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The Ecocritical Insurgency

Lawrence Buell

"Ecocriticism" is a new movement, of the '90s really, still at an early state of unfolding. Although the term was coined twenty years ago, although critical readings of literary texts and movements in relation to ideas of nature, wilderness, natural science, and spatial environments of all sorts have been pursued for the better part of a century, only in the last decade has the study of literature in relation to environment begun, quite suddenly, to assume the look of a major critical insurgency. The "Who's listening?" question that nagged me when I began such work in the late 1980s has given way to "How can I keep up with all that's coming out?" and "Can I even keep track of, let alone stay in touch with, all the players?"

Will this burgeoning of literature-and-environment studies continue? Almost surely so, for at least two reasons. First, the field of application for environmentally-valenced critical inquiry is immense in duration and range. Given that human beings are inescapably biohistorical creatures who construct themselves, at least partially, through encounter with physical environments they cannot not inhabit, any artifact of imagination may be expected to bear traces of that. From this it follows that the scope of the inquiry extends in principle from the oldest surviving literary texts, such as the Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh*, to the literature of the present moment—as is borne out by the sweep of such critical books as Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadows of Civilization* and Louise Westling's *The Green Breast of the New World*, both of which start with *Gilgamesh*.[1] Second, as human civilizations enter the *fin de siècle*, "the environment" looms up as a more pressing, multifarious problem than ever before. If, as W. E. B. DuBois famously remarked, the key problem of the twentieth century has been the problem of the color line, it is not at all unlikely that the twenty-first century's most pressing problem will be the sustainability of earth's environment—and that the responsibility for addressing this problem, or constellation of problems, will increasingly be seen as the responsibility of *all* the human sciences, not just of specialized disciplinary enclaves like ecology or law or public policy.

So literature-and-environment studies are here to stay, no doubt about it. But what has ecocriticism achieved thus far? Where has it succeeded,

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where fallen short? What new directions might it be expected to take? What directions does it need to take in order to fulfill its potential? At different points, the nine essays in this special issue address all those questions, and so will I—in the form of a review of the movement's history, emphases, internal disagreements, and future prospects, with special but not exclusive reference to the essays in the present issue.

Coherence vs. Dissensus: In the Movement, in These Essays

As their heterogeneity attests, to the extent that contemporary literature-and-environment studies can in fact be rightly called "a movement," so far it looks less like, say, New Critical formalism, structuralism, deconstructionism, and New Historicism than like feminist and ethnic revisionism or Gay Studies; for it is on the whole more issue-driven than methodology-driven.[2] Ecocriticism so far lacks the kind of field-defining statement that was supplied for more methodologically-focused insurgencies by, for example, Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* for New Critical formalism and Edward Said's *Orientalism* for colonial discourse studies.

To be sure, it is possible to locate the inception point of the contemporary movement rather precisely: organizationally, as a ferment within the Western Literature Association that put the term "ecocriticism" into circulation, that gave birth to the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, its periodical *ISLE*, and a series of major conferences of increasingly international scope;[3] and substantively, as an inquiry focused especially in the first instance on Anglophone and particularly U.S. nonfiction and poetry about the natural world,[4] an inquiry that, as one can see from the notes of the contributions to this issue, has begun to generate a sizeable secondary literature and with it, perhaps, the beginning of something like an ecocritical canon, upon or against which current work often builds.[5]

Yet the mutual divergence of archives and approaches here is on the whole more striking than the convergences.[6] Jonathan Bate reconceives the represented cultural-environmental life-worlds of Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy as a barometer of nineteenth-century social change that attests to the persistence of an environmentally-aware sense of Englishness based on country life; this essay represents a green-revisionary turn within British traditions of literary-cultural critique that run back from Raymond Williams through F. R. Leavis to ancient roots in Matthew Arnold. More than any other literary scholar, Bate has influenced the rise of British ecocriticism, through his *Romantic Ecology* (1991), but it

