

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

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[abstract]

What is nature writing? It is a literary genre embracing essays on the wide range of topics related to nature. The literary term nature writing came into use in the beginning of the twentieth century. It has three dimensions according to Thomas J. Lyon's well-known taxonomy of it: "natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretation of nature." It has an inclination to turn people's attention toward nature and to awaken their awareness of the ways of living with and in nature. The present paper purports to be a comparative analysis of nature writing in the U.S., Japan and Australia tracing the respective growth of each and introducing some of the major works of each.

[key words]

nature writing, environmental literature, view of nature, Henry David Thoreau, Michiko Ishimure

I

What is nature writing? It is a literary genre embracing writings (non-fictional) the distinctive characteristic of which is that they ponder the relationship between the natural world and human beings.

The literary term nature writing came into use in the beginning of the twentieth century. It has three dimensions according to Thomas J. Lyon's well-known taxonomy of it: "natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretation of nature" (20). The relative weight and balance of the three aspects determine the distinguishing character of each work. Finally the aim of nature writing is to turn people's attention, attentiveness, alertness or watchfulness toward nature. In other words it seeks to awaken people's awareness of ecological ways of living with and in nature.* The present paper purports to be a comparative analysis of nature writing in the U.S., Japan and Australia tracing the respective growth of each and introducing some of the major works of each.

*There is a literary genre popularly known as environmental literature which claims to explore the

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relationship between natural environment and the life and thought of human beings living in it. While nature writing points generally to non-fictional essays, it encompasses a wide range of literary styles: novels, plays, poems and etc.

II

To put nature writing in a relevant perspective, it may be appropriate to review briefly how nature has been perceived in the west in general and in particular what conception of North American landscape prevailed since the arrival of Europeans there.

To begin with, we are able to discern two traditions: the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Greco-Roman tradition. According to the former, man was regarded as a special creation, and according to the latter, man was a creature apart from other creatures for possessing a strong rational power. Yet in either tradition a dichotomous view was dominant: man is separate from nature and identified as a self-centered being. Thus anthropocentrism had been at the basis of the western mind.

Nurtured in the long-standing tradition mentioned above and confronting the variegated features of nature found there, European settlers to North America came to have an ambivalent image of nature. The first was that of "a desolate place." This was to render great religious inspirations for would-be settlers. One conspicuous example will be the Puritans who fled to "the New World" of North America in the early part of the seventeenth century seeking freedom of religion. The second image which also worked to draw settlers to North America was that of "the garden" or "the land of honey and milk." The planters who came to live and owned large tracts of land in the southern colonies would like to believe their abode was midst of such felicitous surroundings. There has been found to have existed a third image of North American nature: that of "the middle landscape." This was the image of fertile land cultivated by industrious farmers and it was thought applicable to the settlers in the Mid-Atlantic regions—New York, Pennsylvania and the backwoods areas of Virginia and the Carolinas.

III

Nature has always played an important place in American literature. At first its presence was taken for granted. It was a topic for literary writings but was not deemed as a major topic. Its role was no more than a background for human experience. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) praising the beauty of rural life in America and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784) including natural history information, present a good example. In addition, William Bartram's *Travels* published in 1791 may well mark the first American nature essay.

It was not until Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) appeared in the early part of the nineteenth century that nature writing took form in the United States. At that time the country was beginning to see rapid increase of urbanization and industrialization. Concurrently national ecological consciousness emerged and Thoreau became

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

a forerunner of it.

Thoreau's works included basic elements of nature writing: praise for nature and things simple; the writer's firsthand experience in nature; the writer's detailed observation of nature; interest in the relationship between nature and man; and concern about the impact of technology on nature and human society. His world-famous essay, *Walden; or, the Life in the Woods* (1854) will first be discussed here.

Walden is a record of Thoreau's firsthand experience of having lived a solitary life for a little over two years in a house he had built by himself on the shore of Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear. . . . (90)

He led a simple life living "by the labor of [his] hands only" (3). In his leisure time he went for a walk observing nature in minute details. Some chapters are worth being called a book of natural history. He enjoyed and praised everything that nature offered and of course its sounds. Unfortunately, the Fitchburg Railroad ran close to his house. He was very annoyed when the silence of Walden was interrupted by the sound of the locomotive passing by the pond. The whistle of the locomotive was to him the march of civilization penetrating into the woods. Regardless of its wide influence down the ages, Thoreau's work was not appreciated by his contemporaries at the time of its publication.

