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Feeling Like the Colorado River: A Groundwork for Restoration Ecocriticism

Colorado Nehri Gibi Hissetmek: Restorasyon Çevreci Eleştirisi'nin Temelleri

Think like a mountain, urged Aldo Leopold.
Quite so. And feel like a river, says I.
Edward Abbey, *Down the River,* 5

I was born upon thy bank, river,
My blood flows in thy stream,
And thou meanderest forever
At the bottom of my dream.
Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, I, 438

In restoration is the preservation of the world.
Scott Freeman, *Saving Tarboo Creek*, 97

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Abstract

Environmentalism has entered a new phase. For the past three decades, communities around the world have been voicing land, air, water pollution, toxicity, diseases connected to contaminated environments, clearcutting, soil erosion, mountaintop

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removal, and other anthropogenic damages to the environments. Currently, there is action in the most hands-on way. Within the ecological restoration movement, grassroots regreening activities have speeded up and communities are engaged in extensive land healing efforts for land productivity, food security, and human/nature wellness. This article poses the question: what will be the response of the English profession to this new trend of ecological restoration? Although existing ecocritical schools have contributed to environmental awareness broadly, this article proposes the study of literary and cultural texts inspired by landscape and local environmental history for hands-on awareness and engagement. The article defines restoration ecocriticism as the ecocritical study of literary and cultural texts that explore or inspire individual or collaborative community restoration efforts in the degraded lands/waters/marine environments, most often caused by anthropogenic activities. It lays the groundwork of how ecocritics may contribute to restoring the lands/waters/marine environments (and native species) in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration through Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, a landmark text that inspires river restoration in the local areas around the globe.

Keywords: *restoration ecocriticism, restoration ecology, ethical responsibility, Desert Solitaire*

Öz

Çevrecilik yeni bir döneme girmiştir. Son otuz yıldır dünya çapında toplumlar, toprak, hava ve su kirliliği, toksisite, kirletilmiş çevrelere bağlı hastalıklar, ormanların yok edilmesi, toprak erozyonu, dağ zirvesi madenciliği ve diğer insan kaynaklı çevre tahribatlarına dikkat çektiler. Günümüz ise aktif katılımlı çevrecilik faaliyetlerine sahne oluyor. Ekolojik restorasyon hareketi kapsamında toplumların, tabandan gelen yeşillendirme faaliyetlerini hızlandırdığına, daha verimli topraklar,gıda güvenliği ve insan/doğa sağlığı için arazilerin geniş çaplı onarımına dahil olduklarını görüyoruz. Bu makalenin odaklaştığı soru ise edebiyatçıların, söz konusu ekolojik restorasyon konusundaki gelişmelere nasıl yanıt vereceğidir. Varolan çevreci eleştiri ekolleri çevre farkındalığına büyük oranda katkı sağlamış olsalar da bu makale, peyzajlardan ve yerel çevre tarihinden ilham almış edebiyat ve kültür metinlerinin aktif katılımlı çevreciliğe yönelik çalışılması gereğine parmak basmaktadır. Makale restorasyon çevreci eleştirisine bir tanım getirerek bu yeni ekoeleştirel ekolü, çoğunlukla insan kaynaklı toprak/su/denizel alan tahribatı olan yerlerde bireysel veya kolektif restorasyon çabalarını inceleyen, veya bu eylemlere ilham veren, edebiyat ve kültür metinlerinin ekoeleştirel yönden çalışılması olarak ifade etmektedir. Makale, Birleşmiş Milletler Ekosistem Restorasyonu On Yılı'nda, çevreci eleştirmenlerin, toprakların, suların, denizel alanların (ve yerel türlerin) restorasyonuna nasıl katkı sunacaklarına dair temelleri atarak, örneklemeyi Edward Abbey'nin dünya çapında yerel bölgelerde nehirlerin restorasyonunu tetikleyen öncü eseri *Desert Solitaire [ÇöldeTek Başına]* ile göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *restorasyon çevreci eleştirisi, restorasyon ekolojisi, etik sorumluluk, Çölde Tek Başına*

