

The Question of Aesthetic Praxis: If Literature and Art are Propaganda, What is Ecocritical Analysis?

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Abstract This essay considers the relationship of literary production and environmental activism through the lens of the theories of propaganda and agitation developed by Frederick Engels, V. I. Lenin, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke in terms of critical praxis. Using these concepts it analyzes the literary production of a variety of writers, including Edward Abbey, Margaret Atwood, Paolo Bacigalupi, Patricia Grace, Ishimure Michiko, Barbara Kingsolver, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Indra Sinha. It briefly treats the debate within ecocriticism about the role of theory in the analysis of nature-oriented literature. And, it addresses the early debate within the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) about whether a literary studies organization should also be an activist organization, as well as recent decisions by ASLE to support financially member projects that work directly with activist organizations.

Keywords praxis; propaganda; agitation; activism; ecocriticism

Upon entering a landscape shaped by a theme relating ecocriticism and activism, a person is quickly confronted with a series of questions. Is one looking at ecocriticism as a form of activism, what some theorists would define as praxis? Is one exploring the ways that ecocriticism might analyze and critique activism? Can or should aesthetic productions be analyzed as a form of activism? Is consideration of activism, or representations of activism, a possible task or a necessary responsibility for ecocritical theory and criticism?

In the development of literary ecocriticism and green studies in the U.S. and Europe, initially there seemed to be far more debate about what the objects of study ought to be rather than being about how these objects ought to be studied. As I have rehearsed elsewhere, in the U.S. at least, the field of literary ecocriticism began with

a focus on literary nonfiction and a relatively narrow range of novels and stories. And so, the fiction-nonfiction divide had to be addressed. Such was not the case elsewhere, say, where poetry was a primary object of study for ecocriticism and a role for theory less questioned. The debate about theory seems to be taking place almost exclusively in the United States, the land of unacknowledged pragmatism, while in some other countries, such as China, the debate seems to be more one of pitting foreign theories against Chinese ones, particularly those drawn from the classics.

The issue of critical practice as a form of activism has never been directly addressed as a question to my knowledge. Over the past few years, in the pages of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* there has been a strident argument about whether academic-based theories are another symptom of modern society's being the anti-environmental enemy, now widely known as the Estok-Robisch controversy. As Louisa MacKenzie and Stephanie Posthumus note, "It hardly bears repeating to readers of this journal [*ISLE*] that 'theory' broadly understood has often been seen as mutually exclusive to activism, to science, and to ecology itself" (757).

Their essay explicitly defends the necessity of studying theories and being theoretical as part of engaging in ecocriticism, but whether or not literary and cultural criticism and developing the theories on which it would consciously be based constitute types of activism, a guide to activism, a supplement to activism, or a complement to activism, seems to remain unresolved. For example, in their conclusion they remark that "We privileged few especially must react to ecological crisis, and we believe that ecocriticism can play a real and active role" (771). But clarification of its role in what and as what could benefit from additional elaboration.

Early on there was a fractious debate in ASLE-U.S. about whether or not the organization should engage in activism, such as passing resolutions about environmental issues or engaging in support for specific environmentalist actions, which arose specifically in relation to the slaughter of bison who roamed beyond the confines of Yellowstone Park. At the time, the decision was made by the organizational leadership and much of the membership to avoid that kind of engagement while the organization was still in the process of achieving academic recognition and respectability. At the same time, some members speculated rather loudly that gaining academic respectability might very well be a demonstration of the organization's irrelevance and impotence in relation to real world issues, as if universities were somehow not part of the real world, even as they are increasingly yoked to the interests of the military-industrial complex and demoted to the role of job training centers. More recently, however, the leadership of ASLE — U.S. has decided to support directly environmental activism through funding mechanisms. Specifically,

The ASLE Outreach Committee is soliciting proposals for projects that will help build connections between the environmental humanities and place-based environmental organizations working outside the academy. Projects will foreground the intersection between local efforts to address issues of environmental degradation and injustice and the role of representation and rhetoric. We are especially interested in projects enabling ASLE to connect with the environmental struggles of biennial conference localities. Funds may be used to cover the costs of public presentations or exhibitions (permanent or temporary), informational materials, literary and artistic productions, or interactive digital projects. (*ASLE News* Winter 2014)

