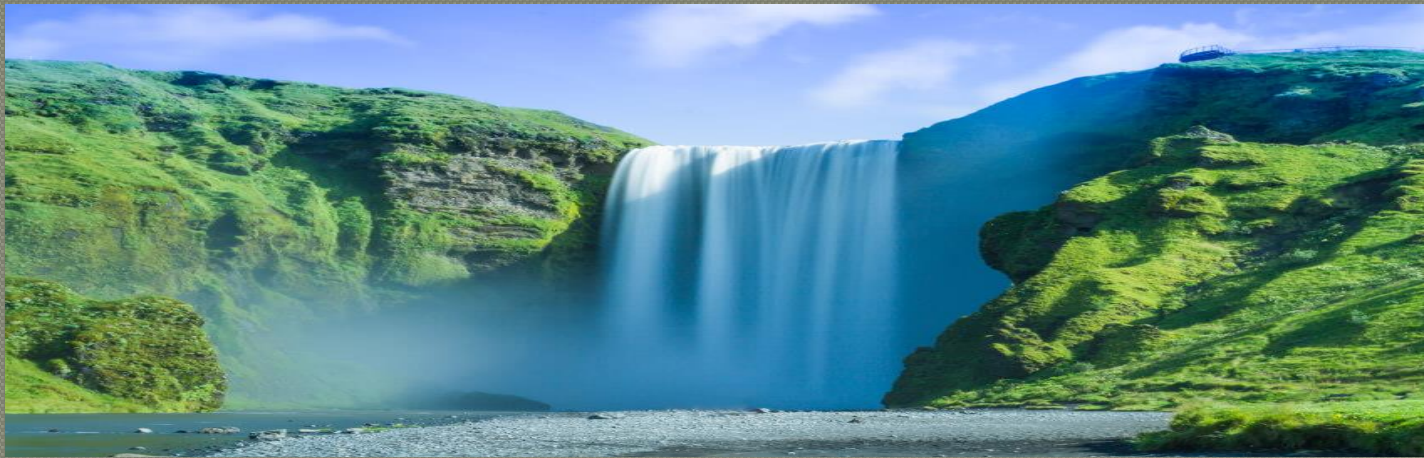


Landscape and the Lore: a Consideration of Geography & Setting in Mining Meaning from Myth

Presented by David P. Iverson,
MEd, MA



What inspired this workshop?

-March 2018 : completed Master of Arts in English at Southern New Hampshire University

-Thesis titled “Moor Honor: Landscape, Luck, and the Love of Frey in *Hrafnkel’s Saga*”

-Setting and geography were analyzed in the “landscape” segment as extremely important and symbolic.

“[t]he fact that Iceland is a volcanic island gives landscape a place of prominence and uniqueness in its literature. However, rather than acting simply as a tool for determining geographical historicity in the sagas, nature provides multiple layers of literary symbolism” (Iverson 3).



Dimmuborgir, home of “Gryla” the
Ogre/Troll

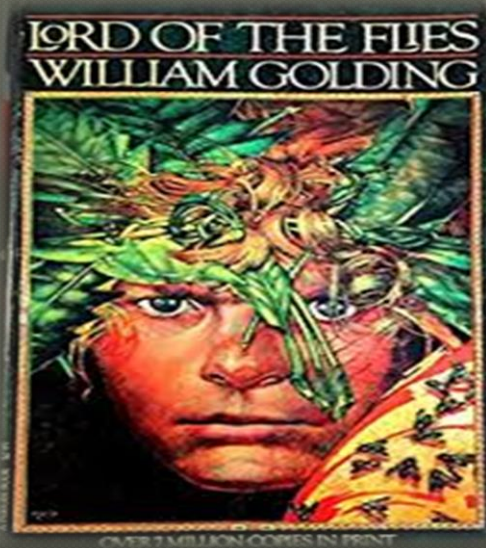
They are the “Third Space” of which Homi Bhabha speaks, a liminal zone where characters are a hybridity of cultures, generations, and religions.

“Place is extremely important...and epistemologies have developed which privilege space over time as the most important ordering concept of reality”

(Ashcroft et al. 35).



“Islands occupy a significant space in literature. They are more than scenic locations; they are literary devices whose natural boundaries help shape and contain narratives. Fictional islands exist as either lost paradises where poetry and contemplation happen, or places where law breaks down and conventional morality gets tested” (Myers).



9th century, Chinese Zen master Ching-yuan wrote that

in effect, nature existed inside his mind, in that it found its shape and significance only as he made sense of it. But [then he understood] that it is equally mistaken to take nature for granted and to try to subsume it within his own mental operations. The point is to learn from nature, to enter into its spirit, and to stop trying to impose upon it the arbitrary constraints which result from our belief in our own importance. (Coupe 1)

“When accepted in this capacity, landscape can be utilized as literary device for authors to seamlessly shift between the internal mechanizations of the characters, their actions, and the overall setting; essentially the internal and external are dualistic reflections of one another.” (Iverson 3).



“[o]ne's inmost soul or self is touched by the beauty of nature, or reaches out to that beauty in the country, the mountains, the stars...The inner and outer correspond to each other: for instance, a dark and stormy night reflects a tormented self or soul, or a gentle meadow with birds chirping awakens an inner sense of peace or harmony” (White sec. 2).

In his essay “The Mystery of the Moors: Purgatory and the Absence/Presence of Evil in *Wuthering Heights*,” Methodist University’s Dr. Cameron Dodworth says of the moors that they are “are truly mysterious and spiritual; existing as a wild environment where the soul is left exposed to the elements...[that] affect the characters off-scene” (129).

They represent borderlands, a realm of “other,” the journey through which leaves one changed. They are a purgatory-like limbo, “with its religious application of being a temporary space where the soul can be cleansed before escaping into a state of reward” (Dodworth 131).



