

# Green Growth



Green Growth:  
From Theory to Action, From Practice to Power

Edited by

Stéphanie Bory and Muriel Cassel-Piccot

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Green Growth: From Theory to Action, From Practice to Power,  
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This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-5142-6, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5142-8

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## FOREWORD

*Biotech, cleantech, greentech, smartgrids... Le territoire lyonnais est un terreau fertile pour de nombreuses innovations qui relèvent de cette « croissance verte » devenue fameuse depuis quelques années. Sur notre territoire fleurissent les projets technologiques innovants, par exemple autour du génie génétique, de la biologie moléculaire, des véhicules électriques, de la méthanisation des déchets ou de l'éco-conception. Notre nouveau quartier de la Confluence est pour les Lyonnaises et les Lyonnais l'emblème de cette ville du futur, dans laquelle la technologie doit se placer au service du respect de l'environnement. Il témoigne de l'engagement de notre municipalité, auprès d'autres acteurs publics comme privés, au service du développement durable.*

*Mais Lyon est également l'un des foyers historiques où grandit la remise en question d'un modèle social et économique reposant sur la croissance. Toute notre région est régulièrement agitée par différentes luttes contre certains projets jugés inadaptés, voire dangereux. Ici plus qu'ailleurs résonnent les mots « résilience », « sobriété heureuse », « transition énergétique » ou encore « décroissance »... Lyon héberge d'ailleurs le journal du même nom, ainsi qu'une autre revue alternative d'envergure nationale : Silence !, qui partage son local du plateau de la Croix-Rousse avec le siège national de l'ONG « Sortir du nucléaire ». Le nouveau compteur électrique communiquant Linky est déployé ici, à titre expérimental, comme dans trois autres arrondissements lyonnais : plusieurs centaines de foyers en ont refusé l'installation. En descendant cette colline, on traverse un secteur où la mobilisation contre les antennes de téléphonie mobile rassemble régulièrement des collectifs actifs.*

*Si nous traversons ensuite le Rhône pour arriver du côté de la gare de la Part-Dieu, nous voyons les voies de chemin de fer que des opposants ont occupées pour signifier leur refus de la Ligne à Grande Vitesse Lyon-Turin. Toujours dans le troisième arrondissement, notre tribunal a jugé les militants antinucléaires qui s'étaient introduits illégalement dans la centrale nucléaire du Bugey. À quelques pas du nouveau palais de justice, la Direction Régionale de l'Agriculture de Lyon a été occupée par des faucheurs volontaires d'OGM, lors de leur manifestation nationale contre le maïs Mon 810. Plus au sud, l'Ecole Normale Supérieure devait accueillir le débat national au sujet des nanotechnologies, qui a*

*finalement été annulé, en raison des perturbations causées par les opposants les plus virulents. Dans le septième arrondissement toujours, un collectif qui souhaite préserver le stade de Gerland s'oppose à la construction du futur « stade des lumières », avec toutes les infrastructures de transport correspondantes, sur des terres agricoles en périphérie de notre agglomération.*

*Même le quartier des Brotteaux, réputé très feutré, a accueilli en 2009 le deuxième « contregrenelle de l'environnement » organisé par des opposants au « capitalisme vert » venus de toute la France ! Nous sommes donc, entre Rhône et Saône, dans un lieu bien adapté pour mener des débats passionnés et passionnants et faire avancer la connaissance sur ces sujets sensibles, qui dépassent largement le cadre de notre ville et de notre pays. C'est bien ce que nous a proposé l'Université Lyon 3 avec ce colloque international « Croissance verte : de la théorie à la pratique ; du savoir au pouvoir », qui s'est révélé spécialement riche, tant par la qualité des intervenants que par la diversité de leurs travaux.*

*Je souhaiterais mettre en lumière ici rapidement quatre interventions qui ont particulièrement retenu mon attention, car je suis bien convaincue qu'elles donneront envie de découvrir l'ensemble des contributions présentées dans cet ouvrage ; elles permettent en effet de mesurer la largeur du spectre des disciplines concernées par cette thématique de la croissance verte, qu'il s'agisse des champs politique, juridique, économique ou anthropologique.*

*Le travail d'Etienne Bourel sur la gestion forestière durable au Gabon retrace par exemple l'émergence progressive des préoccupations environnementalistes dans l'exploitation forestière, à partir des années 1970. Mais il démontre surtout le mythe de l'entreprise forestière « éco-responsable », mythe que construisent, dans leur communication, les trois entreprises occidentales qui se partagent ce marché si lucratif. Et son article nous montre l'envers des éco-labels distinguant de nombreux bois tropicaux : s'il est indispensable de replanter pour assurer le renouvellement forestier, comme de protéger la flore et la faune, ces actions restent très insuffisantes. Peut-on parler d'attitude « responsable » à propos d'entreprises aux fonctionnements néocoloniaux, activement impliquées dans la corruption publique, exploitant illégalement des travailleurs locaux, au mépris de leur santé et de leur sécurité ?*