After Thoreau's death in 1862 many writers of note dealt with the topic of nature in their works. The two outstanding, between the 1870's and the 1920's, were John Burroughs and John Muir (1838-1914). Burroughs was an observer of nature close to him. His first collection of nature essays titled *Wake-Robin* (1871) is a book of ornithology. Muir on the other hand preferred a grand landscape in an out-of-the-way place. *My First Summer in Sierra* (1911) is his reorganized journal of a glorious summer he spent in the Sierra Nevada in 1869. That year he was asked to go with a flock of two thousand sheep into the mountains of the Sierra. For three and a half months, proceeding slowly at a sheep's pace and surrounded by only nature, Muir was thrown into ecstasy. His feeling reached its culmination when he attained the peak of a mountain called the Cathedral and there he found cassiope, a flower he had been yearning for:

No feature, however, of all the noble landscape as seen from here seems more wonderful than the Cathedral itself, a temple displaying Nature's best masonry and sermons in stones. How often I have gazed at it . . . devoutly wondering, admiring, longing! This I may say is the first time I have been at church in California, led here at last, every door graciously opened for the poor lonely worshiper. In our best times everything turns into religion, all the world seems a church and the mountains altars. And lo, here at last in front of the Cathedral is blessed cassiope, ringing her thousands of sweet-toned bells, the sweetest church music I ever enjoyed. (336, emphasis added)

Muir's joyous feelings upon meeting with nature are analogized to those of one who has found his or her faith in God. He conceived nature as God's best work. It is a matter of coincidence that the peak was named the Cathedral for its shape, but its celestial beauty made him think that it was "the first time [he] [had] been at church

in California." The beauty of cassiope was compared to "the sweetest church music." Praise of natural beauty in a form of admiration of religious belief is found all throughout his book.

To name but a few more, there are Mary Austin, Henry Beston, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Sigurd Olson, Aldo Leopold, and Loren Eiseley who have written in the same vein. Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), that appeared in the beginning of the twentieth century, takes up Native American culture and links up themes of woman and nature. Beston's *The Outermost House* (1928) is comparable to Thoreau's *Walden* only on the Great Beach of Cape Cod. Leopold wrote the so-called story of restoration ecology in his *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) but both American readers and scholars did not pay much attention either to the writers or the value of nature itself until 1962.

There is a short story, not an essay, which should not go unheeded for the period: "The Bear" (1942) by William Faulkner (1897-1962) in his *Go Down, Moses* saga. The story is set in an imaginary county of Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi, in the 1870's and the 1880's. There was a big wood where an indomitable bear, Old Ben, lived. The narrator, a boy named Ike, had long been craving to join an annual hunting trip to the woods described as a "yearly rendezvous with the bear" (147). Finally when he reached the age of ten, he was allowed to join it and he saw the bear. He had, upon the advice of Sam Fathers, "the old man, son of a negro slave and a Chickasaw chief" (156), relinquished his gun, compass, and watch. By the age of thirteen Ike had become a good woodsman recognized by Sam:

If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater. (160)

Sam prepared a mongrel dog Lion to hunt Old Ben. In Faulkner's words, Sam and Lion are "taintless and incorruptible" (145) and are very much like Old Ben. We are reminded thus that there are in the story three important characters that all have marks of innocence. Ike is sixteen years of age when he joins the last Old Ben hunt. The bear is killed by Boon Hogganbeck, a quarter Indian, with a knife assisted by Lion. Two years later, Ike returns to the woods alone and finds Boon insane.

Needless to say, Old Ben symbolizes the wilderness not tainted by civilization. That is why Ike has to relinquish his modern conveniences to see the bear. The person who finally kills Old Ben is none other than a one-quarter Indian who has recourse only to a primitive weapon and a mongrel dog. When Old Ben falls, other two "taintless and incorruptible" species also die. It appears as if they follow the fate of the quintessential natural being that Old Ben is. The lumber company that opens up in the woods represents the march of civilization and the death of Old Ben the end of the wilderness. The readers are compelled to listen to the dirge for the wilderness that could not resist the invasion of civilization.

