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Interpreting Environments

One dimension of aesthetic appreciation of environments is interpretation. The aesthetic response to natural and cultural landscapes involves an exploration of aesthetic qualities, and an attempt to make sense of or discover meaning in what we experience. In this paper, I examine the interpretive aspect of environmental appreciation. I argue against a single, cognitive basis for determining a correct interpretation, and put forward an alternative, critical pluralism, which supports a rich interpretive activity that draws upon the multiple meanings we find through our aesthetic experiences.

My discussion is necessarily limited to aesthetic issues relating to interpretation of environments with origins in human and natural causes. A wider discussion beyond philosophical aesthetics would include ideas and models from cultural geography and more empirical material concerning our relationship with landscape. While geographers are generally interested in understanding landscape, aesthetic interpretation of environments will be limited to meanings that arise from and are related to aesthetic qualities, rather than to solely cognitive or other meanings, such as understanding the ecological processes, the human history, or religious significance of a place.

Many Environments

Aesthetic experience ranges over a diverse set of environments, from more natural to more cultural. On one end of the spectrum we find relatively pristine, unmodified environments, and on the other end, centers of human culture in urban environments. It is doubtful that there is anything untouched by human hands in nature, that is, wilderness in its true sense. There are places free from human activity – deep ocean depths and parts of the arctic – but some would argue that they are affected by human activity through weather and pollution. It is perhaps easier to concede that there is something we might call the entirely artefactual and cultural – that which we find in the built environment of dense urban areas. But even here there are pockets of nature, natural organisms, natural materials, and humans themselves, which are part of nature.

They range from landscapes with traces of human habitation and agriculture, to sparse settlements of indigenous cultures, to the heavily modified landscapes of intensive agriculture. On some accounts, all environments or landscapes are cultural; some constructivists contend that even pristine environments, if they exist, are experienced through cultural lenses and conventions. I take a much narrower view, and make a distinction, if not clear-cut, between nature and culture. Cultural landscapes are those that have been intentionally modified by humans but where nature still plays some role. They range from landscapes with traces of human habitation and agriculture, to the heavily modified landscapes of intensive agriculture and sparse settlements of indigenous cultures. Although urban environments would appear to be cultural landscapes, it makes more sense to keep them in a category of their own, since their urban character leaves much less room for nature compared to the rural countryside. In some

environmental philosophy circles, cultural landscapes are ignored in favour of wilderness, which is not surprising given that these environments are most under threat.[1] In any case, it is important to grasp that we encounter a broad range of environments, and that the differences between more natural and more cultural environments will affect our interpretation of them.[2]

Interpreting Environments

Interpretation is the activity of discovering meaning. It is “making sense of” something, and involves exploration and putting together various perceptions into a coherent whole, so that we are able to grasp or take in an aesthetic object. In the artworld, one is trying to make sense of a work and the meanings it has. The question directing interpretation would be, “What do you mean?” or “What does it mean?,” because one expects there to be something to figure out. It will be something very simple – that the painting is of a bowl of fruit - or something much more complex, such as trying to figure out what emotion is expressed in a piece of music. With environments that are mostly natural, this question would be odd since there is no meaning internal to landscapes. We bring meaning to them or assign meaning through cultural frameworks. There is still an attempt to make sense of something, but not in terms of searching for meaning that already exists.

Theories of interpretation in the arts are often distinguished according to the role of “biographical studies” in guiding and justifying interpretation. Although this is a complex debate with many different positions, basically, “intentionalists” argue that interpretation is tied to the artist’s intention, where an actual or hypothetical intention determines a correct interpretation. “Anti-intentionalists” cite problems associated with understanding artistic intention and they argue that the artwork is more free-floating, which allows for pluralism in interpretation. More radical views hold that appreciators have a hand in constructing the work through interpretations of it.