In the first year of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, I present my vision of a restoration ecocriticism, and hope that this new component becomes a future focus in ecocritical scholarship, a useful source to draw attention to many threatened areas caused by human-induced environmental degradation, poorly-planned economic development, and other ills, which in turn may foster land restoration in such places around the globe.[1] From the shrinking Aral Sea in Central Asia, to the global river ecosystems, from the diminishing wildlife habitats, to degraded forests around the world, there is an urgent need to re-establish the disrupted lands through collective collaborative action. The restoration efforts in degraded lands, such as Kenya's influential Green Belt movement[2] to India's current initiative to restore 26 million hectares of land (by 2030), are road maps for building resilience across the earth. As E. O. Wilson stated, "There can be no purpose more enspiriting than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us" (*The Diversity of Life*). The father of ecological restoration, Aldo Leopold had stated, "The time has come for science to busy itself with the earth itself. The first step is to reconstruct a sample of what we had to start with" ("Arboretum and the University" 211). Continuing the Leopold family legacy, Scott Freeman, in his timely nature writing book, *Saving Tarboo Creek* (2018), on community-based restoration, stated, "In restoration is the preservation of the world" (97). These forceful calls explain why I wish to add a restoration ecocriticism dimension to environmental criticism. The restoration ecocritic, with deep sympathy for the losses, may have an important role to play. From Freeman's *Saving Tarboo Creek,* on the reforestation of the Tarboo Creek watershed on Washington's Olympic Peninsula,[3] to Freeman House's *Totem Salmon,* on the restoration of the Mattole watershed in northern California, to Mustafa Sarı's *Vazgeçme* [Do Not Give Up], on the revival of the pearl mullet for a healthy Lake Van in eastern Turkey, ecocritics may be inspired to search for texts on similar community restoration efforts of degraded lands, species, and wildlife across the earth. Equally important for ecocritics will be fiction/nonfiction texts on individual restoration efforts, from past to present, such as Jean Giono's *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1954) and James Barilla's *My Backyard Jungle* (2013),[4] eye-openers for the value of restoring lands. Moreover, many texts that take up degraded waters, such as Edward Abbey's monumental *Desert Solitaire,* can be considered within the scope of restoration ecocriticism as, over the years, they inspire and lead to various restoration efforts, such as the ones promoted by the Glen Canyon Institute.[5]

In view of the ecological restoration movement that has gained attention across the world,[6] it is likely that the literary scholar will also join the movement. Texts, past and present, that narrate actual or imaginary restorationist endeavors in the local regions, and touch our hearts, may become the new passion of the ecocritic who is in search of an interactive way of responding to environmental devastations around the globe. The fact that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021-2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration[7] points at this urgency.

In an article I published in 2009, I'd coined the term "restoration ecocriticism."[8] My decision was prompted by a resolution from the delegates of the 6th World Wilderness Congress (Bangalore, India, 1998) who called on the United Nations to declare the 21st

century as "The Century of Restoring the Earth." Now I wish to introduce how we might utilize texts on restoration, or texts that inspire restoration, both fiction and nonfiction, to protect and to restore our wounded lands and waters, to help initiate ecological restoration in some degraded landscapes around the globe. This may help to turn the tide, and reverse the Anthropocene. In view of the magnitude of current environmental devastations, embracing a restoration ecocriticism has become more than an urgency for the environmental humanities scholar. Heartfelt narratives of restoration, in fiction and nonfiction, may help spread the significance of the ecological restoration movement to diverse communities. This article, then, lays the groundwork for a new school within ecocriticism, a restoration ecocriticism, utilizing Abbey's plea for the restoration of Glen Canyon, in his monumental *Desert Solitaire.*

Desert Solitaire **as text that inspires restoration: Remembering Glen Canyon**

Environmental challenges are many-layered and complex but some warrant more attention than others. Disruption in the life of rivers, the veins of the planet, is one of them, in view of the ages-long reciprocal relations between rivers and communities. The examples of such ecosystem disruptions from around the world are numerous, the Colorado River being one of the most conspicuous, a river that has been over-used along its entire course, from the Colorado Rocky Mountains, through Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California and Mexico, before reaching the Gulf of California, its home.[9] Among American nature writers, Edward Abbey witnessed the "damming of every wild river,"[10] and the Colorado River's predicament formed an important place in his oeuvre.

Let us consider Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* as a text that is prompting ecological restoration. When Abbey published his nature writing classic *Desert Solitaire,* a colossal dam, rising 700 feet above bedrock within the steep walls of Glen Canyon had been established on the Colorado River in northern Arizona. It was constructed, in public discourse, to provide for the water and power needs of millions of people in the West. Full of emotions, Abbey had rejected the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, for Glen Canyon was "a living thing, irreplaceable" (*DS* 189). The dam was a "transforming event" in his life.[11] He had ridiculed the "impounded waters" of Lake Powell, the "reservoir" that came into being by flooding the Glen Canyon, a lake that has 2000 miles winding shoreline.[12] As Abbey narrates in *Desert Solitaire*:

> "This reservoir of stagnant water will not irrigate a single square foot of land or supply water for a single village; its only justification is the generation of cash through electricity for the indirect subsidy of various real estate speculators, cottongrowers and sugarbeet magnates in Arizona, Utah and Colorado" (188).