In 1962, exactly a hundred years after the death of Thoreau, Rachel Carson (1907-64), a well-known marine biologist, published her *Silent Spring*, a book that has changed the world. She wrote the book with a letter from Olga Owens Huckins telling her of the "bitter experience of a small world made lifeless" (Carson viii, Acknowledgments). The country was then in the vortex of industrialization and new chemicals were coming

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

out of the laboratories on a massive scale. The book is an apocalyptic exposition exclaiming the dangers of indiscriminate use of pesticides, particularly DDT. And yet it is not only apocalyptic but edifying. Carson much affected by the thought of Albert Schweitzer, to whom she dedicated the book, questions the meaning of modern civilization built up by man:

The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been molded by the environment. Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight. Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world. (5)

For Carson, man is a part of the natural environment and nothing exists alone in it.

The book made a big impact on the society. She received a great deal of criticism from the chemical establishments but she would not yield her ground. President John F. Kennedy took Carson's stand. In September 1964, the United States Congress passed the Wilderness Act to preserve millions of acres of land and later the 22nd of April 1970 was designated the first Earth Day mainly by the great efforts of Gaylord Nelson, a United States Senator from Wisconsin. However, it was not until Laurence Buell published his book, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* in 1995 that *Silent Spring* was put in the light of literary study.

An explosion of nature writings ensued with superb artists appearing in the late 1960's. There was Edward Abbey whose work *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (1968) was based on his experience of being a seasonal ranger in the Arches National Park, Utah. The plot is loosely classic of American literature: retreat into nature, attempted revitalization, and return to civilization. To which he added comments on too much emphasis placed on anthropocentrism or what he regarded as gross environmental destruction. Wendell Berry published his book *The Long-Legged House* describing where he lived in 1969, a distinguishing year for nature writing. N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Wallace Stegner's *The Sound of Mountain Water*, John Hay's *In Defense of Nature*, Edward Hoagland's *Notes from the Century Before*, Josephine Johnson's *The Inland Island*, Gary Snyder's *Earth House Hold*, and John and Mildred Teal's *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh* also came out in print.

On the heels of the above, Annie Dillard's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) appeared. The work is her psychological responses to nature she encountered at Tinker Creek, Virginia, her small spiritual universe. Ann Zwinger's *Run, River, Run: A Naturalist's Journey Down One of the Great Rivers of the West* (1975), Barry Lopez's *Of Wolves and Men* (1978), and Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (1978) followed. They are all now regarded as modern classics. During the 1980's, a great many writers devoted their efforts in writing essays about nature and man in the United States.

As Scott Slovic used in a lecture given at the regular meeting of the Japanese Association for American Studies in 1994, this new trend in American literary writing has been referred to as "The New American

Renaissance" ("Nature Writing" 556). It is to be remembered that in 1941, F. O. Matthiessen called the rich period in American literature between 1850 and 1855 the "American Renaissance." During the period, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman produced their masterpieces. And Slovic became the first president of ASLE-US (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment-US) founded in 1992.

Gretel Ehrlich (1946-) is one such writer to represent the New American Renaissance. She was born and raised in California and had her education at Bennington College, UCLA Film School, and the New School for Social Research. She went to Wyoming for the first time in 1976 to make a documentary film. Its theme was an urbanite's leap into the western wilderness. While filming sheepherders on the Big Horn Mountains, she lost her partner in life as well as in the project. Two years after the completion of her work, Ehrlich, still in sorrow, went back to Wyoming to "lose [herself]" (Ehrlich 3). She started to write in 1979 and published her first book *The Solace of Open Spaces* (1985) based on her experience.

Ehrlich lives in the open spaces of the west where there is nothing. The climate is rigorous especially in winter which lasts for six months snowing people under. The landscape is "the doing of a mad architect" (3). It is sagebrush that covers 58,000 square miles of the state. The human population is less than that of the animals. People are blunt and laconic but life on the sheep ranch with them "[wakes] [her] up" (4). "Friendliness is a tradition" (5) with men and women, cowboys and sheepherders. As for the animals, she writes: "We're comrades who save each other's lives" (62). She experiences sheepherding: being alone in the mountains except for sheep. In a place where water is scarce, she thinks of water: "There is nothing in nature that can't be taken as a sign of both mortality and invigoration. Cascading water equates loss followed by loss, a momentum of things falling in the direction of death, then life" (83). Later she meets a man, marries him and confesses that it is the end of her loneliness. She also looks into the Sun Dance and the Crow Fair, the tradition of Indians, her neighbors. The book ends in an essay on the fall, the end of the year on the ranch and the author is now fully vitalized.

