

Trees, Forests,
Phytography, Ecocriticism

Weijie Song
(Rutgers University)



SDG15 seeks to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.



Forests have a significant role in reducing the risk of natural disasters, including floods, droughts, landslides and other extreme events. At global level, forests mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration, contribute to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air and protect watersheds, which supply 75% of freshwater worldwide.

Investing in forests and forestry represent an investment in people and their livelihoods, especially the rural poor, youth and women. Around 1.6 billion people - including more than 2,000 indigenous cultures - depend on forests for their livelihood.



SDG11 seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.



Before the pandemic, cities had rising numbers of slum dwellers, worsening air pollution, minimal open public spaces and limited convenient access to public transport.

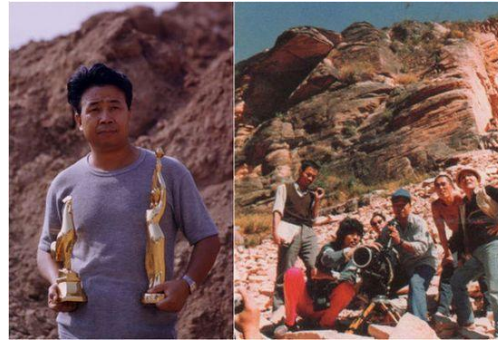
The direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are making it even more unlikely that this Goal will be achieved, with more people forced to live in slums, where quality of life is deteriorating and vulnerability increasing.



• I understand Trees and forests as environmental object, and Phytography (or Plant Writing) as critical approaches to environmental humanities, ecocriticism, and narratives of Hope .

and we keep crushing it





•The Biography of Waters (as environmental object)

- The scarcity of water and the search of and life resources
- Water pollution and purification
- ideological, ecological, and hygienic narratives
- Water Writing, Anthropocene, and De-Anthropocene

Air Narrative (Fog, Smoke, and Smog as environmental objects)

Oriental Aesthetics;

Literary writing, visual presentation and avant-garde art;

the grassroots movement, the practice of daily life,

"collective ecological unconsciousness",
"biophilic" and "aesthetic impulse"



Air Narrative (Fog, Smoke, and Smog as environmental objects)

- Geographical distribution
- Public health concern
- Ecological crisis and propaganda
- Mainstream scientific discourse Official and personal concerns and official warnings
- New Deal on Traffic Laws
- Modification of economic development model





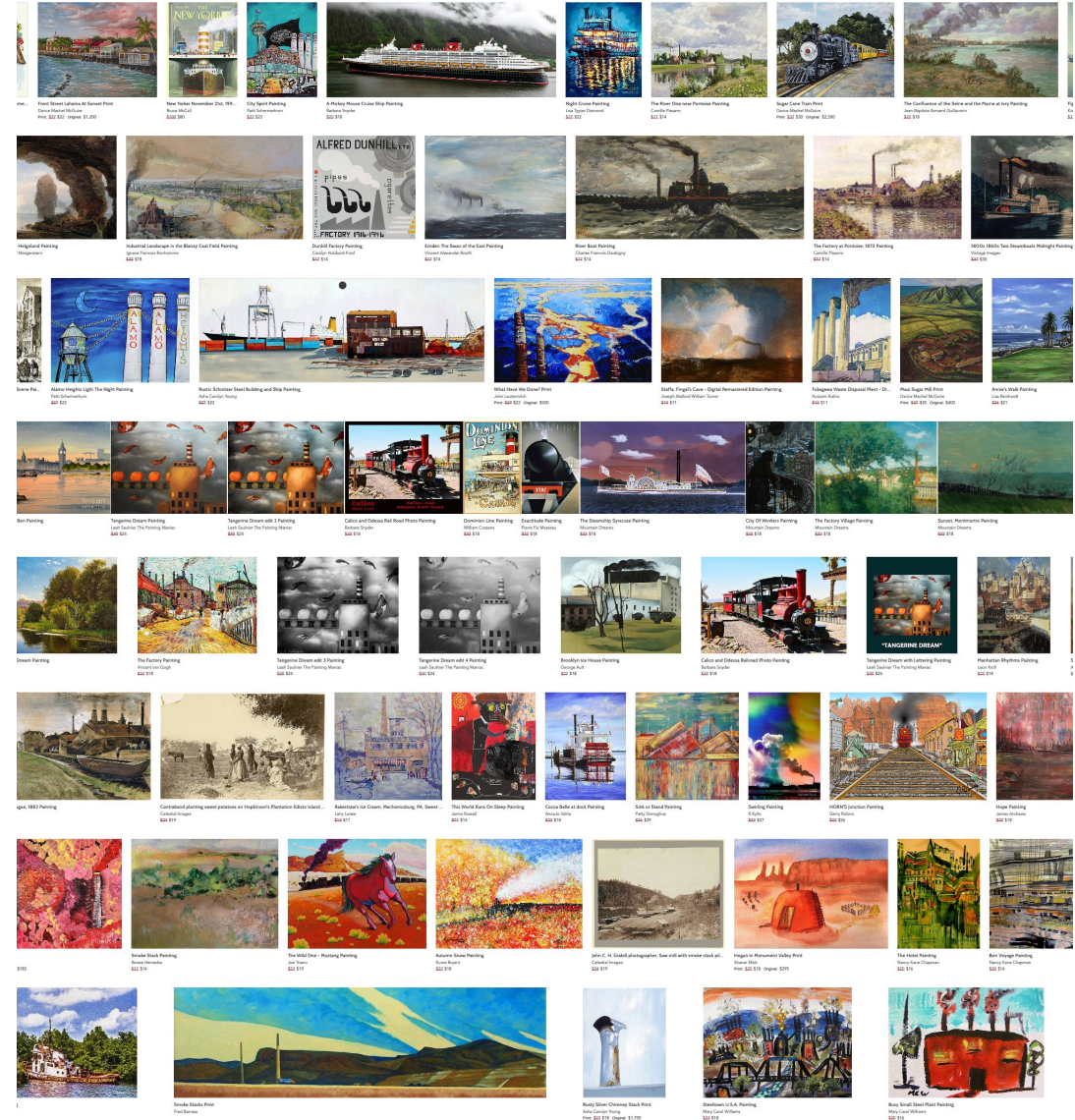
Picturing Plastic Pollution (plastics as environmental objects)