These words are from "Down the River" chapter*,* which narrates Abbey's experience of the river before Glen Canyon Dam was put into place. In fact, he had memorialized his rafting down Glen Canyon from the Colorado River before the completion of Glen Canyon

Dam.[13] In his narration of the trip through Glen Canyon, all the way to the dam construction site, he is immensely critical of the federal government; he fills the pages with the spectacular scenery that he witnesses with his rafting mate, and their anger for the canyon's fate… soon it would be submerged under 400 feet of water. For him: "Surely, no man-made structure in modern American history has been hated so much, by so many, for so long, with such good reason, as Glen Canyon Dam."[14] Thirteen years after the publication of *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey delivered a speech, at this much "hated" construction site, which he titled "Remarks, Glen Canyon Dam, Spring Equinox 1981," and in this speech, he predicted, with sarcasm, its future demise. Abbey stated:

> "We are gathered here today to celebrate three important occasions: the rising of the full moon, the arrival of the Spring Equinox, and the imminent removal of Glen Canyon Dam. I do not say that the third of these events will necessarily take place today. … Glen Canyon Dam is an insult to God's Creation, and if there is a God he will destroy it. And if there isn't we will take care of it, one way or another, and if we don't then Mother Nature most certainly will. Give her a few more centuries and the Colorado River will fill Lake Foul (*Lale Powell*) with mud. … The collapse of Glen Canyon Dam is as inevitable as the rising of the moon, or the revival of spring, or the flow of the river home to the sea" (quoted in Philippon, 163).

Significantly, in *Desert Solitaire,* Abbey condensed the three seasons as a park ranger with the National Park Service (1956, 1957, 1965) into one season which actually overlapped with the construction years of Glen Canyon Dam (1956-1966). Abbey's return to the Arches, in 1965, to complete his explorations of the Colorado Plateau resulted in his nature classic *Desert Solitaire* in which he voiced his ultimate concern: let the desert remain wild with its free-flowing Colorado River .[15]

Disturbances to the Colorado River ecosystem

Desert Solitaire awakened many readers to just how much damage was being done, for business interests, to public lands and waters. In "Down the River," Abbey celebrates John Wesley Powell, the explorer and conservationist, the first man who rafted down the Colorado before the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, and whose name was irrespectfully given to the gigantic reservoir.[16] This is how Glen Canyon, "a portion of earth's original paradise" was named by Powell:

> "On the walls and back many miles into the country, numbers of monument-shaped buttes are observed. So we have a curious ensemble of wonderful features -- carved walls, royal arches, glens, alcove gulches, mounds and monuments. From which of these features shall we select a name? We decided to call it Glen Canyon" (Powell, 32).



Fig. 1 Glen Canyon Before Flooding, 1898. Credit George Wharton James.[17]

Cecil Kuhne, in her book *River Master: John Wesley Powell's Legendary Exploration of the Colorado River and Grand Canyon,* remarks that at the time of Powell's expedition (1869) "Colorado Plateau remained the largest unknown region of a rapidly developing America, and much of this sprawling expanse was truly terra incognita" (xiv). Yet, destruction started soon afterwards. William Smythe, known as the founder of the national reclamation movement at the end of the 19th century, and for whom nature had no value in and of itself, was on the side of "colonial expansion at home," "a policy of peaceful conquest over the resources of a virgin continent" (3). In his *The Conquest of Arid America* (1900), which reflects his instrumental reasoning, Smythe said, Colorado River is flowing uselessly through the desert. Thinking "irrigation is a miracle" (40), Smythe proposed to improve the river's efficiency. For him irrigation should be a national movement in the service of turning the desert into green lands. Smythe said,

> "The enormous water supply which now flows uselessly to the Gulf of California through the channel of the Colorado River must be extensively availed of in time" (Smythe, 240).

His prophesies were fulfilled with numerous dams, spanning the 20th century, with first large scale diversion of Colorado river water in 1901 which gave birth to California's Imperial valley. As Donald Worster explained, "The big dam building era, however, did not really start until the 1930s, under the New Deal of President Franklin Roosevelt" ("Attitudes toward Water"). What follows is the technological conquest of the Colorado River in the seven states of the Colorado River basin. Following the Hoover Dam, in the Black Canyon of the Colorado River in 1936, dozens of dams were constructed in the 20th century. In the opening of Glen Canyon Dam, First Lady of the US, Claudia Taylor Johnson, stated: "America is entering a new era of wise water conservation."[18] This mentality linking water and power was

to turn urban life more comfortable and prosperous for millions. But, there was also regret over the years. David Brower, the executive director of the Sierra Club from 1952 to 1969, had proposed the Glen Canyon, upstream on the Colorado River from the Grand Canyon, for the construction of a dam, who later admitted that it was a big mistake. As John McPhee explaines, in "Conversations with the Archdruid,"

> "David Brower believes that the dam in Glen Canyon represents the greatest failure of his life. He cannot think of it without melancholy, for he sincerely believes that its very existence is his fault" (McPhee, 1971: 163).

