CHAPTER – IV

LAWRENCE BUELL

Professor Lawrence Buell earned an A. B. at Princeton University. He enrolled at Cornell University for Ph. D. He was a professor at Oberlin College before moving to Harvard in 1990. He served as the Harvard College Dean of Undergraduate Education from 1992-1996. He chaired the Department of English and American Literature and Language. He also served on the graduate committee for degree in the study of American civilization. He taught course in the American Literature and culture. He has a particular interest in the discourse of the environmental studies, issues of cultural nationalism, and postcolonial literature.


Lawrence Buell received Jay Hubbell Medal for Life Time Achievement in American Literary studies in 2007. He won Warren-Brooks Award for outstanding literary criticism in 2003 for his book *Emerson*. He has got John G. Cavelti Award for his *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the United States and Beyond*. He retired from Harvard in 2011. Buell's has made significant research in Literature in a Globalizing World, Discourses of
Environmental crisis brings a crisis of imagination. In our time there is the need to find new ways to understand nature and humanity’s relation to it. Lawrence Buell takes up the challenge of finding new paths of understanding nature and our relation to it in *The Environmental Imagination*. He develops a new vision of environmental writing. He seeks a new way of conceiving the relationship between human imagination and environmental actuality in the age of industrialization. He gives us a far reaching account of environmental perception. He provides a major new understanding of Thoreau’s achievement. He provides a profound rethinking of our literary and cultural reflections on nature.

The field of ecological criticism is immense in its duration and range. Human beings are inescapably biohistorical creatures who construct themselves through engagement with the surrounding nature. We cannot inhabit outside the environment. In principle the critical exploration begins from the oldest surviving literary text like the Sumerian epic, Gilgamesh, to the literary work produces in our time, like Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Forests*. Environment is a more pressing and multifarious problem in the twenty-first century than ever before. W. E. B. Du’Bois famously remarked, the key problem of the twentieth century was the racial confrontation. According to Du’Bois the most pressing problem in the twenty first century will be the sustainability of Earth’s environment.

The Jay B. Hubbell Award is given each year to a scholar who has made an extraordinary contribution to the study of American literature over the course of his or her career. In 2007, committee members recognized Professor Lawrence Buell for his outstanding work. He has
both deepened and widened the traditions of American literature. Lawrence Buell has made two such contributions, first to the study of literary transcendentalism, and second to environmental criticism. For over three decades, he has been widely acknowledged as a leading interpreter of transcendentalist aesthetics. More recently, his work on environmental criticism has shaped the establishment of that field, such that no one writing in it can do so without acknowledging his formative influence.

Professor Buell enlarged the impact of his work on literature and the environment with his next book, *Writing for an Endangered World*, which won the 2001 John G. Cawelti Award for the Most Outstanding Scholarly Inquiry into American Culture, sponsored by the Popular Culture Association and the American Culture Association. While *The Environmental Imagination* addresses the green tradition in American writing, *Writing for an Endangered World* extends the work of environmental criticism to the urban landscape in a transnational context. Covering a diverse range of 19th and 20th century English and American writers, from Thomas Hardy to Joy Harjo, this book puts natural and artificial environments in “conversation with each other,” as Buell puts it, and puts an end to the stereotypical conception associating environmental criticism with whiteness.

His most recent book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, published in 2005, completes his trilogy on criticism and the environment. It also constitutes a critical introduction to the field in which he himself has played such an influential role. This book, written with the same elegance and theoretical acumen that characterize his earlier work, signals the transformation of environmental criticism from an emergent field into an established research area that is global in scope. Not coincidentally, it has been translated into Japanese and is
being translated into Chinese. These translations are a fitting acknowledgment of the book’s scope, of the expanding significance of Lawrence Buell’s career, and of the turn it has taken most recently with his co-editing of *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, with Wai Chee Dimock. In this collection, ten prominent scholars of American literature join Buell in relocating the field within an international framework, measuring its significance, as Buell puts it in his contribution to the collection, on a planetary scale, where, to quote Maxine Hong Kingston, it “translates well.” So too does Lawrence Buell’s own work, both as a critic and as an advocate for American literature and the environment. The defining issue of the 21st century may be the problem of ensuring a decent future for life on the planet.

**Literature and the Environment**

Buell said that the Arts and Humanities have to make decisive contributions toward full understanding of the various environmental challenges facing the world today. He has both deepened and widened the traditions of American literature.

Emerson was an antislavery activist. He possessed a poetic spirit and multifaceted curiosity about religion and about himself from the very childhood. Intellectual vitality is self-sustaining. Nationalism is nature based. Environmental imagination is the barometer of national imagination. Natural and social environments impinge encroach on each other. Art is the prototype of all creative thoughts. Nature writers portray the world through environmental motifs. It is finally not a matter of word making alone. It makes life and world as well. Artists make the world. High literature reinvents the world through words. Physical nature has tremendous potential to energise the powers of the human mind. We should be awakened to the interdependence of human
mind and nature. We have to strengthen bond with nature to overcome spiritual and psychic fragmentation.

Nature is a vital force. It perpetually shapes human and non-human beings. It expands vision, insight and power. It is an important force in human affairs. Emerson is a cultural nationalist. He presented the values that stand the test of time and unite the world. He emphasised the scholar’s intellectual independence. He said, “Truth is knowable only by independent minded individuals.” He was influenced by the foreign models.

Emerson is a great philosopher and social critic. His writings have been included in the body of the world literature. He had a passion for classical Persian poetry. He speaks across the borders of place and time. He was well aware that one can’t uproot oneself wholly from one’s home context. He is a religious thinker also. He explicated the importance of religion in human life.

Ecocriticism makes most coherent sense. It brings humanities and sciences together. According to Emerson the spirit of freedom is omnipresent and immortal.

Discourses of environment have become crucial today. We have neglected environment for many decades of the twentieth century. Many nations of the world have been facing the consequences of environmental disaster on human life. The Kenyan environmental activist Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Modern industrial society has failed to manage unintended environmental consequences. Issues of vision, value, culture and imagination are very helpful to solve contemporary environmental crises. British ecocritic Dominic Head suggested:
There is an inextricable tie between individual and community. Culture binds individual and community. Thoreau emphasised the relationship between culture and environment. He said very emphatically that culture depends for its health on environmental health. According to Lawrence Buell environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination. We need to develop better ways of imaging nature. We have to be more imaginative in humanity’s relationship with nature. There is the need to set limits to techno-economic growth. “How we image a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons.” (The Environmental Imagination)¹

Aesthetics can become a decisive force for or against environmental change. Human history is implicated in natural history. Forster seriously considered the influence of natural environment shapes emotions, behaviour and art. William Wordsworth’s “Nutting” suggests human accountability to the environment.

Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden* acknowledges that environment influences culture, text, and personality. We ought to consider environment as the major subject of concern. It should not be the mystification of some other human interests. Raymond Williams and Leo Marx are the most seminal theorists of the country-city polarity.

Emerson said with strong confidence that country living stimulates the mind better than city life.

Environmental literary criticism offers a way forward. He assessed the future of environmental literary criticism positively. He pointed toward four crucial challenges: organization, professional legitimation, defining unique models of critical investigation and establishing the significance beyond academy.

Buell’s book offers a critical engagement with the field of ecocriticism. According to Cherryl Glotfelty, Ecocriticism is the study
of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. His books, *The Environmental Imagination* and *Writing for an Endangered World* have become the important texts in Ecocriticism.

Lawrence Buell is one of the leading theorists in Ecocriticism. *The Future of Environmental Criticism* is a critical review of the ecocritical movement. He has made the proposition that the discourses of the environment should become a permanent part of the literary and cultural studies.

Environmental Justice Movement has made a tremendous effect on the Ecocriticism. Ecocritics have expressed the deep commitment for those people who have been marginalized from the natural world and from the benefits of resources. Ecocritics’ work primarily focuses on literature.

*Love’s Practical Ecocriticism* is an exploration of, “what it means to be human”. Ecocriticism is capable of creating its own critique of environmental literature. All texts can be read as environmental texts. The interests of ecocriticism and environmental history are linked. Without biospheric and planetary conditions human life could not exist.