- The scale and dissemination of plastics
- The exploitation of colonialism and global capitalism
- the doomsday of human civilization and the ecosystem (doomsday),
- the mortality or finitude of life

Smokestacks as Environmental Objects

1. The incarnation of modernization and industrial civilization
2. The crystallization of modernity anxiety
3. The gigantic signs and landmarks of post-war industrialization and urban development
4. The targets for the belated awakening of environmental and ecocritical awareness
5. Materialization of (Post) Industrial Sentiments: Memory and Nostalgia

I understand the imagery of smokestacks both as a concrete object and an abstract concept, which emerged in works ranging from early Chinese futurist eulogy to modernist allergy, from Maoist propaganda to post-socialist eco-critical reflections and post-Fifth Generation requiem for Communism, and from literary imagination to artistic representation.



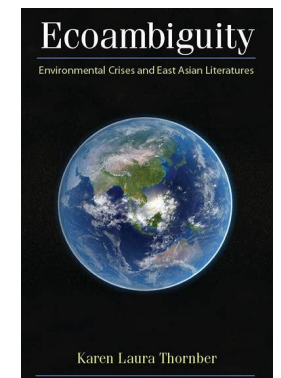
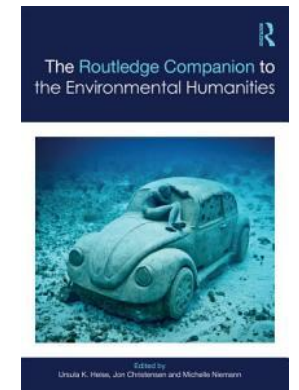
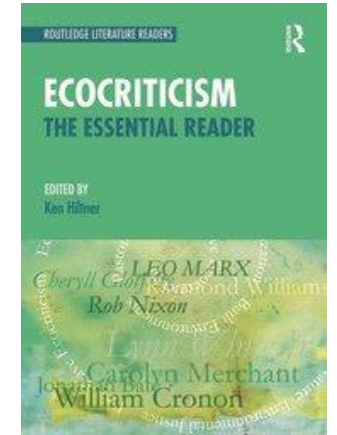
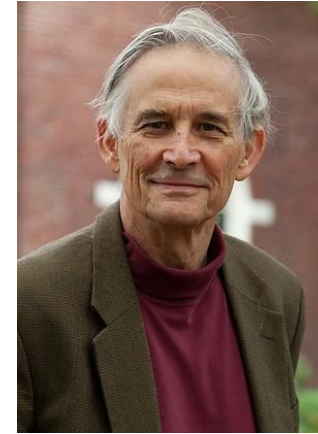
Trees, Forests, and Phytography (Plant Writing)

Environmental Object as
concrete things and abstract
ideas

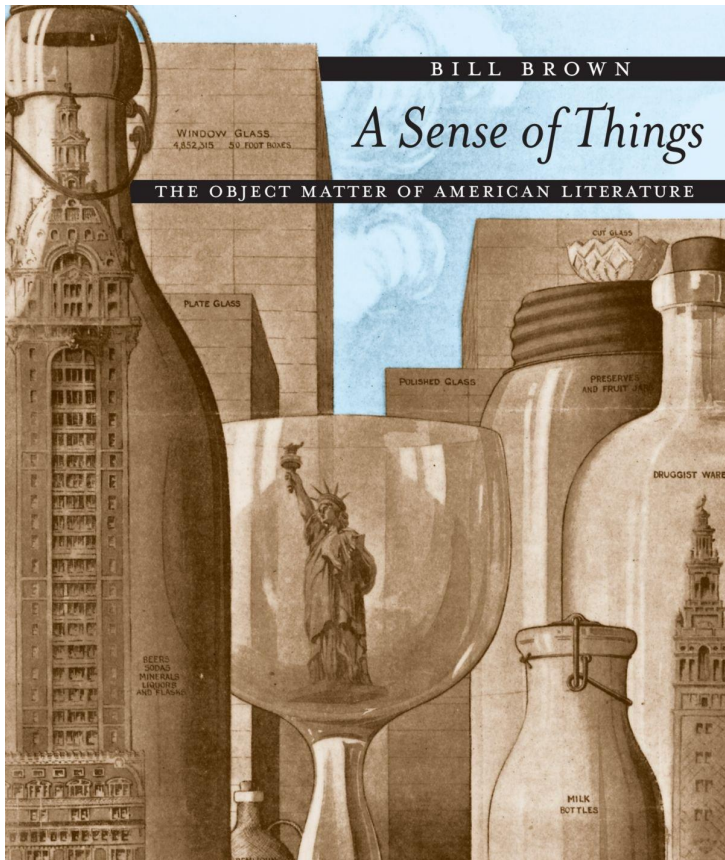
Environmental Humanities,
Material turn,
affective turn,
ideology/ecology