The intentional distinction is not applicable to more natural environments where humans have a minor role. In cultural landscapes, such as agriculture, it may make more sense, but I would still consider it odd to apply the distinction straightforwardly in the environmental context. In the middle range of cultural landscapes, natural processes play a major role even when humans heavily manage them. When there is some obvious element of design or a kind of authorship in the landscape, as in gardens, designed landscapes and environmental art, then reference to the intention of the designer makes some sense. In any case, I would support moderate anti-intentionalism, where it would be unnecessary to refer to the artist’s intention to arrive at a defensible interpretation of an artwork. Moreover, given that designed landscapes still use organic material in a strong sense and involve natural processes, an alternative to the artistic intention model is needed, and one that takes into consideration the dual nature of designed landscapes as rooted in both natural and human processes.

The biographical model could have a kind of relevance for the environment by reference to natural causes and processes (alongside human origins, where relevant) for guiding interpretation. This move is well known as the basis of Allen Carlson’s “natural environmental model” of aesthetic appreciation, and it is relevant in his discussion of “order appreciation” in relation to nature. Carlson argues that we can replace the categories of art history with natural history for appropriate appreciation of nature. By identifying such appreciation as correct or appropriate, he assumes a standard of correctness in our interpretation and aesthetic judgement of nature. For example, in his discussion of order appreciation, Carlson says,

> First, the relevant order is that typically called the natural order. Second, since there is no artist, not even one assimilated to processes and materials, the relevant forces are the forces of nature: the geological, biological, and meteorological forces that produce the natural order by shaping not only the plant but everything that inhabits it. Although these forces differ from many that shape works of art, awareness and understanding of them is vital in nature appreciation, as is knowledge of, for example, Pollock's role in appreciating his action painting or the role of chance in appreciating a Dada experiment.[3]

This kind of position entails a cognitive view of interpretation, and sets out clearly what type of knowledge is relevant for interpretation – scientific knowledge and its "common-sense analogues."

The cognitive approach to aesthetic appreciation of nature, and its focus on science as a criterion of correctness, has been challenged by several environmental aestheticians, so I will not rehearse those arguments here.[4] But I would like to present an approach to interpretation that puts much less emphasis on cognitive sources for discovering meaning through aesthetic appreciation. I want to show how we draw on associations, imagination and emotion, and non-scientific information in interpretation. My view aims at the middle ground between formalist and cognitive approaches. Formalist interpretation of the environment is a perceptual rather than cognitive activity, where our making sense of something involves only those qualities available to perception, such as shapes and colours, perhaps akin to a scenery model of aesthetic appreciation of nature, which rests solely on visual qualities. A cognitive model of interpretation argues for a range of necessary knowledge, from the knowledge of an amateur naturalist to the more sophisticated knowledge of an ecologist or geologist.

In aesthetic interpretation, meanings arise directly out of aesthetic qualities, as perceived by an individual who brings with them a set of values, preferences, and more or less background knowledge, aesthetic experience, perceptual and emotional sensitivity, and imaginative ability. Interpretation begins in exploratory perception, but does not end there. Through perception, we piece together what we apprehend through the senses, grasping shapes and colours, sounds, smells and changing conditions. For example, walking through a pasture, I take in what is around me – cows grazing green grass pockmarked with cowpats, the soft smell of grass mixed with faint sweet fragrances, perhaps from the small white flowers blooming on the tree by the stone wall, and the feeling of uneven ground underfoot, which I have to carefully walk over. My appreciation can be thin, that is, it can rest on a surface rendering of what I perceive, and some of the experience will involve immediate perception rather than interpretation. Or, it may thicken, as I hear the cows munching and am reminded of the first time I walked through this pasture, when my pleasure was tinged with fear of the cows, and I stuck closer to the stone wall. This time the place has a peaceful pastoral quality, compared to the first time, when it was perhaps a little more strange. As I see some of the flower petals floating off the tree in the breeze, I imagine the leaves and fruit that will take their place. Here, the landscape becomes imbued with meaning from personal associations and a basic understanding of seasons changing. I draw on sources of meaning as the experience unfolds, determined both by how I direct my attention, and the changing conditions of the environment around me.

