

REPRESENTING PLACE AND GEOGRAPHY: AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF GAO XINGJIAN'S *SOUL MOUNTAIN*

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ABSTRACT

Glotfelty defines the term ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). The term “ecocriticism” was coined by William Rueckert in “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”, in 1978 but its antecedents stretch back much further. Geography has always been involved in the analysis of place and this provides the first core concept. Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* is an autobiographical novel in its depiction of the story of a wandering man who takes a journey in search of the self and its relation to the collective. The paper seeks to examine the physical environment –the geographical place and the cultural landscapes in Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* and argue how literature can provoke environmental reflection by expanding preconceived understandings of the human and non-human environment as a dimension of personal and communal sense of place. Environmental literature constructs place in a particular way not just by naming objects but by dramatizing in the process how they matter. Place attachment thus becomes a resource in the “articulation of environmental unconscious” (Buell 21).

KEYWORDS: Ecocriticism, Gao Xingjian, Geography, Place, Topophilia