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and his later work owe very little to American literary studies. Quite the opposite is true for John Elder, author of one of the influential early contributions of the American phase of the movement (*Imagining the Earth* [1985], recently republished by the University of Georgia Press). Though Elder's interest in reconciling the categories of "nature" and "culture" constitutes an important ground of affinity to Bate's, Elder's long interest in the life and writings of Robert Frost and of American nature poetry more generally, together with his commitment to coordinating formal literary study with the life-practices of environmental immersion and education (always envisaged, as here, in an upcountry New England context), not only give his work a distinctively American turn but also identify him much more closely than Bate with the distinctively anti-institutional thrust of a sizeable number of American ecocriticism's first fomenters and practitioners: the desire to bring academic writing closer to creative nature writing, as well as to environmental(ist) life-praxis, by taking literary study outdoors, *in situ*. Elder aims to discover the basis of Frostian aesthetics in the internalization and reminiscence of agrarian work-rhythms that the ecocritic is to discover not just through vicarious identification or scholastic investigation but also, indeed even more crucially, by reenacting them.

Robert Pogue Harrison, on the other hand, is an American scholar who approaches the poetry of Wallace Stevens in the first instance not as an Americanist but by way of a specialization in comparative literature. Harrison is less an insider to the ecocritical movement than Bate or Elder, or than the author of the one extended treatment of Stevens's environmental thought Harrison cites.[7] Indeed the way Harrison positions himself in an Americanist context is calculated to cause uneasiness among the considerable subset of ecocritics strongly attached to a "deep ecology" model of understanding the bond between nature and the human self in terms of some kind of shared spiritual and/or biophiliac identity. For Harrison cautiously but explicitly distances himself from myths of the primordialism of American wilderness and the correlative assumption in American romantic thinking of an "innermost self" that is primordial nature's "aboriginal correlate."[8] In this respect his essay aligns itself with the thrust of William Cronon's interdisciplinary anthology *Uncommon Ground* (to which Harrison contributed), which makes ancillary use of poststructuralist theory to underscore an argument that Cronon and the other environmental historians whose work is most extensively featured in that volume have been making on empirical grounds: that the "pristine" nature encountered by North American settlers was subject to anthropogenic modification long before the Columbian arrival.

On the other hand, most seasoned ecocritical practitioners are likely

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to take more or less in stride Harrison's critique (and his representation of Stevens's own critique) of primordialist false consciousness or the illusion of an essential "ecological self," both of which Bate and Elder for example would surely recognize as culture-produced myths, although they would probably differ from Harrison in wanting to envisage these myths as potentially more enabling than disabling. The fourth essay, however, by another contributor to *Uncommon Ground*, is written from a critical standpoint that not only differs far more sharply from Elder's and Bate's but from Harrison's as well: consideration of technologies of virtual ecology and of fictions that erase the distinction between physical world and simulacrum as sites of reflection on human perception, negotiation, and manipulation of physical environment. N. Katherine Hayles's conceptual base of operation is the conversation between literary studies and science studies (Hayles holds degrees in both literature and chemistry), from which vantage point it makes sense to start from a presentist view of "the virtual and the natural as aligned," rather than to rotate around the history of their disjunction or the project of recuperating nature in an increasingly virtualized postmodern world order. In this view, "ecology" refers not to the biota but to the systematization of life-regimes by increasingly informatics-driven cultural regimes; and the task of critical reflection is to appraise in light of this awareness "the profound interconnections that bind us all together, human actors and non-human life forms, intelligent machines and intelligent people."[9]

Hayles's departure from Bate's, Elder's, and Harrison's emphasis on landscape-based primary texts against the background of a strong interest in the history of (perceptions of) physical environment cannot but intensify the question as to whether the category of "ecocriticism" is either infinitely ductile or else so porous as to amount to nothing more than an empty signifier. I myself am not at all confident that Harrison and especially Hayles would be so willing to accept classification as ecocritic as the other seven contributors might (not that anyone likes to be stuck in a pigeonhole); but even if their two essays were subtracted from this symposium its internal diversity would still be great enough to warrant a more concerted attempt to specify just what, if any, the movement's internal coherence and outer boundaries might be.