Buell has mentioned four points that characterize an environmentally oriented work: The non-human environment is present not only as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text.

Leo Marx announced the end of nature in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964). He delineated the increasing domination of machine civilization in America. Rachel Carson’s the best selling *Silent Spring* is
about the environmental complexity. She argued that it is impossible for human beings to get complete control over nature. Love believed as Carson had, that “The most important function of literature today is to redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of its place in a threatened natural world.” This task demands the personal ethical commitment. Ecocriticism challenges much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past. Ecocriticism offers a broad vision of life and our place in nature.

Buell believes the crisis originates in consciousness. Writers can help to ameliorate it through their writing. Environmentally conscious literature helps us immensely to find “better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it.” Buell asks writers and humanistic scholars to participate in rescue operation of the environment. Albert Gore stated that “we must make the rescue of the environment the central organizing principle for civilization”.

Buell believed that Thoreau is relevant for the twenty first century. Thoreau was an original thinker. Buell shows that Emerson played a more important part in the crusade against slavery than many readers today realize.

Barry Lopez in Landscape and Narrative explained the relationship between the external landscape and the interior landscape:

I think of two landscapes – one outside the self, the other within, the external landscape is the one we see- not only the line and color of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, its geology, the record of it climate and evolution… One learns a landscape finally not by knowing the name or identity of everything in it- but by perceiving the relationship in it – like that between the sparrow and the twig…
The second landscape I think of is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape… the speculations, intuitions, and formal ideas we refer to as “mind” are a set of relationships in the interior landscape with purpose and order. The interior landscape responds to the character and subtlety of an exterior landscape, the shape of the individual is affected by land as it is by genes.  

Mary Austin has described environment rather than human interest stories in her famous work *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). She is the authoritative voice of the West and of Native American Culture. She has presented a mature environmental vision through her book. Land is the protagonist. She has explained the patterns of life created by the scarcity of water.

There is the need to strengthen environmental proficiency in Twenty-First century. Burroughs, Ruskin or Lawrence, have not believed that the poet or essayist should teach ornithology. The potency of the environmental text consisted not just in the reader’s transaction with it. It consists in reanimating and redirecting the reader’s transaction with nature.

Modern urbanization has brought about a change in the people’s relationship with the nature. Environmental knowledge is very important for the survival of the society in the true sense of the term. Our apparent success at regulating the environment has created the impression that human affairs are not in fundamental ways subject to regulation by the environment. The blindness to the environment produces unintended destabilizing consequences like skin lesions from the ozone hole, owing partly to the products of cooling technologies that have insulated us from confronting the disgrace of our environmental dependence. There is the urgent need that all people should be environmentally literate.
Thoreau is the patron saint of American environmental writing. He struggled hard for the deep understanding of nature. Eminence did not come to him easily. He remained obscure for more than a generation after his death. Thoreau spent his entire career for the study of nature and culture. He is the most representative artist of American culture, He represented nature exquisitely. Emerson explicated that the individual’s mystical relation to nature is promising. Classic American pastoral writing constitutes the social vision.

Thomas Jefferson had agrarian roots. Jefferson presented agrarian vision of America in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ironically on the eve of industrial revolution. He presented the ideal farming. According to him, ‘the ethos of farming empowers, not frustrates, the pursuit of culture’ (page 41). Pastoral comprises political discourse. Thoreau delivered a lecture “Slavery in Massachusetts” (1854). Thoreau declared that the late events in Boston seem to have permanently shaken our peaceful lives:

> Who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk. My thoughts are murder to the state, and involuntarily go plotting against her.

F. Scott Fitzgerald dramatized the conflict between the ideal nature and the emergent technocracy sponsored by the Middle America. Nature is one of the preeminently formative influences in traditional if not in contemporary American writing. Influence of nature is seen as a positive cultural value.

Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) clusters a series of essays, prose poems and anecdotes. He aimed to create a symbiosis of art and polemic. Ecological environmental representation and lyricism
exist for their own sake in his writing. His writing has influenced the reader for the acceptance of environmental advocacy.

Nature-responsiveness is a kind of culture or rather counter culture. One must pursue it to resist the homocentrism. Nature responsiveness determines one’s psychological and social worlds. Lopez argues that humble aspiration of environmental mimesis is far healthier for an individual, and for a society, than the arrogance of cyberspace.

John Burroughs, late nineteenth century essayist, naturalist, and critic, credits ‘the true poet with greater insight into nature than the naturalist’ in his essay, “Nature and the Poets.” He believed that the greater the poet, the more correct and truthful will be his specifications.

George Eliot, the greatest of all Victorian novelists, praised Ruskin’s doctrine, in a review of the third volume of *Modern Painters*:

> All truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms... in place of definitive, substantial reality.” Eliot acknowledged that “the thorough acceptance of this doctrine would remould our life; and who teaches its application to any one department of human activity with such power as Mr. Ruskin’s, is a prophet for his generation.

Each of Thoreau’s four books, centers on a simple excursion or a series of excursions: *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, on a two-week trip to the White Mountains of New Hampshire; *Walden*, on two years of bivouacking at the pond; *The Maine Woods*, on three journeys to Maine reported successively; and *Cape Cod*, on three trips to Cape Cod.

Nature is a mirror of moral health. Emerson’s environmental achievements are great. Nature took great stride toward philosophic or theological naturalism. If everyone possesses the great degree of environmental sensitivity, there would be no environmental problems.
The problems of pollution, resource depletion, species eradication have become consistently serious. These dangers are rapidly increasing. Environmental texts are the transforming agents to quicken or produce an environmentalist commitment. Thoreau has produced environmentalist commitment through his works.

Thoreau chides his audience for their ignorance to nature. He had a deeply personal love and reverence for nature like Muir. It is the basis for a more enlightened environmental ethic and polity.

Lawrence Buell explored the environmental perception, the place of nature in the history of western thought. He imagines a more ecocentric way of being. Henry Thoreau is the most frequent reference point. Thoreau’s *Walden* is the central book in the green American thinking. Thoreau is the unique representative of green American thinking. Buell explicated the American environmental imagination.

If as environmental philosophers contend, western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today’s environmental problems, then environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it.

Environmental interpretation requires us to rethink our assumptions about the nature of representation, reference, metaphor, characterization, personae, and canonicity. Albert Gore pronounced anxiety about the environment strongly. Since 1970 there has been continued discussion about the need to set limits to techno economic growth. Environmentalism is certainly one of the catalysts for the formation of global culture. Creative and critical arts, are clearly exercising, however, unconsciously, an influence upon the emerging culture of environmental concern. They have also played a significant role in shaping every other aspect of human culture.
How we image a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons. Aesthetics is a decisive force for or against environmental change. Literary creations in Denmark infused erstwhile desolate heathlands with meaning and potential.

Awareness of the potential gravity of environmental degradation among the people should result in the effective care of the nature. We must translate perception for the environment into effective action. Our perceptions about the environment must be powerful to maintain the ecological balance. E. O. Wilson warned that, “No intellectual vice is more crippling than defiantly self-indulgent anthropocentrism.” Buell believed strongly that pastoral ideology is central to American cultural self-understanding. The key figure of the American literary renaissance of the mid-nineteenth century is Thoreau. The writings of Susan Fenimore Cooper are significant. Aldo Leopold’s formation of biocentric environmental ethics was important. In the Cold War era, ecocide was always a more serious threat than nuclear destruction. In literary history the resurgence of environmental writing is as important as the rise of magical realist fiction. An environmentally oriented work spreads ethical values. Human history is implicated in natural history.

A human being should have ecological consciousness. Urbanization wrought social displacement. It links the natural, human, and divine estates. It has serious, contemplative and reverential tone.

**Place**

In the ancient and modern creative writing sense of place is of great significance. Place ought to be central in the theory of environmental imagination. Wendell Berry said, ‘In the moral (the ecological) sense you cannot know until you have learned where.’ Berry celebrates self conscious commitment to place which produces
environmental responsiveness. Environmental humility, an awakened place-awareness makes one conscious that ‘place moulds us as well as vice versa.’