- **Environmental Humanities, Eco-Criticism, and Nature Writing** include (1) environmental philosophy, ecosophy, and environmental ethics in the 1970s; (2) environmental history in the 1980s; and (3) environmental literature, cultural studies, anthropology, geography, and political ecology since the 1980s.
- The **three waves** of Environmental Humanities shift the focuses and scopes of investigations (1) from “**the nature**” and “**non-human world**” to (2) the **urban life and environmental justice**, and to (3) **transnational and multi-ethnic ecological crisis and sustainable futures**.
- a symptomatic **ecoambiguity**, “the complex, contradictory interactions between people and environments with a significant nonhuman presence”



Material Turn



- Bill Brown, *Sense of Things*
- social life and of biography of material things
- Trajectories of objects-human-identity,
- The entanglements of objectivity and subjectivity

- Relying on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and Brian Massumi's translation notes, Eric Shouse succinctly elucidates

feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal

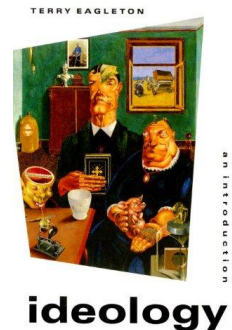
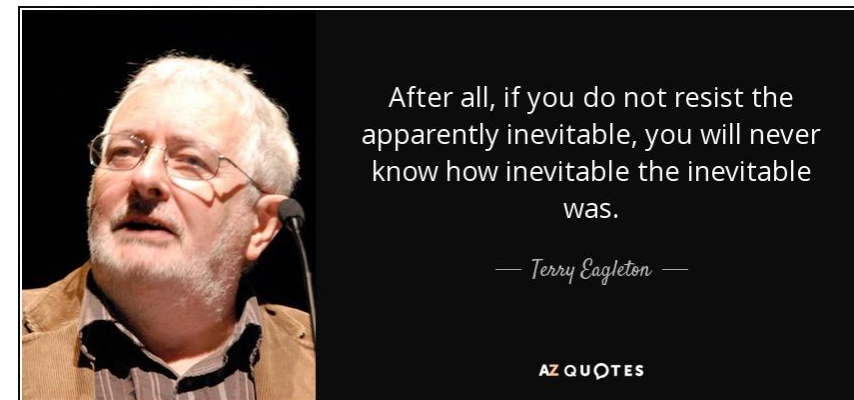
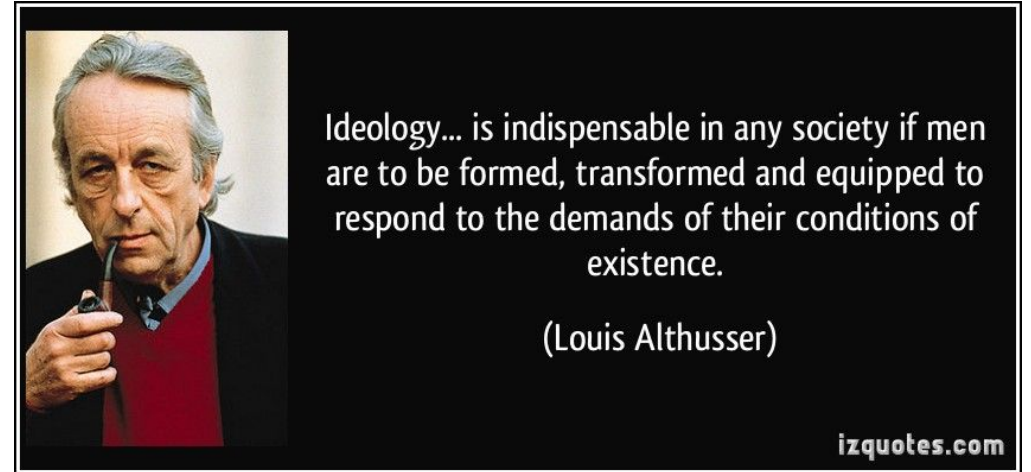
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Ideology