Coming intimately to know Wyoming, she has acquired the sense of place. She has slowly learned the place day by day. Being engaged in ranch work, she was awoken:

A person's life is not a series of dramatic events for which he or she is applauded or exiled but a slow accumulation of days, seasons, years, fleshed out by the generational weight of one's family and anchored by a land-bound sense of place. (5, emphasis added)

She has settled in the place: "I was loved, hated, flirted with, tolerated. I fitted in" (44). And she found herself possessed by the place:

If I was leery about being an owner, a possessor of land, now I have to understand the ways in which the place possesses me. Mowing hayfields feels like mowing myself. I wake up mornings expecting to find my hair shorn. (90)

In the process of acquiring the sense of place, she has acquired her own identity. Thus she wrote in a preface of her book:

Friends asked when I was going to stop "hiding out" in Wyoming. What appeared to them as a

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

landscape of lunar desolation and intellectual backwardness was luxurious to me. For the first time I was able to take up residence on earth with no alibis, no self-promoting schemes. (ix, emphasis added) So *The Solace of Open Spaces* is the story of Ehrlich narrating a sense of place.

It should be noted that the works of nature writing have continued to come out in a stream in the 1990's and beyond to the present time in the United States.

IV

The view of nature varies with the countries. Then it is no wonder that the Japanese view of nature is on a markedly different track from that of the American. Traditionally in Japan nature was regarded as co-existing with humans and vice-versa. Nature was looked at as staying close to and offering abundant blessings to humans. *Bonsai*—"a tree or shrub that has been kept very small by growing it in a little pot and cutting it in a special way" (Collins Cobuild *English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*)—may well be a testimony of the Japanese people's desire to keep nature close to them at all times. With the course of history, however, the Japanese mind became receptive to the notion of nature as hostile to humans after having been exposed to the western ideas in the Meiji era (1868-1912).

I would like to take up five Japanese writers who seem to best represent various facets of the Japanese mind regarding nature.

Basho Matsuo (1644-94) is a *haiku* (31-syllable short poem) composer in the Edo (Tokugawa) period (1603-1867). As a poet in travel, he endeavored to master the art of *fuga*—a subtle way of expressing emotions—in his travel sketches: singing for nature, keeping company with four seasons, looking at things in flower, and thinking about things on the moon. To include Basho's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1702) in nature writing is not an unerring thing to do. The book is the record of his travel as a wanderer to the northern part of Honshu Island in Japan from March to September 1689. It consists of well-balanced prose and *haiku*. Basho left Edo to travel North because he was "tempted" by the natural world:

There are a great number of ancients, too, who died on the road. I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud-moving wind—filled with a strong desire to wander.

[N]o sooner had the spring mist begun to rise over the field than I wanted to be on the road again to cross the barrier-gate of Shirakawa in due time. . . . Even while I was getting ready . . . I was already dreaming of the full moon rising over the islands of Matsushima. Finally, I sold my house. . . . Upon the threshold of my old home, however, I wrote a linked verse of eight pieces and hung it on a wooden pillar. The starting piece was:

Behind this door
Now buried in deep grass,
A different generation will celebrate
The Festival of Dolls. (97-98)

In other words, Basho had a strong compulsion to go to the North being called by nature there.

Doppo Kunikida's entire life (1871-1908) almost overlapped with the Meiji era. He met his wife in June 1895 and got married in November of the same year. His wife left him in less than a year. In his grief of losing his wife, he lived in Musashino, now Shibuya, Tokyo, from the fall of 1896 to early spring in 1897. *Musashino* (1901) is about his empirical scrutiny of walking around the place with the new nature expression in Japan:

[S]preading from one end of the wide horizon to another, going over a grove, a wood, rice fields and another wood, the shower quietly comes. It moves creepingly. It falls gently, conveying a note of elegance and encompassing all around. Such is the characteristic of the shower in Musashino. (13, translated by the present writer)

The shower is the drizzling rain that falls from late fall to early winter. One is not to be surprised that Japanese appreciation of nature consists noticeably of the time-span between spring and summer when flowers bloom and mountains become clad in fresh verdure. As for the trees, pine is much cared for because of its evergreen color.

Kunikida finds beauty in the cold stillness of the fall and winter. In Musashino, it is Japanese oaks, deciduous trees that lose their leaves in the fall that cover the plain. The beauty of the natural landscape of the seasons synchronizes with the writer's sorrow although it is not mentioned in the book. And just as Thoreau did upon his walking in Walden, Kunikida would listen to the sounds from the landscape—flapping and singing of the birds, the wind, insects, the sound of the wheels of the wagon, footsteps, falling of the leaves, woods, water and the shower of rain.