While the inclusion of the phrase “the role of representation and rhetoric” maintains a veneer of academic analysis, it seems obvious with the use of the word “struggles” that the focus will squarely fall on support for efforts at social intervention and change. Clearly, also, the funding of activities of “public presentations or exhibitions,” “informational materials” and the like means that ASLE-U.S. will be funding propaganda, in the neutral denotative sense of that word and not with the negative connotative sense emphasized in American discourse. While not definable as an activist organization, like, say, the Environmental Defense Fund, ASLE-U.S. has clearly become an organization supporting activism and, through advertising its grant program in its newsletter and on its website, promoting local direct action.

So, an organization for ecocriticism has begun to intervene in local environmental “struggles” to change behavior and thought by financially supporting activist groups, and thereby has made activism an inclusive area of its purview and moral consideration, or what in the business world is defined as “corporate social responsibility.” It would seem quite possible also that at least some of the organizations likely to obtain funding are ones in which ASLE members are already involved. If that is the case, are other activities of this organization a form of activism, such as holding academic conferences, funding seminars on specific ecocritical issues, or including environmental justice as an academic field of analysis? That depends on how one chooses to define “activism.” The phrase “academic activism” hardly rolls off the tongues of university professors with any frequency, and in some countries where scholars are practicing ecocriticism such a label could threaten their job security if viewed as a form of adversarial politics. A few years ago, the senior American scholar Stanley Fish went so far as to give speeches in the US and author a book with the title, *Save the World on Your Own Time*, specifically calling for a separation of professional intellectual endeavors and classroom teaching from the

ethical positions and engagements of faculty members.

Defining activism requires a consideration of two concepts more abstract than that of “activism,” although no less materially affective forms of intellectual intervention: “propaganda” and “agitation.” A related and crucial question for ecocriticism is that of whether or not art is propaganda.

The intellectual African American activist, W.E. B. Du Bois, who was also a novelist, gave a speech at the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) annual conference of 1926, on the occasion of the awarding of the Twelfth Spingarn Medal. It is useful to note that the recipients of this award, which continues to be made annually by the NAACP for “outstanding achievement,” frequently consist of authors, artists, and performers. In his speech Du Bois proclaimed that “The apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right.” And further, in a statement that would elicit significant controversy ever since, declared that

Thus all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. (573)

He then published a version of his speech in *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP, in October of 1926 and it has been reprinted frequently since in the U.S., including more recently in anthologies of literary theory and criticism.

In contrast, in 1928, Alain Locke, Philosophy Professor and father of the Harlem Renaissance of African American literature, wrote an editorial for the new journal *Harlem*, titled “Art or Propaganda?” Many scholars have considered it a rebuttal to Du Bois. But that is not quite the case upon closer examination. He objects to what he labels propaganda because of its “monotony and disproportion. . . . For it leaves and speaks under the shadow of a dominant majority whom it harangues, cajoles, threatens or supplicates.” But he argues that does not mean that “Our espousal of art thus becomes no mere idle acceptance of ‘art for art’s sake,’ or cultivation of the last decadences. . . . It is the art of the people that needs to be cultivated, not the art of the coteries. Propaganda itself is preferable to shallow, truckling imitation.” In the end, then, Locke does not disagree with Du Bois that art always represents an ideology and favors the class or national interests of one group or another.

Rather, Locke criticizes art that V.I. Lenin would have considered not “propaganda” so much as “agitation” or even a “call to action.” It is also clear that Locke does not object to art that the artist perceives as serving the role of propaganda

as long as it does not eschew aesthetic achievement or deny individuality and self-representation. He is Jamesian in the sense that he prefers art, and more narrowly literature, that shows rather than tells. But he too is looking for art that will uphold beauty, the aesthetic, without disregarding that “Surely we must take some cognizance of the fact that we live at the centre of a social problem.” While Locke here speaks of racial oppression in the United States, a similar kind of remark can be made about environmental art and the subjects of ecocriticism, which invariably “take some cognizance of the fact that we live” amidst a global environmental crisis. Appreciation of nature, then, is no mere form of aesthete entertainment for a leisure class, but a stance that is overtly ideological and implicitly, when not explicitly, political.