This is a rather ordinary, everyday example, at least in my experience. There are experiences that draw more heavily on various sources for interpretation, such as imagination, emotion, and various narratives. An interesting use of imagination and perception coming together is "seeing as." Seeing as involves seeing objects under an aspect, and it has been described as a kind of interpretive perception. This is not

mistaken perception, when one sees, for example, a black object in front of the car as a cat instead of a plastic bag, but rather when we come to see something as one thing or another thing. In his study of the neglect of natural beauty in aesthetics, Hepburn argues that "we need not confine ourselves to the contemplating of naked uninterpreted particulars;" we should aim to enrich the interpretive element of appreciation:[5]

> In a leaf pattern, I may "see" also blood-vessel patterns, or the patterns of branching, forked lightning: or all of these. In a spiral nebula pattern I may see the pattern of swirling waters or whirling dust. I may be aware of a network of affinities, or analogous forms, that spans the inorganic or the organic world, or both.[6]

Notice that this exploratory activity does not draw on information about the leaf itself, but rather one brings associations or images to bear on perception. This interpretive perception is also the source of many landscapes that are transformed into artworks through paint, sculpture, poems, novels, films and music. For centuries, artists have "remade" the world, transforming their ways of interpreting their surroundings into artistic renderings. Artists are among the most sensitive and creative interpreters of nature, and artworks provide some of the most concrete and enduring interpretations of the environment.

Hepburn expands his more concrete imaginative interpretation to include "metaphysical imagination:"

> an element of interpretation that helps to determine the overall experience of a scene in nature. It will be construed as a 'seeing-as…' or 'interpreting as…' that has a metaphysical character, in the sense of relevance to the whole of experience and not only to what is experienced at the present moment.[7]

Through our experience of sensory qualities and an expansion of imagination in relation to a particular landscape, we make a connection to metaphysical ideas about "how the world ultimately is" or, perhaps, to other fundamental and cosmic ideas which are inexpressible in language.

Emotion also has an important role as a source of interpretation of the environment. The aesthetic qualities of some environment, say, the darkness, and tall, heavy trees of a pine forest, may lead to the attribution of expressive qualities of being magical or perhaps even disturbing. It is these expressive qualities that often contribute to the animation of nature, with stories of creatures – mythical or real - lurking deep inside deep inside the forest. Expressive qualities give meaning to the environment, and at least in this sense contribute to the interpretive framework. Our own emotions or moods will color how we experience a landscape, but we have to be careful not to assume that this would be how others see it. Disinterestedness requires that we recognize certain meanings as personal, and separate them from more generalizable interpretations.[8]

Last but not least, interpretation is an activity that necessarily involves understanding. By conceiving of aesthetic interpretation of nature as "making sense of," there must be some way in which concepts enter into interpretation, but without, as I have argued, embracing a cognitive approach. I believe that models of aesthetic appreciation of nature ought to be open rather than closed. This better accounts for the range of aesthetic experiences we have and the range of abilities that appreciators bring to their experiences of environments. Therefore, it makes more sense to require less of the appreciator rather than more, but at the same time to hope for the development of aesthetic sensitivity through richer experiences of the

environment.

In debates about interpretation in the arts, philosophers have disagreed about the proper aim of interpretation, that is, what it is that we should be doing when we interpret works of art. Some argue that the aim of interpretation is to achieve an understanding of an artwork, and this is done by reaching a correct interpretation by reference to the artist's intention. Others argue that the proper aim is to maximize enjoyable aesthetic experience, and this is achieved through a range of acceptable interpretations of the work. Still others argue that there is no single proper aim, but many.[9] This issue has relevance to the environment too, where we need to ask what exactly is the point of interpreting the environment in the *aesthetic context*. Geographers and ecologists interpret landscapes to achieve knowledge. Indigenous people living in the land want to understand and give significance to the environment that is their home through spiritual, mythological and other means. Although I find it a little on the humanistic (or even the hedonistic) side, the second position is more appropriate to the environmental aesthetic context. When no longer dealing with straightforward artefacts, I would argue that the proper aim of interpretation is to enrich aesthetic appreciation in ways that enhance our aesthetic encounters with the environment. Interpretive activity ought to involve a variety of imaginative ways to discover meaning in our environment, ways that increase the value we find there. This activity ought not be directed, however, at increasing our pleasure. Rather, we should hope for, as side effects to some extent, greater sensitivity to nature's qualities and with that, greater respect for nature. This is more familiar ground to an aesthetic approach than seeking understanding through a single, correct interpretation. I am suggesting a view of interpretation that would be consistent with aesthetic education, without making such education the *aim* of appreciation.

