

# Greening the Library: The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism

By Loretta Johnson

Over the last three decades, ecocriticism has emerged as a field of literary study that addresses how humans relate to nonhuman nature or the environment in literature. Today, with the development and expansion of ecocritical studies, any line between human and nonhuman nature has necessarily blurred. So when subjected to ecocriticism, literature of all periods and places—not only ecocentric or environmental literature or nature writing, but all literature—is viewed in terms of

place, setting, and/or environment, all of which have taken on richer meaning. Ecocriticism poses a variety of questions: Would a shift toward an ecological perception of nature change the ways humans inhabit the Earth? Do authors impute certain values and make assumptions when they present the environment and nonhuman life in their works? How does one avoid binary oppositions, or should one perceive human nature in an I/it or I/thou relationship?

A rapidly changing theoretical approach, ecocriticism grows out of the traditional approach to literature, in which the critic explores the local or global, the material or physical, or the historical or natural history in the context of a work of art. Such approaches can be interdisciplinary, invoking knowledge of environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies. Though it became a subject heading in the Library of Congress list of “Authorities” in 2002, ecocriticism is not yet listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. However, many words prefixed “eco” are listed, among them “ecofeminism” and “economics.” “Eco,”

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Loretta Johnson is adjunct professor of humanities at Lewis & Clark College.

from the Greek root *oikos*, means “house.” The *OED* cites the German *oecologie* as the first appearance of “ecology” (in 1876), meaning “the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment.” Just as “economy” is the management or law of the house (*nomos* = law), “ecology” is the study of the house. Ecocriticism, then, is the criticism of the “house,” i.e., the environment, as represented in literature. But the definition of “house,” or *oikos*, is not simple. Questions remain: What is the environment? What is nature? Why did the term “environment,” which derives from the verb “to environ or surround,” change to mean that which is nonhuman? Are not humans natural and a prominent environment in themselves? Where and in what does one live? Ecocriticism is by nature interdisciplinary, invoking knowledge of environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies, all of which play a part in answering the questions it poses.

Since 1990, ecocriticism has burgeoned. Today, a keyword search for “ecocriticism” in the MLA Bibliography online produces 422 hits, three-quarters of which are from the last eight years. Ecocriticism has entered academic course

lists worldwide, along with the creation of interdisciplinary academic faculty positions to teach them. Peter Barry added a chapter titled “Ecocriticism” to the second edition of his *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, but correctly claims that ecocriticism has no universal model. Accordingly, he lists “what ecocritics do,” which includes read literature from an ecocentric point of view; apply ecological issues to the representation of the natural world; focus on nonfiction and environmental writing that features “nature”; and show appreciation for ethical positions toward nonhuman nature.

Although of major importance to ecocritical studies, omitted from this essay are works on environmental science, ecology, environmental history, ecological economics, and theology. Instead the essay focuses exclusively on the new practice in this area and includes only the most important works on the relationship between culture and nature relative to ecocriticism. As a result, most of the works discussed here are within the purview of English and American literature studies and literary theory in English departments.

## Essential Texts and Manifestos

SOME ECOCRITICS DATE THE BIRTH OF THE word “ecocriticism” to William Rueckert, who in a 1978 essay titled “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” wrote that ecocriticism entailed “application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.” Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm quite rightly included Rueckert’s essay in their edited volume *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary*

*Ecology*, which, more than fifteen years after its publication, remains a benchmark text in the field because of the passion of its contributors, its scholarly breadth and depth, and the diversity of its essays. In a 1989 Western Literature Association meeting, Glotfelty had urged literary critics to develop an ecological approach to literature, one that would focus on the cultural dimensions of humans' relationship to the environment. At the same meeting, Glen Love delivered a speech titled "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Literary Criticism," and Glotfelty and Fromm included that text in their volume.