*Loin de l'Afrique, le système anglo-saxon, qui nous est bien souvent présenté comme un modèle, ne semble pas non plus constituer un exemple à suivre en matière de développement durable. C'est ce que montre Brendan Prendiville dans son analyse centrée sur la problématique du réchauffement climatique au Royaume-Uni. La prise de conscience de ces*

*enjeux a fortement progressé ces dernières années au sein de la population, mais à l'échelle individuelle dominant plutôt fatalisme et sentiment d'impuissance. Et si cette thématique est devenue centrale dans les discours des principaux partis politiques du Royaume-Uni, le passage à l'acte pour traduire cette préoccupation dans la loi et créer des leviers d'action concrète reste extrêmement timide, dans un système économique encore dominé par la recherche du profit à court terme, et un système politique inadapté à la prise en charge de ces nouveaux enjeux.*

*C'est également ce qui ressort de l'analyse de Géraldine George concernant les évolutions du droit de l'environnement au Royaume-Uni. Les formations juridiques concernant les questions environnementales s'y sont énormément développées en quelques années. Ce phénomène s'accompagne d'une hausse des préoccupations environnementales au sein des cabinets juridiques et des études notariales, d'autant plus que ces entreprises y voient des sources d'économies et un gain en matière d'image. Mais les questions environnementales constituent avant tout pour les juristes une nouvelle source de profit : la dégradation des milieux naturels et la complexification des lois nationales et européennes représentent surtout un nouveau marché, qui peut s'avérer très rentable.*

*Au Nord comme au Sud, nous devons écouter les avertissements lancés par Michael Edesess, sur l'importance de distinguer précisément certaines notions clefs, en particulier la croissance économique, la hausse du PIB et le progrès technologique ... Son travail nous invite à savoir repérer, interpréter, anticiper et prendre en compte les signaux d'alerte qui manifestent les excès de la croissance économique, mais aussi à envisager que certaines catastrophes liées à notre modèle de développement se révèlent impossibles à prévoir.*

*Comme à chaque fois que nous parlons de croissance, commençons par nous demander ce qui doit croître. Car si le modèle de société que nous développons aujourd'hui sous l'étiquette de la croissance verte ne voit pas progresser la préservation de l'environnement et des ressources naturelles, les droits humains fondamentaux, le droit à la santé et à l'éducation, l'égalité sociale, le partage des connaissances, du pouvoir et des richesses, le bonheur de chacune et chacun, alors il ne s'agira pas d'un progrès véritable, mais hélas, du nouveau visage du mensonge, simplement dissimulé derrière un joli masque vert.*

*Françoise Rivoire,  
Adjointe au Maire de Lyon  
en charge du développement durable et de l'économie sociale et  
solidaire*

On behalf of the municipality's councillors and myself, I have been delighted to host a one-day event in the Valley of Chamonix Mont-Blanc as part of the symposium entitled *Green Growth: from Theory to Practice, from Action to Power*. The enlightening encounter between researchers from around the world and practitioners in the field allowed the productive confrontations and exchanges of academic analyses and pragmatic approaches. Specific challenges related to Vallorcine's location on the Swiss border at an altitude of 1300 metres were discussed notably in relation to the protection of the environment. More precisely because the community with its distinct characteristics has embarked on different pilot projects, the themes debated focused on the impact of global warming on glaciers, the management of water as a precious commodity, the upkeep of forests, and wood as a clean renewable source of energy. My wish is that the fruitful sharing of such perspectives across public and academic sectors become the rule.

Claude Piccot  
Mayor of Vallorcine  
France

## INTRODUCTION

As part of a recent initiative undertaken by Jean Moulin University (Lyon 3) to identify five areas of research deserving priority treatment, the Institute for Transcultural and Transtextual Studies (IETT) organised a multidisciplinary conference on the theme of globalisation, the environment and the challenges of technology from 15 to 17 September 2011. ***Green Growth: from Theory to Action, from Practice to Power*** sought to elucidate problems raised by these issues and to provide a forum for critical reflection in the two domains of theory and practice, on the one hand, and action and power, on the other.

With the continuing globalisation of technology, debate over environmental issues has become pervasive, shaping thought and action in all sectors of the economy and levels of society. From films such as Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* (2006) or Yann Arthus-Bertrand's *Home* (2009), to shifts in the political landscape, as seen in the increasing number of seats won by Green Parties in European, regional and local elections or the Copenhagen, Cancùn and Durban Climate Change Conferences summits (2009, 2010, 2011) and the Earth Summits in Stockholm and Rio (1972, 1992, 2012), or even more controversial events like the East-Anglia University scandal and Claude Allègre's writings, questions of environmental policy have moved to the forefront of every public forum.