Interpretation and Knowledge

Given these background aims to my approach to interpretation, I can now say a little more about what role knowledge will play, since this is no doubt a difficult issue to work out. Interpretation does not require more than the basic conceptual framework that we bring to our encounters with nature. Examples of this basic knowledge (and what will probably be in the background of so-called normal appreciators) range from: having basic concepts, or an ability to differentiate one thing from another – this is a tree and this is a rock, to understanding the conditions or states of things - that grass is usually green; that the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening; that flowers bloom in springtime, and so on. It is not easy to say when common sense knowledge ends and specialist or scientific knowledge begins. But this basic knowledge comes into play, probably unconsciously for the most part, unless we are really puzzled by something, at which point we wonder if what we perceive is like or unlike things that are already familiar to us. Besides such concepts, whatever background knowledge the individual comes with may be fed into interpretation. This knowledge will vary, from more or less sophisticated, to more or less wide-ranging. Some will come with the experience of a local who walks through a pasture every day, whereas others may be visitors to the place for the first time. The local has acquired an understanding of her surroundings from repeated visits, perhaps looking more closely each time. While a visitor may compare this place to their own familiar environments, bringing those associations and concepts into play. In neither case is any particular knowledge necessary to finding meaning in their surroundings. Both can have equally rich aesthetic experiences, although they will have different emphases. For the local, it is the familiar, and perhaps even overlooking what the visitor would notice. For the visitor, it may be new and even strange, perhaps demanding more exploration. Both interpretive frameworks may issue in reasonable interpretations.

With artworks, it is in some ways easier to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant knowledge because the aesthetic object is fixed by artistic boundaries and conventions. There are conventions that set to some extent the relevance of information that is more directly relevant, and this can be shown most clearly by the fact that artworks are intentional objects. Artistic intention becomes the focus of debate on what is relevant, and whether additional knowledge, such as influences on the artist's style, should be considered. Social and economic conditions are an example of information that is external to the artwork and may be viewed by some as less relevant. This suggests a movement outwards, away from the artwork as such, and toward its external relations, as opposed to the features internal to the work.

Aesthetic appreciation of the environment involves interpretation to a greater or lesser degree, depending on several factors: the type of landscape – cultural or natural; the nature of the particular aesthetic object; and the situation of the individual and context of appreciation. With nature, which has no content, the boundaries of interpretation are less clear, and there is more freedom on the part of the interpreter in terms of what sources they draw upon for interpretation. But it still holds that in terms of the interpretive framework we apply, as we move toward more cognitive sources of interpretation we also move away from the aesthetic. We move more toward attempting to understand landscape as such rather than its aesthetic qualities and the meanings connected to them.

Beyond basic knowledge, identifying the range of sources of interpretation turns on the problematic concept of knowledge. In these post-modern times it would hardly do to limit knowledge to factual categories such as the sciences, to ecology, geology, and so on. We ought to include so-called folk knowledge, through everyday local knowledge of an environment, including knowledge of the landscape from native sources such as mythology and other cultural meanings. We should also not forget that some appreciation draws only on perception, on knowledge acquired purely through perceptual acquaintance with an environment. Widening the scope of knowledge drawn upon does not, however, take away the problem of how we distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable interpretations of the environment. We have to pin down not those interpretations that are true, but those that are reasonable, given particular cultures and types of environments. Before tackling this difficult issue, I shall first consider the range of sources of knowledge we use in making environments meaningful.

Religion and myth are among the most common, less scientific ways people find meaning in landscape. In Hebraic-Christian thought, for example, the aesthetic qualities of landscapes are given meaning through religious symbolism. Yi Fu Tuan describes the opposing views of the desert environment:

> From the earliest times recorded in the Bible, a harsh view of the desert existed simultaneously with its opposite….the prophet who recognized the repellent barrenness of the desert also saw it as the condition for spiritual uplift and exaltation, or he might see the desert itself as exhibiting an austere beauty. In the Old Testament, the Sinai wastes stood for death, disorder, and darkness, but also for God's transcendent power and redemptive love.[10]