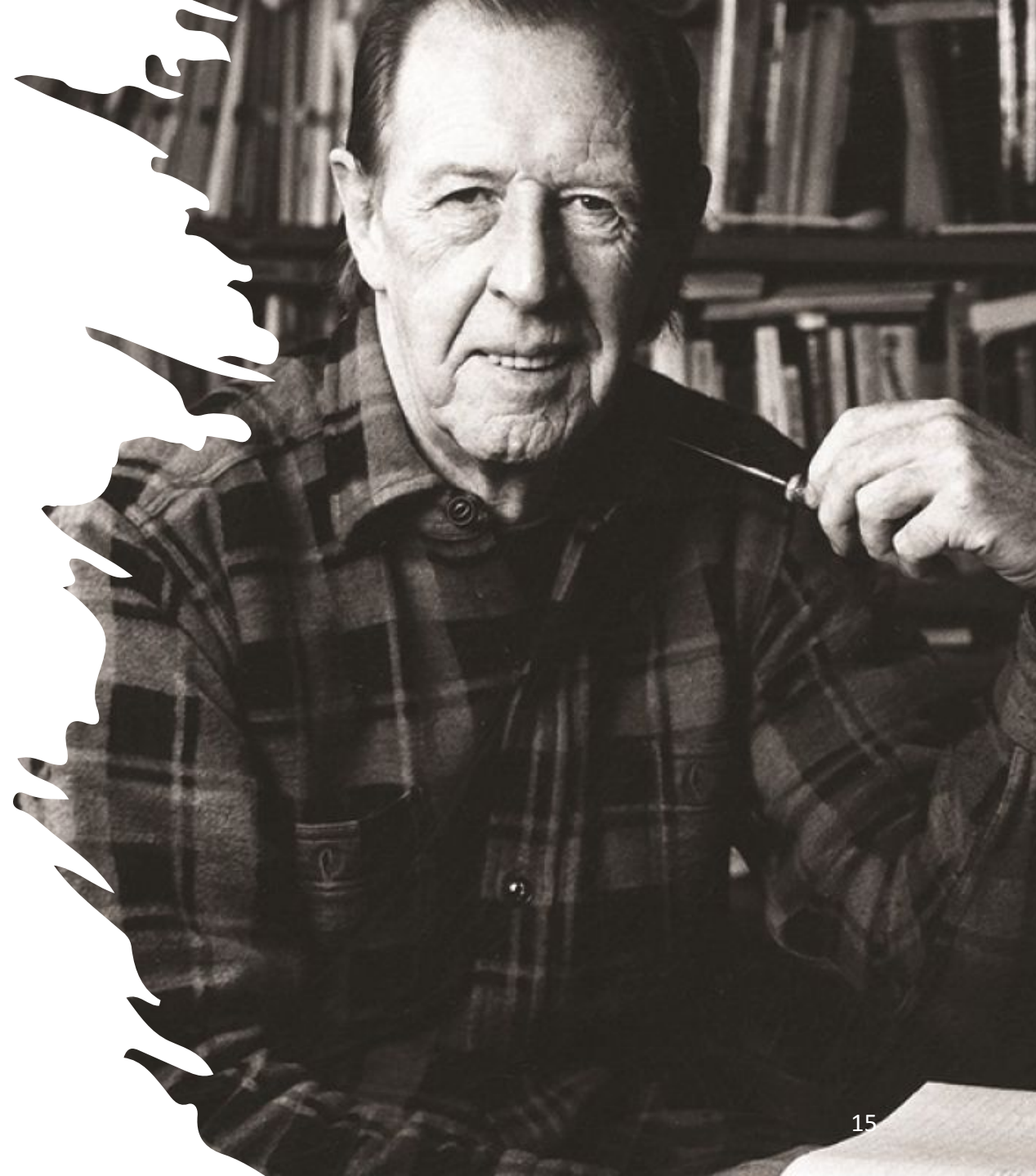
Louis Althusser:

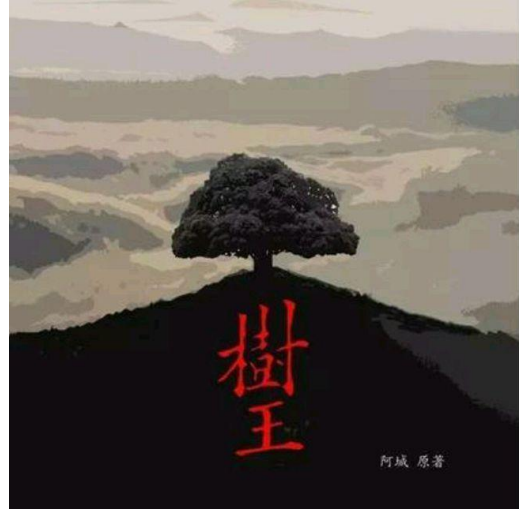
in ideology the **real relation** is inevitably invested in the **imaginary relation**, a relation that *express a will* (**conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary**), a **hope or a nostalgia**, rather than **describing a reality**.