The Green Growth Conference in Lyon brought together academics, socio-economic actors and politicians in order to facilitate exchange and reflection on both ecology as a field of study and environmentalism as a movement. The approach was pluralistic, addressing cultural, social, legal, economic and political issues in a common platform.

The first part of this book explores the concept of Green Growth from a theoretical perspective. Both researchers Simon Estok and Jean-Daniel Collomb look at the tensions between theory and practice. The first paper deals with ecocriticism defined by Simon Estok in an article published in 2005 as "any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the function—thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in

material worlds”<sup>1</sup> (Estok, 16-17). In *Blowing Smoke: Theorising a Space from Eco-Exceptionalism to Action in Ecocriticism*, Simon Estok first reviews the relations between ecocriticism and activism; he then considers praxis in our present time of crises, and studies how it translates “from page to world”; he goes on analysing the tensions between the claims of realism and the contempt for theory within ecocriticism and eventually demonstrates how they are detrimental to ecoactivism. He finally concludes by denouncing the negative impact of institutionalisation on radicalism and eco-exceptionalism.

In *No Love Lost? American Radical Environmentalists and Sustainable Development: the Example of J. Baird Callicott*, Jean-Daniel Collomb focuses on environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott. After reiterating the definition of sustainable development as given in the 1997 Brundtland Report and the origin of environmentalism in the United States, Jean-Daniel Collomb assesses the rejection of sustainable development by radical environmentalism, such as the Deep Ecology movement and ecologist George Sessions. In this context, he examines the concepts of economic growth, materialism and anthropocentrism. He proceeds with J. Baird Callicott’s attempt to revisit the notions and definitions of sustainable development and economics and the influence of Aldo Leopold’s land ethic on Callicott. The latter considers that ecosystem health should prevail over material development and that technological innovation should allow men to adapt their activities to reach the state of health. Jean-Daniel Collomb finally wonders whether Callicott’s vision of ecological sustainability stands any chance of being implemented in an American society deeply committed to consumer culture and facing the non-Western world anxious to adopt the mainstream Western development model.

Along with the development and application of scientific theories and inventions, the expansion of eco-critical studies, which address how humans relate to the environment in literature and philosophy and how green growth can translate (or not) from words into actions, has had a social and cultural impact on the everyday lives of citizens. At a time when the world has become “a global village” (Marshall McLuhan), in the age of information technology, men and women have been informed that the very survival of the human species and of the civilisations that they have created is at stake. This situation raises a certain number of questions

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<sup>1</sup> Estok, Simon. Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: an Analysis of ‘Home’ and ‘Power’ in King Lear, AUMLA, 103.

that pertain to issues of communication and representation. How has public awareness been affected by media coverage of experts' findings and wake-up calls? Which visual and verbal discourses have been used? How have they affected and influenced society? Which social interaction have they produced? Which responses to climate change, pollution and the shortage of resources have been brought? Have they induced new social models and new rules? Part II therefore focuses on environmental communication from the perspectives of linguistics, television messages and law education.

Hélène Ledouble and Olivier Gouirand aim to study how the meaning of the word "hybrid", which is originally a scientific term, has been modified through time by its regular use in the press related to environmental issues. Their article, entitled *Environmental Issues in News and Scientific Discourse, Diachronic Approach to the Notion of Hybridity*, is based on the authoritative publications of the European Environment Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency between 1995 and 2011 and on the newspaper subsection of the Corpus of Contemporary American English from 1990 to 2011. After defining the term "hybrid", they focus on the linguistic operations expressing the notion. The findings of their quantitative and qualitative analyses point to the ambiguity of the term, its level of specialisation, changes in its meaning, and the notion of green-washing.

If Hélène Ledouble and Olivier Gouirand's paper focuses on verbal language, Georges Fournier's *Anthropo-scene, the Fictional Treatment of Environmental Issues on British TV* concentrates on audio-visual communication. After stressing the role of television in the United Kingdom, especially when compared to the United States, Georges Fournier reviews the various types of programmes dealing with ecological issues since the 1970s. He then tackles the problems raised on the one hand by censorship, when the authorities fear disastrous effects on the population, and on the other hand by the principle of impartiality in broadcasting, which guarantees that sensitive issues such as the environment are dealt with evenly. He then goes on showing how, in television environmental films, both fiction and documentary codes, fictional and evidential modes, are inevitably intertwined. His argument leads him to study how fictional representations of ecological issues—notably the IF series—, which are closely linked to the tradition of disaster films, are meant to encourage emotional and intellectual involvement and to raise the population's awareness. In his last part, the author discusses his observations and interpretations in a wider social and political context.