The great master of the literature of natural environment in modern Japan is Michiko Ishimure (1927-) whom Slovic compared to Carson in his aforesaid lecture. Ishimure's life in Minamata City, Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu Island, the place to become the site of the most disastrous industrial pollution, commenced when she was a three-month-old baby. To dominate chemical industry in Japan, the Chisso Corporation opened its factory in Minamata in 1908. The most advanced factory began the production of acetaldehyde and released its industrial waste water inclusive of methyl mercury into the Minamata Bay. The waste disposal continued nearly four decades from 1932 to 1968. The release of mercury poisoned fish and shellfish, and when eaten by the local people they caused a neurological syndrome called the Minamata disease. The case was even worse when pregnant women were affected; the result was the birth of babies who were severely disabled, both physically and mentally. Not only did the company and the government do little to prevent this but also delayed the acknowledgement of the presence of the disease and the need for its compensation. Ishimure's book, *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow: Our Minamata Disease* was published in 1972, ten years after the publication of *Silent Spring*.

The first chapter of the book titled "Sea of Camellias" opens with a beautiful sketch of the well of camellias in a peaceful fishing village of Yudo, an area which gave birth to many congenital patients:

At the foot of cliff in the lowest part of the village near the water's edge, an old well served as common washing place. Minnows and lovely red crabs played between the moss-covered stones paving the spacious rectangular well which was fed by a clear, sweet-tasting rock spring.

In this area springs can even be found on the sea bottom.

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

Withered camellia blossoms and other debris covered the bottom of the well.

On the cliff the dark-leaved twisted branches of age-old camellia trees were entwined above the washing place like a natural roof. It was always cool and quiet under this curious canopy that seemed to emanate a timeless, sacred spirituality. The well and the trees told not only their story, but also that of the village—a story of destinies levelled to dust by the passage of time. (3-4)

After this passage, the narration of young Yamanaka Kuhei, a congenital patient, follows. The juxtaposition of the sketch and the fact is so impressively vivid.

Ishimure's book consists of documentations—patients' medical records and journalistic records of struggle, and patients' narrations of their agony in the beautiful Minamata dialect with a backdrop of genial landscape. The narration is purportedly presented verbatim but its authenticity is to be questioned, for the Minamata disease is known to affect the speaking ability of those who have contracted it. Ishimure would read their thoughts in their eyes. Thus the book is a fiction in a sense but her technique is so masterful. In the chapter "What Yuki Had to Say," Ishimure speaks for Yuki, a dying patient:

"Do we always come back as human beings after we die? It would be wonderful if I could be reincarnated as a human being. I'd be able to work at sea again, together with my husband. I'd work the side oar, and he the main oar. I've spent all my life on the sea. Perhaps I'll come back as a fisherwoman.

"My heart is overflowing with love, so I'll surely come back as a human being." (174)

All this is spoken in Minamata dialect, a tender-sounded language in spite of its location in Kyushu Island where the accent is usually strong. And Yuki is not blaming anything, she is "overflowing with love." She loves the sea, her husband, and human beings. The book is a reportage on industrial pollution, yet a prayer for the human existence reverberates throughout the work. The Minamata disease brought about not only patients but discriminations. And the law suits are still continuing and so does Ishimure who is continuously struggling to save the patients and their souls.

Sawako Ariyoshi (1931-84), much provoked by Carson's *Silent Spring*, wrote *The Complex Contamination* (1975). She had previously taken up various social problems in her works. She was not a professional scientist like Carson. But this did not hinder her from tackling the problem of environmental pollution caused by chemicals. From her study she found out that the number of new chemicals artificially produced has exceeded eighteen million and that among them especially toxic ones do harm to the environment and human beings as a matter of course. She also came to know that the synergistic effect of more than two chemicals intensifies their toxicity.

A good writer as she was, Ariyoshi employs the characters—a doctor, a farmer, and an old man from the neighborhood—and holds a conversation over the issues with them, a technique which has produced an easy-to-read book. Especially she could not help bringing the formidable facts of scientism to the public eye:

It is noteworthy that there are among the leaders of the farmers movement not a small number of religiously-minded people. The reason for this may be attributable to the fact that those who believe in the presence of super-natural beings are better able to see the fallacies inherent in scientism. It no

doubt is an illusion to think that man is above all other creatures. When such an illusion arises and dictates science, man is in turn ruled by science. Here lie the dangers of material civilization. Japan today is in such state. (497, translated by the present writer)

Just as she had designed, *The Complex Contamination* became a big sensation awakening people's awareness of the harm brought about by too much emphasis on science and lack of consideration for human life.