Environmental non-fiction has the variegated, striking character. *Walden* belongs to many genres. One can read it as a poem, a novel, an autobiography, a travel narrative, a sermon, a treatise. Environmental non-fiction is more heteroglossic than that of the novel.

Environmental non-fiction is an important literary enterprise. Nature has become a centrally important subject for creative prose. Prose writers in Britain have made Nature a central subject in their writing with more activism. The interrelated developments of modernisation, romanticist aesthetics, and popular natural history in Britain were ahead of America. Thoreau read seriously the book about nature was William Howitt’s *The Book of the Seasons* (1831). Howitt aimed to respiritualise an increasingly commercial people through restitution of contact with nature. One’s nature influence is implanted. He wrote for the urban bourgeois. The book excites a spirit of attachment to nature. He creates a meticulously objective and subjective account of seasonal change and phenomena. The book promotes moral transformation. Emerson’s *Nature* has become a literary classic. Thoreau’s book *Walden* is not the first book to deal with local travels.

Washington Irving presented the native tales in The Sketchbook (1817). Mary Russell Mitford, British author created ambitious Our Village (1824-1832). Walden draws on the Nature traditions. Susan Fenimore Cooper wrote *Rural Hours* (1850). *Rural Hours* is the first major work of American literary bioregionalism. She exhibits a finely celebrated environmental sense. Cooper writes out of a passionate attachment to her locale combined with distress and contempt for provincialism. She seeks to correct provincialism through practicality,
erudition, and assertion. She directs some of her sharpest thrusts against ignorance of nature. She wrote in another work, “we are still ... half aliens to the country Providence has given us.” It was Cooper, not Thoreau, who among all antebellum writers wrote the most comprehensive short treatise on the history of environmental consciousness in world cultures from ancient times to the present. Cooper takes delight in natural over artificial charms. She was consciously in touch with the literary world. Theory of landscape representation has moved in a more realist direction.

Darwin achieved a breakthrough in Victorian prose in Victorian prose by expressing through his rhetoric the vision of the delicacy of formal categories that constitute the revolutionary element of his philosophy of evolution. Darwin’s ideas and Thoreau’s art have influenced the course of modern science and modern environmental writing respectively. They have also exerted influence on the rewriting of history.

Thoreau was an attentive reader in the field of landscape aesthetics. His favorite form of environmental prose, travel narratives appealed to more than any other kind of contemporary writing. Darwin brought together the natural and human phenomena. He made observations together of Homo sapiens nonhuman species, and landscape panoramas. Boundaries between species become porous in the reading experience.

A large intellectual gap exists between our sense of being actors in the world, of always being in place, and the “placelessness” that characterize our attempts to theorise about human actions and events. - J. Nicholas Entrikin, The Betweenness of Place.4
Lawrence Buell focused on art’s capacity to image and remythify the natural environment. Pastoral both satirized and replicated the hyper-civilization of urban life. Pastoralism is a species of cultural equipment.

American literature has been preoccupied with country and wilderness as setting, theme, and value in contradiction to society and the urban. It has also represented the sociological facts of urbanization and industrialization. Jeffersonianism has made an impact on American literature. Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* is written on the eve of industrial revolution. He offered an agrarian vision in it. Nature is one of the preeminently formative influences in traditional if not in contemporary American writing. It is a positive cultural value. Social prophets have envisioned that a society founded on the order of nature will be free from corruption.

Environmental deterioration has become too obvious to ignore. Physical nature is a touchstone of value for the instruction of one’s culture. Pastoral is enlisted as a vehicle of national self definition. Nature is not just the theatre of human actions but nature exists for its own sake. Technologised culture insulates one from the natural environment and splits one’s allegiances. Modern environmentalists who speak for the green world are contemporary new world pastoralists. Emerson and Thoreau criticized the hypercivilised effeteness of Boston.

People must inhabit their environment responsibly. They have to perceive it something other than just a green world, a dream, a concept. The environment we inhabit is poisoned. People should learn to use productive environment in the interest of humanity and earth’s interest. Many environmental thinkers have suggested the need for new paradigms for envisioning the relation between human and nonhuman. Freya Mathews presented a new paradigm in *The Ecological Self*. Neil
Evernden wrote *The Social Creation of nature*. He argues that a reinvention of vision and values is the key to environmental amelioration. We should begin to look beyond the mythical vision as well as through it to assume the responsibility of the environment. Eighteenth century intellectuals like Jefferson and Timothy Dwight formulated America’s identity and promise in term of ruralist myth of provincial virtue. It is opposed to an increasingly overpopulated, citified, industrialising Europe. Many American writers have celebrated the landscape grandeur in America through their works.

Timothy Dwight and Washington Irving are the pioneers in the genre of the village sketch. It is also known as local colorism. Virtue tends to correlate with rurality even when rurality includes poverty, gloom and intolerance.

Indigenes have used pastoral for serving their own counter hegemonic ends. They have used pastoral as a weapon against cultural dominance. We find some outstanding examples in Native American literature. Leslie Mermon Silko criticizes mainstream civilization in *Ceremony*. He presents an updated version of traditional native wisdom.

Sense of place is necessarily always a social product. George Eliot praised Ruskin in a review of third volume of *Modern Painters*. “doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms... in place of definite, substantial reality.” Eliot affirmed that a thorough acceptance of this doctrine, “would remould our life; and who teaches its application to any one department of human activity with such power as Mr. Ruskin’s, is a prophet for his generation.

The unit of survival is an organism- in- its environment. If the environment fails to survive, so does the individual. Freya Mathews, *The Ecological Self*.\(^5\)
Lawrence Buell has written *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, And Environment in the U. S. and Beyond*. This is the second book written by Buell about environmental imagination. His previous book, *The Environmental Imagination* dealt with forms of literary imagination. According to him environmental crisis is not merely one of economic resources, public health, and political deadlock. Sustained public support for environmental policy will safeguard environment of the country. He has presented a coherent vision of environment. Sociologist Ulrich Beck remarked about debates over species extinction: “only if nature is brought into people’s everyday images, into stories they tell, can its beauty and its suffering be seen and focused on.” The success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on technology or science but on a state of mind: on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives.

Classic texts and genres continue to exert influence. Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh* is an allegory of settlement culture’s triumph over hunter-gatherer culture, town over forest. The world’s physical environment is being increasingly refashioned by capital, technology, and geopolitics. Non-human world is important for the preservation of life. He believes that reorientation of human attention and values according to a stronger ethic of care for the nonhuman environment would make the world a better place, for humans as well as nonhumans. Anthropocentric concerns such as public health and environmental equity are motivators of environmental imagination and commitment. Political and economic enfranchisement guarantees health, safety and sustenance. We should pursue genuinely alternative paths of development to achieve modest environmental reforms. Fears for survival of family and self are more powerful motivators than care for nature. Thoreau, a green saint, acknowledged four basic material
necessities, food, fuel, clothing, shelter. The environmental crisis threatens all landscapes – wild, rural, suburban, and urban. Physical environment is the indispensable shaping force in human art, experience and such aesthetic works. Attachment to place is a creative force. Environmental connectedness requires acts of imagination at three stages: in the bonding, in the telling, in the understanding. Physical environment is a ground of personal and social identity.

Franklin imagines a new urban ecological order. Franklin’s *Autobiography* is an early republican literary classic. William Bertram wrote *Travels in Florida*. He seeks to activate environmental perception to the end of social improvement. He described individual species of plants and animals. Environmental unconsciousness

Environmental sensitivity is basic to human psycho physiological composition. “Ecological identity” is a holistic term. People construe themselves in different ways in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self.

Attachment to a place is a creative force. One should respect for the physical environment. The success of environmental efforts does not depend on some technology or new science; it depends on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives. Power of imagination brings wonders in human life. Sociologist Ulrich Beck remarked about species extinction: “only if nature is brought into people’s everyday images, into the stories they tell, can its beauty and its suffering be seen and focused on.”