By contrast, in the Nordic environment of Finland, the word for the Aurora Borealis is "revontulet," which means "fox fires." It is said to derive from old folklore that explains the bright, pulsating, red and blue lights as the painterly effects of the arctic fox's bushy tail, which starts fires and sprays snow into the night sky.[11]

Human history, an extension of these culturally based interpretations, provides a source for making sense

of an environment. The Isle of Rum in Scotland is now a designated nature reserve, and it was once considered as a possible location for the reintroduction of wolves. However, much of it is a cultural landscape. Among the desolate moors and sublime mountains, one finds the overgrown ruins of black-houses, evidence of crofters who were cleared from the land to make way for sheep-farming. The ripples in the green fields that come up to the edge of the sea are not natural but rather "lazybeds," an old agricultural practice. On the other side of the island, a more recent reminder of human history is found in a bizarre Victorian folly, an old hunting lodge built by a wealthy merchant. As we take in these parts of the environment, and feed in whatever knowledge we may gather, appreciation shifts from seeing the land as a windswept wilderness to a landscape once inhabited by humans, then sheep, and now left largely to nature, except for conservation workers and visitors.

More generally, we can talk about cultural significance, meaning that is assigned to landscapes in virtue of what they symbolise for particular cultures. Human history, but also cultural meaning, can be found in the disused quarries in Welsh mountain landscapes. One finds choppy, grey textured expanses set against the natural contours and dramatic sweep of mountain valleys. These landscapes gain meaning through a sense of human industry set within a beautiful upland environment. More poignantly, instead of being cleared to provide prettified parks, the disused mines that were previously the mainstay of many communities have been left as they are. These landscapes have significance as the cultural heritage of a community, and their qualities have significance within this context. By contrast, wilderness has significance for many North Americans for being a vast space "untouched" by humans, at once tranquil and threatening, beautiful and sublime. It is a sacred environment, symbolising freedom and independence as well as the antithesis of modern life.

I have stressed that everyday or common-sense knowledge may also be sufficient for making sense of an environment. But what about scientific knowledge? The amateur naturalist knows something about birds or wildflowers. The hill walker carrying a guidebook to the Yorkshire Dales is able to supplement the sensations of touch and sight with facts about the age and type of the rocks she treads upon. This may enable her to see more than first meets the eye, as she works with perceptual exploration, feeding in knowledge to take in what lies before her – "It's soft and porous. Aha! It's limestone, and water – that's where all these fantastic shapes and holes came from." Different meanings are brought to bear on qualities in our surroundings through the story told by science. In the case of the Aurora Borealis, the colours take on another meaning. We see them not as the fiery art of the arctic fox, but rather as caused by solar winds moving across the upper atmosphere and hitting gas molecules, which creates light. The colours are not the fox's chosen palate, but correspond to the colours of gases in the ionosphere.[12]

Critical Pluralism

Which story makes the most sense for making sense of aesthetic objects? Is one interpretive story better than another, or are all stories equally legitimate? Advocates of the cognitive or science-based models of aesthetic appreciation of nature argue that although these other stories may have some relevance, science provides the ultimate, correct standard for interpretation. For example, despite the sympathy Holmes Rolston has for participatory and "native-range" experience, he says:

> Living on the landscape keeps persons "tuned in", and this dimension is needed, past mere science, to appreciate what is going on on landscapes. Certainly the human coping has produced mythologies that we now find incredible – Pele extruding herself as lava, Tavwoats

> replacing the trail to Paradise with a forbidding canyon river, the Chinese cocks on rooftops to guard off mischievous spirits, an angry God warping the Earth to punish iniquitous humans. Science is necessary to banish ("deconstruct") these myths, before we can understand in a corrected aesthetic.[13]

Although Carlson does not specifically address the question of interpretation, if we accept that interpretation is a dimension of aesthetic appreciation, science will also provide the correct framework according to his cognitive position. He recognizes the role of mythological descriptions and other cultural knowledge as sources of information for appreciation, but these stories must meet the following condition: "cultural 'outside information' contained in a landscape description must be embedded in such a way that it is accessible within that particular framework and thereby accessible independent of the particular description."[14] On his view, imaginative and literary descriptions do not meet this condition, so they are irrelevant sources of information. In his discussion of cultural knowledge, Carlson does not give a means for determining whether scientific or cultural knowledge takes priority in interpretation, but it is probable, given his views on the correct story within appreciation more generally, that science is the answer. [15]