Another basic resource that reveals the diversity of ecocritical approaches is *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003*, edited by Michael Branch and Scott Slovic (who is the author of *Going Away to Think*, which looks at ecocritical responsibility). Its nineteen essays cover broad landscapes and are written by top ecocritics in the field. The British counterpart to *The ISLE Reader* is *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, edited by Laurence Coupe, which with its many voices eloquently challenges the notion that nonhuman nature is subordinate to human nature, a belief that is rapidly becoming outdated. The essays in *Green Studies* examine major writers, primarily English, and cover basic genres, making no excuse for political praxis. Like other collections, it makes clear that the perception of the environment in literature is a matter of ethics and survival. Another excellent compilation is *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment*, edited by Michael Branch et al., which comprises essays that take diverse approaches. The essays in Fiona Becket and Terry Gifford's useful collection *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism* focus on the politics of environmental crisis. In their study of environmental issues, the contributors look at texts from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* to the animal stories of German writer Otto Alscher and address a necessary question: what are the goals of ecocriticism at large?

All of Lawrence Buell's work is primary to ecocriticism. His ecocritical approach originated in his outstanding work on Henry David Thoreau, which culminated in 1995 with *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation*

*of American Culture*. In this groundbreaking work, Buell offers four criteria for determining whether a text is environmental: first, "the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device"; second, "the human interest is not ... the only legitimate interest"; third, "human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation"; and fourth, "there is some sense of the environment as a process." Buell went on to write *Writing for an Endangered World*, which, more than any of his other books to date, takes the threats to and concerns about the environmental crisis head on. Here he revokes the dualism between nature and humans and approaches both built and unbuilt nature. He also reaches beyond the American nature writers to diverse and global texts. Another of Buell's books, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, emphasizes as essential and necessary a shift in ecocriticism to study built as well as natural environments. In this manifesto, Buell identifies the environmental movement's forays into English departments as the first wave of ecocriticism, a wave that focused on nature writing, ecocentric texts, and natural history. A product of the revived interest in nature writing in the late twentieth century, first-wave ecocriticism gave way to second-wave ecocriticism, which moves from unbuilt to built environments, from wilderness to urban landscapes, and ultimately all space, including "nonspace" (a blank page may be an environment, just as an office cubicle is an environment). In short, ecocriticism defies a neat paradigm or unified methodology typical of, for example, feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies. In fact, should "the environment" come to be considered everything that surrounds anything, we will have no use for ecocriticism.

But for the present, some political praxis is still associated with ecocriticism. In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard measures this by the extent to which one uses, saves, or ignores the environment. In this sense, this work is in the first-wave category. Published in the "New Critical Idiom" series, Garrard's book is useful in its coining categories of how one positions oneself toward the environment. In Garrard's scheme, most ecocritics would probably identify themselves as "environmentalists" or "deep ecologists." Garrard also categorizes the literary loci of the environment: pastoral, wilderness,

apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the Earth. Along with offering a useful glossary and bibliography, *Ecocriticism* can serve as an introductory textbook in the field. In postmodern studies, the "environment" takes on new meaning. As Garrard points out in a chapter titled "Futures: The Earth," ecocriticism oriented toward nature writing has led to urban and ecojustice revisionism, so much so that he finds it "more productive to think inclusively of environmentality as a property of any text."

Timothy Morton's *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* complements Buell's work by pursuing the nature of nature in ecocriticism. Morton documents the changing definition of the word "nature" and—echoing Buell, to a certain extent—suggests that nature can be anything. Yet ecocriticism, despite its murky borders, continues to be a vibrant and relevant approach to literature, one that promises to stay. *New Literary History*, an online journal that "resists short-lived trends and subsuming ideologies," devoted its summer 1999 issue to ecocriticism, providing a Who's Who and a What's What of the field of ecocriticism as it was then emerging.

Glen Love, a leader in the development of ecocriticism, has been teaching and writing for years with the intent of bringing communication between the natural sciences and the humanities closer together. His *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* nicely outlines the issues that the "two cultures" face together. Love demonstrates the consilience or pattern of universal features in nature predicated by evolution and adaptation that serves as a common subject between these large disciplinary areas. Another essential text promoting interdisciplinary study is *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice*, edited by Annie Merrill Ingram et al. Its scholarly essays address the fluidity of boundaries between environment and literature and expand the limits and theory of identity and location. Presenting and stimulating discourse between literature and the natural sciences, this collection takes the reader beyond place or setting to the specifics of swamps, internment camps, and so on.

