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TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ECOCRITICISM

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I want through this essay to encourage the growth of an emerging field I call "environmental justice ecocriticism." In coining this label, I hope to coalesce existing work and help foster new work that understands and elaborates the crucial connections between environmental concerns and social justice in the context of ecocriticism. I'll begin by pointing up some problematic features of much current ecocriticism, and then suggest some ways to further develop an environmental justice strand of ecocriticism. My problem with much past and current "ecocriticism," a term whose necessarily imprecise contours I will try to sketch below, is less what it is than what it is not (yet). While the field of ecocriticism is in many respects very broad, it has not often dealt seriously with questions of race and class, questions which I and many others believe must be at the heart of any discussion of the history and future of environmental thought and action.

Both the problem and some hints towards its solution can be found in the collection of essays entitled, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Burgess Glotfelty and Harold Fromm.¹ As the title itself might suggest (*the* ecocriticism reader, not *an* ecocriticism reader), this volume had designs to be the defining text for its field, and to a large degree it has served that role. As the introduction puts it, "These are the essays with which anyone wishing to undertake ecocritical scholarship ought to be familiar" (xxvi). While there are some gestures noting the incompleteness of the project of ecocriticism, mention of its "evolving nature" for example, to the extent that this text is representative, it suggests that ecocriticism is in danger of recapitulating the sad history of environmentalism generally, wherein unwillingness to grapple with questions of racial, class, and national privilege has severely undermined the powerful critique of ecological devastation. While the field has evolved since *The Ecocriticism Reader* was originally published in 1996, judging by conference programs and

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the main journals featuring ecocriticism, the anthology remains representative of what many consider the main concerns of the field; and those most recent works that acknowledge environmental justice concerns do not like those concerns to fully reform ecocriticism.² I want to argue that the center of concern needs to shift significantly for ecocriticism to truly represent the range of connections among culture, criticism, and the environment. Where a certain type of ecocritic worries about "social issues" watering down ecological critique, mounting evidence makes clear that the opposite has been the case, that pretending to isolate the environment from its necessary interrelation with society and culture has severely limited the appeal of environmental thought, to the detriment of both the natural and social worlds. Any serious environmentalist must now realize that for decades the worst forms of environmental degradation have been enabled by governmental and corporate policies of dumping problems on communities of color, poor whites, and the Third World. This process was inadvertently aided and abetted by mainstream environmentalists whose not-in-my-backyard focus led to more sophisticated corporate and governmental efforts at environmental cover-ups that mollify the middle classes while intensifying distress in poor communities in the United States and around the world.³

The problem I am addressing can be seen clearly in a remark in the section of the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* entitled, "The Future of Ecocriticism." There, coeditor Cheryll Burgess Glotfelty names the problem and exhibits it in the same breath. She writes: "Ecocriticism has been a predominately white movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (xxv). Notwithstanding the good intentions no doubt present in this statement, it is a remarkably complacent and politically insensitive one. Offered as a series of passive constructions, there is clear recognition that the "whiteness" of the movement can appear to be a problem, but there is little sense of urgency about making connections between "the environment and issues of social justice." We are presumably to wait until those connections "are made" (as if they had not been made for years by environmental justice workers), and there is more than a hint that we will have to wait for those connections to be made after "a diversity of voices is encouraged to contribute to the discussion." Again, why do "we" have to wait? Why does Glotfelty not feel an urgent need not merely to encourage but actively to seek out "those" voices for the collection? And why are issues of racial justice not seen as a "white" problem, rather than one that must await diverse voices? A

vast body of literature now available on the racialization of "whiteness" is utterly ignored in that formulation. The content of the rest of the volume unfortunately reinforces the problems and gaps in this initial formulation.

