driven an ancient truck through it. They must have stolen a truck just to crash it through our gate. I think they must have been pyro addicts—bald people with painted heads, faces, and hands. Red faces; blue faces; green faces; screaming mouths; avid, crazy eyes, glittering in the firelight. They shot us and shot us and shot us. I saw Natalie Moss, running, screaming, then pitching backward, her face half gone, her body still impelled forward. She fell flat on her back, and did not move again. I fell with her, caught up in her death. I lay there, dazed, struggling to move, to get up. Cory and the boys, running ahead of me never noticed. They ran on. ...

Someone screamed near me, then tackled me, pulled me down. I fired the gun in reflexive terror, and took the terrible impact in my own stomach. A green face hung above mine, mouth open, eyes wide, not yet feeling all his pain. I shot him again, terrified that his pain would immobilize me when he did feel it. It seemed that he took a long time to die. (July 31, 2027; Chap 14; 153 ff)

-What is the attack like?

-What saves Lauren?

The Aftermath

There was a dead green face on our front porch. I went up the steps and stood looking at him—at her. The green face was a woman—tall, lean, bald, but female. And what had she died for? What was the point of all this?

“Leave her alone.” A woman who had a pair of Cory’s shoes in her hand strode up to me. “She died for all of us. Leave her alone.” I’ve never in my life wanted more to kill another human being. ...

“She died for us,” the scavenger woman had said of the green face. Some kind of insane burn-the-rich movement, Keith had said. We’ve never been rich, but to the desperate, we looked rich. We were surviving and we had our wall. Did our community die so that addicts could make a help-the-poor political statement? (July 31, 2027; Chap 14; 159-163)

-how is the language of social justice used here?

-how are the Paints another parable for Butler?

-what are the politics of this part of the novel?

The Road North: What are its Lessons?

- Zahra Moss and Harry Balter
- where are they going? What does “going North” represent?
- Lauren’s disguise? Effect?
- conditions and conflicts?
- Zahra’s experience living on the outside as a child with a prostitute mother
- the debates over helping people? Harry vs Zahra and Lauren?
- the dangers of the road?
 - “coyotes” and wild dogs
 - roving armed bands and the constant threat of robbery and violence (including sexual violence)
 - earthquakes and fires
- Travis, Natividad and 6 mo old Domingo
 - they fled indentured servitude in a house where Travis was a handyman and Natividad was a maid
- Bankole-57 yr old enigma
- the sisters Jill and Allie
 - they left a life of violence and prostitution where their father was their pimp
- 3 yr old Justin Rohr

She is hagridden. Earthseed is Positive Obsession

More Sharing"

PARABLE OF THE SOWER is a story of death and rebirth. It will never let go.

In this story, a woman strives to create a new religion that will give humankind a new birth among the stars.

The religion, EARTHSEED is first, last, and foremost - Goal, Whip, and EARTHSEED must touch on everything, delve into everything, Sustenance must offer strength, guidance, and purpose to Lauren and through Lauren without demanding faith in the supernatural

More Hispanics

ADD more racism
Add more Hispanics. Most of neighborhood should have Hispanic relatives. More Hispanic surnames on people like Mora who seem ordinary blacks, or ordinary whites. More Spanish Language.

More Racism

More disease. They must see the sick + dying along the road like downtown LA only worse.

More casual, horrible death.

MORE POSSIBLE TRAVELING COMPANIONS DURING THE NORTHERN JOURNEY. They drop away, refusing to comply with group rules. They try to push her away to take over leadership. They try to settle in the stones of the small towns and cities they pass through.

They die. They are killed by gunfire, illness, knives. They are kidnapped and killed. Burned out druggies etc
They are raped.

These things must happen at least once each. Incidents will bunch up, two or three at once. Some people may leave the group because they've lost a child, a wife, whatever.

More Death

More "old" new stuff--computers--talking notebook-library photovoltaic (solar) strips, Hydrogen or electric vehicles.

Solar Roll, sheet Ribbon

More High Tech

GOD IS HER OPPONENT, AND/OR HER PARTNER.

In Book I, She learns to be a careful, adaptable, farsighted Godshaper.

In Book II, She applies what she has learned to collect and protect a new moving community, then lead these to find and claim a new home.

They are seeking a home--room of their own in which to grow and work toward the goal that Olamina has given them.

Butler's Archive

The Huntington Library, San Marino CA

Outline and notes for *Parable of the Sower*, ca. 1989. The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

Butler's Environmental Memory Archive

-This image is of the outside of an envelope Butler used to file away the articles she collected on climate and the environment beginning in the 1980s. (The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens).