At the time, Brower was actually trying to save Dinosor National Monument from being flooded by a dam. For him, Glen Canyon, the heart of the Colorado River, should have remained untouched, and he remained a strong supporter of draining Lake Powell Reservoir and restoring Glen Canyon for the rest of his life.[19] In "Let the River Run Through It," Brower stated,

> "Whatever Lake Powell's water losses turn out to be, the draining of the lake simply has to happen. The river and the regions dependent upon it, including Baja California and the Gulf of California, can no longer afford the loss of water."[20]

Nevertheless, Colorado River and its tributaries, are now controlled by an extensive system of dams and reservoirs, for agricultural irrigation as well as supporting millions of people in 7 American States. Lake Powell is now filled, in Abbey's words, with motorboats, "scumming the water with cigarette butts, beer cans and oil, dragging the water skiers on their endless rounds, clockwise" (Abbey, 1971: 188). A river "largely unchanged through eons of history" (McNeese, 4) but devastated within half a century, is awaiting urgent restoration so that the river and its Delta in Mexico, parched and withered, regain their past glory. Now is the time to revere the sacrality of the once mighty Colorado river, and highlight, once again, its predicament to include it to a movement, around the world, that is gaining momentum—granting legal rights to natural phenomena, including rivers, lakes and mountains. Herein lies the significance of Abbey's feelings of sempathy to a river, a "living thing," which was indeed fundamental to his morality.

Feeling like the Colorado River

When Abbey(1982) stated, "Think like a mountain, urged Aldo Leopold. Quite so. And feel like a river, says I," (5), he was thinking of the river as a metaphor for life, drawing a parallel between the river and the bloodstream, and making a plea for a river's moral considerability. To replace Leopold's more rational stance (as an ecologist), Abbey was thinking of the circulation in our veins, and the river's circulation, "the lifeblood of mother earth,"[21] and proposing to sympathize with natural phenomena.[22] Abbey was thinking that a river might be within ethical considerability just by being alive. During the 150 mile down the river, as narrated in "Down the River" chapter of *Desert Solitaire*, he unofficially grants personhood to the Colorado River.

Although the immediate context is the "canyon World," he wishes to sanctify the river all the way from its headwaters to its home in the Delta:

> "Heart of the whole and essence of the scene is the river, the flowing river with its thin fringe of green, the vital element in what would be otherwise a glamorous but moon-dead landscape. The living river and the living river alone gives coherence and significance and therefore beauty to the canyon World" (227-228).

In "Down the River" chapter, Abbey depicts the river voyage as a voyage through paradise. As he narrated, "I saw only a part of [Glen Canyon] but enough to realize that here was an Eden, a portion of the Earth's original paradise" (189).[23] Rafting on the river Abbey stated, "we are indeed enjoying a very intimate relation with the river: only a layer of fabric between our bodies and the water" (191). The river that "bears us quietly along" (197) and that "has no false pride" (199) looms larger than life and gives life to the entire Colorado plateau. Thus is born Abbey's sentiment of a river as a being worthy of moral consideration and not as a resource to exploit for economic development. His years at the Arches National Monument which laid bare a vast landscape as far as the eye can reach made the Colorado River itself the desert's solitaire… the jewel that was giving meaning to the entire Colorado Plateau.

> "The view is open and perfect in all directions except to the West where the ground rises and the skyline is only a few hundred yards away. Looking toward the mountains I can see the dark gorge of the Colorado River five or six miles away, carved through the sandstone mesa, though nothing of the river itself down inside the gorge" (5).

These lines from the very first pages of the book suggest that his *Desert Solitaire* was penned not only for the restoration of Glen Canyon, but the restoration of the entire Colorado River, a more-than-human river that has the right to be protected in its entirety. As "sole inhabitant, usufructuary, observer and custodian," Abbey felt love and respect for the river that eclipsed any desire for an intrumental outlook. Abbey, in his "Down the River with Henry Thoreau," significantly referred to Thoreau's dictum, "In wildness is the preservation of the world" (468). This living river that flowed for eons, that brought life to its banks, and to the Delta, indeed had every right to reach its Home—the sea.

The Colorado River delta: Past and present

The Colorado River delta was once a lush network of wetlands. One only needs to read "The Green Lagoons," one of the Chihuahua and Sonora essays in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, on the Delta's breathtaking past life—the lands that the waters of the Colorado River once flowed into. When Leopold first took a boat trip in the Delta of the Colorado River in 1922, he was awed by the scenery of the entire region. "'He leadeth me by still waters' was to us only a phrase in a book until we had nosed our canoe through the green laggons. If David had not written the Psalm, we should have felt constrained to write our own," he wrote in "The Green Lagoons" (*Almanac,* 142). In the Delta, Leopold was also amazed with the abundance of wildlife. "A verdant wall of mesquite and willow separated the channel from the thorny desert beyond," he stated. "At each bend we saw egrets standing in the pools

ahead, each white statue matched by its white reflection. Fleets of cormorants drove their black prows in quest of skittering mullets; avocets, willets, and yellow-legs dozed one-legged on the bars; mallards, widgeons, and teal sprang skyward in alarm" (142). During the boat trip that Leopold took with his brother, awed with ecosystem health, and never imagining the magnitude of the destruction in the years to come, he wrote: "The river was everywhere and nowhere."[24]



Fig. 2 Aldo Leopold with his brother, at the Colorado River Delta, 1922. Courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation and University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives.