There is not a single essay in the volume that deals seriously with environmental racism. The two essays that seem most clearly chosen to introduce something of the "diversity of voices" Glotfelty mentions are essays by mixed-race American Indian authors Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Silko. Both articles attempt to elucidate aspects of Native American relationships to the natural world and, however admirable each may be on its own terms, in context it seems to me they play into the syndrome wherein Indians of the past are noble, in this case noble keepers of the land, while contemporary Indians remain invisible or useful only as symbols of a degraded present. I hasten to add that this is not an attitude I attribute to Gunn Allen or to Silko, but rather to the discursive context in which they are set in the absence of serious environmental justice perspective.

Before continuing my discussion of what is missing from ecocriticism, I think it helpful to try to define and sketch the terrain it covers in order to help locate these problematic dimensions within the wider space of the field. The introduction to the volume offers two somewhat competing definitions of ecocriticism. The first, relatively narrow definition reads as follows: "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). But immediately after this, a larger, more inclusive set of questions expands the scope of ecocriticism beyond "literature" to include more general questions of "representation" that would entail looking at "U.S. government reports, corporate advertising, and television nature documentaries," among other things (xix). This larger definition is greatly to be preferred, in my view, since a wider sense of relevant "texts" will be crucial to the elaboration of an environmental justice ecocriticism; though as I will try to suggest, there is much that has been and can be done in this respect with regard to "literature" defined narrowly.

Let me offer the following typology of ecocritical schools, approaches, or tendencies as a way of briefly mapping the field. Like all typologies, of course, it is a crude device, and I should say quickly that much, if not most, ecocriticism in practice combines two or more of these "schools." The schools listed are meant to correspond roughly to major sectors in the history and present of environmental movements. Since all of these schools are still relatively undefined, I find the best way to characterize each is through a list of the typical questions it seeks to address, rather than definitive positions it takes.

Conservationist Ecocriticism

Typical questions: What can literature/nature writing and criticism do to enhance appreciation and improve attitudes toward the natural environment? What can literature and criticism do to help preserve and extend wilderness, protect endangered species, and otherwise assist in the preservation of the natural world? How can literature and criticism strengthen the transcendent dimension of the human/nature spiritual relationship?

Ecological Ecocriticism

Typical questions: How can the ecosystem idea (or metaphor) be extended to a poetics of the literary system in relation to nature? How can literature and criticism be placed within ecosystems, or be used to elucidate the nature and needs of ecosystems? How can a sense of rootedness in place, in particular ecosystems, bioregions, etc., be enhanced when examining literary works? How can the insights of the "science" of ecology be used in the analysis of literary texts and other representations of the natural world in ways that better connect people to environments?

Biocentric/Deep Ecological Ecocriticism

Typical questions: How can literature and criticism be used to displace "man" and place the biotic sphere at the center of concern? How can literature and criticism be used to show the limits of "humanism"? How can the independent existence and rights of the nonhuman biotic and abiotic realms be protected and extended through literary and critical acts? How can a deeper, biocentric spirituality be furthered by literature and criticism?

Ecofeminist Ecocriticism

Typical questions: How have women and nature been linked in literature and criticism? How has nature been "feminized"? How have women been "naturalized"? In what other ways has the gendering of nature been written and with what effects? How are the liberation of women and the liberation of nature linked? How do interrelations of race, class, and sexuality complicate

the imagined and real relations between women and nature? Is there a separate, different history of women's "nature writing" and other writings about nature?

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Environmental Justice Ecocriticism

Typical questions: How can literature and criticism further efforts of the environmental justice movement to bring attention to ways in which environmental degradation and hazards unequally affect poor people and people of color? How has racism domestically and internationally enabled greater environmental irresponsibility? What are the different traditions in nature writing by the poor, by people of color in the United States and by cultures outside it? How can issues like toxic waste, incinerators, lead poisoning, uranium mining and tailings, and other environmental health issues, be brought forth more fully in literature and criticism? How can issues of worker safety and environmental safety be brought together such that the history of labor movements and environmental movements can be seen as positively connected, not antagonistic? How can ecocriticism encourage justice and sustainable development in the so-called Third World? To what extent and in what ways have other ecocritical schools been ethnocentric and insensitive to race and class?