There are those who would believe and contend that activism is only represented by direct actions, picket lines, monkey wrenching, and following the calls to action of a Greenpeace or an EarthFirst! But it would not seem that revolutionary and reformist intellectuals would agree with such a narrow conception or that they would wish to see direct action boxed off from more indirect efforts at persuasion and the effecting of change. After all the direct-action American organization EarthFirst! was deeply inspired by Edward Abbey’s novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which romantically and comically chronicles environmentalist sabotage by a small group of individuals, and which gave rise to the term “monkey wrenching” for various forms of protest, such as destroying logging machinery or tree spiking, which prevents loggers from felling trees that may have spikes nailed into them because they represent a threat to safe cutting.

In like manner, Upton Sinclair’s novel, *The Jungle*, was commissioned by *An Appeal to Reason*, a newspaper of the Socialist Party of America, to expose the unsafe working and environmentally degrading conditions in the meatpacking industry. The public uproar it caused upon publication led to the passage of federal food safety legislation, having a greater impact as an agitational piece in terms of actual results than other forms of protest at that time. At the same time, *The Jungle* represents the lack of direct correspondence between intentions and results or even between the focus of agitation and propaganda and the focus of attention in direct action influenced by them. Sinclair was focused on working conditions in his novel and wanted legislation to change that, but instead the legislation that was passed focused on food safety, which directly benefited the general public but only indirectly benefited the meatpacking workers.

It seems quite likely that many of the early ecocritics in the U.S. preferred literary nonfiction as the subject for ecocritical analysis because it was more overtly referential and generically realist, more frequently reflected the thoughts and behaviors of activists, and more easily incorporated explicit or implicit calls to

action than did either fiction or poetry, rather than only championing it because of its omission from the canon. Certainly, Lawrence Buell's efforts in *The Environmental Imagination* to trace the lineage of American nature writing back to Thoreau had this kind of emphasis. Yet, more overtly didactic texts are not necessarily the measure of good literary propaganda according to some of its most famous practitioners.

Frederick Engels provided the following analysis in an 1885 letter to Mina Kautsky on this point:

The modern Russians and Norwegians, who produce excellent novels, all write with a purpose. I think however that the purpose must become manifest from the situation and the action themselves without being expressly pointed out and that the author does not have to serve the reader on a platter the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he describes. . . . Thus the socialist problem novel in my opinion fully carries out its mission if by a faithful portrayal of the real conditions it dispels the dominant conventional illusions concerning them, shakes the optimism of the bourgeois world, and inevitably instills doubt as to the external validity of that which exists, without itself offering a direct solution of the problems involved, even without at times ostensibly taking sides. (Marx and Engels 88)

That is to say, not only does the author need not reveal his own intentions or position on the environmental issues, the attitudes of characters toward the more-than-human world, or the actions taken to address a specific crisis or event, but neither does he or she need to provide a call to action in order to be encouraging action. The text suffices to be progressively propagandistic if it only serves to expose, reveal, and draw attention to the reality of the current human environmental predicament. At approximately the same point in time, then, both Engels and Henry James, political polar opposites, demonstrated a preference for authors to show rather than tell in order to interest their audiences. In 1888 Engels remarks in a letter to Margaret Harkness, "The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art" and then goes on to praise Balzac, a politically conservative author, over Zola, an explicitly socialist one (Marx and Engels 91).

It would seem that V. I. Lenin, the Russian revolutionary who led the Bolsheviks to power, also saw the value of a literature that might show and thereby intellectually stimulate an audience being told through other forms of discourse, such as polemic and calls to action, about the need to transform society. Lenin wrote numerous letters to Maxim Gorky seeking to align him with the Bolsheviks and to submit work by him and other writers to revolutionary newspapers and magazines. In February of

1908, Lenin wrote to the famous novelist and playwright on the need for a foreign newspaper published in exile to be the revolutionary party's political organ, and remarked, "Why shouldn't literary criticism be included in it?" (*On Literature* 169). And a week later wrote again to him, "I have in fact been dreaming of making the *literature and criticism* section a permanent feature in *Proletary*" (*On Literature* 172). Two weeks later, he followed up with another letter, "Now it really will be splendid if little by little we draw in fiction writers" (*On Literature* 187).