For Leopold, this splendor had to live perpetually, but he also had deep mistrust in the market economy that would sooner or later devastate the stunning beauty of the Delta. In "The Green Lagoons," emotion laden he wrote, "I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in" (148-149). Today, we watch with dismay, the dying breath of the Delta, once comprising over 2.5 million acres of wetlands. We read about the native vegetation that provided habitat for over 300 species of plants and wildlife. We hear the laments of the Cocopah Indians who dwelled along its shores, thousands of them, and made a life from the ecosystem by fishing, hunting and farming. Following a century long human impact filled with ecocatastrophes, the waters that flowed for millions of years from the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of California, in Mexico, do not reach the sea any longer. This paradise that the Colorado River flowed into, and Leopold was afraid to turn back, is a parched delta, a wasteland, today.[25] A century long private interests and energy development with massive dams, Hoover and Glen Canyon dams being top destroyers, disrupted the life breath of the Colorado River turning the river's end in the Gulf of California into a "dead ecosystem."[26]



Fig. 3 Colorado River Basin. Dams and diversions. Used with the permission of *The Colorado, LLC.*

One day, the waters of the once mighty Colorado River may finally reach its Delta after a century of desacralization, and the parched Colorado River Delta may gain its waters back. But there is a need for a whole-river consciousness that Abbey cried out with his *Desert Solitaire.*



Fig. 4 Colorado River delta today. Photography Murat Eyuboglu.



Fig. 5 Tidal waters of the Colorado River delta today. Photography Murat Eyuboglu.

Laying the groundwork of restoration ecocriticism

Environmentalism has entered a new phase; now there is action in the most hands-on way. Grassroots restoration activities are soaring, especially in the U.S. where communities are engaged in land healing efforts, in "land doctoring" in Leopold's terms. [27] Let me give my definition first: restoration ecocriticism is the ecocritical study of literary and cultural texts that explore or inspire individual or collaborative community restoration efforts in the degraded lands/waters/marine environments, most often caused by anthropogenic activities.[28]

What will be the distinctive features of this new ecocritical school? First, as restoration ecocriticism will aim to reverse the degradations on local lands/coastal waters/ecosystems, hope will replace despair in ecocritical scholarship. Wangari Maathai's words, in the "Foreword" to the twentieth anniversary edition of Jean Giono's influential narrative on restoration, *The Man Who Planted Trees,* explains best. With reference to the Green Belt Movement, she stated,

> "Like the narrator of *The Man Who Planted Trees*, I saw human communities restored along with nature. ... Human beings cannot thrive in a place where the natural environment has been degraded" (viii).

Dealing with texts, fiction or nonfiction, that restore human communities along with the restoration of nature will be the defining feature of a restoration ecocriticism, then.[29] When the Leopold family began planting pines and prairie on their sand farm, they were healing the land. As Leopold's daughter Nina Bradley Leopold remarked, they were also healing themselves.[30] Second, natural history will become an integral part of this new ecocritical subfield. The restoration ecocritic will pay special attention to the lands before and after anthropogenic damage. Nature writing on community ecological restoration projects, such as Freeman House's *Totem Salmon* or Scott Frieman's *Saving Tarboo Creek,* describe the long, patient process of restoring damaged landscapes/rivers/waters back to their original healthy states. The texts ultimately teach the value of rebuilding natural habitats, and restoring native species. Third, the restoration ecocritic will connect individual or collaborative community restoration projects to sustainability in the local areas. Exploring *Totem Salmon,* for instance, restoration ecocritic will connect the narrative on the activities of local communities on the Mattole River watershed of northern California to sustainability.[31] As Freeman House narrates in *Totem Salmon*, two decades long restoration in the Mattole Watershed has contributed to community well-being and local livelihoods.[32] Finally, highlighting hands-on involvement on restoration projects will lead to greater ethical responsibility.[33] One only needs to read the articles in the *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* (2017), to realize the value of restoring what has been lost.[34] This new ecocritical school will lead to the recovery of hundreds, perhaps thousands of places of misery, and thus, to the salvation of the planet. In "A Roundtable Discussion on Ecocriticism," I'd stated:

> "Ecocritics need to step outside the classroom and be a connector, i.e., there should be a "tangible" problem—awaiting urgent solution—for ecocritics, and their essays should take up this real problem. The ecocritical pen should hit the target. For me this is what ecocriticism is. The blunt truth is today there is no place on earth that has not seen devastation. In my country, numerous wetlands have been drained, rivers have been polluted, soil erosion is a massive problem, woodlands have been clear-cut, marine ecosystems have been devastated, fisheries have collapsed, past biodiversity has vanished, our waterbirds have left our skies…. There are hundreds of diminished areas in Anatolia that need to be taken up by Turkish ecocriticism so that recovery efforts can possibly take place. A restoration ecocriticism I'm talking about has the potential to transform the field" (461).[35]

I follow Cheryll Gloftelty's lead in listing some questions.[36] Restoration ecocritics will ask questions such as the following for texts featuring/impacting restoration practices:

*In what ways is the author keeping the memory of diminished landscapes/waterscapes/ wildlife alive?