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All these strands can and should be woven together into a multifaceted field. But it is clear that the last of these, environmental justice criticism, remains the least considered, least developed approach. Two articles, set back-to-back in *The Ecocriticism Reader* neatly stage the problem and point to solutions I see emerging. The first is an essay by Scott Russell Sanders entitled, "Speaking a Word for Nature" (182-202). The presumptuousness of the title is matched by the content of the essay, which in essence condemns virtually all of contemporary American literature as un- if not antinatural. Sanders cites a number of examples of this alleged unnaturalness, but one will suffice to point to the issue I wish to raise. Sanders writes: "In Don DeLillo's *White Noise*—the most honored novel of 1985—the only time you are reminded that nature exists is when his characters pause on the expressway to watch a sunset, and even the sunset interests them only because a release of toxic gases from a nearby plant has poisoned it into technicolor" (193). For Sanders these facts point up the utter lack of appreciation for, or sense of connection to, "nature" in DeLillo's novel. Tellingly, this passage comes soon

after Sanders reports that his own attempt to view a lovely sunset in the Great Smoky Mountains has been interrupted by a rumbling camper van that clearly reminds him of the gross insensitivity of city folks to nature. From Sanders' ecological ecocritical perspective, DeLillo's "unnatural" novel is a tragedy and a travesty. But looked at from an environmental justice perspective, quite a different sense of *White Noise* emerges.

Clearly in part what is at stake here is what counts as "nature" or "the environment." Sunsets apparently count, while toxic gases do not. It would be hard to find a more succinct statement of the problem in much ecocriticism. DeLillo's novel brilliantly shows how the toxic gas cloud aesthetically "improved" the sunset, a biting critique of the limits of an aestheticizing, pastoral form of environmentalism. The problem with Sanders' perspective is not that it is ecological, but that it is not ecological enough. The ecosystem and "Nature" seem to end at the edge of the city or the national park or the wilderness. Sanders argues that much contemporary literature is superficial because it does not treat seriously human connectedness to nature. But his own analysis remains equally superficial in that it fails to connect the social realm to the "natural" (defined too narrowly), including what those toxic gases are doing to all of us but to low-income communities especially. It remains deeply embedded in a romanticist notion of nature as the non-human, and the relatively pristine.

What are left out, of course, are human beings as connected to nature, not only as appreciators but also as destroyers. To privilege the first without dealing seriously with the second is a recipe for continued ecological disaster. The kind of nature appreciation writing Sanders thinks we need more of has, in fact, been the dominant form at least since the Transcendentalists. Despite the great virtues of this tradition, it is not the primary source of modern environmentalism. That source is work like Rachel Carson's, which brought to the world's attention the link between human damage to nature and human damage to humans. The toxic chain she traces is powerful in its evocation of a silence(d) spring, but it is placing people in that chain, I would argue, that accounts for the ultimate power and impact of the book. Even the route to biocentrism must pass through the human.

The next essay in the ecocriticism collection also discusses *White Noise*, but in a very different, more useful way. Cynthia Deitering's "The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in Fiction of the 1980s" places *White Noise* in the context of numerous works in the last several decades in which the traditional "wasteland" literary trope has been made more concrete and specific in the form of works pointing to various kinds of real waste—toxics, garbage,

landfills, industrial debris, etc.—that are so much a part of the contemporary “landscape” (196–203). Where Sanders saw DeLillo’s novel as unnatural, if not antinatural, Deitering’s essay sees DeLillo as pointing us toward and trying to bring into greater public awareness a toxic environment that is leading us toward further disasters. This seems to me the beginning of a better understanding of a work like DeLillo’s, but an environmental justice ecocritic would push the analysis further in two importantly interrelated ways. ✓