-beginning at age 18 and over the rest of her life, Butler amassed a huge collection of clippings and notes on science, the environment, climate change, and politics

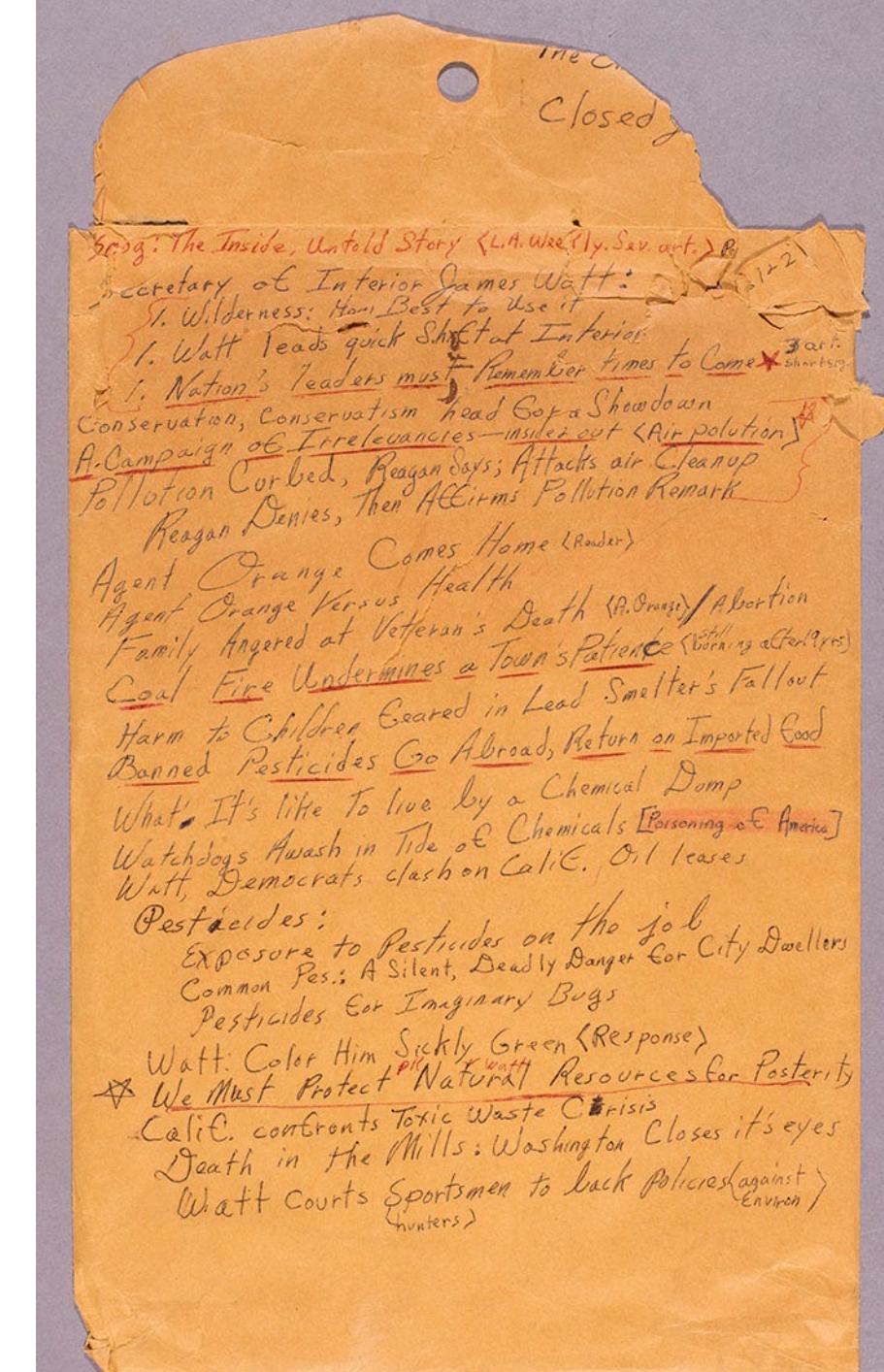
-according to the literary critic Shelby Streeby, “Butler coined the word HistoFuturist to describe herself as a memory worker and “historian who extrapolates from the human past and present as well as the technological past and present.””

(Source: Streeby, S. (2018). *Imagining the future of climate change: World-making through science fiction and activism*. University of California Press. 72)

-Butler can be considered an early climate change theorist and activist much like Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*)

-Butler: “They spend their tomorrows today.”

-Butler linked climate change (air pollution, desertification, water scarcity, etc) to economic and political policies that prioritized short term profit or gain against long term sustainability



Tell stories
Filled with
Facts.

Make People
Touch and
Taste and
KNOW.
Make People
FEEL!
FEEL!
Feel!

Octavia E. Butler, notes on writing, ca. 1970-1995. The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. © Estate of Octavia E. Butler.