*How does the author draw attention to before and after states of the damaged environments / endangered species?

*Was the restoration area devastated because of human impact / natural causes?

*What reasons are given for the need to restore the land/wildlife/the species?

*Is restoration done by individuals or by community involvement?

*What are the ways in which community-based restoration activities develop in devastated areas? How does the community act as a team?

*Is there a keystone species in the literary work? Which native species got extirpated?

*What narrative strategies inspire ecological restoration in the literary work?

Addressing these questions in lierary and cultural texts may create an awakening for local lands with similar disturbances. With the impact of a restoration ecocriticism approach, hope may arise for their recovery. *Desert Solitaire* is ultimately a text that inspires ecological restoration. Abbey underlines damage to a section of the Colorado River ecosystem in such a forceful way that watershed restoration (in the Delta) has started; and dam removal projects in its course will soon follow. The river's Delta itself is making the call to bring health to the river and its tributaries.

The Colorado River's restoration is an urgency

Greatly altered by human activity, much of it barren mud or salt flat, and a waste waterway, the Colorado River Delta has been calling its waters back. The nature lovers would like to see the Colorado River granted legal personhood, much as the legal personhood of the Whanganui River in New Zeland, third largest river in the country.[37] A first in the world, the Whanganui River is being protected, in its entirety, by the law, but one only needs to remember that the conceptual foundations of a river's personhood were thrown by Abbey decades ago. In Abbey's

estimation, reaching its home was the most natural right of a living river. He used his pen to help masses of people acquire this mindset so that effective restoration could take place. Getting to the root of the problem, Abbey suggested the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam and the draining of Lake Powell in his *Desert Solitaire,* a guidebook for all the bloodstreams of the world. Today, following many adverse environmental consequences, there are debates on the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam and draining Lake Powell which will help bring the river and its delta back to life. It will be a giant step towards the personhood of the Colorado River that has been draining away somewhere in the Mexican border.[38] Pseudo-restoration efforts in the Delta are ineffective as there is very little water that reaches the Delta.[39] This topic has been widely researched by historians and other scholars, but a recent documentary, *The Colorado,* shows the magnitude of the devastation in the Delta.[40] As Murat Eyuboglu, the director of *The Colorado*, explains, purchasing the "water rights" from the farmers in the Delta, then using this water in the restoration areas remains ineffective as the amount of water that reaches this area is less than 1% of its original (0.6%).[41] In any case, in the Delta region, there are five restoration areas that are actively involved in the healing, involving the participation of stakeholders.[42] But for real healing to take place, bold dam removal projects are needed for the multitude of dams on the Colorado River's path. This will revitalize habitats along the riverbeds, and lead to a strong base flo . The region wants its bloodstreams restored back to their health and Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* is, still, right in the middle of this restoration debate to recognize the value of a free-flowing Colorado Rive .

Today, following many adverse environmental consequences, it has become an urgency for local decision makers that legal rights are extended to the Colorado River, to be followed first by the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam and the draining of Lake Powell. This would be in line with actions that have been happening in other parts of the world—granting legal rights to natural phenomena, including rivers, lakes and mountains.[43] The waters of the once mighty Colorado River may finally reach the Sea after long decades of desacralization, and the parched Colorado River Delta may gain its waters back in "the century of restoring the earth."[44] The force of literature has been great in water decisions.[45] Now, in the midst of controversy, the force of *Desert Solitaire* will be even greater in announcing the personhood of the Colorado River, that it is a living being, not a waterway for ecosystem services.

Abbey's deep sympathy with the pains of the meandering river now makes us optimistic about all future restoration efforts in its path. The Arches National Monument has become an aesthetic indicator, a keystone location, a gemstone that gives meaning to the entire Colorado River Watershed. From this vantage point, the sublime slickrock, that is onlooking the Colorado River and its tributaries, Abbey has been spreading his message for the region, a disinterested look for the vast landscapes of the Colorado Plateau that otherwise would be open for more "development," for more mining and drilling.