To the question of what ecocriticism "at bottom" means or should mean, at one level there is no avoiding a Humpty Dumpty answer: ecocriticism means what its self-identified and imputed practitioners say it does. Inclusivist definitions have, moreover, often been urged by the movement's most visible proponents. For example, Cheryll Glotfelty's Introduction to the *Ecocriticism Reader* offers a many-mansions definition of ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and

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the physical environment" in any and all ways that these two terms can be brought into relation.[10] Yet it would not be accurate to characterize the movement as nothing more than an infinitely-expanding menu of noncompetitive, happily-coexistent possibilities, nor to suppose that all who have become associated with it (whether by choice or by ascription) feel equally content to let pluralism take precedence over the quest for consensus.

For one thing, a number of the essays in this gathering display strongly normative dispositions. Their perspectives are heterogeneous in the aggregate, but in the individual case they often express a strong sense of conviction about the right way to frame the inquiry. Elder deeply believes that ecocritical education must involve environmental education at the experiential level. This seems at least partially at odds with Harrison's and particularly Hayles's disbelief in the myth of individual rapport with the natural world. Dana Phillips believes so deeply in the disjunction of literary texts from physical worlds that the prospect of a revival of even a qualified version of literary representation as extratextual mimesis seems to him wrongheaded.[11] On the other hand, William Howarth deeply believes that ecocriticism and literary scholarship generally must rest on a better-informed understanding of landscape history and the contributing natural sciences, a position that seems to presuppose some sort of mimetic link between environmentally-valenced literary text and physical landscape.

Some Distinctive Ecocritical Emphases

1.

In different ways, Elder, Hayles, Howarth, Glen A. Love, Phillips, and John Rowlett all proceed from a conviction that informed knowledge of the natural world and/or natural science(s) ought to matter for the practitioner of environmentally-valenced literary studies. This has certainly been one of the major preoccupations within the ecocritical movement, albeit not universally shared or advanced in the same way. Love's essay is perhaps the most instructive formulation of this view in that it is the most comprehensive in scope, positioning itself most self-consciously within an unfolding tradition of ecocritical thought; and since it argues most explicitly for a kind of unified field theory of ecocritical discourse: namely, that ecocriticism should base itself on the model of evolutionary biology, more specifically upon the kind of pandisciplinary, sociobiological syntheses conceived by figures like Edward O. Wilson and Jared Diamond. Love hopefully identifies a counterpart

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trajectory of literary-critical synthesis from the book most often taken by ecocritical insiders to be contemporary ecocriticism's first major statement,[12] Joseph Meeker's recently-republished *The Comedy of Survival* (1974)—an imaginative and venturesome attempt to theorize comedy as an ecological as well as a literary mode, to Joseph Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory* (1995), a recent argument on behalf of conceiving evolutionary biology as a model for literary inquiry. Love's standing as himself an inspirational figure in one of the academic departments in the U.S. so far most committed to a strong ecocritical presence (the University of Oregon—the other two being the University of California at Davis and the University of Nevada at Reno) adds weight to his account.

Although the vision of a new synthesis of literary and environmental studies that would somehow bridge the two cultures has been one of ecocriticism's major projects, it is by no means the only project; nor is the kind of synthetic conceptualization Love favors the only path that the subset of science-oriented ecocritics have favored. Nor do they necessarily privilege the same modes of scientific inquiry. Howarth seems rather to favor bringing humanities and science together in the context of study of specific landscapes and regions; and for him the history of geology is at least as important as that of the life sciences. Rowlett is scrupulous in wanting to preserve due historical and substantive distinctions between the field of ornithology and the disciplines of poesis and criticism, even as he seeks to bring the two domains closer together and gently chides Leonard Lutwack's *Birds in Literature* for failing to draw fully enough upon the author's expertise as birder when doing literary criticism. Hayles begins from a vision of how contemporary literary texts are interpenetrated by technological discourses and how criticism rests on the premise of a very different kind of scientistic approach to the understanding of the production of thought and expression. Thus her commitment to the premise that the natural world, as well as representations thereof, is for all practical purposes produced by technology—now if not always already—is vastly different from Love's premise, shared in different measure also by Howarth and Rowlett, of scientific knowledge as a means for ecocriticism to achieve a more informed recuperation of the natural world.

2.