First, Deitering’s essay misses the opportunity to raise more directly the nature and causes of the toxic crisis. And second, in doing so, it would be crucially important to see that crisis related in part to the whiteness of the world depicted in *White Noise*. “Noise” in technical jargon is that which distorts communication. And the “white noise” that is the background or subtext of U.S. culture is a not accidentally racially coded distortion of environmental reality. The whiteness of the world in DeLillo’s novel is one studded with privilege and the capacity to bury consciousness of toxicity along with all other signs of human vulnerability. The novel is in part about flight from death and the search for reality in a wholly simulated environment. The sunset whose observation Sanders mocks is part of an ecosystem of commodified representations parodied most directly in tourists flocking to photograph “the most photographed barn in America.” The commodification of this picturesque rural America is merely an extension and condensation of an ideology of the picturesque that has pervaded European and American apprehension of “Nature” since the late eighteenth century. And that process of commodification has been inadvertently furthered by the kind of aestheticization found in much ecocriticism. What the environmental justice ecocritic would bring to the fore here is the invasive, pervasive effects of corporate capitalism on this process, and the racial-class dynamic that has enabled that process to continue. Aesthetic appreciation of nature has not only been a class-coded activity, but the insulation of the middle and upper classes from the most brutal effects of industrialization has played a crucial role in environmental devastation. Aesthetic appreciation of nature has precisely masked the effects of environmental degradation. In the case of this novel, that dynamic can be seen most richly in the way in which the white suburban characters have been so protected by privilege that they literally cannot see the toxic danger in front of them—the “airborne toxic event” is something that happens only to others, to lower-class people in ghettos or inner cities or squalid Third World villages. ✓

Let me turn now to sketch some directions in which the further development of an environmental justice ecocriticism might go, and then offer two more brief examples of how such an approach might be brought to bear on texts not obviously primed for such a reading. In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Glotfelty offers an ecocritical gloss of Elaine Showalter's feminist gloss of Houston Baker's gloss of the stages through which black literary critical history evolved. She suggests that a similar structure of stages is occurring in the development of ecocriticism. I think this is a useful model that can in turn be transferred to describe the development of an environmental justice criticism. But I would drop the chronological "stages" metaphor and speak rather of three prime "levels" of work: 1) identifying images/stereotypes; 2) uncovering and mapping traditions; and 3) theorizing specific approaches within the field. I think environmental justice ecocriticism is proceeding and should continue to proceed on all these fronts simultaneously.

With regard to level one, we can continue looking especially for relations between racial and environmental stereotypes (a task underway in some ecofeminist work, among other places, and which can learn much from ecofeminist analysis of gender stereotypes in nature literature).⁴ Such work would range from tracing the history of racist metaphors like "savage wilderness" or "urban jungle," to examining the class and racial cultural biases that disallow the environmental knowledge produced by nonelites.⁵ Since the vast majority of environmental justice workers are women, questions of gender also need to be addressed in this work. This will also include incorporating a rich body of work in racialist biology that analyzes ways in which the racialization of science played into the racialization of environmental science.⁶ More directly, we can examine the cultural assumptions in various environmental rhetorics, both texts that have helped enable racism, and texts that have called attention to instances of environmental racism.⁷

Level two will include further attempts to define other than white traditions in nonfiction nature writing generally, as well as tracing the specific literature on environmental justice in fiction, poetry, and other cultural forms, including the visual arts, theater, and pop culture.⁸ As Patrick Murphy has pointed out, a preference for nonfiction "nature writing" has limited the range of literary ecocriticism generally.⁹ This limit is especially problematic with regard to writers of color, both in the United States and around the world, who have for the most part been excluded from or felt alienated from the Euro-American male-centered tradition of natural history writing and the nature-experience essay.