With dreams of restoring the canyon,[46] Abbey's eco-warriors in his *The Monkey Wrench Gang* wanted to blow up the Glen Canyon Dam. Their fictitious project failed, but dam removal projects are alive and well in the US.[47] Abbey's three seasons as a ranger at Arches National Monument, in Utah, is exemplary to an entire nation, to all the countries

on the earth planet, at the moment. A set of values on the rivers, telling us how to lead an ethical life with our waters, our watersheds, our environments is becoming more forceful. Detesting the commercialization of the lands, Abbey asked how much "development" must we have to be content, and changed people's perception of the entire Colorado River watershed that defines the American West. Convinced that natural phenomena have purpose and personhood, and that we have ethical obligations to all of these entities, he made his readers re-value these vast landscapes and waterscapes, and made a plea for a renewed relationship with the Colorado River long before the advent of officially granting legal rights to natural phenomena around the globe.

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration could not have come at a better time. The ecocritic will hear its "global rallying cry to heal our planet," and delve into new research on restorationist themes in literary and cultural texts. This may become a new hope for the earth's life support systems that have been disrupted for decades.

Endnotes

1 It is widely acknowledged that 25 percent of the earth's total land area has been degraded, and that land restoration is the remedy. See, for example, the GEF website: https://www.thegef.org/topics/land-degradation

2 See the website at: http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/

3 Land restoration is a family legacy initiated by Aldo Leopold. Scott Freeman and his wife, Susan Leopold Freeman, with thousands of local peoples of the region, have been restoring the Tarboo Creek watershed that has been exposed to massive deforestation between 1880 and 1930.

4 In *My Backyard Jungle*, Barilla connects individual restoration efforts with "a culture of coexistence" (p. 480, ebook). See also Tallamy's *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard* (2020) on the need "to restore nature to our home landscape" (p. 94, ebook).

5 See the website of Glen Canyon Institute ("dedicated to the restoration of Glen Canyon and a free flowing Colorado River") at https://www.glencanyon.org/restoring-glen-canyon/

6 See Paddy Woodworth's book, *Our Once and Future Planet: Restoring the World in the Climate Change Century*, "an eight-year journey into restoration, through a series of encounters with individuals and cultures, with species and ecosystems and landscapes, and with ideas in ferment" (1) exploring ecological restoration projects in different parts of the world.

7 See https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/. For the "Resolution" adopted, also see https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/284.

8 See Özdağ, "An Essay on Ecocriticism in the Century of Restoring the Earth." I'd stated, "Restoration of degraded lands and diminished wildlife populations is the grand legacy of Aldo Leopold. Scott Russell Sanders, in his, 'A Conservationist Manifesto,' has made a forceful call for land restoration, saying 'conservation means not only protecting the relatively unscathed natural areas that survive, but also mending, so far as possible, what has been damaged.' Therefore, I envision embracing what I would like to call a restoration ecocriticism, in the Century of Restoring the Earth. This will give rise to not only conserving lands but also restoring damaged lands" (140).

9 Over its 2,334 kilometres, the Colorado River sustains some 40 million people with 2 million hectares of farmland.

10 See David Gessner, All the Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and the American West, (200).

11 See James Bishop, Jr.'s words in *Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist*, "If there was one transforming event in Abbey's life...it was the construction of Glen Canyon Dam" (122).

12 For Lake Powell, Abbey (1971) ironically stated, "The impounded waters form an artificial lake named Powell, supposedly to honor but actually to dishonor the memory, spirit and vision of Major John Wesley Powell, first American to make a systematic exploration of the Colorado river and its environs" (188).

13 For the time span, see Jared Farmer's words, "Abbey made his river trip in June and early July 1959 when Glen Canyon Dam stood half built" (157).

14 See Daniel J. Philippon's "Edward Abbey's Remarks at the Cracking of Glen Canyon Dam" 165.

15 Abbey had also taken up in his novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) the need to decommission the dam, and free the waters of the Colorado River. In his novel, four eco-warriors make plans to blow up the Glen Canyon Dam. For the reference, see also Özdağ's "Türkçe Baskı için Sunuş" [Introduction to the Turkish Translation], p. 21, in Abbey's *Çölde Tek Başına* [*Desert Solitaire*].

16 John Wesley Powell led two expeditions down the river in 1869 and 1871. See his "The Exploration of Glen Canyon" in *The Glen Canyon Reader.*

17 See information (public domain) at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:A_bend_in_Glen_Canyon_of_the_Colorado_River,_Grand_Canyon,_ca.1898_(CHS-4708).jpg

18 For the reference, see the documentary, *The Colorado*, directed by Murat Eyuboglu, script by William deBuys and Murat Eyuboglu.

19 See "David R. Brower Conservation Award" at https://www.glencanyon.org/the-david-r-brower-conservation-award/

20 See Brower's "Let the River Run Through It" at https://vault.sierraclub.org/sierra/199703/brower.asp

21 See the use of the term in Coleen A. Fox et al., "'The river Is Us; The River Is In Our Veins': Re-defining River Restoration in Three Indigenous Communities" (521).

22 On the comparison between Leopold and Abbey, see also Menrisky's words: "One wonders what 'feeling like a river' adds to Leopold's original and influential appeal to a 'deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself,' but at the very least the reference reinforces the fact that Abbey, in his patch of desert, replaces or overlays social mores with ecological forces" (63).