Another facet of this contrast I have just drawn is that Hayles's approach, broadly speaking, leads to a critical discourse wholly congruent with and indeed likely influenced by poststructuralist models of inquiry, which for Love and to some extent also for Howarth seem

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rather a roadblock to the project of acquiring the scientific understanding needed to redirect critical attention toward literature's engagement with the physical environment. Hence in part the popular association of the ecocritical movement with resistance to theory—an association justifiable up to a point in light of the impetus in some quarters of the movement to emphasize environmental education as the key underpinning of critical practice (either at the experiential level, as in Elder, or at the level of formal learning, as in Howarth, Love, and Rowlett), and/or to montage critical practice with nature writing and other forms of poesis.[13] Yet no less typical of the way the movement has unfolded, indeed increasingly so as time goes on, has been an anxiety to achieve a constructive engagement with poststructuralist thinking and ensuing strands of literary and cultural theory. Thus for example Jhan Hochman's *Green Cultural Studies* develops an environmentalist hermeneutic on the basis of a revisionary cultural constructionist model, and Verena Andermatt Conley's *Ecopolitics* rereads the archive of French poststructuralism as a narrative in which green concerns figured to a much greater extent than has been realized.[14] In the present collection, Christopher Hitt returns to a centerpiece of deconstructionist and New Historicist romantic theory, the conception of the sublime as an armature for the will to linguistic and/or imperial dominance. Hitt gives the formation an ecocentric turn by fixing upon the pivotal moment of blockage or frustration in the face of encounter with nature's alien power that traditional revisionist theory can see only as that which must be repressed or overcome.

Both the endeavor to rebut or contain the antimimeticism of linguistic and cultural constructionist versions of critical practice and more theoretically-driven attempts to turn these models to advantage evince a certain predictable anxiety about the referential properties of literary texts. To me this comes out in an especially telling way (though here I may exaggerate out of personal interest in being the subject of remark) in the resistance expressed cautiously by Hitt and truculently by Phillips to my argument for the importance of a post-poststructuralist account of environmental mimesis: for a critical practice that operates from a premise of bidirectionality, imagining texts as gesturing outward toward the material world notwithstanding their constitution as linguistic, ideological, cultural artifacts that inevitably filter and even in some respects grotesquify their renditions of the extratextual. How hard it is in the present climate of critical opinion to think "mimesis" without going to one extreme or another!—whether it be to want to overprotect ecocriticism against textuality or social construction theory by exaggerating literature's capacity to render factical environments or environmental phenomena, or whether it be to warn us off from trying to reopen

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such an unfashionable subject, or whether it be to want to play down or finesse the issue as Hayles does by placing primary emphasis on artifact, culture, environment as the product of simultaneously interpenetrating technologies. That questions of mimesis, reference, and extratextuality have produced such intense contrary reactions persuades me that even in today's age of "remediation," as Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin wittily call it,[15] this age in which (as Hayles perceives) technologies of simulation interlock the realms of minds, texts, matter *via* their multiply replicative simulacra, even now—indeed perhaps especially now—the ancient question of the mimetic status of literary texts, the relation of image to world, will doubtless remain very much alive within the literature and environment movement. This indeed I should identify as a second major focus of ecocritical work, partially related to yet also in considerable measure distinct from the first, the question of the pertinence of scientific models of inquiry to literary study.[16]

By now it will have become obvious that my preferred approach to sizing up the contemporary ecocritical scene is to create in essay-meditation form a counterpart of the special-issue-symposium genre: that is, to map it as a concourse of interlocking but semi-autonomous projects. So far I have named two. In the interest of conciseness I must now become more briskly schematic.

3. Understanding landscapes, regions, place.

Howarth's essay on (re)imagining wetlands is a luminous and erudite case study of a particular landscape form, considered both ecologically and phenomenologically, all the more valuable on account of the neglect of swamplands as a literary-critical topic, despite the manifest importance of such marginal lands not only in ecological research and environmental historiography but also, as Howarth begins to suggest, in literature as well (Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River," Faulkner's "The Bear," Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, A. R. Ammons's "Corson's Inlet," and so on). Ecocritical study of other landscape types favored by literary discourse are in a flourishing state: for example, mountains, rivers and watersheds, forests, and deserts. Harrison's *Forests* is an exemplary case, and worth setting beside Howarth as instancing the obverse approach of starting with symbolic/ideological topoi rather than with forest ecology or history.