This work would include a long-range study of how nature has been figured in different cultural traditions within the United States. American slaves, for example, saw the "wilderness" not as the Puritans had as a place of evil, but rather as a place of refuge from captivity, or as a frightening territory that had to be crossed to achieve freedom.¹⁰ More recently and directly, there are those cultural texts that Joni Adamson has called the "literature of environmental justice."¹¹ Adamson uses the word "literature" with intentional ambiguity, pointing us primarily to a body of poetry and fictional prose directly treating environmental justice issues, but also keeping open the wider meaning of literature as any writing on a given subject. Fiction and poetry by a range of U.S. writers including Ana Castillo, Leslie Silko, Toni Cade Bambara, Octavia Butler, Winona LaDuke, Audre Lorde, Linda Hogan, Ursula LeGuinn, Gerald Vizenor, Alice Walker, Simon Ortiz, Barbara Kingsolver, Joy Harjo, Karen Yamashita, among many others, fits the first definition. With regard to the larger meaning of literature, environmental justice ecocritical work could also include reading the nonfiction writing about environmental justice, from movement manifestos to Environmental Protection Agency documents, with an eye towards their cultural meanings, contexts, and influence.¹² This work can be of real political usefulness in that the environmental justice movement, as currently constituted, has often worked with a rather thin sense of culture and has not utilized cultural workers as much as it might.

In addition to looking for the most direct sources for an environmental justice ecocriticism, theoretical imagination should encourage us to approach texts where the links are not immediately present. Mary Wood, for example, offers an imaginative reading of immigrant writer Mary Antin's "natural history" of mice in her early-twentieth-century tenement as a reflection on gender, ethnicity, racial privilege and the coding of nature.¹³ Wood asks seriously playful questions about what counts as nature and natural history. Why does the idea of studying the habits of urban mice seem risible to us, while observing more "wild" creatures is seen as the utmost in enlightenment? From another angle, the recent novels of "toxic consciousness" Deitering describes could also be enhanced by an environmental justice approach. One might also extend this process to a rereading of such classics of "toxic nonfiction" as Carson's *Silent Spring* in light of racial issues and class difference.¹⁴ In a similar vein, Giovanna Di Chiro has contrasted the aestheticized mode of "ecotourism" that in many ways parallels traditional ecocriticism with the "toxic tourism" organized by some environmental justice groups.¹⁵

Lastly, level three would seek to bring together theoretical tools from

[political ecology, cultural studies, racial formation and critical race theory, postcolonial theory, "minority" literary theory, among other sites, as well as from other schools of ecocriticism, to develop further the theoretical bases for extending environmental justice ecocritical analysis in new directions. Works by Laura Pulido and Devon Peña, for example, are highly suggestive of ways to bring environmental justice issues together with a theorized "cultural poetics" sensitive to dimensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality.¹⁶ Cultural studies approaches to environmental issues are many and varied, and often bring critical questions to bear from postmodern theory.¹⁷ One key facet of this work is theorizing other sites as "natural" that are more often coded only as "cultural." There is, for example, a growing body of urban ecocriticism that makes the crucial but often ignored point that the natural environment does not end at the edge of cities.¹⁸ Since suburbia, from which a great many wilderness lovers hail, has proven a far more environmentally destructive place than cities, we need also to develop a sense of suburban ecologies and theorize more fully their role in environmental, gender, class, and race politics. There is also a body of work in political ecology that links up national and transnational questions of culture and environmental justice in crucial ways, and could provide the basis for comparative environmental justice ecocritical work sensitive to varied cultural traditions, political economic conditions, and geopolitical contexts.¹⁹ The potential usefulness of postcolonial theory is suggested in *The Ecocriticism Reader* itself in David Mazel's essay, "American Literary Environmentalism as Domestic Orientalism." Mazel's insights might well be adapted to link environmental colonialism to racialized and gendered colonialism more fully and extensively, thereby joining other work that has pointed out the political dangers of a romanticized, feminized, othered Nature.²⁰ Just as a reformulated environmentalism may well prove to be a movement capable of bringing into coalition a wide array of progressive social movements nationally and internationally, environmental justice ecocriticism could do much to overcome what Chicana feminist critic Chela Sandoval has called the "apartheid" of theory that has divided related academic discourses also aimed at supporting vital social and environmental change.²¹

Let me end with two brief examples of the kind of synthesizing work that an environmental justice perspective could bring to bear on texts and issues now lying outside the realm of ecocriticism. How for example, might an environmental justice ecocritic comment on these lines from June Jordan's powerful "Poem about My Rights"?

