

# ECOCRITICISM



(UK: "green studies")

&  
literature ↔ the environment

Cheryll Glotfelty, founder 1980s

American Transcendentalists (Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller)  
return to nature

Culture ↔ Nature?

not everything is socially constructed

~~Constructedness~~

don't always ironize or metaphorize nature as symbols.  
Nature actually exists.

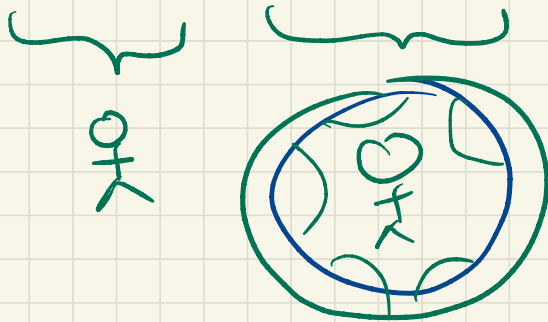
the case of ... and Roger Fowler ... (pp. 205-6). In ... created exchanges have ... been between the American Wordsworth critic Alan Liu and various ecocritics, including Jonathan Bate (in *Romantic Ecology*), Karl Kroeber (in *Ecological Literary Criticism*), and Terry Gifford (originally in *ISLE* in 1996, and reprinted in Coupe's *The Green Studies Reader*, pp. 173-6). The key feature of Liu's position is the view that calling something 'nature', and seeing it as 'simply given', is usually a way of avoiding the politics which has made it that way. Of course, it can be so: for instance, the well-known nineteenth-century children's hymn by C. F. Alexander, 'All things bright and beautiful' originally contained the notorious lines (long omitted from most editions):

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate;  
He made them high and lowly  
And ordered their estate.

"Nature" as a human  
Construct.

It is obvious here that social inequality is being 'naturalised', that is, literally, disguised as nature, and viewed as a situation which is 'god-given' and inescapable, when actually it is the product of a specific politics and power structure. (Perhaps Karl Marx had such sentiments in mind when he said, in his 'Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right', in 1844, that religion is the opium of the people.) The Left's long-standing assumption that the invocation of nature will have the side-effect of legitimating inequalities and injustices. Hence, for Liu (in Bate's paraphrase of his position) 'There is no nature ... in other words, "nature" is nothing more than an anthropomorphic construct created by Wordsworth and the rest for their own purposes' (Coupe, p. 171). Liu's now notorious remark is a frequent target in ecocritical writing and has been, paradoxically, a valuable stimulus to the definition and crystallisation of ecocritical

anthropocentric  
anthropocentrism.



slow violence  
systemic  
Rob Nixon