So far ecocriticism has focused overwhelmingly on nonmetropolitan landscapes (as do virtually all the contributors here), but there is no inherent reason why it should continue to do so. On the contrary, the movement can never be expected to reach full critical maturity until it

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has figured out how, as it were, to envisage John Muir and Jane Addams as part of the same narrative. Until this is done, the ecocritical movement will surely remain much more tied than it should to the Euroamerican bourgeois imaginary (nature writing and to a lesser extent nature poetry being to a large extent written by white middle-class authors and consumed by white middle-class readers).

One project of this kind, which Hayles's treatment of *Infinite Jest* illustrates in part, is engagement with post–Rachel Carson literature of toxic anxiety and resistance, which puts greater emphasis than ever before upon the interpenetration of "country" and "city," and dramatizes the presence within the history of urbanization and industrialization of forms of environmentalism that most ecocritics have so far overlooked. Love seems to me absolutely right in suggesting that environmental degradation may prove a key incentive to the growth of a less parochial, more environmentally-informed literary criticism.[17]

This and other landscape-oriented ecocritical work would in the long run promise to give a far richer account than we now have of the placial basis of human and social experience, conceiving "place" not simply in the light of an imagined descriptive or symbolic structure, not simply as social construction, not simply as an ecology, but all of these three simultaneously. Indeed, we are now, I believe, in the midst of a time of intense interest in place theory, to which the ecocritical movement has begun to make important contributions and surely will make more.[18]

4. Questioning anthropo-normativity.

As Love hints in his allusion to a colleague's revisionist reading of *Moby-Dick* on the basis of "the Whaleness of the Whale,"[19] ecocriticism has begun, but only begun, to revisit the archive of literary history with a view to appraising its status both as reinscription and as critique of anthropocentricism. Both Howarth and Rowlett, by the very fact of concentrating as they do on the fascinations of contemplation and mimesis of birds and of wetlands ecology, raise the environmental-ethical question, without greatly developing it theoretically, of the extent to which ecocritical exegesis should take up the issue of literature's sensitivity—or insensitivity—to the history and phenomenon of human dominance of the nonhuman world; and should look for symptoms of autocritique, troubled uncertainty, alternative environmental-ethical models of thinking.

Perhaps the most substantial work of this kind to date, both in ecocriticism *per se* and in such contiguous fields as environmental ethics and cultural studies, has had to do with how human representations of

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animals, and of human relations with animals, unsettle anthropocentric norms.[20] In this critical studies has followed the lead of such prominent nature writers as Barry Lopez ("Renegotiating the Contracts," *Of Wolves and Men, Arctic Dreams*), as well as the (sometimes quite contrasting) work in various genres by Native American intellectuals.[21] Often critical discussions have linked human (mis)treatment of animals and the rest of the natural world to androcentrism, racism, and classicism, sometimes in critiques whose emphasis on humanitarian feeling directed at animals as evasion of social responsibility puts the work altogether outside the pale of what might reasonably be called *eco*criticism,[22] sometimes with a view to diagnosing dominationism as a pathology working across species lines such that, for example, women and animals become conceived coordinately, as analogous vulnerable targets of patriarchal victimage.

A particularly rich vein of ecocritical inquiry has been feminist study of the symptomatics and history of how (mostly male) observers imaged women as "natural" and nature as gendered female, and of how women's imaging treatment of the nonhuman world has differed, historically and across cultures, from men's. It is no coincidence that two of the *Ecocriticism Reader*'s top fifteen recommendations are influential works of this kind (Carolyn Merchant's intellectual/cultural history *The Death of Nature* and Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*, an exposé of androcentric patterns of representation in early American male writers). It is regrettable and misleading that the present collection includes no such work, includes indeed the work of only one woman scholar. For not only was ecofeminism[23] a key influence behind the early phases of the movement—key in directing attention both to gender issues and, more broadly, to all kinds of pathologies in anthropo-normative thinking—it is also the case that important new work continues to be produced that builds more elegantly on earlier findings that had been expressed in too sketchy or tractarian form (for example, Westling's *Green Breast of the New World*) and/or questions and complicates previous binaries (for example, Vera Norwood's *Made from This Earth: American Women and Nature* [Chapel Hill, 1993]). Today the impression seems to be gaining ground in some quarters that feminist scholarship is in retreat. In literature-and-environment studies, however, it is being practiced just as vigorously as ever, and with increasing sophistication.