In *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment*, editor Steven Rosendale gathers a selection of essays written primarily by professors of American literature. Originating at a 1998

conference titled “Representing Place,” these thirteen essays concern themselves with an approach to ecocritical studies that can be combined with other methodologies. The collection sets up a dialogue between ecocriticism and historicist, feminist, science fiction, and sublime literary studies. Also not to be overlooked is Patrick Murphy’s *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies: Fences, Boundaries, and Fields*. Murphy, the founding editor of *ISLE*, here continues an investigation of ecocritical theory that follows from his previous books—*Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* and *Understanding Gary Snyder*—in which he blazes new trails in teaching about the environment and enlivening syllabi in English classes. Murphy introduces the value of “one anothering” instead of “othering” when one perceives nature and/or wilderness. Ursula Heise also creates new ecocritical perspectives in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*, in which she urges ecocritics to look beyond the immediacy of place and envision the Earth as “our place, our locus,” as a place that deserves loyalty and preservation.

## Precursors to Ecocriticism

MOVING BACKWARD IN TIME TO THE 1960s and 1970s, one finds a number of important resources on what came to be known as ecocriticism. Two titles are especially important: Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* and Raymond Williams’s *The Country and the City*. Marx identifies the machine as the advancement of technology in what was considered by many to be the virgin land of America. This classic in the study of American literature exemplifies the fertile ground that gave birth to ecocriticism in the United States. Williams does the same for Britain, and his book is equally revered. Williams focuses on the urbanism that competes with the bucolic English countryside. Joseph Meeker’s *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* stands not as a precursor but as an early founding text. This groundbreaking work introduces the idea of

literary ecology by emphasizing comedy in a discussion of how the natural world strives for survival. In a chapter on *Hamlet*, he innovatively shows that Hamlet’s doubts are directed not only at the world of humans.

Four more-recent titles stand out. In *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind*, Karl Kroeber paves the way for sane, inspiring prospects for merging the interests between the arts and the sciences. Although he focuses primarily on the British Romantics, Kroeber makes a compelling case for interdisciplinary study of the impact of the natural world and poetic process. In a similar fashion, Jonathan Bate revisits the claims of natural law and natural right by extending and applying them to the nonhuman existence in his *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, which complements Buell’s work on American Romanticism in *The Environmental Imagination*, mentioned above. Ultimately, Bate identifies the possibility for humans to listen to the environment, the song of the Earth, not in lieu of but in addition to themselves in their environment. In his subsequent work, the scholarly yet beautiful *The Song of the Earth*, Bate expands his ecocritical focus on the Romantics to Coleridge, Byron, Keats, and others and debates whether this Romantic notion of nature is a metaphor for the self rather than a tribute to the biotic world. Looking at how to read literature in terms of its relationship to “nature,” major weather, the picturesque and the sublime, dwelling, and human perspectives on nonhumans, *The Song of the Earth* addresses the social liberation of Enlightenment thinking, Cartesian dualism.

Equally important to the revisioning of nature is Carolyn Merchant’s outstanding *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, which traces the Renaissance shift toward patriarchal authority that expunged the female presence in an Aristotelian, god-permeated universe. Merchant closes the chasm between the cultures of the humanities and the sciences by linking the methods of science to the formation of societal norms. Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* seeks changes in perceptions of nature by looking at the forest as depicted in Western culture. And Louise Westling’s *The Green Breast of the New World* traces

the patriarchal view of nature in Western culture from *Gilgamesh* to the present. As an important precursor to ecofeminist studies, Westling’s book followed Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land*, which looks at metaphor and “American life and letters.”

Roderick Frazier Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind*, now in its fourth edition, is a classic study of how wilderness is an idea that needs to be understood before environmentalism can be understood. Nash provides landmark readings of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold. An important follow-up to Nash’s book, Dana Phillips’s *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* foresees the inevitable development of ecocriticism as a completely interdisciplinary study, engaging new debates between the two worlds of science and the humanities.