Philosophers on the other side of the debate accept that multiple stories may lead to multiple acceptable interpretations, but they are sensitive to the problems, aesthetic and moral, of "humanising nature," or of interpreting nature through only a cultural lens, rather than attempting to experience it also on its own, natural terms.[16] For example, Yuriko Saito is particularly concerned that some cultural associations overly humanize landscapes and prevent us from appreciating their natural value. For example, she comments that tourists appreciate some landscapes "primarily through historical/cultural/literary associations. Plymouth Rock and the Gettysburg battlefield are the prime examples from this country."[17] She recognizes that the cultural and historical values of these places are important, but she worries that such interpretations do not approach nature on its own terms. Also, Saito allows for folk knowledge associations because she thinks that these are not just about "human deeds" with the landscape as a backdrop, but rather they work much more closely with nature's qualities, attempting to interpret it. While I agree with her remarks, I would want to avoid romanticizing folk myths, and also emphasize that, where relevant, in interpretation, we need to recognize rather than ignore, or attempt to hide, the ways in which culture shapes landscapes.

I have claimed that the aim of interpretation ought to be one that sits easily alongside the spirit of aesthetic appreciation as an enriching encounter with the natural world. Thomas Heyd argues, in a similar vein, that diverse stories can illuminate aesthetic qualities and engage us in a more concrete way than science's abstraction. Stories are determined as relevant on a case-by-case basis according to whether or not they bring out nature's qualities for appreciation in a fruitful way.[18] Given the lack of intended meaning in many natural and cultural environments, it is also the case in pre-reflective practice that aesthetic interpretation of the natural environment affords greater freedom to the appreciator. As Hepburn has suggested, environments demand "adventurous openness" on the part of the appreciator, and there are countless new perspectives to try out.[19] These points support critical pluralism rather than critical monism. Searching for a single, correct interpretation, being guided by just one story, would be counter-productive not only to what environments themselves demand, but also to what we should expect from ourselves as engaged participants.

Critical pluralism sits between critical monism and “anything goes,” the subjective approach of some post-modern positions. It argues for a set of interpretations that are deemed acceptable but which are not determined according to being true or false.[20] A more pragmatic view is taken by some pluralists, where acceptable interpretations are those that work in making sense of something. An interpretation must be defensible, it cannot be outlandish, irrelevant, or the whim of one person. Besides cohering with the aesthetic and non-aesthetic descriptions of the aesthetic object, the validity of interpretations must also be relativized to the background beliefs, values and cultural and historical context of interpreters. This will allow for flexibility, especially in respect of contrasting cultural meanings given to environments.

Although I am using these points to clarify what is meant by pluralism, they also reflect the fact that interpretive practice is subject to these variables. It would be harsh and overly restrictive to insist that a single interpretation is correct, given the range of appreciators’ backgrounds, the dynamic conditions of many environments and aesthetic objects, and the fact that interpretations of environments span many generations. The diversity of possible interpretations should not mean that all of them make sense. A happy medium must be found between respecting environments – a normative constraint on interpretation – and allowing for the freedom and diversity of environmental appreciation. In the interpretation of the Aurora Borealis, both folklore and science provide acceptable interpretations; they give alternative ways of seeing the spectacular phenomenon in the sky. If the point were simply to understand what it is we are seeing, with knowledge as the aim, the scientist would give us the best answer. But that is not the point of “making sense” in the aesthetic context. Here, it is about trying out different ways of seeing aesthetic qualities, trying out different perspectives, as part of an exploration of nature and its qualities. The aim is to enrich and deepen appreciation by expanding our ways of relating to different environments, but without trivializing or appropriating them.[21]

