



## **Perceiving through the Blue Humanities: Eco-dimensionalism as a Reading and Methodological Practice**

If, as Princeton University's Anne McClintock has claimed, "the problem of the Anthropocene is a problem of perception," then a possible solution to this problem could be dissolved in the mix that has come to be known as the Blue Humanities. This stream of inquiry has emerged from the Environmental Humanities as a developing interpretive force that can change our perceptions of and relationships with our global waters. Focusing on artistic representations of water, an element that is more intimate and essential to the human experience—and indeed to the experience of all living things—than perhaps any other element, the Blue Humanities almost demands a reading and methodological practice that expands possibilities for perceiving and understanding our hydrological experiences. In all of its forms, simply put, water compels us to see differently. It messes with our expectations and prompts us to think when we might rather rely on habit and preconceptions to do the thinking for us. It is a shape-shifter like none other in our world, existing, as we well know, naturally in all three states. Water allows us to consider dimensions that we might not otherwise have considered, to feel what we might not otherwise have felt, and to understand what we might not otherwise have understood. For want of a better term, we may call this expansion of perceptions (and the potential methodologies and reading practices that produce it) *eco-dimensionalism*. My talk explores the possibilities of such an approach initially through analyses of the immersive experiences represented in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and those discussed in the commentary and theories of Macarena Gómez-Barris on Indigenous Columbian filmmaker Carolina Caycedo. In the latter part of my talk, I wander into more frigid climes to think about how ice fascinates us and how we mourn its disappearance. From there, my discussion moves into more parched environments of water-knives and heat waves and deserts of the sort that spawned Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other things thought to be divine. Indeed, water often touches the divine—let us not forget that the first major extinction event, according to three of the world's major religions, was a flood (and it was anthropogenic). The intensity of the experiences water provides animates literature and art throughout history. Eco-dimensionalism intensifies the experience of art so that it becomes intimate, sensuous, liberating, dangerous, and, above all, relevant.

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**Bio:** Dr. Simon C. Estok is a Professor of Literature and is a Senior Fellow at Korea's oldest university, Sungkyunkwan University (established 1398). He is an editor of *Neohelicon* and is an elected member of the European Academy of Sciences and Art. Estok has been in South Korea for almost thirty years where he received the National Research Foundation Writing in the Humanities Program book award twice. He is best known for his interdisciplinary theory of ecophobia, which has been profoundly influential, spawning an entirely new discipline—ecogothic studies—and several new journals. Estok began formulating the term "ecophobia" in his doctoral thesis, introduced the term to the ecocritical community in 2009, and then published his masterful book *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* through Routledge in 2018. Estok is not only an influential ecocritic but a pioneering Shakespearean. He was the *first* person to study "ecocritical Shakespeares," against considerable resistance—now it is a thriving industry all its own. His

work is wide-ranging. He has over a hundred articles published, 70 in A&HCI journals (including *PMLA*), 26 book chapters, and 9 books, notably *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (2011), *East Asian Ecocriticism: A Critical Reader* (2013), and *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (2018). His most recent book is entitled *Slime: An Elemental Imaginary*, published in 2024 by Cambridge University Press. He has a book entitled *The Agony of Water in an Age of Climate Change* contracted as the inaugural book in the Bloomsbury Blue Humanities series and forthcoming in October 2026.