## Nature Writers and the Literature on Them

ECOCRITICISM DEVELOPED BECAUSE scholars in English departments began to question why nature writing was traditionally poorly represented in course syllabi. Henry David Thoreau has, of course, been the exception, and the excellent recent studies of this canonical writer include *More Day to Dawn: Thoreau’s Walden for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Sandra Harbert Petruionis and Laura Dassow Walls; it includes Robert Cummings’s refreshing ecocritical essay “Thoreau’s Divide: Rediscovering the Environmentalist/Agriculturalist Debate in Walden’s ‘Baker Farm.’” More recent works include, most notably, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, an exposure of the environmental hazards of DDT, which first appeared in 1962 and inaugurated twentieth-century environmentalism. *Silent Spring* continues to be a classic in environmental nonfiction, as do the writings of California naturalist John Muir. Among them is Muir’s *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, which predates Carson’s groundbreaking work by a half century. Ecocritics have scooped up Muir, particularly his campaigns against damming the Hetch Hetchy River in the Sierra Nevada. Terry Gifford’s *Reconnecting with*

*John Muir: Essays in Post-Pastoral Practice* presents Muir as writer of environmental texts par excellence. With Muir as his focus, Gifford demonstrates how to teach an ecocritical approach to literature, and he prefaces each chapter with his own poetry on Muir. In addition to an elucidation of Muir's writings, the book provides pedagogic advice on immersing in and teaching environmental literature, providing a useful map for practicing ecocriticism in the classroom and in literary research.

Those who teach environmental literature will want *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*, edited by Laird Christensen, Mark Long, and Fred Waage, which presents a diverse set of essays that not only address critical approaches—ecocriticism and environmental justice among them—but also provide class plans and innovative ways to teach the work of nature writers and other place-based literature. *Women Writing Nature: A Feminist View*, edited by Barbara Cook, collects interesting essays written about famous and less familiar female nature writers, including Willa Cather and Kathleen Dean Moore, and in doing so shares the varied history and basic tenets of ecofeminism. Mark Allister demonstrates a new use for nature writing in *Refiguring the Map of Sorrow: Nature Writing and Autobiography*, in which he investigates the healing power nature provides to autobiographers suffering grief. He witnesses the values of human relationship with nonhuman animals and natural landscapes in numerous environmental texts by such writers as Terry Tempest Williams, Peter Matthiessen, and William Least Heat Moon.

A seminal contribution to the expansion of the study of nature writing is *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, edited by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace. These essays go beyond the usual suspects to the ideas of wilderness, nature, and the unbuilt environment across (and slightly beyond) the entire span of American and British literature. Treated here are the book of Deuteronomy, Toni Morrison, Virginia Woolf, Chaucer, and science fiction, to select just a few of many individuals and topics.

The Library of America took up the task of bringing together, in one volume, key environmental texts, including excerpts of texts. The resulting anthology, *American Earth: Environmental Writing since Thoreau*,

edited by Bill McKibben (whose *The End of Nature* deals with global warming) and with a foreword by Al Gore, is invaluable. It presents works by the most famous American nature writers, among them Muir, Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Woody Guthrie, Walt Whitman, Leslie Marmon Silko, Barry Lopez, and Barbara Kingsolver. Also included is work by lesser luminaries, for example, Susan Fennimore Cooper, Lynn White Jr., and Mary Oliver.

In an essay of this length, one can only dip into the long list of nature writers; suffice to say their work is more and more incorporated into the classroom. *ASLE* (the online presence of the Association for Study of Literature and the Environment) will be an excellent resource and also provides online access to the *ASLE Handbook on Graduate Study in Literature and Environment*, edited by Dan Philippon et al., now in its fourth edition, updated by Barbara Cook and Tina Richardson.