I shall be a bestselling writer.
After Imago, each of my books will be on the bestseller lists of LAT, NYT, PW, WP, ~~etc.~~, etc. My novels will go onto the above lists whether publishers push them hard or not, whether I'm paid a high advance or not, whether I ever win another award or not. This is my life. I write bestselling novels. My novels go onto the bestseller lists on or shortly after publication. My novels each travel up to the top of the bestseller lists and they reach the top and they stay on top for months (at least two). Each of my novels does this. So be it! I will find the way See to it! So be it! See to it! So be it! See to it!

My books will be read by millions of people. I will buy a beautiful home in an excellent neighborhood. I will send poor black youngsters to Clarion or other writers' workshops. I will help poor black youngsters broaden their horizons. I will help poor black youngsters go to college. I will get the best of health care for my mother and myself. I will hire a car whenever I want or need to. I will travel whenever and wherever in the world that I choose. My books will be read by millions of people! So be it! See to it!

In class writing: Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* and Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section).

Consider the ways in which Ward and Butler each dramatize the effects of natural disaster and climate change.

1. Which novel did you enjoy reading more?
2. Which novel do you think is more effective at getting people to recognize the social and environmental costs of climate change? Why?



14. Apocalypse Now (and Then)

Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Day 3

ENGL133 Imagining Nature



Sun Ra Arkestra feat. Shabaka Hutchings, “Love In Outer Space”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arh3rRYyBL8>

The Evolution of Earthseed

-What is the purpose of the discussion with Travis in Chap 18?

There's hope in understanding the nature of God—not punishing or jealous, but infinitely malleable. There's comfort in realizing that everyone and everything yields to God. There's power in knowing that God can be focused, diverted, shaped by anyone at all. But there's no power in having strength and brains, and yet waiting for God to fix things for you or take revenge for you. You know that. You knew it when you took your family and got the hell out of your boss's house. God will shape us all every day of our lives. Best to understand that and return the effort: Shape God." (Aug 8, 2027; Chap 18; 220)

Travis: "Why personify change by calling it God? Since change is just an idea, why not call it that? Just say change is important."

"Because after a while, it won't be important!" I told him. "People forget ideas. They're more likely to remember God—especially when they're scared or desperate."

"Then they're supposed to do what?" he demanded. "Read a poem?"
"Or remember a truth or a comfort or a reminder to action," I said.
"People do that all the time. They reach back to the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran, or some other religious book that helps them deal with the frightening changes that happen in life." (Aug 8, 2027; Chap 18; 221)

- Purpose? emphasizes adaptation, resilience, and the necessity of change

- a path forward in a world where the old ways are no longer sustainable

-How does Earthseed resist conventional Christianity?

-What is godshaping?

-what kind of religion is this?

-ideas vs stories

-how does this distinction speak to Butler's larger project?

The Destiny of Earthseed

“The Destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars,” I said. “That’s the ultimate Earthseed aim, and the ultimate human change short of death. It’s a destiny we’d better pursue if we hope to be anything other than smooth-skinned dinosaurs—here today, gone tomorrow, our bones mixed with the bones and ashes of our cities, and so what?”

“Space?” [Travis] said. “Mars?”

“Beyond Mars,” I said. “Other star systems. Living worlds.”

“You’re crazy as hell,” he said, but I like the soft, quiet way he said it—with amazement rather than ridicule. (222)