So, with the example of *The Jungle* in mind, it can be said that while propaganda and agitation cannot be reductively represented as a cause that produces a specific desired social change or course of action pursued by activists, it cannot be disassociated from them either. At the same time, if it fulfills a more general propagandistic function of exposing flaws, injustices, and crises within a particular political economic system, it need not lead readers to any specific ideas about activism, but exerts its influence at a more general level of ideological reorientation. My two examples, however, clearly fall into the category of works in which the authors are consciously and explicitly concerned about social and environmental issues and do intend for their aesthetic products to have an effect in the world and are not written merely for entertainment or aesthetic virtuosity. Certainly that was the case for Gorky's writings as well. A specific ideological intention, however, is not a requirement for art to be propaganda. Du Bois and Engels write about literature written with a purpose beyond entertainment, but Lenin in his discussions of Tolstoy also writes of literature as propaganda not due to any authorial intentionality but as a result of its sincere representation and its unanticipated impact on the world (*On Literature* 54-55). And here is precisely where the role of criticism can come into play in an extremely valuable way.

Ecocriticism provides theories and methods for analyzing the ideologies at work in literature and other forms of cultural activity in terms of their positions on human-rest of nature relationships, environmental science, hierarchy and heterarchy, ethics and behaviors. On the one hand, ecocriticism does not turn a work into propaganda, in the sense that it does not inject an ideology into the text from the outside. Rather, it makes explicit that which may be implicit or immanent but unacknowledged and even unrecognized by the author and the characters invented. On the other hand, though, through promoting the reading or teaching of a particular text, it elevates it as propaganda for the position of which the critic approves; or the critic alters its reception in the minds of readers as an ideological intervention in the individual and social interpretation of that text. If art is propaganda, whether of a progressive or reactionary kind — criticizing or defending contemporary social reality — then criticism that draws attention to specific artistic works or cultural artifacts

and practices in opposition to or in hierarchical comparison with other ones must unavoidably be propaganda as well.

But propaganda here remains too broad and too vague to suffice for understanding the relationship of ecocriticism and activism or for determining whether or not a theoretical formulation or a critical practice ought to be considered an activist instance. To further refine thinking about these relationships, one can turn to the early writing of Lenin. In *What Is To Be Done?*, originally drafted in February of 1902, after addressing the need for theoretical development, he makes a distinction among propaganda, agitation, and a call to action. A “propagandist”

must present “many ideas”, so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience . . . and utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting *a single idea* to the “masses”, e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty. . . . to single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function “the call upon the masses to undertake definite concrete actions”, is sheer nonsense, because the “call”, as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet, and agitation speech, or represents a purely executive function. (409-10)

While distinguishable one from another, in Lenin’s taxonomy all of these aspects can be perceived as part of a larger whole: the effort to effect fundamental change in the entire system of relations and behaviors among the members of a society. The reverse is the case, however, in that all of these aspects can also be used to deter, delay, or prevent fundamental change. In the environmental sphere, climate change denialism is the most salient example and it is carried out on all of these levels simultaneously, from challenging the science at a theoretical level, to disputing the motivations for the conducting of climate science, to agitating around a specific event, such as “climategate” or a specific revision of one piece of a United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, to calling for the relaxation of environmental regulations at every opportunity, such as the ongoing drought in California or the Keystone pipeline project.

Lenin remarks later in *What Is To Be Done?* that “Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete, sense of the term can be made only at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action, and do so immediately can sound such

calls” (414). That is what is usually thought of as activism and that is what ASLE-U. S. now appears to be committed to supporting financially. And when we look at an organization such as Greenpeace or EarthFirst!, one sees that they carry out both agitation around specific issues and engage in direct action and calls for action at specific places, for specific issues, at specific points in time. Literary works, cultural products, and criticism, then, cannot be considered activism in this narrow sense, even when they narrate a story of activism that includes in that plot line a call to action. The literary work can, however, draw attention to such calls to action with the effect of making readers more sensitive and more considerate of them when they hear specific appeals being made. Among written works, the essay is certainly more congenial a literary form for agitating in direct connection to a call to action because of its potential to be more timely through more rapid publication than a longer work or one requiring more aesthetic styling. Poems can serve this function as well in those countries where poems can still be published quickly in newspapers. Online forums reduce the time to social impact considerably without the delays of print publication, but crafting a novel takes a considerably longer period of time, distancing it from a specific event, than sending a tweet.