In her article *From Teaching Environmental Law at University to Practising it in a Firm of Solicitors in England and Wales : Defense of the Interests of the Planet or New Source of Income?* Geraldine Gadbin-George examines how current and future lawyers, especially solicitors, in England and Wales get involved in environmental law, as a result of well-known worldwide organisations and legal principles, and considers their motivations. She first analyses how environmental law is connected to other disciplines, such as science, religion, and obviously business, before describing the development of this legal branch at the British and European levels, both to protect the environment and to fight the elements damaging nature. Geraldine Gadbin-George goes on studying the teaching of environmental law through the examples of some universities that have chosen to offer either trans-disciplinary or specialised diplomas. She eventually argues that the environment has become a new business for law firms not only willing to be present on this developing niche market, but also anxious to be seen by their clients as environmentally-friendly.

Not only has scientific thinking brought about new social practices, but it has also had consequences on the marketplace including production dynamics (agribusiness, energy, marketing), and ethical corporate policies (fair trade and business ethics). What are the links between theoretical knowledge and economic power? How do the players in the various industrial and service sectors adapt to this new order? How do they react to such notions as no-growth or sharing economy? In an attempt to partly answer these questions, Part III tackles Green Growth and development, first in different developing countries such as Taiwan and Malaysia, then in a more theoretical approach thanks to Professor Edesess's article on economics.

Professor Chi from National Dong-Hwa University has studied a community living in central Taiwan and in his paper entitled *The Green, Green Landscape of Home* attempts to show that green initiatives and sustainable development are possible in a developing country. He indeed reports on concrete alternative programmes led by local authorities that have resisted classical industrialisation and its impact on the environment. Until the 1980s Yilan County in north-east Taiwan was an isolated, sparsely populated region, where economic activities remained limited and the rate of growth slower than elsewhere. At the end of the decade, the county was offered attractive investment proposals, which would bring jobs and wealth. But the county government headed by a non-aligned mayor rejected the offer arguing that they wanted neither to endanger the health of the local population nor to bring misfortune to their descendants.



Chun Chieh Chi explains why and how people from Yilan County resisted the pressure from big companies. He then discusses how the county has produced a variety of green alternatives to the setting up of a coal plant and of a petrochemical company. He analyses the power struggle between on the one hand the population, local government, NGOs, and associations and on the other hand central government and potential industrial polluters. However, the conclusion tends to paint a mixed picture: although Yilan County has been operating successful revitalisation schemes and as a result can be seen as a green window for other counties, it still has major challenges to respond to such as changes in land use patterns and communication routes.

While Chun-Chieh Chi's paper provides the reader with a rather optimistic vision, raising hopes that economic development can be achieved through Green Growth and without the intervention of major polluting industries, Ivan Tacey, an anthropologist with a deep interest in Southeast Asian, gives us a more pessimistic account. In *Transforming Forests into Oil Palm Plantations: the Impacts of Landscape Representations and Global Entanglements on Orang Asli Forest People in Peninsula Malaysia*, he starts by explaining why oil palm is the most-traded oil seed crop in the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how this industry has reconfigured environments. His study focuses on a particular forest-dwelling minority indigenous group of the region, the Batek, whose living conditions and way of life are described in detail. In order to analyse how "entanglements" of actors, representations, discourses and power have (re)created Malaysian landscapes", he examines how deforestation has hit the tribe and explores the precise consequences it has had on their lives in general (residence, diet, knowledge, conception of the land). Adopting a historical approach, he notably insists on the various problems raised by land, rights and ethnicity. Finally, he points to the dangers caused by logging not only to the environment but also to the Batek people as ecological and scientific representations of forest have rendered them invisible.

In *Is Economic Growth Sustainable?*, Professor Edesess finally studies the fundamental divide existing between mainstream economists and most environmentalists as to whether economic growth can continue forever. His article demonstrates that it is possible for three reasons: first, technological advances could enable growth to continue indefinitely, next the standard measure of the size of the economy—GDP—is defined in such a way that it enables economic growth to continue forever, and last economic growth can be construed as analogous to sustainable evolutionary processes of natural ecosystems.

Part IV deals with the difficulty to reconcile theory and practice in the energy sector, a key market in 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, first in forestry, then in green electricity production. In *Sustainable Development in Gabonese Forests: from Rhetorics to Concrete Effects*, Etienne Bourel examines the gap between the rhetorics defended by forest businesses, especially their will to create a new form of forest management taking into account sustainable development, and their concrete actions in Gabon. After mentioning the 2001 Gabon Forest Code adopted in the context of the Earth Summits in Rio and Johannesburg, the author analyses the different actors involved in this new “forest governance”, most of them being concentrated in the capital. They are thus out of touch with local activities and rules, which entails Etienne Bourel to focus on three major ecocertified companies, left alone to implement the principles defined in this governance. He studies their websites, highlighting the discrepancy between the pictures and mottos used on the Internet and the companies’ actual activities, which he refers to as “the myth of eco-friendly companies”. Etienne Bourel finally points out the human, financial and technical obstacles faced by small contractors to abide by the law and to retain their workers. He concludes by asserting that imperialism still prevails.