Human beings are biohistorical creatures; they construct themselves in interaction with surroundings. Nature culture distinction itself is an anthropocentric product. It comes from the change from nomadism to settlement that began millennia ago in southwestern Asia. Capital, technology, and geopolitics have refashioned physical environment. To achieve environmentalism, we must follow alternative
paths: rejection of consumer society, communitarian antimodernism, animal liberation. Jonathan Bate affirms, “the dream of deep ecology will never be realized upon the earth, but our survival as a species may be dependent on our capacity to dream it in the work of our imagination.”

The environmental crisis threatens all landscapes- wild, rural, suburban, and urban. Greenhouse effect has endangered the places. Ecocritics acknowledge that physical environment is the vital force in human art, experience and aesthetic works. Buell argues that a comprehensive public land policy must address both human needs and ecosystem imperilment. Efficient management of the physical environment is crucial to human and social health. Imagination is a preservative against the confusion of the world. Environmental connectedness requires acts of imagination at three stages: bond, expression, and understanding. Physical environment is a central floor of personal and social identity. Human experience is formed in transaction with nature.

Benjamin Franklin, William Bertram seeks to activate environmental perception to the aim of social improvement. If people are environmentally unconscious, it is impossible for them to come to complete consciousness at whatever level: observation, thought, articulation etc. The power of imagination can achieve breakthroughs. Literary artists deal with the environmental unconscious in aspects, occluding and enabling. According to Lawrence Buell, Embeddedness in spacio-physical context is constitutive of personal and social identity.

Chapter I, “Toxic Discourse,” deals with the rhetoric and ethics of imagined endangerment. Toxic discourse is culturally significant. People have become aware of the hazards of the poisoned world. Medicine, political science, history, sociology, economics, and ethics
have contributed to the debate of the fear of a poisoned world. Anxiety arises from perceived threat of environmental hazard due to chemical modification by human agency. Thought, values, feeling, expression, and persuasion may be more influential in the remediation of environmental problems than the instruments of technology and politics. Ecocritical movement has brought the issues of environment within literary and rhetorical studies.

Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of mother earth. All species are interdependent. Every species has the right to be free from ecological destruction. Environmentalism is an instrument of social justice. The fear of environmental poisoning has made environmentalism a compelling public issue. Environmental crisis endangers public health. “A healthy environment is necessary for a healthy economy” (Environmental Values in American Culture p 257).” Human cooperation and respect is necessary for life and wellbeing. Rachel Carson introduced toxic discourse effectively in Silent Spring (1962). Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden discussed the techno-economic progress to which national policy has always been committed with escapist fantasies of inexhaustible natural beauty. Creative artists envision communities of safe, clean, ample residential and public spaces. Carson insists: “every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals from the moment of conception until death.” Communities are contaminated with the occult toxic networks. Public policies and power makes vital impact on the health and quality of the individual human life. George Perkins Marsh presented an image of a ruined world in Man and Nature (1864). Environmental reform is linked with social justice.

Chapter II, “The Place of Place,” focuses on place attachment as a resource in the articulation of environmental unconscious. Human
beings are located somewhere, in particular locations. Environment is not something different from us. Environment is part of our being. Edward Casey affirms: “a placeless world is as unthinkable as a bodiless self.” The novel, *Gain* suggests colonizing force of transnational capitalism. Toxification practices of the multinational corporations are manifest through its impact- emotional as well as physical on bodies and families. Contemplating the impact of Toxification on the people, people can question the patterns of hegemony. Place has multiple dimensions, it is significant for the maintenance of the culture. Environmental endangerment or environmental wellbeing can be properly understood if one possesses a keen sense of place.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century place has reappeared in humanistic and social theory as a term of analysis. Sense of place makes us capable to understand the oneness of human and nonhuman. The sense of place is inevitable in nationalism. Place is associated with ethnic, political, informational, cultural and religious formations. Native American novelist Leslie Silko beautifully expressed the delicacy of place in *Ceremony* (1977). He is faithful to the intricacy of the web of relations and feelings that comprises a deep sense of place. He has brought environmental unconscious to full articulation. Place sense is important to literary and cultural imagination. Places shape the personal identity; cultural artifacts also reshape the personality. The power of image is key to which makes individuals and people feel place connected. Our experience of the natural world is always reshaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising and industry. Institutions like religion, tourism and education form the sense of place. Visual and other information technologies can enhance place sense. Some of the places that move us deeply even though we have seen them only in the mind’s eye are actual places. Without benefit of
this, our sense of world citizenship might suffer. We feel the sense of accountability for suffering in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. Certain imagined places that have moved people deeply are more purely visionary, like the traditional image of heaven or hell. The imagined celestial city sought by the protagonist Christian in John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress moves people deeply. Centuries of writers have described the place of heaven and believers have visualized it.

Place imagination plays a crucial role in human life. It is universal compulsion for human beings to seek to connect themselves with places of settlement. Loss of sense of place produces pathological effects like insomnia, affective disorder. A person who does not feel placelessness as loss, there is something deeply wrong with that person. Kentucky regionalist writer Wendell Berry puts it:

How you act should be determined, and the consequences of your acts are determined, by where you are. To know where you are (and whether or not that is where you should be) is at least as important as to know what you are doing, because in the moral (the ecological) sense you cannot know what until you have learned where. Not knowing where you are, you can lose your soul or your soil, your life or your way home (Standing by Words P. 103).  

Place sense teaches how to live well in a place. Leslie Silko affirmed that she wrote Ceremony to recreate her home place in compensation for absence from it. The novel imagines the psychic reintegration of the protagonist Tayo largely as a matter of reintegration with place. Phenomenologist David Abram wrote a book full of insights about place, The Spell of the Sensuous. He remarks:

In the oral, indigenous world, to tell certain stories without saying precisely where those events occurred (or if one is recounting a vision or dream, to neglect to say where one was when granted the
vision), may alone render the telling powerless or ineffective”
(David Abram, P. 182).

Place affects wellbeing through physical environment, social context, and phenomenology of perception. Place connectedness maximizes wellbeing. Connection to soil is surely not the whole measure of one’s spiritual health. Place attachment can create possessiveness, ethnocentrism, and racial intolerance. Place-centeredness can make one vulnerable outside one’s place. If people are ecologically ignorant or possessive they may be dangerous to the place. Place is more deeply a matter of belonging than possession. Space should be converted or reconverted into place. Place is outside the range of vision of people.

Chapter three, “Flaneur’s Progress: Reinhabiting the City” is about reassessment of the urban writing. He examines the Woolf, and various other writers. He explicated the perception of metropolis as an ecocultural habitat. He criticizes self protective autonomy of the urban people. People have been hurt by ecological illiteracy. People must relearn what it means to be native to a place. Reorientation process is not a solitary quest. It involves the engagement with a place’s human and nonhuman environment. Place attachment molds one’s identity.

Wendell Berry, John Elder, Gary Snyder rediscovered their respective places, Kentucky, Green Mountain village life, and California. Frederick Law Olmsted is the best known American exemplar of green city thinking. The contemporary bioregionalism has influenced the central insight of the urban planners. Sale affirms: “every city is part of a region, and depends on the surrounding countryside for many of its resources and much of its market, and every city is built
upon a natural foundation.” Natural landscape is transformed as urban-industrial place. Physical environment constitutes the urban landscape.

Charles Dickens and Walt Whitman were the first major creative writers who studied the city deeply and portrayed in literary works. Whitman was an ardent admirer of Dickens. He animated the democratic ideal of equability and fraternity. Whitman’s poetry deals with the urban world of strangers. He wrote about New York, a city of extraordinary wealth and power, and equally remarkable for pollution, diseases. He said that environmental negligence, and injustice contributes to worse problems of dirt, pollution, disease, uncontrolled growth, and overcrowding. He crusaded against unhealthy and unsafe working conditions. He campaigned through his newspaper for new water and sewer systems for the city of Brooklyn. Both, Charles Dickens and Walt Whitman express commitment to the ideal of a city sweet and clean. Whitman believed that social reform is not brought by institutional change but bringing about amendment of behaviour through change reflected in attitudes. He insists on contact with landscape and others. Urban inhabitant should not be self absorbed. He knew that inhabitants of the city should be more mutually trusting. Consciousness and identity are continually shaped and reshaped through interaction with the people and nature.