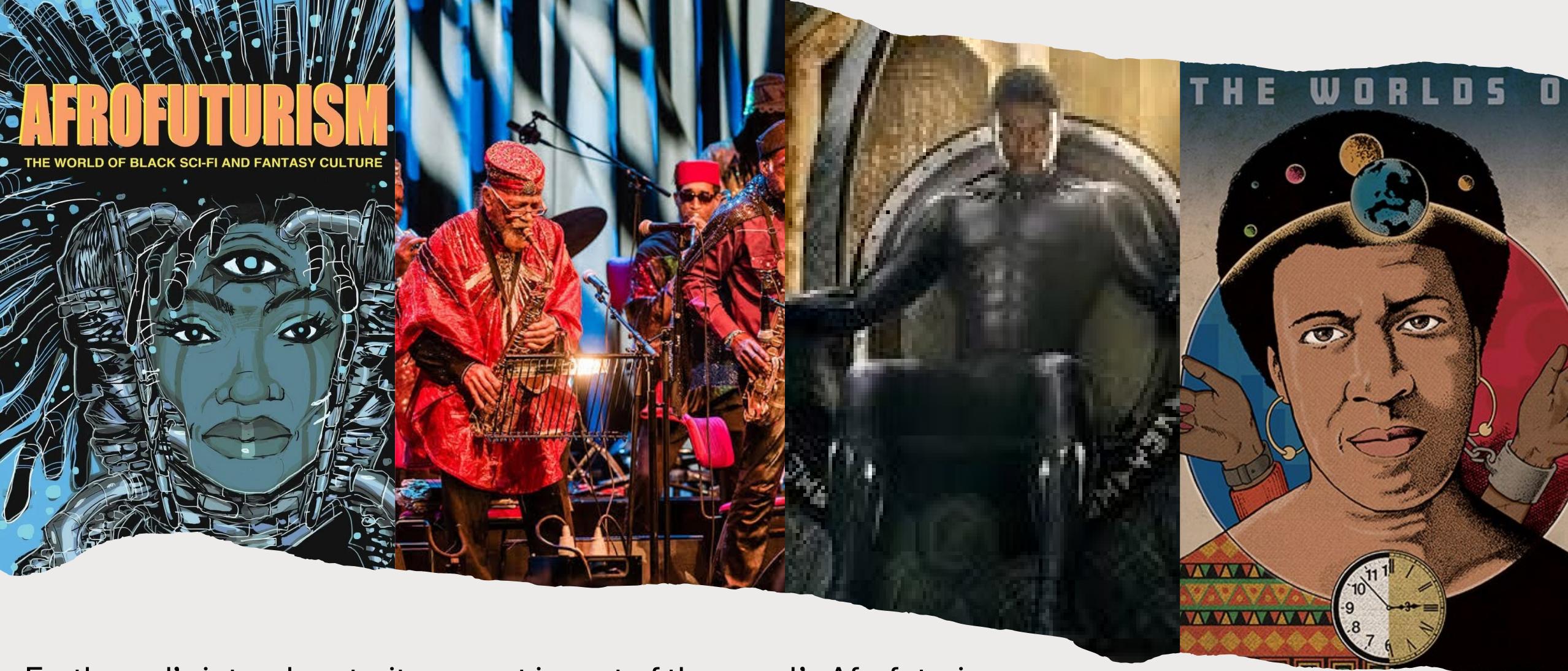
-the interplanetary aspect?

-Effect of these discussions with Travis and Bankole? Draws out and attempts to disarms the reader’s skepticism

-cf. to the opening scene of the novel in Lauren’s dream of flying

“The essentials [of Earthseed],” I answered, “are to learn to shape God with forethought, care, and work; to educate and benefit their community, their families, and themselves; and to contribute to the fulfillment of the Destiny.”

“And why should people bother about the Destiny, farfetched as it is? What’s in it for them?” “A unifying, purposeful life here on Earth, and the hope of heaven for themselves and their children. A real heaven, not mythology or philosophy. A heaven that will be theirs to shape.” (Chap 21; 261)



- Earthseed's interplanetary aspect is part of the novel's Afrofuturism
- Afrofuturism= a genre that centers Black history and culture and incorporates science-fiction, technology, and futuristic elements (*Black Panther*, Sun Ra Arkestra)
- a vision of the future where Black people are at the forefront of innovation and are liberated from historical legacies of marginalization and oppression
- Butler is often referred to as the “Mother of Afrofuturism”

A New Community Arises from the Ashes

Bankole owns this land, free and clear. There's a huge, half ruined garden plus citrus trees full of unripe fruit. We've already been pulling carrots and digging potatoes here. There are plenty of other fruit and nut trees plus wild pines, redwoods, and Douglas firs. None of these last were very big. This area was logged sometime before Bankole bought it. Bankole says it was clear-cut back in the 1980s or 1990s, but we can make use of the trees that have grown since then, and we can plant more. We can build a shelter, put in a winter garden from the seed I've been carrying and collecting since we left home. (Chap 25; 318)

- Bankole's land in Humboldt CA
- it is both a horror story and a forest eden
- the land holds both slow and spectacular violence
- an integral part of Lauren's Earthseed vision is the founding of a multiracial community in the north
 - the danger from whoever burned out Bankole's sister's family
 - the choices that the group faces in trying to decide whether to stay here or go further north?
- Isolation vs jobs
- trust in each other
- Private property vs. communal living

Acorn: The Ending

So today we remembered the friends and the family members we've lost. We spoke our individual memories and quoted Bible passages, Earthseed verses, and bits of songs and poems that were favorites of the living or the dead.

Then we buried our dead and we planted oak trees.

Afterward, we sat together and talked and ate a meal and decided to call this place Acorn.

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bore fruit an hundredfold. (Luke 8: 5-8) (Chap 25; 328-9)

-what kind of ending is this?

-what does the parable of the sower mean at the end?

-what role does Lauren play in this parable?

Afrofuturism and Environmentalism

Utopia or Dystopia?



- What models of going to the stars do we have?
- The Destiny? The interplanetary vision of Octavia Butler vs. Elon Musk
- What do they share? How are they different?

- Is the interplanetary aspect utopian or dystopian?
Is it a rebirth or a giving up?
- is it reproducing the logic of settler colonialism in
outerspace?

