

ER(R)GO

summaries in english<sup>1</sup>



**Tomasz Sikora**

(Eco)criticism of Pure Perception

In this excerpt from his 2003 book *Virtually Wild: Wilderness, Technology and the Ecology of Mediation* Tomasz Sikora looks at how the modern subject constitutes itself through a perceptual appropriation of “nature” or “wilderness,” an appropriation that is always already mediated through technology, even though this fact tends to be denied or forgotten. The (mostly American) idea of pure, unmediated or transparent perception, as an attribute of a primordial, wild or uncontaminated self, is critiqued with a view to developing a different ecocritical way of thinking about the relationship between “self” and “world.” It is mostly through a reading of two poems: “An Anecdote of the Jar” by Wallace Stevens and “Hawk on a Wire” by Nelson C. Sager that the article illustrates both the (Western/American) fantasy to perceive the world in a “pure” way and, ultimately, the impossibility of such perception. Instead of the false natural-technological binary, the author postulates that a new ecological awareness should focus on the process of mediation (or the medium) itself.

**Tomasz Burzyński**

Risk and Cultural Studies. Selected Methodological Dilemmas

This article aims to outline theoretical and methodological frameworks that may facilitate a more informed inquiry into the nature of technological risks from the conceptual perspective of cultural studies. Despite its roots in technical and economic sciences, the notion of risk seems to fit perfectly into a plethora of culturally-oriented discourses whose common denominator is a criticism focused at scientific and technological pillars of (late) modern civilizations. When perceived in an overtly cultural context, risk functions as a discourse which embraces, on the one hand, social, political and moral consequences of modernization processes, and, on the other hand, symbolic practices which aim to construct cultural representations of diversified technological dangers.

**Bartosz Stopel**

Subjugating Culture: Literary Darwinists  
and the Biological Roots of Humanities

The article analyzes the relation between nature and culture in the light of Darwinian literary studies. According to the Darwinists, literary theory has greatly suffered from claiming that culture (in the sense of the whole of human creation) is autonomous in relation to nature. If, as they claim, the human psyche is not independent from the biologically understood body, and if the theory which best explains the functioning of the human mind is evolutionary psychology, then all its creations (including literature and other arts) can be fully understood only within Darwinian framework. As the Darwinists claim, understanding the mechanisms governing art, along with its function in human life requires subordinating humanities to biology and a further reduction of all research areas to simpler, empirical claims, so that the unity of science can be maintained. However, a closer analysis of both the Darwinists’ claims and of some examples of the Darwinian studies indicates numerous

problems with the postulated research programme, raising doubts about the possibility of a fully reductionists stance on culture.

### Karolina Lebek

*Curiosities and Method: Natural Philosophy and Exceptionality in Seventeenth-Century England.*

The article is concerned with the philosophical function of curiosities in Sir Francis Bacon's thought, especially his new logic. It takes as its starting point two critiques Bacon launched in his writings, first, of epistemological capabilities of the human mind and, second, of the heretofore methods of studying nature at universities (scholasticism with its uses of the syllogism) and the renaissance court (natural histories with their uses of the emblem). As a separate category of objects and phenomena, curiosities were central for Bacon's new inductive method as correctives for the flawed mind and thus as regulatory means for inductive interpretation. Such treatment puts curiosities in a paradoxical position of both the object of study and a vital element of the method itself.

### David Schauffler

*Abendland: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the Ecological Consciousness*

The field of ecological criticism has, in the United States, concentrated upon recent and contemporary works, regularly invoking only a small group of earlier writers, such as Thoreau and Leopold, who are obvious precursors of modern ecological thinking. However, if one turns to 19<sup>th</sup> century writers whose popularity during their lifetimes shows that they voiced widely held views, one may conclude that the concerns of today's ecological critics and writers have always figured prominently in the American consciousness. This paper examines some representative works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to show that this supremely conventional poet wrote feelingly on three issues that most preoccupy current ecological criticism: the condition and fate of Native Americans, the exploitation of nature, and the instability and destructiveness of modern civilization. Longfellow's popularity in his own day indicates that his vast readership was likewise exercised by these concerns, and that, therefore, the "ecological consciousness" was quite widely held in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America. The paper suggests obliquely that this conclusion may lead one to take a dim view of the practical effectiveness of an ecological consciousness in Longfellow's day or in our own.

### Joanna Soćko

*Silent Life of Letters.*

*On Interconnections between Language and Nature in the Poetry of R.S. Thomas.*

The essay sets out to explore R.S. Thomas' (1913–2000) vision of the problematic relations between the man, the nature and their Creator. In the context of contemporary critique as well as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, post-husserlian philosophy, the author analyses Thomas' cosmological poems and represents, on the one hand, the place that both man and God take in the creation

and, on the other, the sacramental relationship between the human and the nature. What is important from this perspective is the material existence of both man and nature, which enables mutual infiltration that leads to discovery of imperceptible dimension of materiality, which, in turn, influences both human consciousness and language. This is why the author asks about the role of science in Thomas' poetry and about the influence that "the machine" has on language and consciousness.