“structure of feeling”

- Raymond Williams, “structure of feeling” in *The Long Revolution* and *Marxism and Literature*
- It is **firm and definite** as “**structure**” suggests, yet it operates in the most **delicate and least tangible parts of our activity**
- a set of **collective sentiments** in process that has **not yet been formalized in fixed ideologies or values.**





Trees as environmental objects and Phytography (or Plant Writing):

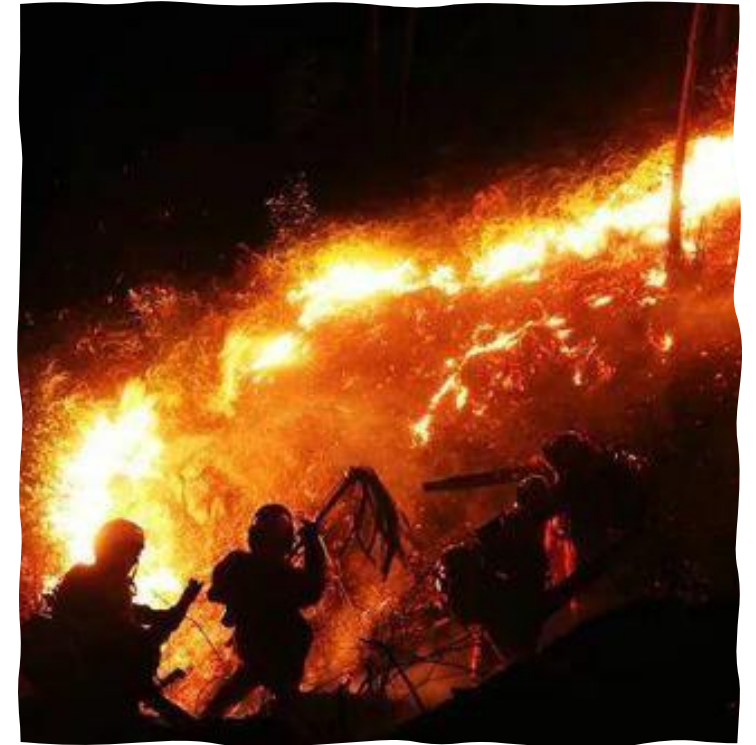
- (1) The token of marred humanity,
- (2) the sign of ecocritical awakening,
- (3) the indicator of climate crisis,
- (4) the illustration of

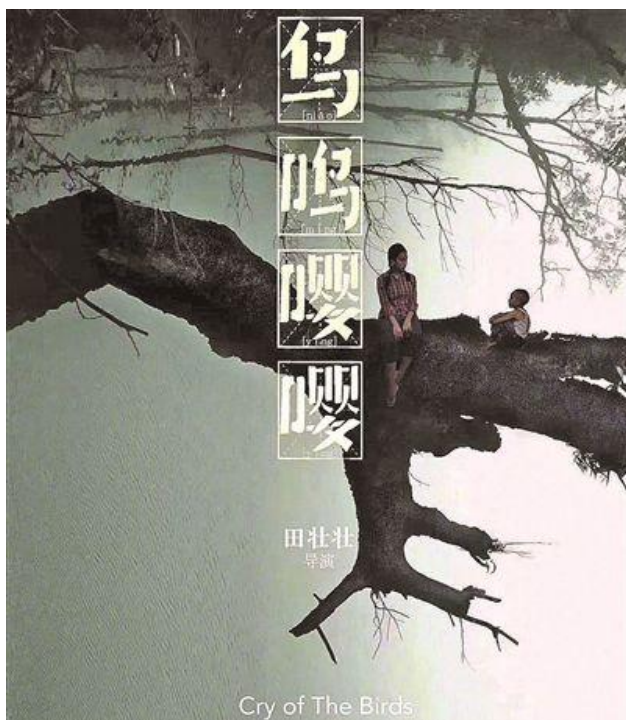
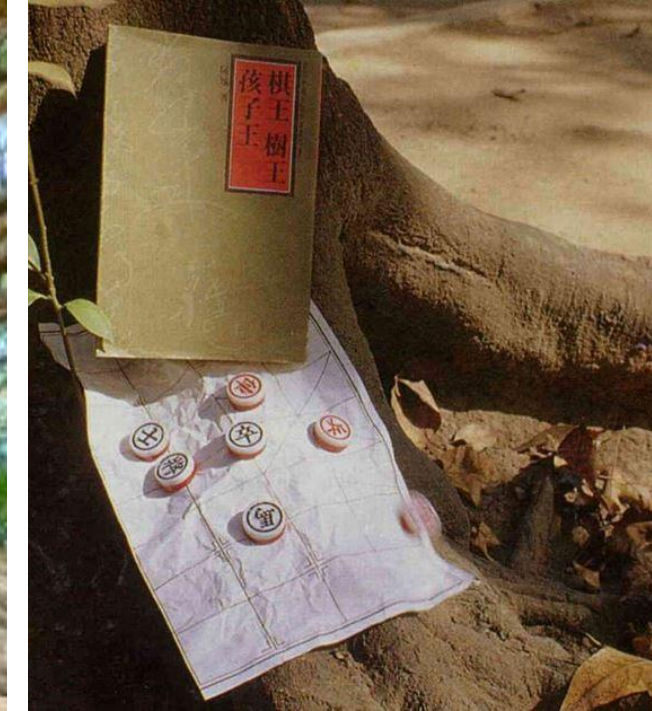


•Kong Jiesheng's 孔捷生 groundbreaking novella "Forest Primeval" (大林莽 Da linmang, 1984).