Barbara Kingsolver’s latest novel, *Flight Behavior*, is worth consideration in this regard. The plot focuses on the plight of Monarch butterflies, whose “flight behavior” reflects their being confused by the effects of climate change and the resulting loss of habitat, temperature variations, and the shifting onset of seasonal cycles. As such it fits the Leninist definition of agitation and this plight is revealed through narration of events and dialogue about why the butterflies are wintering in the wrong part of North America. There is, though, a secondary plot, one that could be considered more propaganda than agitation. That plot focuses on the complex web of reasons for why people engage in “flight behavior,” i.e., running away from scientific evidence about climate change and its implications for their daily lives and responsibility for their behaviors. Varied episodes, characters, and reasons address this plot line in the novel. *Flight Behavior* does not issue a specific call to action. But if readers have been affected by its propaganda and agitation effects then they may be more sensitive to, and conscious of the reasons for, calls to action that they subsequently hear.

Ecocritical analyses of *Flight Behavior* could easily opt to focus more on one of these plots than another, while intersectional analysis would contend with the class, gender, and national dimensions of Kingsolver’s narrative. It is often the case that the cumulative effect of several agitational articles on the same text written from different theoretical orientations gradually generates a more propagandistic reading of a novel and why edited collections of essays on the same work provide a valuable diversity of opinions and richness of scope. One might also argue that calls for more

comprehensive intersectional analysis, including ecofeminist, postcolonial, and comparatist approaches, which has certainly enriched ecocritical practice, constitute precisely a recommendation to generate more criticism that would meet the criteria of propaganda than those of agitation. At the same time, I would suggest that recognition of this distinction and the utility of both practices might protect readers and critics alike from expecting any one literary or cultural studies article to deliver more than it promises.

But is all art really propaganda in Du Bois' sense of the term? Let's hold that question in suspension and consider another proposition: all art, like all forms of human semiosis, is ideological and to the degree that it reflects, implicitly or explicitly, one ideological orientation or another, contributes to the promoting or critiquing of values and beliefs by readers and viewers who engage such art. Consider a less subtle example of semiosis: the slogan. Here are three: cure cancer: donate to the American Cancer Society; cure cancer: stop ingesting carcinogens; cure cancer: stop the transnational production and distribution of known carcinogens. The first is the variety Americans hear most in relation to cancer. It is a call to action, but it does much more ideological work than that. By making the recipient of the requested donations the American Cancer Society, it emphasizes the idea that the "cure" will come from scientific research and technology, and casts individuals as patients who must passively wait for the experts to achieve a breakthrough. Additionally, it focuses on treating the symptoms of cancer and genetic predispositions toward cancer. It contains virtually no political or economic agitation, but does reinforce the pharmaceutical-medical complex emphasis on expensive treatment carried out by experts.

The second slogan shifts the focus from treating to preventing and identifies the primary cause of cancer as external carcinogens rather than internal predispositions, but it limits its focus to what Americans deem to be "lifestyle choices." It is basically agitational at the level of freedom of choice, personal discipline, and self-education. The third slogan, however, shifts the emphasis to the sources of carcinogens and the need to halt their production. One cannot after all refuse to ingest carcinogens if they are floating in the air that people must breathe and the water that they must drink. That is why air and water pollution are often the focal point of public outcries over pollution. The addition of the terms "transnational" and "distribution" generate the opportunity to broaden the propaganda work of the slogan by raising the specter that it is not only the production of carcinogens that must be addressed, but also the ways in which they are disseminated, including hazardous recycling activities, and the reality that pollution does not respect national borders. Since "transnational" is most frequently used as a modifier of "corporation" this third slogan also points attention

to the foundation of industrial economics. The propaganda that would evolve from the third slogan still has to be teased out from its implicit discourse to make those implications explicit through critical analysis.