5. Environmental(ist) rhetoric.

For the most part, the contributors to this symposium choose for demonstration purposes primary texts from the repertoire of what other

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literary scholars would immediately classify as imaginative literature: prose fiction, poetry, nonfiction nature writing. But as Howarth's essay especially suggests, the literature and environment movement has by no means bound itself to this archive but has in fact interested itself in unpacking modes of articulacy across every expressive genre. This is still another way it has sometimes brought together science and literature, as in M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer's *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, a study of conventions of environmental advocacy in both popular and academic genres across the human sciences; and Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown's collection *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, which presents a series of studies focusing largely on particular interest groups and activist projects.[24]

At this point we perhaps seem to have reached, indeed transgressed, the very border of the "literary," and again the nagging question arises of whether, if there is no limit to what might count as "ecocriticism," the term can be said to denote anything substantive. But that would be a shortsighted response. Rather, the foregoing studies of green rhetoric should be seen as testifying crucially (a) to the interdisciplinarity of vision that is or at least always should be at some level present in ecocritical thought even when it is trained exclusively on poems or novels, (b) to the importance for many ecocritical practitioners of the link between literary representations of environment and the realms of social affairs, as well as the realms of science, and (c) to the transferability and pertinence of eco*critical* expertise—the exegetical and conceptual tools requisite to textual analysis—to virtually all aspects of environmental inquiry, whether scientists and public policy experts recognize it or not. That does not mean we should expect Al Gore to sit down and read the last dozen exegeses of the representation of seasonality in Thoreau's *Walden* or Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. But it does mean that ecocritics have every right to believe that if they do their jobs right—not, of course to be taken for granted—they will not only be able to reveal to fellow literature department colleagues some hidden things about even the most familiar and classic works but also have a basis to consider themselves participants in a pandisciplinary inquiry of the first order of historical significance. From the multiple epicenters of this inquiry—through a mixture of collaboration, solitary concentration, and sheer luck—not just new regulatory codes, pharmaceuticals, engineering marvels and the like may ensue but new insights, new revaluations of the physical world and humanity's relation to it, that will make a difference in the way others live their lives. Admittedly nothing is more shocking for many humanists than to find their ideas taken seriously. But it might just happen in this case. That self-identified ecocritics tend

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to be folk who seriously entertain that possibility is one reason why the best ecocritical work is so strange, timely, and intriguing.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1 Robert Pogue Harrisson, *Forests: The Shadows of Civilization* (Chicago, 1992); Louise Westling, *The Green Breast of the New World* (University, Miss., 1996).

2 Ecocriticism also differs from the latter kind of insurgency in that the question of its imbrication with identitarian considerations is (even) more complicated. For one thing, the question of what my "environmental identity" is and how that relates, or does not relate, to my standing to speak *qua* scholar about environmental issues and their relation to human interests is even more problematic—albeit less volatile, since the environment can not talk back—than the question of how, for example, my racial identity does or does not bear on my unpacking of issues of racial representation. For another, and by the same token, if only because literary discourse is so manifestly a product of human agents focused largely on the realm of human affairs and directed exclusively toward human audiences, no matter how salient "the problem of the environment" becomes in the contemporary world, we may expect ecocriticism to experience more extratribal skepticism and intratribal malaise (vehement assertions of its import contending with doubts as to its impertinence or peripherality) relative to critical inquiry directed at aspects of identity located more squarely within the human body and/or the realm of human affairs: gender, race, class, and sexuality.

