

A detailed painting of a forest scene. In the foreground, there are large, lush green ferns. The middle ground is filled with tall, slender trees, some with bare branches and others with green foliage. A path or clearing leads into the distance, where a bright light source, possibly the sun, creates a hazy, golden glow. The overall atmosphere is serene and naturalistic.

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)?



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IN FOCUS



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

EDITOR'S CHOICE



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

UNEP NEWS



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

- 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: Greening policies and villages for poverty reduction

VIDEOS





United States Environmental Protection Agency

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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!

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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.

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NEWS

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- [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’

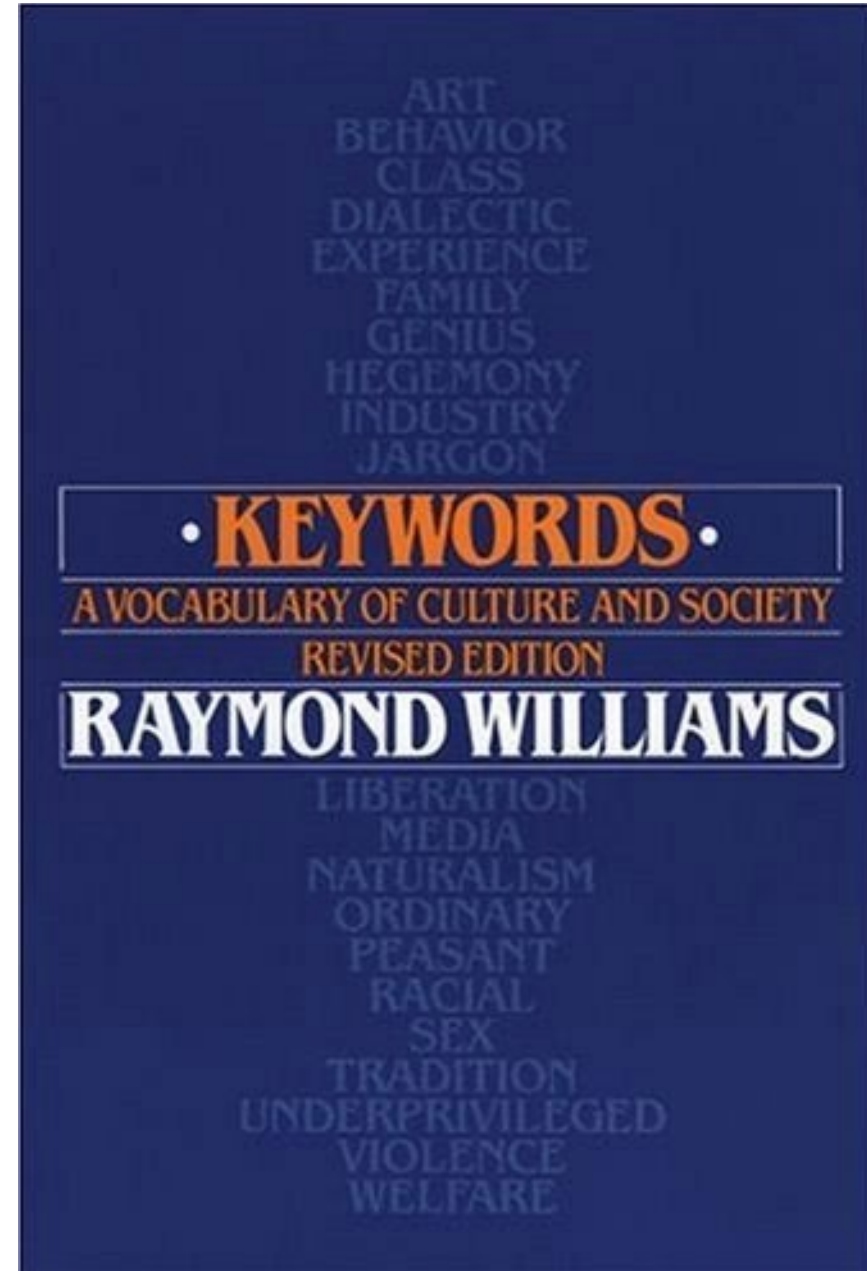
-Oxford English Dictionary notes that its primary meaning as ‘the area surrounding a place or a thing’ does not appear until the eighteenth century

-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.