In the second article, *Promoting ‘Green Electricity’ in the European Internal Market*, Etienne Durand considers the conditions of the complex reconciliation between the promotion of green energy, an unprofitable sector, and the core principles of the European internal markets, especially the ban on state aids, by dividing his study into two parts. He first examines what he calls “the top down approach”: the erasing of the internal market, which regards electricity as “merchandise”, despite its intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics, while admitting though its “specialness”. The author analyses the tools used by European Member States to promote green electricity, judging whether they respect the ban on state aids as well as competition rules. Etienne Durand then studies the “bottom up approach”: the use of market law as a way to promote renewable energies. He asserts the necessity to redefine electricity and its production in order to clearly separate the two concepts. Indeed, only the latter should be supported by Member States. He concludes by calling for the recognition of green energy production as a universal environmental service, as already ruled by the European Court of Human Rights and stated by some European directives.

If free market ecology is really a viable option, then Green Growth can only take place with the help of public institutions and the State. But how

would sustainable development fit into this new "eco-economic" order (to borrow an expression from Luc Ferry's *New Ecological Order*)? How does it serve political power? To what extent is the green cause instrumental in promoting specific interests? Clearly the ideological, political, geopolitical, urban, legal, and philosophical stakes (green vote, partisanship, north/south divide, migrations, urban policies, legal protection and judicial protection) could not be higher. Part V thus tackles Green Growth and politics, first in Europe, then in the United Kingdom and finally in the United States.

As an expert in European affairs, Robert Sherratt aims to assess the role of the European Union as today's world leader in global environmental governance. In *Consistencies and Contradictions in EU Environment Policy*, he shows how enacting the most ambitious green policies is a complex objective, the coherence of which can be equivocal. Tracing the origins of European environment policy back to the 1970s, Robert Sherratt first points to its weaknesses, which lie in reconciling opposite forces: green policies and economic growth, regulations and competitiveness, public opinion and industrial lobbies, farming communities and ecologists, the diverging interests of the various member states, and finally the different stands and approaches of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, and the European Commission. Furthermore he highlights the Union's difficulty in dealing with green issues with respect to its ambiguous positions as a representative body, a *sui generis* structure, a legitimate negotiating partner, and a rule enforcer. Despite these major constraints, the author evaluates the green achievements of the European Union, insisting on its role as a powerful progressive player in the field of climate change and the reader is provided with a detailed analysis of the programmes and agreements that have been ratified. The reasons for the major advances that have been made are then explained and their impact on the Union's credibility, legitimacy, and image at both national and global levels is explored. However being a leader in environment policy is a complex task, which sometimes leads to contractions because of multiple expectations, overambitious targets, and perverse side effects as in the case of biofuels and fisheries. Robert Sherratt concludes on the delicate balancing act of ensuring the protection of the environment in times of crisis.

If the European Union is an international leader in green politics at the global level, one of its members, the UK also stands out for its position on the issue. In *Climate Change in the UK. Policy and Politics*, Brendan Prendiville focuses on climate change as a social and political problem, by first reviewing the state of climate change in Britain and the public's

reaction to the shifts in weather patterns, what he calls “Climate knowledge and climate awareness”. He deems it necessary to briefly remind readers of the changes in the British climate over the last decades, dealing with warming, sea levels, rainfall and wildlife’s adaptation to these changes. Even if Britain has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions, especially when compared to many other European countries, Brendan Prendiville underlines the fact that the situation is not so bright. Indeed the overall decline in GHG emissions conceals a rise in the transport sector and is due to accounting methodology rather than any national effort to curb them. His survey reveals an increased awareness on climate change in public opinion, as illustrated by the trend towards cutting domestic energy use and adopting greener modes of transport. Secondly, he studies the climate change policies of successive governments since 1997 and the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, with a view to assessing the obstacles to the formulation and implementation of this policy. Brendan Prendiville focuses on the early Blair administration, with the creation of the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the increasing use of eco-taxes, and the Brown government, following the publication of the Stern report in 2006 and the Conservative new leader’s interests for the environment. He ends with analysing the start of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, “the greenest government ever” in David Cameron’s own words. Brendan Prendiville finally considers the politics of climate change with particular emphasis on the question of leadership. He highlights how much climate change policy needs a long-term vision, thus very decisive leadership, to overrule the reluctance of the British Treasury to support public investment and regulation, which, in his opinion, neither Blair nor Cameron have been able to embody.