23 See Farmer's words, "the draft of 'Down the River' went by the title 'A Last Look at Paradise.'" (157-158)

24 Leopold wrote, "It is the part of wisdom never to revisit a wilderness, for the more golden the lily, the more certain that someone has gilded it. To return not only spoils a trip, but tarnishes a memory" (141).

25 Now the memory of this river is celebrated in *The Colorado*, a documentary by a Turkish film director, Murat Eyuboglu, giving a powerful environmental message with stunning aerial views of the devastation in the Delta. As narrated in the documentary, starting from the construction of the Hoover Dam (1936), Between the years 1890 and 2013, dozens of dams were constructed.

26 See Glenn et al., who stated: "It is sometimes assumed that the Colorado River delta is essentially a dead ecosystem" (1176).

27 In 1935, Leopold published an article in *American Forests:* "Coon Valley: An Adventure in Cooperative Conservation." With references to the Coon Valley Erosion Project, he gave a powerful message to the locals, on how to "rebuild" the Coon Valley. Emphasizing collective collaborative community action, Leopold launched the field of ecological restoration.

28 For my earlier article on restoration ecocriticism, See Özdağ, 'Evrim orkestrasının trompeti' turnalar: Bir restorasyon çevreci eleştirisi uygulaması [Cranes are the 'trumpets in the orchestra of evolution': A restoration ecocriticism approach]. 137-149.

29 Leopold's daughter, Nina Bradley Leopold, narrate in the *Green Fire* movie, that restoring the shack pulled the family together. See at https://www.aldoleopold.org/teach-learn/green-fire-film/

30 Nina Leopold Bradley's reference is to the Leopold family. Ecological restoration has become a family tradition. Scott Freeman and Susan Leopold Freeman's new book, *Saving Tarboo Creek*, shows that this passion for restoration is alive and well. Freeman and his wife Susan, Aldo Leopold's granddaughter, have been restoring a property in the Pacific Northwest

31 Mattole River watershed communities collaborated for two decades to bring back the Mattole Salmon back to the river's tributaries.

32 Freeman House was the founder of the Mattole Restoration Council. His nature writing text, *Totem Salmon*, is a monument both to the ecological restoration movement and to restoration ecocriticism.

33 See A. Carl Leopold's "Living with the Land Ethic" on ecological restoration leading to "a personal sense of ethical responsibility to the natural world" (149-154).

34 See the articles at https://annals.mobot.org/index.php/annals/issue/view/volume102-2 . I am grateful indebted to Dr. Curt Meine for his guidance in the field of ecological restoration. See Meine's words in "Restoration and 'Novel Ecosystems': Priority or Paradox?" in which he evaluates ecological restoration as "serving a land ethic that is itself continually evolving" (224).

35 See my words on ecocriticism in "A Roundtable Discussion on Ecocriticism" in *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*. Eds. Oppermann, Özdağ, Özkan & Slovic. 459-479.

36 See Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," (xix).

37 New Zealand's Parliament has declared in 2012 that the Wanganui has "the same legal rights as a person." The recognition of the river as a "living entity" is a first in the world. See Kennedy Warne's "A Voice for Nature."

38 For water rights and duties between Mexico and the US, see O'Donnell's "Restoration of the Colorado River: Not a Minute to Spare," 413-448.

39 See Sonoran Institute projects to revive the Colorado River Delta. https://sonoraninstitute.org/

40 See https://www.projectcolorado.com/

41 Director of *The Colorado,* Eyuboglu explains the "water rights" in the Delta: The water rights pass on to the son from the father. If you purchase land, you're purchasing it with the water rights. So farmlands, whose water is coming from the Colorado River, are precious. No matter how severe the drought is, water rights are under guarantee for all times." (Personal communication, 16 Nov. 2019)

42 See the video of the Sonoran Institute about their various Delta Program initiatives, about the partnership between Mexico and the USA. https://sonoraninstitute.org/card/colorado-river-delta/

43 After the granting of rights to the Wanganui river, New Zealand granted legal personhood to the Te Urewera forest in 2014. Three years later, legal personhood was granted to India's Ganges and Yamuna rivers in 2017.

44 The reference is to my article, "An Essay on Ecocriticism in the 'Century of Restoring the Earth.'" I refer to the delegates of the Sixth World Wilderness Congress who resolved that the 21st century be announced as the "Century of Restoring the Earth." (139-140)

45 See, for example, Sara L. Spurgeon's article, "Miracles in the Desert," on "the power of literature to move people, to shape discourse" (758).

46 For Abbey's "calling of the restoration of Glen Canyon," (1403), see Laura Smith's "What if Edward Abbey's 'Monkey Wrench Gang' had Succeeded? The Ghosts of Glen Canyon Past, Present, and Future."

47 See the video of Elwha River dam removal at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VipVo8zPH0U

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