

An Eco poetic Analysis of the Poems “Spring in New Hampshire” and “The Tropics in New York” From The Collection *Spring In New Hampshire* By Claude Mc Kay

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Abstract

Ecopoetics is a term for the environmentally-driven, innovative writing that has followed a nation's move from primarily rural to primarily urban economies and communities. Poet and scholar Jonathan Skinner is the person responsible for the term coming into play in the poetic sphere. Skinner chose *Ecopoetics* as the name for his influential literary magazine, which he has been publishing out since 2001. He transformed it, by using it to describe the avant-garde work he publishes, work that is dedicated to exploring creative-critical edges between writing with an emphasis on poetry and ecology. McKay an Afro-American demonstrates his intimate knowledge of the peasants' lives and celebrates their rural, Afro-Jamaican origin. He shows the country as a beloved agrarian motherland that suffers greatly from the white man's interference. McKay realistically depicts the life of a peasant who is annoyed and disturbed by the white man's presence. He clearly expresses his sympathy toward the exploited. McKay's *Spring in New Hampshire* and *Other Poems* fall within the conventions of the pastoral mode. The pastoralism of *Spring in New Hampshire* is complex and varied. This shows the ambivalent relation of black literary history to the pastoral tradition. This column tries to examine two poems from the collection as a certain kind of witness: witness to the devastation of the natural world, to poverty and urban blight, to lives lost and forgotten. They map urban imagining of ecopoetics as intrinsically tied to the human organism.

Key Words : Ecopoetry, Urban imaginings, Pastoral mode, Human organism.

Poetry has special characteristics as a kind of language. It is full of meanings that contain effects and emotions. It functions as an information teller, but arranged in dense and concentrated shape because the objects of information that will be communicated are various such as the private life experience, biography, view to nature and to social conditions and with moral and religious messages.

There is a flourishing crop of ecopoetics writing happening right now. Ecopoetics is a term for the environmentally-driven, innovative writing that has followed a nation's move from primarily rural to primarily urban economies and communities; that has been informed by the science and technology of the Industrial Revolution and beyond; and that has come after and in subversion of the more traditional nature poetries. It's the poetry that's grown out of the environmental movement that began to take shape in the 1960s, influenced by the work of Rachel Carson and many others, a movement which exists parallel to and joins forces with movements for economic, social, racial and gender justice.

The editors of *The Ecopoetics Anthology* call it “poetry that...is shaped by... [the environmental] crisis” and that “enacts through language the manifold relationship between the human and the other-than-human world”. This is poetry of a certain kind of witness: witness to the devastation of the natural world, to poverty and urban blight, to lives lost and forgotten. The poems, wildly varying in tone and form in a series of intellectual and existentially-driven sequences, offer a wise perspective, questioning the ease with which humans make war, monger hate and cause extinction.

In 2008, Seamus Heaney stated that, “environmental issues have to a large extent changed the mind of poetry.” An Eco-poet sees man as an indissoluble part of the natural environment, flourishing when he accepts and adapts to that natural heritage, creating a hell on earth and within himself when he is separated from it by his intellect and its technological and societal creations.

The poet presents us what is sense of place and he is eager to go back to his own place where there is real work and real life to live and makes us understand sense of home and belonging. Then he demonstrates his optimistic and hopeful wishes that we can find our true place in the world living in harmony with the non-humans if we have ecological conscience and dwell poetically in the wilderness forever.

The distinguishing attribute of African American poetry is its struggle for freedom socially, psychologically and aesthetically. Two basic “voices” characterize the African American poetic sensibility. First, black poets attempted to survive in a literary market dominated by white publishers. Second, black poets have been equally concerned with forging distinctive voices reflecting both their individual

sensibilities and the specifically African American cultural tradition. This dual focus within the African American sensibility reflects the presence of both formal and thematic power, helping them to construct a poetry that is at once unmistakably black and universally resonant.

Encompassing all of these things, ecopoetics is a concept that's been steadily generating conversation over the last decade or so, and this conversation has led to a healthy harvest of excellent recent anthologies: *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, which seeks to revisit the notion of how black writers have documented themselves in the landscape and soil of the country throughout American history; *The Eco Language Reader*, a collection of innovative scholarly and lyric essays on ecological poetics; *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral*, non-traditional work by contemporary poets; and *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, which seeks a "capacious definition" of the term that puts traditional nature poetry in conversation with the ecocentric avant-garde.

Claude McKay was born on September 15, 1889, on the British West Indian island of Jamaica. There he grew to manhood. In 1912, at the age of twenty-three, he came to the United States to study agriculture at Tuskegee Institute. In Jamaica, McKay had already established a local reputation as a poet, having produced before he left two volumes of dialect poetry, *Song of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*. He was one of the first to express the spirit of the New Negro. His first American poems appeared in 1917. Before the decade of the Negro Renaissance had begun, he was already winning recognition as an exciting new voice in Negro literature.

McKay appeared to be an ambitious, talented young man with a fine future in Jamaica. In his poetry he had closely identified himself with its people. He had also revealed a deeply sensitive, independent spirit, keenly responsive to the good and evil in both man and nature. McKay represented much that was characteristic of the New Negro. His movement from rural Jamaica to the big city and the literary world of the twenties is itself symbolic of the larger movement by Negro people from the rural South to the broader horizons of the urban North.

As Claude McKay knew that there is no constructive way to think about aiding the planet without thinking about the impact of racism, poverty, patriarchy, capitalism, religion and other such factors have directly on the ways we use and abuse our

environment. This paper tries to exemplify the underlying ecopoetic qualities in the poems "Spring in New Hampshire" and "The Tropics in New York". McKay's work steps beyond merely the ecological rendering of disparate and plundered geographies; his work fuses aspects of the body, the global and the local concern into one dire lyric.

Spring in New Hampshire and Other Poems was published in London in 1920. The book's thirty-one poems did not find nearly as wide a readership. McKay described Spring in New Hampshire as a "little brown book of verse" that "appeared in the midst of the radical troubles of the fall of 1920". In the context of "Ecology of the Color Line," however, the book does possess value for African American literary history. This collection raises questions about its pastoral title, which necessarily frames poems that would later be recast in an urban light. Most of the book's poems fall within the conventions of the pastoral mode.

"Spring in New Hampshire" one of the poems in the collection, with its two stanzas of six lines each is a meditation on the nature of color that ebbs and flows into a meditation on race and racism with a yearning to enjoy the dazzling spring weather outdoors. The poem's speaker feels only distressed and prefers not to be tempted by its sweetness because the narrator is not free to enjoy it.

In the first stanza, the speaker shows the excitement nature brings forth through the opening lines "Too green the springing April grass, Too blue the silver-speckled sky" the lines that follow discuss the speaker's longings to join with nature "For me to linger here, alas, While happy winds go laughing by" at last he laments, "Wasting the golden hours indoors, Washing windows and scrubbing floors."

This is contrasted with "Too wonderful the April night, Too faintly sweet the first May flowers" in the second stanza. The narrator doesn't refer to the grass and sky as merely green and blue but implies that nature's excesses make one pensive. The glory of the night sky is drawn in the lines "The stars too gloriously bright, For me to spend the evening hours" the end note of the poem "Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping." allures the pastoral as a dream-like space for workers in transit between rest and work an imperfect interlude in the capitalist rhythm of constant busy-ness.

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