The last article, *The Politics of Global Warming in the United States since the Supreme Court’s Massachusetts v. EPA ruling (2007)*, by Eliane Liddell, first exposes the American paradox since the US, a country prone to extreme weather events, has always been in the lead concerning climate science and sounding the alarm, whereas national climate legislation is almost non-existent. In her article, she reviews the chain of events starting from the ruling of the Supreme Court in 2007, *Massachusetts v. EPA* (Environmental Protection Agency), considered a landmark decision, until the present state of disarray in order to study whether the American judicial branch could push Congress to address climate change. Eliane Liddell thus presents in detail the 2007 decision which incidentally reinforced the role of the states in combating global warming. The arguments introduced in the Opinion of the Court were based on neutral scientific evidence and the break away from the usual

moral complacency. She then considers the election of Barack Obama in 2008 as a turning-point since the latter seemed willing to introduce climate change regulation. He yet had to face the strong opposition of the business community and the cap-and-trade climate bill adopted in 2009 by the House of Representatives was never voted in the Senate. Two years later, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives decided to halt the EPA programme regulating industrial air emissions, which President Obama threatened to veto. EPA's role was eventually reaffirmed in *American Electric Power v. Connecticut*. Eliane Liddell finally focuses on possible solutions to such a deadlock, including the bottom-up approach, i.e. local and state actions, the use by the president of his authority in the media to force Congress into action, or, last but not least, the power and influence of the judicial branch with appointed-for-life independent federal judges, as well as civil rights action. She concludes by comparing the fight against climate change to the struggle for civil rights, a long battle initiated by a now famous Supreme Court ruling.

The last day of the conference was devoted to meeting glaciologists, politicians, and civil society actors and the encounter led to fruitful discussions and debates. As organisers of the symposium and editors of this book, we want to thank all the people who contributed to the event and publication. Because much interest was generated and many questions were raised, a follow-up programme will be carried out.

Stéphanie BORY  
Muriel CASSEL-PICCOT



**PART I.**

**GREEN GROWTH AND LITERATURE /  
ECOCRITICISM**





## CHAPTER ONE

# BLOWING SMOKE: THEORIZING A SPACE FROM ECO- EXCEPTIONALISM TO ACTION IN ECOCRITICISM

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The boom ecocriticism has enjoyed since its inception in the mid-1990s, like all other booms, is unsustainable in its current mode. One of the things that need to happen is a change in the way that academics think in relation to the world upon which they comment. One does not want to be a nay-sayer, a pessimist, or a cynic, and, indeed, ecocriticism has done remarkable and good work; at the same time, however, if this good work is to continue, ecocritics will need to address the personal as well as the political, will need to assess how our individual involvement within the profession contributes to the very things under discussion, will need to look, for instance, at the sexism that underpins so much of our work, will need to act on the unsustainable practices of inter-continental flights (and all of the justifications we use for these flights: “it is important to connect with people face-to-face,” “it is important to deliver our ideas as broadly as possible,” “Skype meetings and web-conferencing aren’t the same as the real thing,” and so on), and will need to be far more conscientious. In short, for those of us working within the environmental humanities, we will need to stop kidding ourselves about our exemptions. We will need to stop practicing eco-exceptionalism. And we will need to recognize that the cards are stacked heavily against us in this task.

When Timothy Morton argues in *PMLA* (March 2010) that “Much American ecocriticism is a vector for various masculinity memes, including rugged individualism, a phallic authoritarian sublime, and an allergy to femininity in all its forms (as sheer appearance, as the signifier, as display)” (Morton 2010, 274), it seems shocking. After all, ecocriticism has its roots in the soils of ecofeminism. These are struggles fought and won. Ecofeminism has come and gone. We’ve been there, bought that tee-shirt, and finished with it. None of us want to hear that we haven’t. The sober reality, however, is indeed shocking, and, as Greta Gaard has recently pointed out in “Ecofeminism Revisited,” ecofeminist (and indeed feminist) positions are at risk of erasure now. Even progressive publications self-consciously aware of the necessity for feminist, activist, anti-racist, and anti-essentialist positions are increasingly in danger, if Jodey Castricano’s “Introduction” to *An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World: Animal Subjects* is any indication. Here we find the right hand not seeing what the left is doing, one paragraph talking unproblematically about “calling into question the boundaries that divide the animal kingdom from humanity” (Castricano 2008, 1-2), and the very next claiming to support “critiques of racism, sexism(s) and classism” (2). That support seems dubious with the notion of an “animal kingdom” patterning the writer’s perceptions. Kingdom?! What will it take to break the hold that sexism has, a hold that restricts our imagination and perceptions? And what are the effects of gendering nature in this way? And if sexism implies a certain ethical position about women, what ethical position does gendering nature imply? And what does that position say about space? What does sexism imply about the social production of space?