## Ecocritical Studies in Traditional Fields of Literature

WHEN CRITICS SEEK TO UNDERSTAND the aesthetics, politics, psychology, and/or science of the hegemony of one group over another, their cause diminishes in relation to their success. So too will ecocriticism merge into mainstream studies when the disenfranchised gain and assume authority. If ecocriticism fades away, as happens when scholars succeed in bringing an area of study from the margins into the mainstream, what remains? The reality is that, though we may not call them ecocriticism—a terminology that is already beginning to fall out of use—we will always have critical studies of how the environment is perceived in literature. One example is Robert Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*. In writing this meticulous study of Shakespeare's comedies, Marvel's pastoral lyrics, and the work of other Renaissance writers, Watson entered a brave new world of literary criticism. He shows that ecological concerns were present and assailed at that time, manifested by encroachment on natural resources and refiguring epistemological priorities in creation. Other preeminent ecocritical

works on the traditional English-language canon include Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* (released in the "Accents on Shakespeare" series) and Diane McColley's *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* ("Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity" series), which demonstrates conclusively and with authority that concerns about the environment and its impact on human society (including health) were as central to seventeenth-century poets as they are today.

One of the most fascinating new studies in ecocriticism, *Early Modern Ecostudies: From the Florentine Codex to Shakespeare*, edited by Thomas Hallock, Ivo Kamps, and Karen Raber (and released in the "Early Modern Cultural Studies" series), assembles essays that challenge the limits of ecocriticism not only in terms of arcane subject matter—but for example, it looks at the culture of the early modern cat—but also in looking at the unspoken assumption that human perceptions of nature have been somewhat consistent throughout history. In terms of the general field of poetics, David Gilcrest's *Greening the Lyre* makes a compelling case for the development of an eco-poetics in which nonhuman language lies outside the purview of current studies of poetry.

And finally, turning to film studies, one finds *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns: Ecocriticism in an American Film Genre*, edited by Deborah Carmichael. This interesting collection joins ecocriticism with film studies, frontier writing, and portrayals of the landscapes of the American West.

## Environmental Justice and Related Fields

SOME ECOCRITICS ARGUE THAT TO separate the environment as an isolated phenomenon is to revitalize not only the sovereignty of humans over nature but also the inequities that that sovereignty entails. Accordingly, environmental justice looms large in ecocriticism, and that leads directly to Native American studies. Joni Adamson's important *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* looks at how Native American authors address environmental and ecological concerns. Covering the works of such writers



as Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, and Leslie Marmon Silko, she documents problems in identity, alienation, and ecological landscapes and in so doing delivers an ecocritical study of both past and present Native American culture. In a complementary work, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*, Jake Kosek seeks the nature of the Native American sense of place. He would add “belonging” to Garrard’s topics (as presented in *Ecocriticism*, discussed early in this essay) and merge it with the characteristics of Garrard’s “dwelling.” Kosek asserts that material and “symbolic” nature are factors integral to inequities in race and class in America. *Understories* serves as an informative and contextual source for the dangers of nuclear power and the cooperation necessary to protect the world, as depicted in Silko’s multidimensional, environmental novel *Ceremony*.

Visitors to Washington State University’s *Environmental Justice Cultural Studies* site can find T. V. Reed’s essay “Environmental Justice Ecocriticism: A Memo-festo,” which challenges ecocriticism in terms of environmental justice. Reed questions any study of literature and the environment that does not acknowledge the exigencies of race and class. Reed is also contributor to *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy*, edited by Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, which documents environmental issues as particularly linked to social inequalities.

Those who broaden the term “environment” to include all environs will discover urban ecocritics and their rich study of cities. Essential to the study of urban environments and how they are perceived is *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*, edited by Michael Bennett and David Teague. Looking at literature, film, and poetry, the essays in this collection focus on urban and suburban environments and the cultures that emerge from them.

*Wild Things: Children’s Culture and Ecocriticism*, edited by Sidney Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd, demonstrates that the study of the environment in children’s literature produces important normative conclusions on how humans perceive and treat the environment. Looking at such figures as Walt Disney, Beatrix Potter, Dr. Seuss, E. B. White, and Jim Henson, the authors of these essays hail from a variety of disciplines.