There remains one more writer to be discussed, Sansei Yamao (1938-2001). He took the initiative during the Japanese counterculture in the 1960's and made a critical stand against the society's reliance on technology. Yamao also tried to counter the people's inclination toward materialism and industrialism and led the group called "buzoku," or "tribe." From this point of view he questioned the then dominant concept of the relationship between nature and human beings and turned to pursue spiritual opulence. He went in pilgrimage to India and other places in a quest for spiritual knowledge. His search took him finally to the Yakushima Island, a small island located to the south of Kyushu Island.

In the dense forest of Miyanoura-dake grow old cedar trees, the oldest up to 7,200 years of age. Yamao depicts his life on the island in his *Sacred Old Man: A Farmer, a Poet, and a Believer* (1988) an anthology incorporating other essays narrating his spiritual journey. He went there only to stay close to the oldest cedar which he personally referred to as the "Sacred Old Man." He appreciated the simple life of a farmer and was fascinated by the relationship between the human mind and inhuman nature he found on the island:

In the Yakushima Island . . . there are cedar trees that are of inordinate longevity—some reaching 5,000 or 7,000 years of age. These are called *dakesugi*. . .

[T]he *dakesugi* stand at the top of the island's eco-system. To tell not to cut them is tantamount to telling to preserve the eco-system of the island. Equally to tell to preserve the eco-system of the island is tantamount to telling to preserve the *dakesugi*. Man is part of the eco-system. Based on this assumption, the *dakesugi* are in essence the vital core of the island's community. (17-18, translated by the present writer)

Sacred Old Man: A Farmer, a Poet, and a Believer is another literature of place.

To conclude, there had been hints of nature writing since earlier times in Japan, but nature writing has not been established as a literary genre until recently. ASLE-Japan (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment-Japan) was founded in 1994. The assessment of Japanese literature from the point of nature writing is, in my mind, a task that is yet to be done by scholars.

V

A brief look into the state of Australian nature writing is in order. Mark Tredinnick, Vice President of AZLE-ANZ (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment-Australia & New Zealand) founded in 2003, shares the discussion with Judith Wright in her *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* (1965):

Before one's country can become an accepted background against which the poet's and novelist's

American, Japanese and Australian Nature Writing

imagination can move unhindered, it must first be observed, understood, described, and as it were absorbed. The writer must be at peace with his landscape before he can turn confidently to its human figures. (xi)

Surveying Australian nature writing from this vantage point, Tredinnick calls on his compatriots to become nature-conscious and ecology-aware in the following vein:

Forty years have passed since Wright wrote her book. And the land is starting, but still not convincingly, to sound in our prose. We have not got ourselves yet a tradition of nature writing. We are just getting going on that.

In it he urges that it is due time to give serious thought to writing about the country's natural landscape. With the rampant droughts, rising salt, dying rivers and two hundred years of colonization, the country is now ready: "the time has come in Australia" (Tredinnick).

To conclude the present paper, I might add that nature writing is not necessarily an apocalyptic warning lamenting and telling the people that the end of the world is near. But rather it is, in my view, a "literature of hope" (Slovic, *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* 18) and should remain that way. We would be better off if we take heed of the wisdom that nature writing offers and choose to take the right road toward a sustainable society.

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アメリカ、日本およびオーストラリアにおけるネイチャーライティング

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【抄録】

ネイチャーライティングとは何か。基本的な定義によると、ネイチャーライティングとは、自然と人間のかかわりを省察した一人称形式のノンフィクション文学のことである。この文学用語は20世紀初頭に用いられるようになった。トーマス・J・ライアンは、ネイチャーライティングには「博物学的情報、自然に対する個人的反応、自然に関する哲学的解釈」という3つの基本要素があると指摘する。ネイチャーライターは自ら自然の中で生き、その具体的かつ個別的な体験を語ることによって、読者に自然に対する新しい意識をよび起こすことを目指している。本試論は、それぞれの主要作品に言及しつつアメリカ、日本およびオーストラリアのネイチャーライティング発達の比較分析を試みるものである。

【キーワード】

ネイチャーライティング 環境文学 自然観 ソロー 石牟礼道子