Such teasing out is often what literary and cultural criticism will do whether reading Ishimure's Michiko's *Lake of Heaven*, Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*, or Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, just to name three texts that provide varying content amenable to either agitational or propagandistic criticism. With *Lake of Heaven*, for instance, critics can focus on the issue of excessive dam building and the destruction and displacement of agrarian communities, which could be tied in with other novels that address this same singular topic. Or, critics can take up the multifaceted issues raised in the novel of sense of place, destruction of habitat, sonic pollution, urban homogeneity, conflicting community-economic systems, and spiritual versus secular orientations toward the rest of nature. *Animal's People* and *Potiki* have both been read through the lens of postcolonial criticism and postcolonial ecocriticism, with important differences in the aspects highlighted when the ecological issues are brought to the fore. As with *Lake of Heaven*, *Potiki* has a spiritual theme that clarifies an inhabitational sensibility that is sometimes ignored if a narrow topic focus is chosen for critical attention, while displacement necessarily needs to be handled differently due to the historical discussion in *Potiki* of native struggles to regain ownership of traditional land seized by the colonizers.

Cautionary tales are a useful form of narrative to consider here. After all, a tale can only serve the function of being cautionary if an author believes that literature can alter consciousness and affect behavior. Often such stories engage in propaganda over agitation because they contain a significant amount of contextual development, including in science fiction world building, or explanations of various systems, weather or climate, technology, or social relations. Often such tales require a multi-volume narrative to develop the plot with all of the contextual apparatus that the story lines require. Two examples of such cautionary tales are the trilogies by Margaret Atwood and Kim Stanley Robinson, *MaddAddam* and *Science in the Capitol* respectively. Or we have lengthy single volume works, such as Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*. The post-carbon consumption world established as its setting functions as cautionary propaganda, as does the main plot line about transnational corporations trying to control the global seed market. Although the story is set in the future, the plot describes events occurring in the world today and exposed by numerous nonfiction authors and activists, such as Vandana Shiva and Abby Kinchy. There is also a clearly agitational post-colonial resistance movement to globalization promoted by the novel as well, particularly as seen by the successful resolution of the plot at novel's end.

If aesthetic praxis is thought of as the complementary interaction of literary,

artistic, and cultural artifactual production and its criticism, then it can be understood as partisan creation, dissemination, or analysis and critique of literary and other forms of artistic production with the purpose of effecting a change in dominant ideological formations and social awareness. Its ideological underpinnings may be revolutionary, reformist, or reactionary, but not ideologically neutral. Ecocriticism is a form of aesthetic praxis that is in itself not a form of activism in the narrow sense of direct, immediate, and local actions, but by being propagandistic and agitational contributes to the potential success of activism through its effect on social consciousness. Such aesthetic praxis does not depend on the ideological self-consciousness, intentionality or motivational awareness of the artists themselves, although certainly for the addressing of environmental issues it provides a strongly persuasive complement.

While much of American and European ecocriticism is thematically and ethically oriented in its attention, in other parts of the world there are other emphases, such as those on semiotics or ecoaesthetics. Some might wish to argue that an ecoaesthetics is not environmentalist or political, that it is not propaganda. But certainly any form of literary and cultural criticism that encourages an appreciation for wild nature, for notions of “harmony” and “balance,” for looking back to Daoism and Confucianism, for instance, functions culturally as a counter narrative to dominant global models of development and consumption economics and implies some kind of environmental ethic. Ecoaesthetics rather than an explicitly thematic or ethical criticism may just be a form of environmentalist persuasion by other means and seen as related to E. O. Wilson’s concept of biophilia, which he perceives as an ecologically-based perception. Perhaps what all forms of ecocriticism, whether agitation or propaganda, and the theories from which they are consciously or unconsciously derived, seek to do is to promote the idea that biophilia could overcome or supersede culturally induced ecophobia? If so, then we might see how this very possibility upends the hierarchical binary that privileges so-called rational, compartmentalized ideas over intuition, emotion, and sensibilities, those very aspects of the human condition that literature and art affect so deeply and evoke in each reader and viewer to enable fundamental reorientations.

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