Examples from Hrafnkel's Saga

- ◉ The travelling across the moors by Hallfred signifying a new beginning
- ◉ The two goats he leaves behind being crushed in a landslide
- ◉ Hrafnkel's adolescent journeys through the moors leading to an almost mystical discovery of the land on which his future farm would stand

Socio-political/cultural considerations

- There are also connections between landscape and political commentary, ala Norway (Hallfred the father) and Iceland (Hrafinkel the son) only maintaining ties by traversing the obstacles the moors represent

In explaining this connection, Icelandic philosopher Guðmundur Finnbogason says, “The characteristics of the nation originate in the intersection of land and people” (qtd. in Wyatt 60).



Nature, landscape, geography, topography, and even architecture...setting in general, “is an analogous lesson that marries matter and mind...the exercise of the will or the lesson of power is taught in every [natural] event” (Emerson194).



Works Cited

Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth & Tiffin Helen. *The Empire Writes Back*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Coupe, Laurence, editor. *The Green Studies Reader: from Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2010

Dodworth, Cameron. "The Mystery of the Moors: Purgatory and the Absence/Presence of Evil in *Wuthering Heights*." *Bronte Studies*, vol. 37, Apr. 2012, pp. 125-35.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." 1844. *Volume B: 1820-1865*, edited by Robert S. Levine, 9th ed., W.W. Norton & Co., 2017, pp. 181-210.

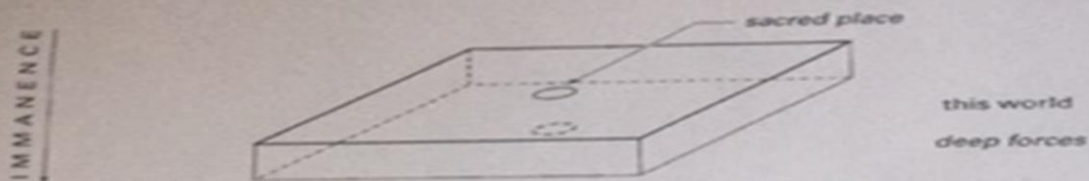
Iverson, David Peter. "Moor Honor: Landscape, Luck, and the Love of Frey in Hrafnkel's Saga." Southern New Hampshire University, 13 Mar. 2018. Manuscript.

Myers, Ben. "Why Writers Treasure Islands." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/may/31/writers-islands-fiction. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

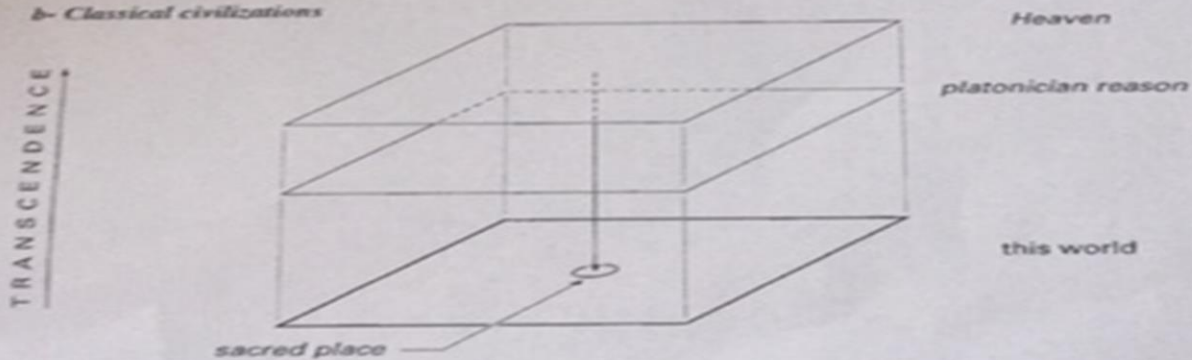
White, Craig. "Romanticism (late 1700s-1800s)." *University of Houston Clear Lake*. Accessed 22 Jan. 2017

Wyatt, Ian. "The Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas: Text, Place, and National Identity." *Landscapes*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2004, pp. 55-73.

a- Before the written word



b- Classical civilizations



c- Modern societies

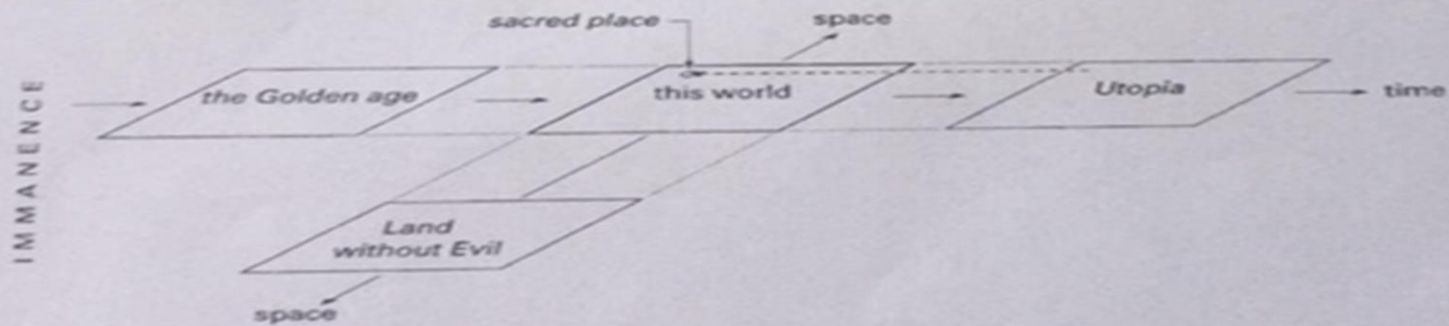


Fig. 1. Topology of this world and other worlds.