Joyce imagines the city as a compatible habitat. Bloom remembers the song about praising of country life and celebrating community. Joyce expressed the desire to connect with environment through Bloom. He gave a complete picture of Dublin. He created urban consciousness through Bloom. Public and private interpenetrate.

Virginia Woolf described postwar London in Mrs. Dalloway. She presented a more dominant cityscape. She is exceptionally sensitive to the vibrations of environmental unconscious in molding the human life.
She believed that urban life could be made aesthetic. She described the interplay between physical stimuli and mental life. Woolf perceives personhood develops through confluence of people with each other and with physical environment, each shaping the other simultaneously.

William Carlos Williams expressed perceptions of bioregionalism through poetry. He had refined urban ecological imagination. He created exciting pictures of urban landscapes. Nature asserts itself. He created poems faithful to the place. He creates an ecopoetics of the city. He displayed a keen sense of ecological relationships. Urban centers depend on environmental circumstances which are rarely noticed by the city dwellers. City is a natural habitat. City is a part of the ecosystem.

Chapter one to three are about mixed signals to the degree to which people and communities should be seen as constructed by place. Chapter four, “Discourses of Determinism” reviews nineteenth and twentieth century writers and their creative works which reveal lives place determined. Reinhabitation comprises a voluntary sense of place. Toxic discourse states people may be more entrapped than they think in a place more dangerous than they think. People’s lives are inevitably emplaced. Biogeographically human destinies are influenced. Environment shapes people more than they shape it. Socialist theory believes that human collective can change society. Modernization reinforces faith in human power to control environment.

From Herodotus to Montesquieu, creative artists have contemplated that character has often been produced by location. Circumstance constructs character and behaviour. Public health theory has avowed that dirt and bad housing is responsible for epidemic disease. Creative writers have probed the notion that inheritance or environment determines human communities.
Charles Dickens was the first major creative writer in the English language who explores the modern urban problems in fictional works. He presented individual differences in great cities. He described the sense of the city impressing itself on people for better or worse. Dickens later novels reproduce houses, neighborhoods, factories, landscapes as scenes of confinement. Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* (1854) finds prison of his whole adult life within the midlands factory town. *Bleak House* demonstrates the interdependence of people and the environment. Dickens constructs psychic landscapes true to the urban environment. Miller Confirms, “*Nature is buried behind a thick surface of roads, streets, buildings, signs, values, meanings*” (Miller, P. 295).

Charles Dickens Little Dorrit represents environmental determinism. He described social parasitism and literal pollution in London. The sanitary condition of the neighborhood predicts the inhabitant’s state of wellbeing. Clean environment ensures both bodily and mental health.

Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906) projects the Lithuanian immigrant family who bought the property too quickly. At first sight family members thought it is their dream house. Later they realized it is too literal overpriced. The house was built on a former garbage dump. They suffered a ghastly odor of dead things. In the place one never saw fields or any green thing whatever. Factory smoke blackened the air above and swarms blackened the air below.

Emile Zola described in *Germinal* the reducing of the people to pawns, workers to tools. Escape becomes unimaginable for the characters from the confinement of working places.

Richard Wright rendered entrapment of the people starkly in the naturalist novel, *Native Son* (1940). He deals with the sensuous feel of urban blight. Many people get sick and die in slum living conditions.
He described the conditions in which Negroes lived. He was acquainted with poverty and discrimination. He identified himself with the protagonist in *Native Son*. He affirmed the misery, alienation, potentiality for violence of any native son. Native son live among the greatest possible plenty on earth but he cannot get access to it. He presented the mechanization of human life under harsh working conditions and stress.

Rurality is the fate of human life. Environment constructs human identity. Nature and culture are the interdependent determiners of human life. The Speaker in Wordsworth’s poem “Tintern Abbey” affirms, “Nature never did betray / the heart that loved her.” Natural harmony is not only a fact but it is also a value. Wordsworth wrote about the predicament of the people in rural surroundings.

Transaction with the natural environment determines the health of persons and communities. Nature can have constructive as well as blighting influence on human life. Ethical-political commitment is the determiner of the human and nonhuman relationships. Homogeneous community exhibits healthy relationship with nature.

Jane Addams wrote magnificent essay, “A Modern Lear.” Industry in principle is or ought to be like family. She has described the irony of self-serving manipulator. She resisted arrogant imposition of limits decided by political leaders. People are always place-bound whether they know it or not. Physical nature, human nature, or socio-culture are the primary determiners of human life. Ethical-political commitment constitutes human life. Environment is a precondition for elementary human dignity and accomplishment.

Chapter five, “Modernization and the Claims of the Natural World: Faulkner and Leopold” describes the relationship between human community and nonhuman and its place-connectedness. William
Faulkner and Aldo Leopold developed ethics of land stewardship through their creative works.

Human beings should behave ethically with the nonhuman. To become re inhabitor to a place and the awakening of a sense of environmental determinism requires reconceiving the human relation to the nonhuman and to extend ethical values to them. We should be compassionate to animals and trees. Preindustrial cultures lived in closer symbiosis with nature than we do. A determinist approach tends to minimize difference between human beings and animals as environmental constraints affect both equally. A re inhabitor thinks compassionately of animals. An environmental determinist thinks humans and nonhumans in the same boat.

A lively sense of mentality contemplates scenes of rapid environmental change. Many writers’ creative works have been influenced by the experience or knowledge of environmental change. James Fennimore Cooper’s Cooperstown novel, *The Pioneers*, and his daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper’s literary daybook *Rural Hours*, Thoreau’s *Walden*, George Perkins Marsh’s *Man and Nature* reflect deeper understanding of nature. William Faulkner has reflected environmental ethic through his novels. Leopold and Faulkner were disconcerted by ruthless exploitation of rurality by industry and agribusiness. Both of them reconceived the place of nature within the space of culture.

William Faulkner is an environmental historian. His interest in environmental change was one dimension of his interest in southern character and history. The material distinctiveness of regional environment is basic to his depiction of place. Sense of future shock wrought by technological innovation is the core of his first important Yoknapatawpha fiction, *Flags in the Dust*. He takes insightful account
of southern modernization, especially its casualties and failures. He connects people to landscape. The plot of *Light in August* intertwines forest history with social history. The workers in the mill are underpaid. They lived in a nondescript house. They obtained the plainest of food and clothing. Few were ever able to rise in the economic and social scale. They had no ambition. They were satisfied with living in the present. They were not concerned with the future of themselves or their children. All the characters are what they are not just because of who they are. But history of Mississippi has influenced lives of the people. Lucas’s placelessness becomes a stalking horse for his partner Joe Christmas’s more extreme placelessness. It is a product of his culture’s shortsightedness about natural resources. For Joe Christmas, it is a product of the culture’s shortsightedness about race.

Environmental history illuminates Faulkner’s fiction. Faulkner was a natural historian. He exhibited mature aesthetics to infuse truth with myth, legend, and poetic rhetoric. He has interwoven characters with the environmental realism. *Light in August* reflects surrealistic image of the blighted landscape. It is the contemporary vision of nature and its impact on human beings.