I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/ or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/ all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:
I could not go and I could not think and I could not
stay there
alone²²

Jordan here is asserting, with and against the Thoreauvian tradition, a "right" to enter the literal and literary "woods" of America as an equal partner, free from the fear of rape attendant upon her race, her class, her gender. Where, she asks, does the gendered part of her being begin and the racialized part end? Where does her natural body enter into its cultural moment? How does the nature of colonialism reinforce the colonization of nature? How might a privileged enjoyment of wilderness blind the seer to the nature of injustices inflicted on the less privileged? Jordan reminds us throughout the poem that her "natural" body is a colonized site, one colonized *with* and *as a part of* the natural world, that the rape of an African country, an environment, an African American woman's body, are all entwined, that each violation of rights shapes each of the others, reinforcing mutually. Just as surely she reminds us that only a mutually reinforcing resistance on all these levels will bring liberation to any part. To revise a famous bumper sticker: If you want a sustainable environment, work for justice.

Or how might an environmental justice ecocritic look at a quite different, equally influential poem, like Adrienne Rich's "Trying to Talk with a Man"? The poem, about a disintegrating love relationship, is set on the Nevada nuclear test site:

Out in this desert we are testing bombs,

that's why we came here.

Sometimes I feel an underground river
forcing its way between deformed cliffs
an acute angle of understanding

moving itself like a locus of the sun
into this condemned scenery.

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Coming out to this desert
we meant to change the face of
.
surrounded by a silence

that sounds like the silence of the place
except that it came with us

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talking of the danger
as if it were not ourselves
as if we were testing anything else.²³

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A new critic or a psychological critic would approach this setting as a mere metaphor, an externalization of a barren relationship (and surely it is that, in part). Feminist critics have read it well as a critique of patriarchal power embedded in the verbal reticence of the male character. What could ecocritics add? Ecological ecocritics could link lack of respect for the delicate desert ecosystem with the other character flaws suggested in the poem and with the violence of the state embodied in nuclear weapons. Ecofeminist critics would extend this to the patriarchal power and arrogance that threatens the world with the bombs being putatively “tested” on this landscape.

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An environmental justice ecocritic would use these analyses of power, and then point also to what is left out of the poem. S/he would work, for example, to re-place the indigenous Paiute and Western Shoshone back onto this Nevada Test Site region, for it is they who have suffered most directly the effects that the patriarchal military-corporate-scientific complex have inflicted on this particular landscape.²⁴ They are present as the absence that calls this place a wasteland. Seeing that this wasteland is inside the “man” of the title, allows an opening toward what “he” does not see—the desert and the people who have lived on it for several thousand years. The poem can be made to reveal the hidden link between gender and racial identity that has rationalized environmental devastation in “national sacrifice zones,” even as it has also made barren interpersonal relations and the possibilities of cross-cultural communication.²⁵ An environmental justice ecocritic would “feel” the “underground river” that Rich evokes, as it forced its way between the “deformed cliffs,” would feel a new possibility emerging

into this "condemned scenery," and in response would develop an "acute angle of understanding" to remind us that such sites sacrifice us all, beginning with the most vulnerable, already exploited populations.