Conclusion: What environmental models arise out of Butler's novel?

- environment is not background but an active agent in the story
(cf. the fire along the highway, the landscape of Bankole's land in Humboldt)
- this challenges Western ideas about control and mastery over the environment
- what happens when there is a loss of this fantasy of mastery?
 - the environment is both literal disaster and a metaphor
 - ecological collapse is inseparable from social and moral disorder

In class writing: Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* and Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

Work with a partner but write down your answers separately with your name on it so you can turn it in at the end of class (unless you are both in the same section).

Consider the ways in which Ward and Butler each dramatize the effects of natural disaster and climate change.

1. Which novel did you enjoy reading more?
2. Which novel do you think is more effective at getting people to recognize the social and environmental costs of climate change? Why?

Choose a specific passage to illustrate your view and include its page number. (If you don't have Ward's novel with you, you can just describe the passage).



A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured trunks and branches of several trees.

15. The Rights of Nature

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement

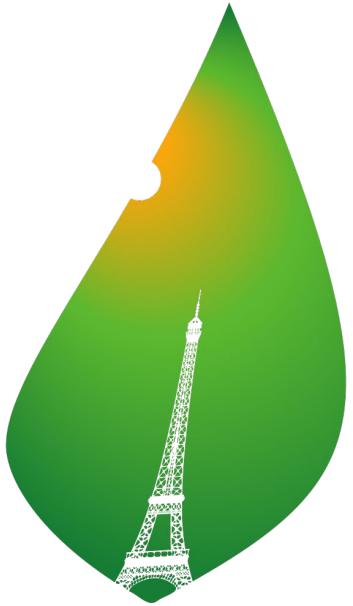
Pope Francis, “Laudato Si”

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course stuff

-Final Exam ADS accommodation reservations:

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PARIS2015

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

COP21·CMP11

The Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

-an international treaty adopted in 2015 whose goal was to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and to limit the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels

-facilitated by the UN



Pope Francis (papacy 2013-2025), Laudato si' [Praise Be to You] (2015)

-a papal encyclical subtitled “On care for our common home”

-the pope encourages global action on climate change, while criticizing reckless development, environmental degradation and a lack of care for the world’s poor who are disproportionately affected by global warming

-encyclical?

-a public letter on church doctrine clarifying difficult theological issues

-in his entire papacy Francis only released 4 encyclicals

-audience? Not just the 1.4 billion Catholics but to everyone

The History of the Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

- ratified by all nations except for 3 (Iran, Libya, and Yemen)
- all nations must set their own greenhouse gas emission goals (nationally determined contribution aka NDCs);
- countries must report their greenhouse gas inventories and progress relative to their targets but there are no penalties for not meeting those goals
- the US ratified the accord in 2015, withdrew in 2020, rejoined in 2021, and announced its withdrawal again in Jan 2025

-Trump's 2025 Exec order was entitled: "Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements"

-why does the US keep going in and out of this Agreement?

-those who argue against the Paris Agreement believe that it would potentially burden the U.S. economy, lead to job losses or increase fossil-fuel energy costs

-those who argue for the Agreement believe that climate change will have great economic and humanitarian costs in the near future unless action is taken now. Also that US needs to lead on this issue so that other nations will follow; also claims that jobs associated with clean energy will offset any job losses in fossil-fuel industry

-why does it matter if the US is in or out of the agreement?

-the US is the second largest global emitter of greenhouse gases

-if the US does not honor its commitments neither will other countries

2015 Paris Climate Agreement

2.1. This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

- (a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
- (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;
- (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

Pope Francis, “Laudato Si” (2015)



- Francis has recently been called “perhaps the world’s greatest environmental champion”
- progressive Catholics and faith leaders embraced the encyclical as a call to action on climate change
- “Laudato si” acknowledges that the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are significantly to blame for the current climate crisis and that these should be replaced by renewable energy sources
- under Francis’s leadership, Vatican City said that it will soon generate all of its electricity needs from a solar plant

The Opening of Francis's “Laudato Si”

-Based on Saint Francis of Assisi's “Canticle of the Creatures,” a poem of divine praise composed in Italian in 1225

1.“*LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore*”—“Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.... This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

-What model of home is this? How does the language of family function?

-Personification?

-how does this language relate to premodern ideas about nature?

“Laudato Si” and Biblical Ideas about Dominion

67. We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man “dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. ... Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.

-How does this passage revise ideas about dominion in the Genesis account of creation?

-What model of care is this?

- emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things

- an integrated ecology (more like the indigenous kinship model)

In Class Writing: How would you describe the collective voice that issues from the Paris Climate Agreement? How does this voice compare to that of the “Laudato si”?

-How would you describe the style of each document (diction, verb choice, tone, etc)? What models for care of nature have been put forward? Which language do you find to be more effective in achieving its goals?