3 *ISLE* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) features a mix of literary-critical and creative work focused on environmental issues, as do (for example) *Terra Nova*, *Trumpeter*, and *Orion*. Less scholarly in flavor than *ISLE*, however, these journals illustrate more markedly the bridges that many academic ecocritics have tried from the first to form with lay reading communities. Meanwhile, a number of more specifically academic journals in various fields have been hospitable to ecocritical contributions: *Studies in Romanticism*, *American Literary History*, *Environmental History*, *Environmental Ethics*, and so on. This in turn testifies to the exceptionally wide interdisciplinary range of interest shown by ecocritics as a group, from medicine, public health, and engineering sciences to religion, music, and sculpture.

4 This is still too true. Part of the problem is that ecocriticism has not yet discovered how to conceptualize metropolis, on which more below. Part of the problem is that it has not yet become sufficiently cross-national. So far ecocriticism is being practiced most vigorously in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Australia; but not sufficiently in a comparatist spirit, with honorable exceptions like Patrick Murphy (through critical articles and editorial projects) and Scott Slovic (through international symposia he has helped to organize). The untapped opportunities are still much greater than the achievement thus far. For example, India offers distinguished traditions of environmental historiography, ecological science, and environmentalist thought as well as a rich literary archive that engages environmental issues; but ecocriticism has not, so far, tapped very deeply into it.

5 *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, Ga., 1996), pp. 393–402, provides a selected bibliography of recommended books, articles, and journals, including an annotated booklist of "top fifteen choices," a large majority dating from the 1980s or thereafter. Three of our nine essays are by "top-fifteen" authors (Bate, Elder, Harrison), and the *Ecocriticism Reader* also includes essays by Howarth, Love, and Phillips.

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6 By my quick count, no one critical book of humanistic scholarship having to do with environmental representation or history is cited by a two-thirds majority of our nine contributors. The dozen mentioned at least twice (though often in cursory base-touching ways), are (in order of publication): Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 1964) (Howarth, Love); Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge, 1977) (Howarth, Phillips); Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots* (London, 1983) (Bate, Howarth); *Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Tobias (San Diego, 1985) (Hayles, Hitt); Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London, 1991) (Bate, Hitt); Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven, 1991) (Hitt, Howarth); Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (New York, 1994) (Hitt, Rowlett); Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995) (Elder, Hitt, Howarth, Love, Phillips); *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, 1995) (Harrison, Hayles, Hitt); Joseph Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory* (Columbia, Mo., 1995) (Love, Rowlett); and *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Howarth, Love, Phillips). Among these, six are among the *Ecocriticism Reader*'s top fifteen (Marx, Worster, Elder, Bate, Oelschlaeger, Buell). In short, the degree of convergence of critical genealogies represented here is certainly not negligible, but neither is it particularly conspicuous.

7 Gyorgi Voros, *Notations of the Wild: Ecology in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* (Iowa City, 1997).

8 Robert Pogue Harrison, "Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself," in this issue of *NLH*, p. 670.

9 N. Katherine Hayles, "The Illusion of Autonomy and the Fact of Recursivity: Virtual Ecologies, Entertainment, and *Infinite Jest*," in this issue of *NLH*, p. 696.

10 Glotfelty, "Introduction," *Ecocriticism Reader*, p. xviii.

11 Since Phillips's chief target of attack is chapter 4 of my *The Environmental Imagination*, it would be evasive to refrain from providing some reply to it, but an unfair exploitation of my advantaged position as commentator to make more that this summary response: namely that since Phillips's often incisive micro-level observations come (or so I think) at the cost of reducing book to chapter, chapter to monolithic claim, and "realism" to monolithic formation, the essay's main value seems to me rather as further evidence of the nonmonolithic character of the ecocritical community and as symptomatic of a theory-anxiety surrounding discussion of certain particular issues, especially the issue of the referential dimension of literary texts—on which more below.

12 Every concerned party will wish to propose his or her own genealogy, of course. To my mind, the most seminal precontemporary critical texts are, for U.S. literary studies, Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (which Love mentions but criticizes for its argument—which Marx has since revised—that pastoral exhausted itself in the early twentieth century), and, for British literary studies, Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973). It is intriguing, *vis-à-vis* what I have to say above and below about ecocritical treatments of mimeticism, that although both Marx and Williams mainly approach their central binaries (nature/technology for Marx, country/city for Williams) as ideological formations, they differ on the issue of whether literary representations should be read primarily as symbolic configurations (Marx) or also as attempted representations of historical landscapes (Williams).