Gerard Manly Hopkins assured the regeneration of nature. Faulkner’s profuse description of nature should have influenced the magical realism of Gabriel Gracia Marquez and other Latin American novelists. Natural forces assert themselves. Faulkner made the strongest presentation of nature untrammeled in Go Down, Moses (1942). He was committed for natural reflection. Go Down, Moses is the description of the relationship between the people of white and black race. It also foregrounds environmental reflection. Fate of the character is linked to the fate of character. He dramatized environmental consciousness.
Aldo Leopold is known as the father of modern environmental ethics. *A Sand Country Almanac* is the most enduring work written by Leopold. It is about land ethic. Leopold states that all species have a right to exist as a matter of biotic right. He emphasised that human beings should treat nature properly. From the twenty-first-century perspective nonhuman creatures should be regarded as moral agents. Leopold asserts, “It is only the scholars who understands why the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise” (*A Sand Country Almanac* Pp. 200-201). They attempted to instill respect for the natural world. They enhanced aesthetics of environmental perception. Faulkner wrote with considerable knowledge of southern environmental history and its economic, social and racial ramifications. He is the harbinger of southern environmentalism. Leopold is rhetoric in the writing of nature. Faulkner presented psychohistorical case studies through fictional works. He explored split allegiances, self deception, and ironic unintended consequences. *Go Down, Moses* is an unusually rich meditation in environmental ethics. Faulkner constructs a complicated ethical dilemma around environmental doublethink: the experience of being caught between one’s environmentalist propensities and the inertial drag of selfish values. One’s commitment to something is always muddled by other commitments, distractions, or sheer inanity. Faulkner exposes the chuckleheadedness of his wilderness lovers: their inability to think straight about wilderness issues.

Chapter six “Global Commons as Resource and as Icon: Imagining Oceans and Whales” is about the appropriate regulation of economic development so that the natural resources and environmental quality will not be degraded. The risk society paradigm puts the globe under the sign of toxic endangerment. United Nations report *Our Common Future* promotes sustainable development.
Rachel Carson wrote the most significant book of the sea in the nature writing tradition, *The Sea Around Us* (1950). She has told the toxic effects of DDT and other chemical pesticides. She focused on the anthropogenic degradation of the island biogeography. Literature and the discourses of cultural production should offer insight and commitment for the protection of nature and human life.

Chapter seven “The Misery of Beasts and Humans: Nonanthropocentric Ethics versus Environmental Justice” is about ethics and aesthetics. Mahasweta Devi’s Bengali novella translated by Gayatri Spivak in 1995, “Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha” is an environmental justice fiction. Pirtha is a small village. Exploitative deforestation has accelerated evaporation, erosion which have deteriorated soil quality. Pterodactyl symbolizes tribal identity. Pirthans themselves have become demoralized. Villager’s plight is linked with the plight of the non-human world.

Chapter eight “Watershed Aesthetics” explicates the important role of water in human life. Without water life is not possible. Civilizations have been defined by the rivers throughout the world. Rivers are local, regional and national signifiers.


Lawrence Buell has written *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* in 2005. He presented endangered state and uncertain fate of life on earth. According to W. E. B. Du Bois, the environmental crisis is a major question in the twenty-first century. He has discussed the emergence of ecocriticism,
environmental imaging and representation, reconception of place as a fundamental dimension of both art and life, its string, ethical and political commitment.

Literary and cultural studies has got environmental turn in the 1990s. Ecocriticism is a heterogeneous movement. Creative art and critical reflection have always taken a keen interest in how the material world is engaged, absorbed and reshaped by theory, imagination and technology. Environmental discourse is rooted in ancient times. Mayan mythography symbolizes the collective survival that must exist between humans, plants, and animals. The chapter first in the book reviews the appearance of a new critical theory, “The Emergence of Environmental Criticism.”

Environmental criticism is an emergent discourse. It is one with very ancient roots. It corrects the marginalization of environmental issues in versions of critical theory that dominated literary and cultural studies through the 1980s. Setting in the novel or drama is not merely the backdrop of human actions. Egdon Heath, the non-human entity is the main character in Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native*. Thoreau’s *Walden*, Rachel Carson’s *The Silent Spring*, *The Sea Around Us* describe the strong bond between humanity and nature. Now environment has taken the hold of public concern worldwide. Kenyan environmental activist, Wangari Maathai has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Modern industrial society is incapable to manage its unintended environmental consequences. Ulrich Beck proposed the contemporary theory that even the privileged classes of the world inhabit a global “risk society.” Hazards cannot be anticipated, calculated, and controlled, much less escaped (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994:6; cf. Beck 1986; Willms 2004).
Environmental issues have become an increasing provocation for artists and academics. Cross-disciplinary environmental studies programmes have become very attractive within colleges and universities. Teaching and scholarship have become environmentally directed. Issues of vision, value, culture, and imagination are keys to today’s environmental crises. Humans should become the part of the biotic community. Human beings are ecologically embedded.

Ecocriticism attempts to solve the problem of humankind’s alienation from nature. It questions the concepts, on which the old hierarchies are built, androcentrism, anthropocentrism. The term implies the methodological holism. It has been more aesthetic, ethical, and sociopolitical than scinetistic.

**The Beginnings of Ecocriticism**

The term ecocriticism was coined by Rueckert in 1970s. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* (1836) is the first canonical work of US literature to unfold a theory of nature. Leo Marx’s *The Machine and the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in American Culture* (1964). Raymond Williams’ *The Country and the City* (1973) has been praised as a masterpiece of ecocriticism. Williams and Marx identified national essence symbolically with nature. They have explicated the irreversible transformation of landscape wrought by economic power and/or interest. They believed that the process of modernisation, industrial capitalism triumphed over pastoral and traditional local life. Williams described the endangered country folk and the culture of rural country folk. Peasant poet, John Clare and regional novelist, Thomas Hardy wrote faithfully about the nature and rural life. Ecocriticism takes the cognizance of humanity’s ongoing interaction with “the non-human forces in which our lives are embedded (Hess 2004: 77, 95).
Ecocritics read environmental imagination as a barometer of national imagination. Joseph Meeker’s *The Comedy of Survival* (1972, revd. 1997) is considered as the starting point for American ecocriticism. Williams and Bate are committed to the ethical values as the part of contemporary structure of values.

The first wave ecocriticism deals environment as natural environment. Ecological criticism aims to struggle to preserve the biotic community. It studied the effects of culture on nature. It celebrates nature. It redefines the term culture in organism term. It removes the separation between human life and other elements of nature. Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* is the representative work of first wave of ecocriticism. Social criticism treats urban and degraded landscapes as seriously as natural landscapes. Personhood can be understood in the context of nature.

Native American writer quoted by an Ecocritic/nature writer has explained the strong connection of humanity with nature: “You could cut off my hand, and I would still live … You could take out my eyes, and I would still live … take away the sun, and I die. Take away the plants and animals, and I die. So why should I think my body is more a part of me than the sun and the earth?” (K. D. Moore 2004: 58-9). Environment is crucial to health or disease, life or death on planet earth. First wave of ecocriticism breaks down the hierarchical separations between human beings and other elements of nature.

Second wave ecocriticism presents nature within cities. It exposes crimes of eco-injustice against marginal groups within the society. Ecocriticism is committed to the nature protection ethic. It is also committed to the environmental justice. It also exposes eco-injustice against marginal groups within the society. Terry Tempest Williams and
Sandra Steingraber have written about metropolitan environmental cancer clusters.

According to Lance Newman, “Nature writing is not a stable form of reaction to a stable problem. It is the dynamic response to the rise and development of the capitalist ecosocial order… how nature writers see and understand nature has everything to do with how they see and understand nature has everything to do with how they see and understand the society whose relations with it they hope to change” (Newman 2002: 18-19). To understand ecocentric consciousness, one should possess historic consciousness. Newman argues that nature writing is implicitly positions against material, social and natural systems that have produced the environmental crisis. Nature writing has become politicized after Carson. Ecocriticism has become a great intellectual, critical movement in the twenty-first century. Its reach is worldwide.

Environmental criticism is a wide open movement. It has evolved as a critical theory with intellectual zest and activist edge. Nature writing is a not a static but dynamic tradition. It responds to the rise and development of the capitalist ecosocial order. Newman argues that to understand ecocentric consciousness requires a historical consciousness. Nature writing reflects the material, social, and natural systems that has produced the present crisis of environmental endangerment.