Interpretation and Sense of Place

I want to conclude with a couple of points concerning the interpretive contexts covered here. Firstly, as we have seen, the stories of different environments range from those told by science to those that more explicitly reflect human relations with the environment. These narratives have a greater or lesser role in appreciation, depending on the knowledge of the appreciator and the depth of interpretation in any one encounter. Secondly, in all of the interpretive contexts I have discussed, meaning emerges through the reciprocity of perceived aesthetic qualities and interpretive frameworks brought by appreciators to the environment. We draw on various sources – from the perceptual to the cognitive - to make sense of what we experience. This is one essential route to *sense of place*, a way of experiencing an environment that includes the aesthetic, but reaches beyond it to embrace a whole range of personal feelings and community values in relation to a particular place. Sense of place often goes hand in hand with these different narratives, and all of them may come together with emotion to create the feeling of being at home, of attachment to a particular landscape, town, house or other part of the world. I mention these points because it is not easy to say where aesthetic appreciation ends and sense of place begins. As we move away from aesthetic appreciation and more toward an all around experience of an environment, we move toward sense of place.

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Notes

1. Much more recently, some environmental philosophers have turned to addressing urban environmental problems, and this indicates a new understanding that nature exists – and is worth philosophical consideration - outside wilderness.

2. Elsewhere, I discuss how these differences affect aesthetic appreciation more generally. See Emily Brady, "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Natural Environments," in Vernon Pratt, with Jane Howarth and Emily Brady, *Environment and PHilosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 142-151.

3. Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 120.

4. See, for example, objections raised in: Yuriko Saito, "Is There a Correct Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature?" *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18 (1984): 35-46; Robert Stecker, "The Correct and the Appropriate in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 37 (1997); Cheryl Foster, "The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism: Special Issue: Environmental Aesthetics*, eds. Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson, 56 (1998); and Emily Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism: Special Issue: Environmental Aesthetics*, eds. Arnold Berleant and Allen Carlson, 56 (1998): 139-147.

5. Ronald Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty" in *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 20.

6. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

7. Ronald Hepburn, "Landscape and Metaphysical Imagination," *Environmental Values* 5 (1996): 192.

8. I follow a much richer concept of disinterestedness than the drier view that is often portrayed and criticized. See Emily Brady, "Don't Eat the Daisies: Disinterestedness and the Situated Aesthetic," *Environmental Values*, 7 (1998): 97-114. As I understand the concept, it is part of an approach to the aesthetic response that is relatively traditional, drawing on perception and imagination, but also incorporating emotion and concrete aspects of the appreciator. Such a view incorporates disinterestedness as part of an aesthetic response that is not deeply subjective or self-interested, and one that values the aesthetic object for its own sake.

9. See Robert Stecker's discussion of this issue in "Interpretation," in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* eds. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 243-4.

10. Yi Fu Tuan, "Desert and ice: ambivalent aesthetics," in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 143-4.

11. Recounted by Joe Brady in "Aurora Borealis: The Northern Lights," at http://virtual.finland.fi/finfo/english/aurorea_borealis.html

12. Ibid.

13. Holmes Rolston, III, “Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature Need to Be Science-based?,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 35 (1995): 381-2.

14. Carlson, p. 228.

15. Ibid. Carlson categorizes science under “factual descriptions” and myths, literary, and imaginative descriptions under “cultural knowledge.”

16. Yuriko Saito is closer to Carlson in her views, but rather than emphasizing correctness, she emphasizes the need for appreciating nature on its own terms, which involves a moral attitude toward it. See “Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms,” Environmental Ethics, 20 (1998): 135-49. Hepburn’s position is quite different from Carlson’s, and instead, it attempts to distinguish between respectful and serious humanizing of nature as opposed to disrespectful and trivial humanizing. See “Nature Humanised: Nature Respected,” *Environmental Values*, 7 (1998): 267-79; and “Trivial and serious in aesthetic appreciation of nature,” in Kemal and Gaskell, pp. 65-80.

17. Saito, 1998, pp. 139-40.

18. Thomas Heyd, “Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories About Nature,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 41 (2001), p. 135.

19. Hepburn also sets out the great range of interpretations of nature through art, and is especially supportive of the multiplicity of valuable representations and “aesthetic possibilities.” See Ronald Hepburn, “Nature in the Light of Art,” in *Wonder and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), especially pp. 41-42 and 50-51.

20. Matthew Kieran, “In Defence of Critical Pluralism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36 (1996): 239-51.

21. See note #16 above.

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