Preamble to the Paris Climate Agreement (2015)

Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity, ...

Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of the concept of “climate justice”, when taking action to address climate change,

Have agreed as follows... (pp. 20-21)

Francis, “Laudato Si” (2015)

My appeal

13. The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. ... Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. ... Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.

14. I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. (p. 4-5)

A photograph of a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the canopy of tall, thin trees, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The foreground shows the dark, textured trunks and branches of several trees.

15. The Rights of Nature

Should Nature Have the Same Rights as People?

ENGL133 Imagining Nature

Course stuff

- Final Exam ADS accommodation reservations:

For those with ADS testing accommodations and who plan to take our final with ADS, please schedule your exam time asap and ideally by this Friday 5/9

- Writing Assignment #2 will be graded in the next week

- Please bring a web-enabled device to class next Monday if available. You'll have some time to do course evaluations in lecture

- Final Exam: Monday 5/19 in Tawes 1100 from 4-6 pm

- Study Guide will be available by this Friday

How do the Voice and Tone of the Paris Agreement and the Laudato Si Differ?

Paris Agreement

1. main point of Paris Agreement is phrased in terms of scientific quantification—2 degrees above pre-industrial (cf. Enlightenment idea of quantifying nature)
2. doesn't acknowledge that something is wrong with current situation ("adverse impacts" or "effects")
3. what is the solution? the phrasing of the problem assumes a technical solution; also "finance flows" and emission targets
4. "environmental justice"
5. audience? Parties and stakeholders

"Laudato Si"

1. frames the climate crisis as primarily a moral and ethical problem
2. criticizes current practices as well as the church's past interpretations ("crisis" "disaster" "catastrophe")
3. what is the solution? Individual and political; care for home; the earth itself is like the poor; outcome is awareness and conversation
4. environmental justice!
5. audience? every person living on Earth, regardless of their faith or background

Why is it important to identify who speaks for nature and in what voice?

- because the voice tells you what is being assumed or hidden
- diction, rhetoric, and tone signal what is left unsaid

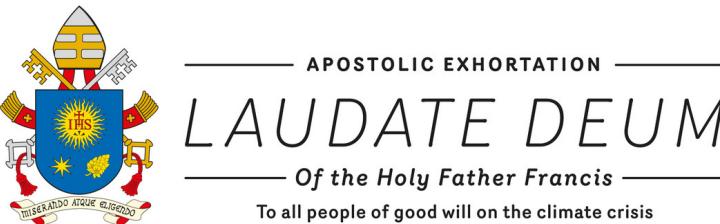
Beyond the 2015 Paris Agreement and the “Laudato si”: Where are we now?

Paris Climate Agreement

- raised awareness about climate change
- made countries revisit their targets every 5 years
- sparked low-carbon solutions and encouraged renewable energy markets
- more than \$430 million has been pledged for countries most effected by extreme weather
- commitments from almost all countries demonstrates the most international agreement on a single issue to date

BUT

- the agreement had no penalties for nations not meeting their goals
- compliance has been mixed
- in US there have been continued arguments about potential economic impacts of the climate treaty
- it is technically still possible to get on the 1.5-degree pathway; emissions would have to fall by 42 percent globally by 2030 and by 57 percent by 2035, compared to 2019 levels.



Beyond the 2015 Paris Agreement and the “Laudato si”: Where are we now?

Laudate deum

-in 2023 Pope Francis issued an apostolic exhortation as a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical “Laudato si.” This treatise argues for quicker action against the climate emergency and it forcefully condemns climate change denial.

Main points:

-cautions that we cannot geoengineer our way out of the current crisis:

“To suppose that all problems in the future will be able to be solved by new technical interventions is a form of homicidal pragmatism, like pushing a snowball down a hill.” (¶ 57)

-the solution lies not just with individuals but at the corporate and political levels, particularly at the national and international levels

- connections between lifestyle and impact:

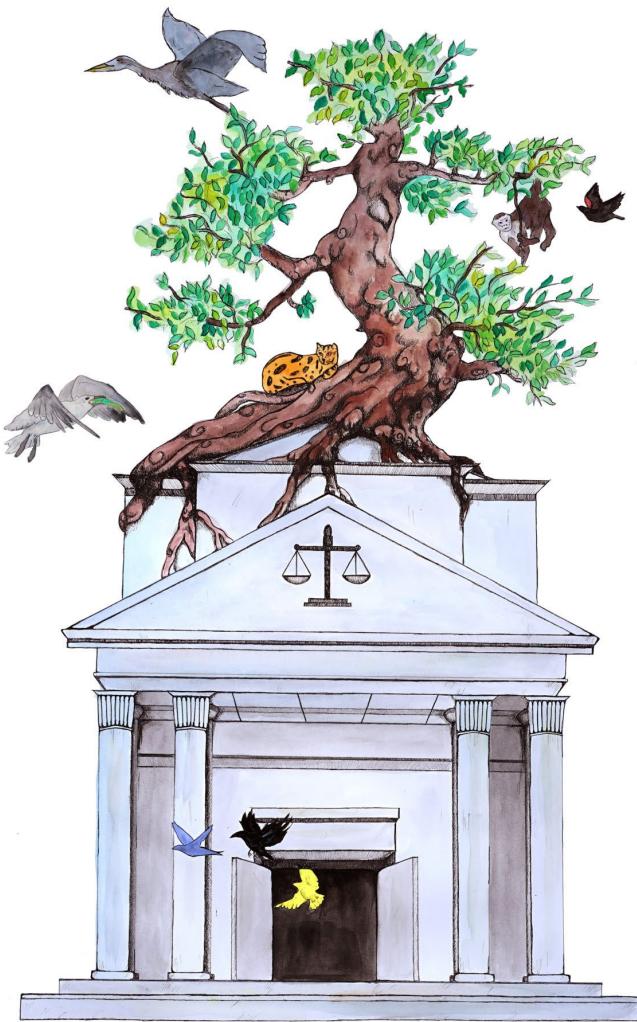
If we consider that emissions per individual in the United States are about two times greater than those of individuals living in China, and about seven times greater than the average of the poorest countries, [44] we can state that a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact. As a result, along with indispensable political decisions, we would be making progress along the way to genuine care for one another. (¶ 72).

Source: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html#_ftnref20

A wide-angle photograph of a lush green forest. In the foreground, a stream flows from the background towards the viewer, its water appearing dark and slightly blurred. Several large, moss-covered boulders are scattered across the stream bed. A fallen tree trunk lies horizontally across the middle ground, partially submerged in the water. The background is filled with dense green trees and foliage, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

What are the Rights of Nature?

The Rights of Nature (RoN)



- a legal theory that began in the 1970s that proposes that nature and natural phenomena should be recognized as having inherent rights, similar to human rights
- such rights may be assigned to nature as a whole, particular ecosystems, species, or specific landscape features (such as rivers or mountains)
- multiple legal mechanisms have been used to guarantee these rights
 - “legal personhood” allows them to sue in their own name and seek legal remedies for damages
 - legal personhood has been used successfully to protect rivers in New Zealand, Colombia, India, and Bangladesh
- How do RoN legal arguments differ from environmental protection laws?
Environmental protection laws are usually aimed at limiting pollution and protecting human health (anthropocentrism), while RoN laws aim to prevent harm to ecosystems and ensure their integrity (ecocentric)
- RoN is not a singular movement but a variety of legal tactics used in different places
- RoN laws raise many questions:
 - Are these kinds of rights a good mechanism of environmental protection?
 - what are the benefits and challenges of the RoN as both a legal tactic as well as an ethical philosophy?

RoN 1: Constitutional Rights for Nature in General: Ecuador, Bolivia, and (not) Chile

Ecuador

- in 2008, Ecuador was the first country in the world to accord legal rights to nature in its constitution
- it recognizes the rights of “Pachamama” (Mother Earth) to “maintain and generate its cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary processes”
- reflects a more Indigenous worldview and it often linked to indigenous recognition and rights
- this article was added to the constitution after its high court ruled that mining in a protected region of the Ecuadorian rainforest violated the rights of nature



Bolivia

- in 2010, Bolivia enacted the Law of the Rights of Mother Earth
- but its implementation has been uneven
- in May 2014 the government enacted a new mining and metallurgy law, which limits the protection of Mother Earth by keeping pre-existing mining rights concessions and contracts



Not Chile

- in 2022, a proposed Chilean constitution that would have recognized the RoN was defeated by voters in a referendum in 2022 (62% against).
- while several factors contributed to its defeat, a large lobbying campaign against the constitution was undertaken by mining, agricultural, and energy companies, whose interests were potentially impacted by the proposed RoN changes
- also a defeat for expanded indigenous rights
- cf Make America Beautiful campaign with the Crying Indian (follow the \$\$)

RoN 2: Grassroots Organizing: Protecting A Lagoon in Spain



-in 2022, the first RoN case in Europe granted legal personhood to a lagoon in the Murcia region of southeast Spain

-Mar Menor is the largest saline Mediterranean lagoon in Europe and has great habitat and species biodiversity; however, it experienced rapid environmental degradation due irrigation for agricultural and livestock purposes

-a local petition signed by 700k people lead to national legislation that created a series of national and local bodies that have legal authority to act on behalf the lagoon

-what is **legal personhood**?