Environmental criticism is a wide open movement. It is still sorting out its premises and its powers. Its reach is increasingly worldwide. It has become an integral part of graduate and post-graduate studies in some major university literature departments. It is wide open to alliances with environmental writers, environmental activists, and extra-academic environmental educators.
Chapter second “The World, the Text, and the Ecocritic,” reconceives place as a fundamental dimension of both art and human experience. Environmental criticism strives to make the notion of environment from abstraction to concrete. Literary texts show the environment and human interaction to it. Silent Spring is a classic of toxic non-fiction. Environmental criticism theorizes the relationship between humanity and the natural world. The experience of subaltern victims of environmental injustice is presented through literary text. There is a close relationship between the text and the world. But text is not a replica of the world. Text is an environmental representation. Genres and texts themselves are arguably ecosystems. Texts reproduce sociohistorical environments. Every text is environmentally embedded, from its germination to its reception. A text may be environmentally unconscious, as one may be politically unconscious.

Rhetoric comprehends all genres of expression, literary, academic or popular. Environmental critics are strongly interested in rhetoric. We acquire the knowledge through language about the nature. All artistic works depend upon the evocation of imagined worlds that may or may not bear a close resemblance to literal or historical environment. Literary texts evoke fictive environmentality. Ecocritics explore the literary text as the refractions of physical environments and human interaction with those environments. Both first-wave and revisionist seek to break down the division between creative writing, criticism, field based environmental studies, and environmental activism. Carson’s Silent Spring is classic toxic nonfiction.

There is the increasing interest among the literary scholars in popular culture. Science fiction has taken a keen interest in ecology, in planetary endangerment, in environmental ethics, in humankind’s
relationship with the non-human world. Science fiction has dealt with the issue of environment potentially.

Eminent science fiction writer and environmentalist, Ursula LeGuin wrote quite masterful novel *Lathe of Heaven* (1971). It is a psychological realist fiction. The novel is an elegant reflection on the paradox of eco-apocalyptic discourse. The protagonist George Orr is afflicted by effective dreams. If he dreams an event that never happened, it does. He finds the isolation and burden of responsibility unbearable. The novel is an elegant reflection on the paradox of eco-apocalyptic discourse.

Karen Tei Yamashita’s magical realist, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990) is a whimsical romp. Its protagonist, Kazumasa, is a Japanese expatriate cyborg. We must save the world drama based on techno-gimmickry. Soyinka argues in *A Dance of the Forests*, high-rolling extraction, consumption, and waste, global capitalism and transnational forms of greed have been responsible for the ecological crisis. These novels are serious works of environmental representation.

Chapter third is titled, “Space, Place, and Imagination from Local to Global.” Environmental criticism arises within and against the history of human modification of planetary space. Human modification of planetary space has greatly accelerated since the industrial revolution. Relationship between being and habitat is dialectical. Place is a requisite concept for ecological humanists.

There is the clear distinction between space and place, as geographical concepts. World history is a history of space becoming place. One’s residence is not space but place. Walter said, *A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered* (Walter 1988: 142). Modernisation has rendered place attachment obsolete.
Scientific and technological revolutions have made place attachment nugatory.

Place is rightfully the primary term. Place offers the promise of a “Politics of resistance” against modernism’s excesses. Malpus argues that places are part of the source of our rational capacities from the very beginning (Malpus 1999: 35; Preston 2003: 116). All knowledge is situated. Physical embeddedness is a central place in ecological criticism. Ecofeminist philosopher, Val Plumwood, cautions, place sensitivity requires both emotional and critical approaches to place (Plumwood 2002: 233). Heidegger emphasizes that one should live responsively within one’s environment.

Wilderness is a relative term rather than an absolute term. Sally Carrighar and Douglas Peacock wrote remarkable autobiographies. They wrote about the recovery from trauma induced social dysfunction through contact with wild animals. In classic environmental writing, Thoreau’s Walden shows the characteristic problem of imagining a life closer to nature. Nature and culture are not separable domains. They must be seen as supporting. We have the capacity to image earth holistically. Literary texts also narrate representation of endangered communities. A place can be as small as a corner of our kitchen or as big as the planet. A protected reserve is cared for. In the same manner, if every place on the earth is cared for, the health of the planet and people might be secured. A good thing should not be taken too far.

People are interdependent with the land. Global warming is likely to pose threats for coastal and island nations. Placeness is not only conditioned but it is inherent. Place consciousness involves orientation in space. One also becomes attached to a place, by the power of imagination alone. Folk stories and epics create the sense of place among the people. The places haunt one’s dreams. Places to some
extent define one’s character. Imaged places induce loyalty and longing. They influence national behaviour and the course of world affairs.

Contemporary ecolocalism is concerned with the threats to the bounded community from the outside. Kentucky farmer poet Wendell Berry argues, “We have become a nation of urban nomads.” For him regionalism means, “Local life aware of itself.” People develop long term commitment to their community. Berry said,

Without a complex knowledge of one’s place, and without the faithfulness to one’s place on which such knowledge depends, it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed (Berry 1972: 67-9).

Wordsworth was a poet of the Lake District. Dickens environmental imagination operated more at the level of urban life in London. Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South is a major work of Victorian environmental fiction. She sketched village life and the polluted urban life. The concept of the bioregion is important in the environmental criticism. People have a long term commitment to the place where they live. It is an attempt of greening city life. Urban areas sprang into existence, and most often continue to depend on environmental circumstances.

Bioregional awareness means more prudent and self sufficient use of natural resources such that environmental and human quality will be maintained and improved with better human- human and human/nonhuman considerations. We should be aware of the environmental consequences of our life style.

Modern urban arrangements should take into account the role of environment in the sustenance of human life and culture. James Joyce Ulysses and Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway portray the distance from environment damages the cities holistically. Hardy’s novel Woodlanders
(1887), describe people’s lives get traumatically disrupted or extinguished because of the unsustainable relationship with nature. Graham Swift’s regional novel, Waterland tells the long narration of the East Anglian fenlands as a series of reshaping of landscape and social arrangements. The bioregional horizon must extend beyond a merely local horizon. The local cannot be separated from translocal forces.

Richard Powers’ novel, Gain (1998) dramatizes the contrast between traditional and newer conceptions of environmental scale. It exposes the impossibility of understanding locales without taking account the power of destabilizing macro-forces. Barry Lopez attempts an ecohistorical anatomy of the entire Alaskan and Canadian Arctic as a single complex bioregion.

Sociologist, Ulrich Beck, argues that industrial modernisation has permanently destabilised life on earth. Technology can no longer control the damage wrought by its own unintended consequences. Since Chernobyl, the culture of modernisation has entered into a second reflexive stage that Beck calls the “risk society.” We should reconcile techno-economic advancement, human environmental welfare, and the limits of earth’s resources.

Walcott’s epic, Omeros is a poem about the island-nation of St. Lucia, the author’s home place. He writes the challenges before the people. He narrates the divide between the educated, expatriated poet and the local life. He gives voice to the local life. Omeros is a migratory, global and world-historical. It evokes a sense of place. It romanticizes traditional peasant culture.

Chapter fourth is entitled, “The Ethics and Politics of Environmental Criticism.” Ecocriticism is usually energized by environmental concern. It is openly polemical. It explores the issue widely known as ecological crisis. It raises public consciousness about
history, present state, and possible future of the environmental interdependencies between human and nonhuman. Two polarizations are: ecocentric or biocentric vs. anthropocentric. For ecocentrist health of physical environment is the first priority. Anthropocentric thinkers are concerned with social welfare of interhuman equity. Ecocriticism has ecocentric face. Environmental writers themselves affirm the environmental construction of their identity.

Aldo Leopold extends the conception of community “to include soils, waters, plants and animals.” A biotic community, in which humankind is one of the species, are entitled to existence as a matter of biotic right. Environmental crisis is not solely an economic problem. Leopold argues for the preservation of integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.

Arne Naess, Norwegian philosopher and activist, coined the term, “deep ecology.” Ecocentric criticism has also been influenced by Martin Heidegger, French phenomenologists Gaston Bachelard and especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They focused more on the body emplaced than on the mind giving itself over to place of abode. Gandhi influenced highly Naess. The wide impact of various strands of South and East Asian philosophy, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, on environmental writers is remarkable. Ecocentric thinking is more like a scatter gram than a united front. All its strains define human identity not as free standing, but in terms of its relationship with the physical environment and / or nonhuman life forms.