Several books offering ecological treatments of other fields merit mention. Second-wave ecocriticism treats such environments as disease landscapes and medical geography of global disease wrought on environments by colonialism. In his brilliant, original *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*, Alan Bewell looks at the impact colonialism had on infecting native populations and how British Romantic literature reflects that epidemiological crisis. This ecological colonization includes not only smallpox epidemics in the Americas but also long-term psychological and medical effects of colonization in tropical climates worldwide. Bewell identifies these concerns in the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, John Keats, and many others. Another prize-winning book that might not fall under the strict rubric of ecocriticism but will interest all students of language and landscape is Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. In this work of creative nonfiction, Basso (an anthropologist and rancher) explores the lore, lays, and ethnography of ancestral and modern Apache landscapes. Ecocriticism has expanded globally, and Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson offer an African perspective in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Although primarily a collection of literary criticism of key writers and critics, the book includes an ecocritical perspective that cannot be ignored.

Last, in *From Apocalypse to Way of Life* geologist Frederick Buell (brother of Lawrence Buell, discussed above) writes about the “environmental crisis in the American century,” providing a definitive, scholarly account of what is now called “ecopocalypse.”

## Bibliographies, Journals, and Web Sites

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF Literature and Environment (ASLE) is an invaluable source for students of ecocriticism. Founded in 1992 (its one thousand members include twenty-three international affiliates), ASLE “seeks to facilitate interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to the study of nature and culture through forms such as nature writing, art, ecocritical scholarship,

pedagogy, science writing, poetry, music, creative writing, and film, among other forms.” ASLE’s annotated bibliography is now available online, but 1990-97 titles are also available in print. ASLE’s first print bibliography, *Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment: Bibliography, 1990-1993*, ed. by Zita Ingham and Ron Steffens, includes 120 pages of works pertaining to ecocriticism (compiled by Ingham). Since 1993, the bibliography has been available in ASLE’s official journal, *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and Environment: ISLE*, which is now available online. In 2009, this flagship journal (now available through Oxford Journals) went from semiannual to quarterly publication. According to the journal’s Web site, “ISLE seeks to explore the relation between human beings and the natural world, and publishes articles from literary scholars in other fields relevant to ‘literature and environment.’” Its stated goals are “to encourage such scholarship, writing, and teaching, while facilitating the development of a theoretical foundation for these activities.” The ASLE bibliography now contains almost 1,300 entries, not including those collected in the print bibliography between 1990 and 1997. The bibliography draws entries from 194 scholarly sources and institutions related to ecocriticism. *ISLE*’s predecessor, *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* (“a biannual publication devoted to the study of writing on nature”), launched in 1989, is also available online. Other resources available on the ASLE site are the ecocritical library, providing links to articles and online texts; announcements about professional events and conferences; relevant news; and *Handbook on Graduate Study in Literature and the Environment*, a directory of universities and colleges in the United States with graduate programs and degrees in environmental sciences, environmental literature, and human ecology.

The Web site for ALECC—the Association for Literature, the Environment and Culture in Canada, the Canadian offshoot of ASLE—provides links to international ASLE affiliates and resources in Canadian ecocriticism. Its online journal, *The Goose*, has been designed to

complement *ISLE* with articles on Canadian literature. The Australasian Universities Modern Language Association also prints its own journal, *A.U.M.L.A.*, now available online.

Another online bibliography is available at *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature* (Appendix U: "Nature, Ecocriticism, and Ecofeminism"). The ten entries for ecocriticism in American letters (1996-2004) are all discussed in this essay. Other useful new online, peer-reviewed journals include the *Journal of Ecocriticism (JoE)*, launched in 2008, and *Green Theory and Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy* (launched in 2005).

## What Next?

LIKE ANY POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, OR social cause, ecocriticism started out with a simple agenda, which was—more or less—to save the environment. Such a cause as a literary venture includes promoting literature that impacts the environment and serves the agenda. Ecocritics argue that literature that discourages that agenda should be reevaluated under the scrutiny of contemporary concerns. Ecocriticism may well be in its demise already. In their 2004 essay "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World," available through <http://www.thebreakthrough.org/about.shtml>, Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus proclaimed that global warming politics can no longer be a "cause." The environmental crisis requires global change. Ecocriticism, once the literary arm of environmentalism, has evolved into a multidisciplinary approach to all environmental literature, which, if ecocriticism does its work, will be all literature. Period.

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*ASLE: The Association for the Study of Literature & Environment* (CH, May'99, 36-4807)  
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*A.U.M.L.A.: Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association*  
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