I end with this composite reading because my goal is not to suggest that environmental justice ecocriticism supplant these other approaches. Rather, I want to suggest that it adds a vital dimension to the important work done by Glotfelty, Sanders, and others, just as surely as the environmental justice movement adds an absolutely crucial dimension to our understanding of environmental problems and solutions. But this is not mere addition. Bringing environmental justice into ecocriticism entails a fundamental rethinking and reworking of the field as a whole, just as environmental justice theory and practice is leading to a fundamental rethinking of all environmental movements. Ecocriticism, like the environmental movement generally, cannot afford to be seen as a domain structured by white privilege, as a place where white folks go to play with wilderness, while others are locked into urban "jungles" (as the racist construction of inner cities was often phrased). The alliances between labor and environmentalists at the World Trade Organization demonstrations in Seattle in late 1999 made clear beyond a doubt how much more powerful an environmental critique can be when it works with, not against, working people and people of color, at home and around the world.

The lack of a strong environmental justice component within the field of ecocriticism should be felt as a deep crisis, one that should be addressed seriously at all levels of the field, from conferences, to journals, to associations, to public statements, in published work, and in direct political action. There are signs all around us of many people of goodwill working to resolve this crisis. This timely anthology is itself a prime artifact of efforts underway to shift focus. But we will need to do more, much more, to overcome the problematic legacy of an incomplete ecocriticism and to create a field in which the modifier "environmental justice" will not be needed because ecocriticism will have a concern for economic, racial, and gender justice at its heart, alongside its deep concern for preservation of the natural world that is utterly entwined with these social concerns.

NOTES

1. Glotfelty, Cheryll Burgess, and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

2. A close look at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment conference programs over that last few years, or a look at recent issues of the association's journal, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, makes clear that most ecocriticism remains within the paradigms laid out in *The Ecocriticism Reader*. A book like Lawrence Buell's recent *Writing for an Endangered World* (Cambridge: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2001) is at once encouraging in that a critic with clear ambitions to define the terrain of ecocriticism moves beyond his earlier, largely Thoreauvian paradigm to include environmental justice issues in his scope, and discouraging in that those concerns aren't fully engaged and don't fundamentally transform even his much-expanded paradigm of the field. Among the anthologies and other book-length studies that do expand ecocriticism in various ways, are: Rachel Stein, *Shifting the Ground: American Women Writers' Revisions of Nature, Gender, and Race* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, eds., *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Michael P. Branch et al., eds., *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998); Michael Bennett and David W. Teague, eds., *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999); John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington, eds., *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000); Patrick Murphy, *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); David Mazel, *American Literary Environmentalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000); and Glynis Carr, ed., *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2000).

3. The literature on environmental racism and environmental justice is vast. Among the works most useful in an ecocritical context are: Robert D. Bullard, ed., *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. (Boston: South End, 1993); Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Equity* (Boulder: Westview, 1990); Al Gedicks, *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations* (Boston: South End, 1993); Robert D. Bullard, *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1994); Annie L. Booth and Harvey M. Jacobs, "Ties That Bind: Native American Beliefs as a Foundation for Environmental Consciousness," *Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 1 (1990): 27-43; Laura Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest* (Tucson: University

of Arizona Press, 1996); Devon Peña, *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics: Subversive Kin* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999); Devon Peña, *The Terror of the Machine: Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology of the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for the Global Commons*, ed. Michael Goldman (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 120–43; Daniel Faber, ed., *The Struggle for Ecological Democracy: Environmental Justice Movements in the United States* (Guilford, Conn.: Guilford, 1998).

4. See, for example, Noël Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures* (New York: Routledge, 1998). This book examines the effects of racial stereotyping and other racial dynamics in undermining the effectiveness of ecofeminism and other radical environmental efforts.

5. For an example of this latter approach, see Giovanna Di Chiro, "Local Actions, Global Visions: Remaking Environmental Expertise," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 203–31.

6. See, for example, Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon, 1995). Also see Donna Haraway's books, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

7. One rich example of this kind of analysis can be found in Timothy Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997).