•Educated-youth literature carries over "Scar literature", "Reform literature", "Search-for roots" literature in the 1980s, and later enters into the new stages of "Neo-realism" with different variants after the 1990s.

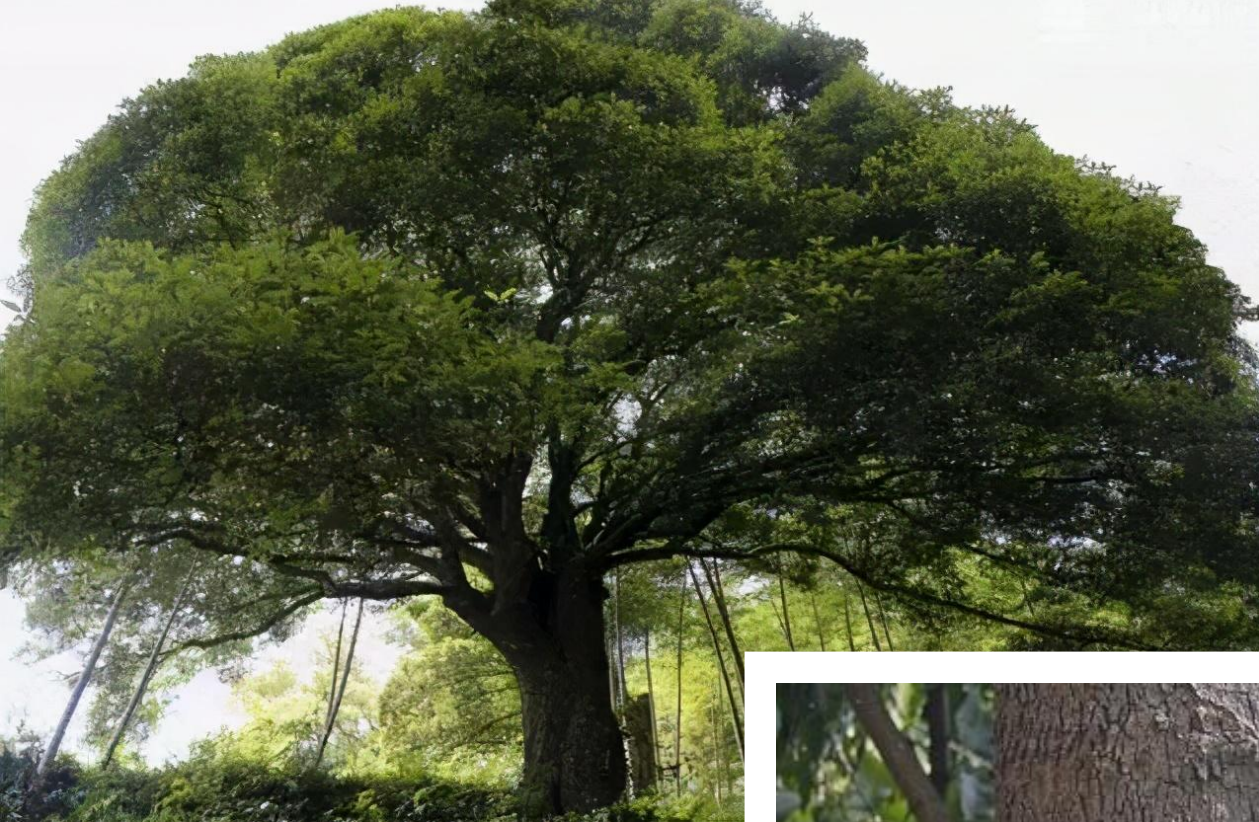
•Human-Nature relationship in the labyrinth of the tropical forest