-it extends the idea of a "person" beyond humans, granting legal rights and obligations to non-human entities, such as corporations, trusts, or in this case, an ecosystem

-where did it come from? corporate personhood was elaborated in medieval law which recognized religious organizations and universities as distinct entities with the ability to own property, enter contracts, and sue or be sued, separate from their individual members

-today, corporations are people too (cf 2010 Citizens United v. FEC that said corporations have First Amendment rights to free speech, including the right to spend unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns)

RoN 3: Legal Personhood of the Whanganui River in New Zealand

-in 2017, the Whanganui River was granted legal personhood and became the first river in the world to be recognized as a legal entity

-the Te Awa Tupua Act (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) attempted to resolve over a century of conflict between the local Māori and the government over the river's management (indigenous cultural, spiritual and fishing concerns vs. settler steamer service and mineral extraction)

-recognized the area around the Whanganui River and all its physical and metaphysical elements as an indivisible whole with the rights of a NZ citizen

-also provided \$80 million to redress the environmental degradation and community impacts

-there was a conflict between govt and local Māori communities over who would own the area

- -the compromise was that the area could own itself by recognizing the “spirit” of the river, that it is above human sovereignty and therefore owned by no one

- -these *mouri* (vital essences of nature) guard over specific parts of a river



- the law refers to the two human guardians that govern the new legal person as the river's “human face”
 - this is a version of **prosopopoeia** (like nature in Coleridge or storms in Defoe or Hurricane Katrina in Patricia Smith's *Blood Dazzler* poems)

The RoN in the US?

-2010, **Pittsburgh** became the first major municipality in the United States to recognize the RoN

- the goal was to protect the city's natural environment from the negative impacts of shale gas drilling and frack waste
- allows citizens to bring legal actions

-in 2019, **Toledo** passed the **Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR)**, which granted legal rights to Lake Erie and its watershed

-why? Agricultural and industrial runoff that leads to algal blooms and drinking water emergencies

-advocates had collected 10k signatures to trigger a referendum on LEBOR that passed with over 60% of the vote and was added to Toledo's City Charter.

-importantly, the bill stripped corporations charged with a violation of their legal personhood (so that companies and individuals could be held responsible for polluting the lake and its watershed)

-in 2020, a federal judge ruled that LEBOR was unconstitutional on the grounds that it was too vague (what is healthy? What is clean?), that it violated the 14th Amendment's due process clause, and that it infringed on states' authority

-plaintiff in this case was an agricultural group (follow the \$\$\$)



-local cities and municipalities have tried to adopt RoN laws with varying degrees of success despite the judicial challenges, RoN laws have been passed in more than 30 localities across the US

-BUT in April 2025, the Trump administration directed the Justice Department to block all state and local climate initiatives “that threaten American energy dominance and our economic and national security”

Are the Rights of Nature Necessary or even Desirable?



1. Rights tradeoffs

- individual liberty and personal property vs collective health and future well-being of humankind
- if nature has rights, then human beings have new responsibilities and will have to restrict certain activities that unjustifiably impair those rights.
- this is similar to other hot-button issues in US (guns, pandemic restrictions)
- how do you value the common good against individual freedoms?

2. Is legal personhood a bad version of anthropocentrism?

- do we have to turn nature into a person before we respect and protect it?
- if taken to the extreme, can anyone own anything in relation to nature (land or homes)?
How does one draw the line?
- some expand indigenous models of knowing and kinship with nature but have to be converted into Western legal models that pit private vs. public property

3. RoN Guardianship model

- the Lorax problem: who speaks for the trees? Who has legal standing or, if granted rights, who has guardianship?
- ideally RoN is an ecocentric vs anthropocentric view of nature
- but this model usually assumes some kind of legal guardianship
- but human interests are not fully identical with those of the natural world
- for example, in the NZ Whanganui River case, should all pollution be prohibited? What about diversions for irrigation? How much pollution and diversion is enough?

4. Trusteeship rather than Guardianship model?

- guardianship can be seen as problematic
- trusteeship means holding something not just for future human generations but also for nature itself

Other Legal Mechanisms: Ecocide?

- a recent legal movement that criminalizes egregious environmental damage and aims hold perpetrators accountable
- the movement has lobbied for “ecocide” being a crime that could be heard before the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) alongside genocide and crimes against humanity
- the proposal came from Vanuatu, Fiji, and Samoa
- goal=to treat harm to nature as seriously as we treat harm to people
- one rationale for this movement is that global multilateral agreements such as the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement do not have legal sanctions
- another rationale is that environmental disasters often have planetary rather than local consequences
- examples of potential cases: Deepwater Horizon oil spill, a Chernobyl-like nuclear event, or the mass deforestation in the Amazon rainforest



- challenges? Long shot at getting this approved at the ICC
- also agreeing a definition of ecocide
- currently the definition pits human benefit against environmental damage
- what one critic calls an “anthropocentric cost-benefit analysis”
- who decides what level of harm is acceptable?