Leopold’s land ethic has been most important for advocates of nature preservation. His biotic community is avowedly ethical. Egocentrism recognizes the inflexible interdependence that subsists between the human and the nonhuman. Naess made a distinction between deep ecology and shallow ecology. Shallow ecology is
designed to enhance amenities for those already well off. The relation between the humanity and nature is not inherent but dependent. Deep ecology looks more persuasive ontologically and aesthetically. As ontology, deep ecology and egocentrism can provide a needful corrective to modern culture’s underrepresentation of the degree to which humanness is ecosystemically imbricated.

Ecophilosopher Freya Mathews puts it: *To represent us as anything less than so interconnected is in fact to misrepresent us to ourselves, and hence to interfere with our possibilities of self – realization.* From this position, ethical and political positions can be deduced. Jonathan Bate cordoned off criticism from politics by saying that literary criticism should not spell out a programme of action for better environmental management. According to him criticism should present the harmonious ways of living on the earth. He said that ethical and political proposals should be scrutinized, when put to the test of realistic implementation. Aldo Leopold’s *Sand Country Almanac* is a classic of modern environmental writing and of ecocentric environmental ethics. Leopold argues that the biotic community’s welfare should be the standard of right conduct. He awakens sleeping “ecological conscience.” He insists that the world must no longer be thought of as revolving around “us”. Reconstructive ecotheology is more dramatic example than green aesthetics or green ethics. Thomas Berry expresses promises in his widely influential *The Dream of the Earth*:

*Humanity’s reenchantment with the earth as a living reality is the condition for our rescue of the earth from the impending destruction that we are imposing upon it. To carry this out effectively we must now, in a sense, reinvent the human species within the community of life species. Our sense of reality and of value must consciously shift*
from an anthropocentric to a biocentric norm of reference (The Dream of the Earth, 21).^8

Harvard Centre for the Study of World Religions sponsored the project, “Religions of the World and Ecology.” The study of indigenous faiths and great traditions of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism helps to reorient towards green thinking. These religious traditions have emphasized the unity of human and non-human life. Jonathan Bate tells eloquently the role of literature in the establishment of close kinship between nature and human life:

We cannot do without thought-experiments and language experiments which imagine a return to nature, a reintegration of the human and the other. The dream of deep ecology will never be realized upon the earth, but our survival as a species may be dependent on our capacity to dream it in the work of our imagination (The Song of the Earth, 37).^9

Deep ecology emphasizes on identification of self as fulfilled through its identification with nature. Deep ecology and Ecofeminism share the common view of our embeddedness in nature. Plumwood said: “The basic concept required for an appropriate ethic of environmental activism is not that of identity or unity of but that of solidarity which requires not just the affirmation of difference, but also sensitivity to the difference between positioning oneself with the other and positioning oneself as the other.”

Humanity’s relation to the nonhuman is always socially mediated. Considerations of human welfare and equity strongly influenced the settlement of environmental questions. Ecofeminism is closer to social ecology than deep ecology. Social ecology aspires to confront and ultimately eliminate capitalism and social hierarchy. Ecofeminism has
brought a shift in ecocriticism. Ecofeminists have pushed environmental criticism toward substantive engagement with issues of environmental welfare, social and economic equity, racism, poverty and toxification. Ecofeminism seems to be the most dynamic movement within environmental criticism. It takes the ethics and politic of ecocriticism in a sociocentric direction.

American environmental writing effectively begins with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* not with Thoreau or Frost or even Leopold. Environmental justice is the important component in ecocriticism. Ecocriticism’s greatest challenge in the first part of the twenty-first century is to address the question of environmental concern in nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness narrative. Critical horizons need to be expanded. Academic study and environmental practice are interdependent.

First National People of Color Environmental Leadership summit held in Washington DC incorporates the provisions of sustenance of natural resources. The provision four states:

Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

Upton Sinclair exposed gross mistreatment of suffering workers in the Chicago meatpacking industry. He focused on a particular family of Lithuanian victims, who get maimed or killed off on by one. Friedrich Engels’ *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) is the classic documentary work. Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire* or Leslie Silko’s *Ceremony* are about the subject of nuclear contamination of respective imagined places. Oliver Goldsmith’s eighteenth century poem *The Deserted Village* is a reflection on ecological refugeeism: *But*
times are altered; Trade’s unfeeling train / Usurp the land and dispossess the swain (The Deserted Village, p. p. 7).

Thoreau’s Walden is the most canonical text in environmental literary nonfiction. It reflects author’s experiment in simplicity. It is an interesting inquiry in ecology and culture. Gadgil and Guha have written about environmental refugees, the multitudes of landless poor crowded into India’s urban slums.

Ecocriticism’ agenda is concerned with issues of social justice and equity. Environmental criticism in literature is moving beyond the arena of nature. It addresses the question of how natural and social environments impinge on each other. It expresses concern for the most essential needs of the humanity. The two concerns are inherently interwoven. It deals with the reconciliation of the human life and nonhuman life. Serious artists write about the future of humanity and earth both so must the critics do.

Chapter fifth is entitled, “Environmental Criticism’s Future.” Buell brings out that every critical movement faces certain challenges or crises which are four: The challenge of organization, the challenge of professional legitimation, and the challenge of establishing significance beyond academy. The progress of environmental criticism has been encouraging. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment has become a worldwide network. Environmental criticism in literature and the arts clearly should get the standing within the academy of such other issue driven discourses as those of race, gender, sexuality, class, and globalisation. Ecocriticism has now become a part of graduate and post-graduate programmes in various parts of the world. Environmental history has assumed central status in its discipline. Environmental criticism has now got clear visibility and standing. An
interest in the environmental issues has become a plus attribute for young academics in literature.

Environmental criticism has not changed literary studies or environmental humanities. It has been absorbed therein. It has introduced a fresh topic or perspective or archive rather than introducing distinctive methods of inquiry. Environmental criticism cannot claim the methodological originality, not only in literary studies but also throughout the human sciences. New critical formalism or deconstruction injected new methods of analysis in literary studies.

Environmental has made great achievements. It has offered a characteristic way of reading literary texts. It has foregrounded neglected genres like, nature writing or toxification narrative. It has changed the subject or archive. By introducing the change in the subject matter, it has revolutionized the field of critical theory. Feminism or black studies have made serious inquiry in the domain. They have not brought a radical shift in critical methodology associated with the theory. All branches of natural science are relevant to the environmental criticism. Ecocriticism concentrates on the whole branches of human sciences. Environmental-aesthetic perception is more plausible. Environmentalist approach should be seen as indispensable to how one reads literature. Ecocritics inquire the environmental literacy of a text, its way of situating itself locally and/or globally, its attention or inattention to the non-human sphere, or its ideological positions with regard to receptivity or opacity to social justice issues.

Methodological self-consciousness or innovation is not unimportant. Buell emphasizes that a new critical paradigm is not the be-all or end-all that it is often thought to be. Field-defining paradigms are after all made to be broken. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* exposes arrogant misconstructions by European authorities on the east. He has
made contribution in opening up for literary studies underexamined
dynamic of manifestation. The exploration is important for both East
and the West. Human imbrication in environmentality is another
example of an area under-explored in literary studies before 1990.
Environmentality is a crucially more important issue of global
proportions than any other issue. Environmentalism has become a much
more important issue in the new century.

Environmental criticism in literary studies matters also to those
people who are outside the discipline. Ecocriticism has taken academics
outside the classroom. Students are taken to the field. It inspires teachers
and students to undertake significant creative or critical endeavours.
Environmental criticism tends to signal a reformist or transformationist
aspiration.

Ecocriticism has produced a challenging intellectual work in the
twenty-first century. It is a constellation rather than a single titanic book
or figure. It has reinforced public concern about the fate of the earth. It
has established permanent concern for literary and other humanists. It
has established environmentalism as a permanent concern for literary
and other humanists. It opposes environmental injustice. It explores the
importance of vision and imagination in changing mind, live, and policy
as well as composing words, poems, and books.
References