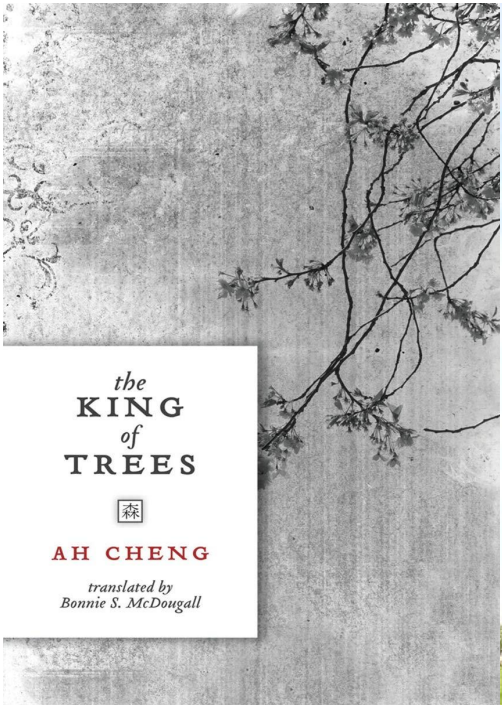


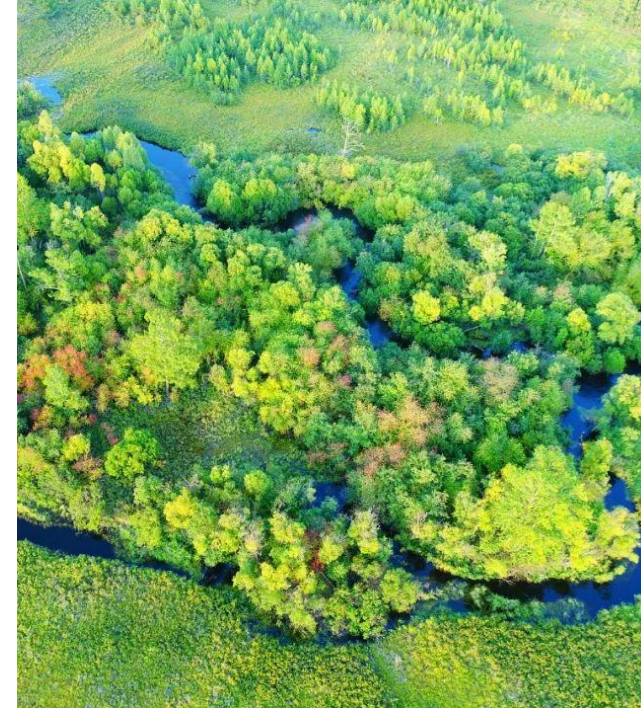
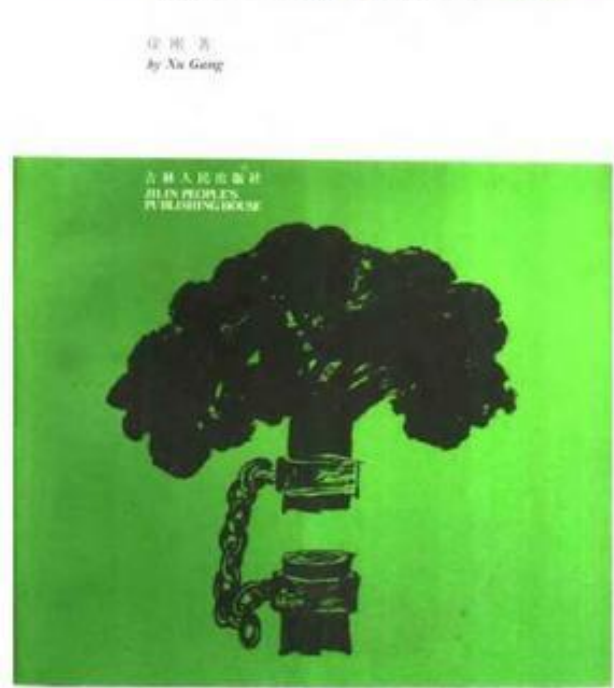
• Ah Cheng's 阿城 pioneering novella "The King of Trees" (树王 Shuwang, 1985)

- Useless and useful trees
- Tree spirit, Superstition, concept, ideology
- Tree-cutting scene: silence, witness, epiphany, and awakening
- Double silence, double deaths, and hopeful rebirth

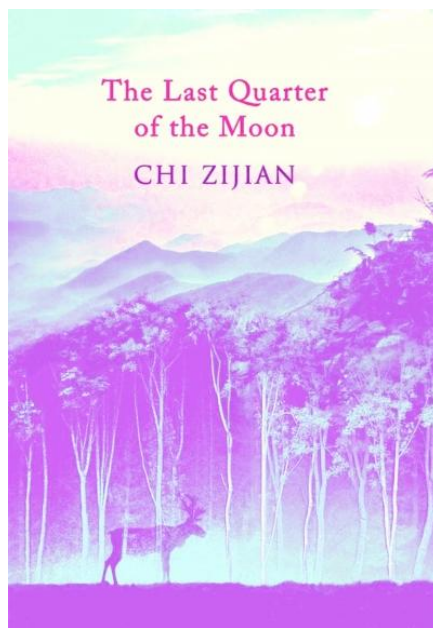
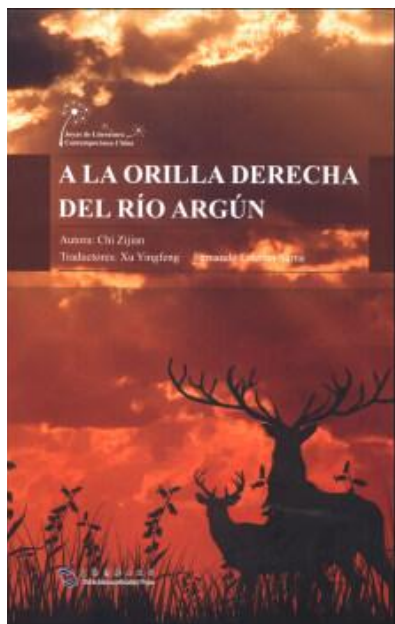


