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"'Images adequate to our predicament': Ecology, Environment and Ecopoetics"

Lidström, Susanna, and Greg Garrard

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This paper discusses the idea of "ecopoetry" by outlining its development from drawing on Romantic and deep ecological traditions in the 1980s to reflecting complex environmental concerns in the 2010s. We identify a distinction between definitions that focus on poetry's ability to heighten individual readers' awareness of their physical surroundings on the one hand, and definitions that look for how poems can engage with difficult and complex environmental questions involving scale, justice, and politics on the other. We suggest that the difference between these two kinds of poems might be clarified by differentiating between *ecophenomenological* and *environmental* ecopoetry. We argue that recognition of this difference reflects a broader interdisciplinary development in our understanding of the environment as a social category, and that recognising it more readily and clearly could facilitate increased and improved cross-disciplinary discussions between ecocritical studies of poetry specifically, and environmental humanities more broadly. We carry out our analysis through the lens of the work of two influential poets in the Western, Anglophone world, namely Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes. Heaney and Hughes's respective poetics exhibit distinctive differences that illustrate our argument. Their poems are frequently taught in university classes on ecopoetry, as well as, especially in their home countries, to younger students, and we argue that the differences we point to in their depictions of human-environment relations are important to recognise in these settings as part of a nuanced and interdisciplinary understanding of the relationship between poetry, ecology and environment. (Text from authors' abstract)

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