

Peter I-min Huang  
Tamkang University

Chang, Chia-ju, 全球生态社区想象: 西方和中国生态批评实践 [The Global Imagination of Ecological Communities: Western and Chinese Ecological Praxis] (Jiangsu: Jiangsu UP, 2013), 283 pp.



Chia-ju Chang's *The Global Imagination of Ecological Communities* is a very important contribution to Sinophone ecocriticism. It introduces and develops many concepts that have not been previously explored or have received scant attention in China and other Chinese speaking countries. As the eminent Chinese ecocritic Cheng Xiangzhan points out in one of the three introductions to the book (the other two are by Scott Slovic and Greta Gaard), "with her expertise in East and West ecological discourses," Chia-ju Chang is pioneering "areas that many Chinese ecocritics have not paid attention to" (ii).

The book is divided into four parts: 1) ecological literary studies; 2) animal studies; 3) ecofeminism; 4) Zen Buddhist ecocriticism. In the first part, Chang outlines the emergence and development of ecocriticism in the West, especially in the United States. She devotes particular attention to Ursula Heise's influential concept of eco-cosmopolitanism (presented in the landmark study *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*), which she also uses as a theoretical underpinning for her own book. She argues that Heise's concepts are extremely important for studying ecocriticism in global contexts, highlighting the linkages to risk theories and the postmodern environmental aesthetics (8), and places her own study within the "third wave" of ecocriticism proclaimed by Scott Slovic and Joni Adamson in a 2009 special issue of *MELUS*. Accordingly, she explains, the aim of her study is to "replac[e] the post-colonial ecological imagination with one that is focusing on global webs and the global imagination of ecological communities" (9). Yet despite her embrace of Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism, she points out that this concept is informed by peculiarly Western presuppositions and reflects the linguistic and economic inequalities that are inherent in globalization: "[E]conomic and cultural domination and control," she insists, inevitably shape the process of "canon formation" (37). Her call for resistance to the hegemony of English in the production of ecological world literature is timely and courageous.

Perhaps most valuable in Chang's book are the chapters devoted to animal studies and ecofeminism, areas that are her specialties. Her study of ecomedia (in an animal studies context) in these chapters is fantastic and can serve as a very useful supplement to Greg Garrard's chapter on animals in his book *Ecocriticism*. Among the films she discusses is Lu Chuan's 2004 film *Kekexili* (可可西里), which dramatizes the plight of the endangered Tibetan antelope and is a very important film for Chinese ecocritics. Chang argues that the poaching of Tibetan antelopes betrays the complicity between Chinese "modernization" and global capitalism (121). Addressing the issue of the relationship

between local poverty and global consumer wealth, the film poses serious questions for ecocritics based in both the East and the West. It draws attention to the tension that frequently exists between environmental justice and the protection of endangered animal species—which all too often ends up displacing local peoples.

In the chapters devoted to ecofeminism, some of the most original discussion relates to Chang's analysis of the so-called "dog mothers" in Taiwan, women who take care of stray dogs on the streets in the cities. Chang argues that these groups exemplify a form of care-based ecofeminist activism which challenges and subverts patriarchal, industrial and urban, progress in Taiwan (156). At the heart of their practice is a "trans-species" care ethics such as it is expounded by many Western ecofeminists, among them Greta Gaard (163, 171). Chang points out that the modern pet industry is one of the reasons why there continue to be stray dogs in Taiwan. This industry is a part of global consumer culture (165). Following Gaard, Chang characterizes ecofeminism as a form of second generation feminism, and animal studies and vegetarian ecofeminism as third generation feminisms (180). Chang's ability to bring Western ecofeminist theory and Eastern activism into a dialogue is one of her most impressive achievements.

In the last two chapters of the book, Chang discusses Zen Buddhist ecocriticism, an area of ecocriticism that holds out enormous promise for the future development of ecocriticism. Chang argues that the pollution of the environment can be recognized and acted upon in the spiritual context of the pollution of soul and spirit (216). She argues that Buddhist meditation should be considered as a form of social activism, and that Zen Buddhism in particular can inspire us to achieve "nondualism" and "biocentrism" (227). Given the importance of this subject, it would have been desirable for it to be introduced much earlier, and discussed in much greater detail. To my mind, this is the only defect in an otherwise original and ground breaking book.