A patriarchy has everything to gain from keeping intact sexist ontologies that determine the production of space. There is money involved, and in these difficult times, no one *wants* to lose money; yet, changing any system is going to cost. The changes we need in environmental ethics are also going to cost, and the resistance is, in this sense, not (or should not be) surprising. It is fierce resistance from moneyed positions, and it is a pattern of resistance with which we are all very familiar—think about the tobacco industry.

The environmentalist movement shares many things with the anti-smoking movement. It is hindered by mammoth companies (most notably oil companies, meat production companies, and agriculture companies) that benefit from unsustainable lifestyles. Hired researchers blow smoke in our eyes about the causes of climate change and environmental degradation being outside of our influence, no less than tobacco companies have blown smoke in people’s eyes about how smoking was *not* the cause of cancer,

was *not* harmful, and was actually *beneficial* in many ways (“Watch your nerves . . . let up—light a Camel,” a cigarette advertisement ran in the 1930s), having spent years and years and billions of dollars in the process. In North America, fifty percent of the men and thirty-three percent of the women smoked in the year that I was born; eventually, however, people *did* finally get it that tobacco was lethal.

It took various kinds of legislation against smoking, which many people saw as an infringement on personal liberty. It took appeals to emotion, to reason, and to financial sensibility. It took a broad-based change in ethics. It took sacrifices. It took years. And when the tobacco industry was thriving, no one would have thought it possible or ethically defensible to bring these behemoths down. Many people would have lost work, and, anyway, there was little felt need for shutting down these businesses.

We flatter ourselves as academics on our abilities to produce and dispense knowledge, as if this were enough. Knowledge, in itself, however, simply isn't enough to cause change. The average smoker is testament to this. If those behemoths that seemed so unassailable have been overwhelmed to some degree, then it was through an enormous amount of effort, not simply through the dissemination of knowledge. If knowledge were enough to cause change, then we'd have problems explaining the average air passenger, or driver of a car, or meat eater—indeed, my presence at the conference that spawned the collection of which this essay is a part. The question is simple: what will it take to cause change? The answer is disturbing. As with movements against tobacco industries, it will take various kinds of legislation against things that we like doing, which many people will see as an infringement on personal liberty. It will take appeals to emotion, to reason, and to financial sensibility. It will take a broad-based change in ethics. It will take sacrifices. It will take years. We may not have as many years as we need, yet there is good reason to continue to hope.

Deep ethical rumblings under ecocritical soils are afoot. Some of these rumblings have been in the area of material ecocriticism and theories about corporeality. Stacy Alaimo recently commented (citing in the process Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III) that “If the predominant understanding of environmental ethics has been that of a circle that has expanded in such a way as to grant ‘moral consideration to animals, to plants, to [nonhuman] species, even to ecosystems and the Earth’ [Light and Rolston 7], trans-corporeality denies the human subject the sovereign, central position” (Alaimo 2010, 16). We can take this to the next logical step and argue that if capacities for agency prove not to be the sole

privilege of the *cogito*, then, changing our relationships with the material world is probably a good idea. Yet, we have never really seen it in our best interests to rock the boat, to change our environmental ethics, since these have served us so well<sup>1</sup>—except, of course, when we consider that our environmental ethics are toxic, acidic, and very nasty, that those environmental ethics have burned a giant hole in the boat we are wanting not to rock, and that we’re going down fast.

We take agency outside of ourselves as threats. It is precisely these nonhuman agentic forces that determine so very much of our environmental ethics: the felt or imagined material effects of these forces, the felt or imagined material threats, the felt or imagined challenges to our existence (and forget the obverse side, for a moment: the good, the sustenance, the pleasure, and so on that the material world offers), the felt dangers of material agencies beyond us simply don’t fit into any friendly epistemological familial mesh we may design, and history speaks to this: we have a history of what Freud called “the will to mastery, or the will to power” (Freud 1920, 418), a history of hostility to agentic forces outside of ourselves, variously articulated as a will to live, as a pleasure principle, as ecophobia.

In order to talk meaningfully about material ecocriticisms, at this point, we obviously need to say a few words about ecophobia and what it is (which I will do shortly below). Indeed, as the CFP Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann for *Material Ecocriticism* (Iovino and Oppermann 2011) put it:

In regard to a highly technologized posthuman world, this [material approaches to ecocriticism] also implies rediscovering the boundaries between human and more than human world. Ecocriticism, in such a context, can also enable us to formulate effective responses to the vexing question of ecophobia in all its forms: the irrational fear of the natural world and its entities, and groundless hatred for the unpredictable climactic and natural patterns around us (for instance, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, flooding, hurricanes), as well as anxiety produced by doomsday scenarios.