- Useless and useful trees
- Tree spirit
- Superstition, concept, ideology
- Tree-cutting scene: silence, witness, epiphany, and awakening [double deaths]





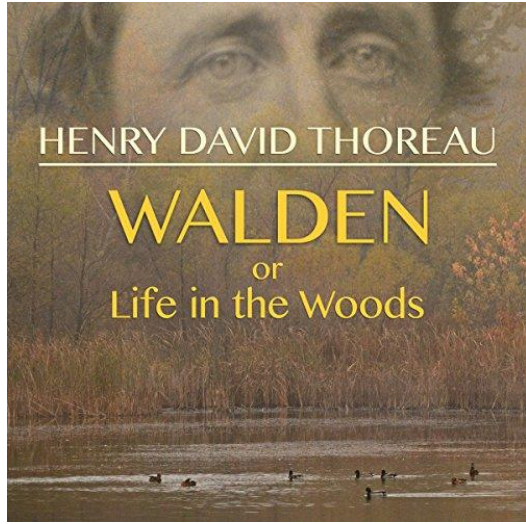
- Xu Gang's 徐刚 bold and brave reportage *Loggers, Wake Up!* (伐木者, 醒来! Famuzhe, xinglai! 1988) and his recent environmental reflection *The Great Forests* (大森林 Da senlin, 2017);
- and along the same genre and genealogy of reportage literature, we can also consider Wang Zhi'an's 王治安 apocalyptic *The Tragic Forests* (悲壮的森林 Beizhuang de senlin, 1999)



- Chi Zijian's 迟子建 lyrical and nomadic phytophography-ethnobotany *The Last Quarter of the Moon* (额尔古纳河右岸 Eergunahe youan, 2005)
- The Last Quarter of the Moon*, not only creates a dazzling epic about an extraordinary woman bearing witness to the stories of her tribe and the transformation of China, but also displays “the nature” and “non-human world” in the first wave, as well as the transnational and multi-ethnic ecological crisis and sustainable futures in the third wave of the environmental humanities.



- The **second wave** of environmental humanities, “the urban life and environmental justice,”
- Yan Lianke’s 阎连科 Beijing story, *Garden No. 711: The Ultimate Last Memo of Beijing* (711号园, 2012), **the construction and destruction (dismantle) of an ecotopia.**
- Mythorealism** “abandons the seemingly logical relations of real life, and explores a “nonexistent” truth, an invisible truth, and a truth concealed by truth. Mythorealism keeps a distance from any prevailing realism. The mythorealist connection with reality does not lie in straightforward cause-and-effect links, but rather relies on human souls, minds . . . and the authors’ extraordinary fabrications based on reality.... Imaginations, metaphors, myths, legends, dreams, fantasy, demonization, and transplantation born from everyday life and social reality can all serve as mythorealist methods and channels.”




The Routledge Companion to
Yan Lianke

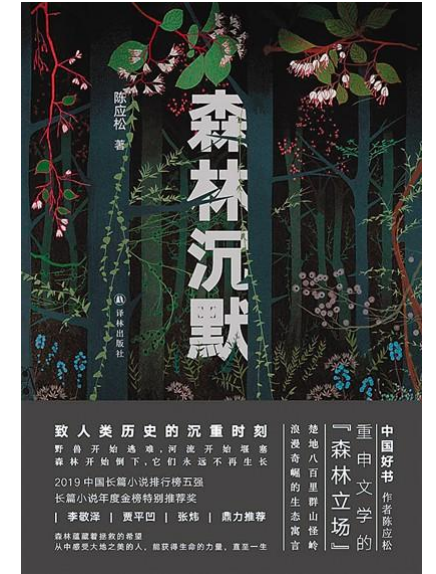


Edited by Riccardo Moratto and Howard Yuen Fung Choy



Hu Donglin's 胡冬林 posthumous encyclopedic eco-writing *Notebooks from Mountains and Forests* (山林笔记 Shanlin biji, 2020).

Chen Yingsong's 陈应松 ecocritical milestone *The Forest is Silent* (森林沉默 Senli chenmo, 2020) claims a forest position, forest attitude, forest manifesto, and develops grand forest narrative. His powerful storytelling is located at the nexus of Shaman, superstition, reason, the savage mind, and human-plant-animal relationship evidenced in the protagonist's Biophilia romance.





•By exploring the storytelling of deforestation and afforestation, the rise of ecological and ethical consciousness, and the complexity of human-nature relationship, the author aims to examine trees as environmental object, and thus to investigate contemporary Chinese multimedia phytophography along the ranges of token of marred humanity, sign of ecocritical awakening, indicator of climate crisis, and illustration of biophilia-biophobia entanglement.

•The distinctive tree stories, forest narratives, phytophography and eco-writing provide an illuminating entry point into the changing material trajectories and social life, the awakening environmental consciousness, and the structural transformation of private feelings and public emotions against the great backdrop of industrial, de-industrial, and post-industrial times and related ecological impacts.



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