13 David Robertson's *Real Matter* (Salt Lake City, 1997) and Elder's *Reading the Mountains of Home* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998) are good examples of such montaging, as are a number of critical texts by practitioners known chiefly as creative writers rather than as scholars though they do or have taught within universities, such as Gary Snyder's *The Practice of the Wild* (San Francisco, 1990) (another of the *Ecocriticism Reader*'s top fifteen) and several of the essays in Leslie Silko's *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (New York, 1996).

14 Jhan Hochman, *Green Cultural Studies* (Moscow, Idaho, 1998); Verena Andermatt Conley, *Ecopolitics* (London, 1997).

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15 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).
16 In addition to my own work and the critique of it by Hitt and Phillips, see for example, Leonard M. Scigaj's post-poststructuralist ecocritical rehabilitation of reference in "Contemporary Ecological and Environmental Poetry: *Différance* or *Référance*?" *ISLE*, 3 (1996), 1–27, a revised version of which will appear in Scigaj's *Sustainable Poetry* (University Press of Kentucky, 1999); and Elisa New's argument, against "magisterial gaze" theory, on behalf of eye/mind/literature's capacity to receive and render the material world, in her *The Line's Eye* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).
17 The archive of eco-degradation literature cutting across town-country landscapes has lately been growing fast: Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Underworld*; Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*; A. R. Ammons's, *Garbage*; Richard Powers's *Gain*; Percival Everett's *Watershed*. For critical treatments, see for example Cynthia Deitering, "The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in Fiction of the 1980s," *Ecocriticism Reader*, pp. 196–203; Kamala Platt, "Ecological Chicana Literature: Ana Castillo's 'Virtual Realism,'" *ISLE*, 3 (1996), 67–96; Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourse," *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (1998), 639–65; and (in the field of social discourse studies) Barbara Adam, *Timescapes of Modernity* (London, 1998).
18 In addition to the essays in this volume by Bate and Elder, see for example *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*, ed. Vera Norwood and Janice Monk (New Haven, 1987); Kent Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (Iowa City, 1993); Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds* (Washington, D.C., 1995). Phenomenologists Edward Casey and David Abram, anthropologist Keith Basso, architectural historian Delores Hayden, social theorists Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, social geographers David Harvey and John Agnew, and humanistic geographers Yi-fu Tuan and Robert David Sack are some of the scholars in other fields who have done particularly important work on place theory upon which environmentally-valenced literary scholarship has been drawing. Sack's *Homo Geographicus* (Baltimore, 1997) is perhaps the most ambitious attempt thus far to formulate "place" with the requisite tripartite balance and amplitude, sketchy and schematic though it is in a number of spots. As this range of models suggests, self-identified ecocritics by no means have a monopoly on place theory; their work exists in an uneasy dialogue with literary scholarship of a more thoroughgoingly social constructionist persuasion, such as *The Geography of Identity*, ed. Patricia Yaeger (Ann Arbor, 1996).
19 Glen A. Love, "Ecocriticism and Science: Toward Consilience?" in this issue of *NLH*, p. 573.
20 See for example Marian Scholtmeijeir, *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* (Toronto, 1993).
21 For example, Linda Hogan's recent novel *Power* (New York, 1998), about a Native American prosecuted for hunting an endangered species, differs from the (predominantly Anglo) nature-writing norm by setting species-protectionist and first-peoples-antidiscrimination commitments at odds.
22 For example, James Turner's *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore, 1980).
23 "Ecofeminism," be it noted, has been made to cover a variety of possibilities, such that many scholars whom some might so categorize would wish to disclaim the label: the critique of patriarchal representation of nature as female, revisionist rehabilitation of the importance of women's roles in the history of natural history, scientific research, writing about nature; the advocacy of an "ethics of care" toward nature as against an ethics of extraction or exploitation; and the recuperation of an alleged mystical affinity (biological or spiritual) between woman and nature.
24 M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America* (Carbondale, 1992); *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, ed. Carl G. Heindl and Stuart C. Brown (Madison, 1995).

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