There it is: ecophobia. Indeed—and I couldn’t have put it better myself—theorizing ecophobia seems both as a precondition and forebear

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly, sexism basically benefits men—small wonder, then, that feminism did not begin with men, since men clearly did not see it in their best interests to stop being exploitative. Indeed, those who benefit most from any oppressive and exploitative system are uninclined to rock the boat.

of serious “material ecocriticism.” But what exactly is ecophobia: how can we define it?

Ecocriticism needs a very broad scope for the term ecophobia. Clinical psychology uses the same term to designate an irrational fear of home; in ecocriticism, the term is independent of and in no way derived from the manner in which it is used in psychology and psychiatry. Broadly speaking, we may define ecophobia as an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism. It plays out in many spheres; it sustains the personal hygiene and cosmetics industries (which cite nature’s “flaws” and “blemishes” as objects of their work); it supports city sanitation boards that issue fines seeking to keep out “pests” and “vermin” associated in municipal mentalities with long grass; it keeps beauticians and barbers in business; it is behind landscaped gardens and trimmed poodles in women’s handbags on the Seoul subway system; it is about power and control; it is what makes looting and plundering of animal and nonanimal resources possible. Self-starvation and self-mutilation imply ecophobia no less than lynching implies racism. If ecocriticism is committed to making connections, then it is committed to recognizing that control of the natural environment, understood as a God-given right in Western culture, implies ecophobia, just as the use of African slaves implies racism, as rape implies misogyny, as “fag-bashing” implies homophobia, and as animal exploitation implies speciesism.

Theorizing ecophobia does not mean offering a new perspective, one that ecocritics have somehow missed; of course, ecocritics have long theorized on matters of anthropocentrism. While the contempt and fear we call ecophobia does not represent the *sole* trait that characterizes our relationship with the natural world, it is as yet a remarkably unattended one. Its opposite would, to some extent, be the biophilia Edward O. Wilson defines as “the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms” (Wilson 1993, 31). Certainly Scott Slovic is accurate to note that “ecocriticism is actually motivated by biophilia” (Personal correspondence, “Re: LIKELY SPAM” 16 September 2008). Admittedly, biophilia indeed seems to be the *motivation* but not the *object* of ecocritical inquiry. The object of such inquiry certainly must centrally include ecophobia and how it patterns our relationship with nature. We can clearly see that ecophobia is winning out over biophilia. The “rapid disappearance” (Wilson 1993, 40) of species of which Wilson speaks so eloquently and persuasively has a cause: it is ecophobia, surely, not biophilia. Theorizing ecophobia does not dismiss but rather builds on that history, offering a vocabulary that is new, a vocabulary for conceptualizing

something we do (and have been doing for a long time) and for which we haven't had appropriate descriptive or theoretical words.

Ecophobia is, among other things, the fear of material agencies outside of ourselves within the natural world. Indeed, these very agencies are often the imagined site and source of tragedy. If material agencies (human and nonhuman) outside of the suffering individual are the source of tragedy, and if tragedy then presumes a revulsion for uncontrolled and uncontrollable agencies, for agencies that disrupt orders presumed inviolable, and for anything that advocates against humanism, then addressing human exceptionalism is vitally necessary. Within literary studies, the results are unusual and unexpected.

One of the things that become very clear is that anxieties about human puniness and mortality inhere in the genre of tragedy. Such is certainly a position with which Terry Eagleton would seem to agree: "Perhaps the form satisfies our desire for immortality, leading us to a sense of being indestructible as long as this magnificent poetry pulses on," Eagleton suggests in his comments on Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Eagleton 2003, 26). This anxiety about natural cycles and contempt for its constituent parts (death being one of them) resonates deeply in tragedy; Stephen Greenblatt, however, might respond: "But nothing—from our own species to the planet on which we live to the sun that lights our days—lasts forever. Only atoms are immortal" (Greenblatt 2011, 6)<sup>2</sup>. It is these atoms that have recently caught the eye of ecocritics.

The current theorizing in quantum physics marks a radical—indeed, paradigmatic—break, in some ways, from previous notions about the material world, how we relate with it, and how it relates with our bodies. A comparable event was in the early modern period with anatomies. The revolutionary break with the pre-modern, the ancient, and the classical—initiated by Andreas Vesalius—is a pivotal re-defining in Europe with relationships toward the body, among people, and with nature at large. It is a pivotal move toward the Enlightenment with a collapsing of certainties in the old hierarchies that organized previous ways of thinking, a collapse that heralded enormous new regimes of control over Nature. The image that the period inherited of nature, noted environmental historian Carolyn

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<sup>2</sup> If longings for immortality are rejections of the body and the agential realities of the material processes of life, no less than *anorexia nervosa* is a rejection of the body and its material agencies and needs, then it is entirely fitting to see this all for what it is: ecophobia. No one would balk at calling the denial of women the right to vote *sexism* or the denial of LGBT people the right to teach in elementary schools *homophobia*, so recognizing the rejection of the body as ecophobic is hardly provocative.