8. For examples of environmental justice art other than literature, see John O'Neil, "For Generations Yet to Come: Junebug Productions; Environmental Justice Practice," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, ed. Richard Hofrichter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 301–12; and Giovanna Di Chiro's essay/interview in chapter 15 of this volume.

9. Murphy, *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature*.

10. For examples of this kind of criticism, see Kristin Hunt, "Paradise Lost: The Destructive Forces of Double Consciousness and Boundaries in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," in *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*, ed. John Talmadge and Henry Harrington (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000); and Penny Hall, "Nature and Culture in Three Slave Narratives" (paper presented at the "Culture and Environment" online conference, Washington State University, June 1997).

11. See Joni Adamson, *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).

12. When I first coined the term "environmental justice ecocriticism" in the context of an early version of this essay in 1997, I was naming a largely nonexistent field. Today I am happy to report that the kind of work I was calling for is well underway. Perhaps the best sustained example of "environmental justice ecocriticism" to date is Adamson's *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism*. Her book combines excellent close readings with accessible theoretical insights and a personally grounded narrative connecting theory, movements, and experience. I have no desire to police the boundaries of environmental justice ecocriticism, but among the work that I think contributes to this evolving critical practice are: Kamala Platt, "Ecocritical Chicana Literature: Ana Castillo's 'Virtual Realism,'" in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 139–57, as well as her essay "Chicana Strategies of Success and Survival: Cultural Poetics of Environmental Justice from the Mothers of East Los Angeles," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 18, no. 2 (1997): 48–72; Valerie Kuletz, *Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Joni Adamson, "Toward an Ecology of Justice: Transformative Ecological Theory and Practice," in *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment*, ed. Michael P. Branch et al. (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998); Krista Comer, *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women's Writing* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Bennett and Teague, *The Nature of Cities*, especially the interview with Andrew Ross, and the article by Kathleen Wallace; Carr, *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, see especially the essays by Julie Sze on Karen Yamashita, Benay Blend on Chicana writers, Charlotte Walker on Alice Walker, and Greta Gaard on Linda Hogan and Alice Walker. And, of course, see the other essays in the "Poetics" section of this book.

13. Mary Wood, "Spiders and Mice: Mary Antin, Immigrant 'Outsider' Identity, and Ecofeminism" (paper delivered at the Pacific Northwest American Studies Association meeting, 10–12 April 1997).

14. Another example of toxic nonfiction nature writing is Robert Sullivan's wonderfully perverse *The Meadowlands: Wilderness Adventures at the Edge of a City* (New York: Scribner's, 1998). With humorous seriousness, this book uses Thoreauvian tropes to explore a profoundly polluted "wilderness." While

missing opportunities to provide deeper social critique, *The Meadowlands* suggests a host of possibilities for a whole new body of nature writing focused on sites that have been de-natured by the nature-writing canon.

15. See Giovanna Di Chiro, "Bearing Witness or Taking Action? Toxic Tourism and Environmental Justice," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, ed. Richard Hofrichter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 275–300.

16. See Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*; Peña, *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics*; and Peña, *The Terror of the Machine*.

17. Theoretical issues at the interface of cultural studies and ecocriticism can be gleaned, for example, in the following: William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995); Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, eds., *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics and the Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Luke, *Ecocritique*; and two books by Andrew Ross, *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits* (London: Verso, 1991), and *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society* (London: Verso, 1995).

18. Bennett and Teague, *The Nature of Cities* contributes to the field by underscoring the fact that "nature" does not stop at the edge of the city, and by exploring a variety of ways in which urban environments, race, and class intersect.

19. See, for example, Richard Peet and Michael Watts, eds., *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Bron Raymond Taylor, ed., *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); and David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999). Ramachanda Guha offered the classic early analysis of the limits of mainstream U.S. environmentalism from a Third World perspective in his essay "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 71–84.

20. In *American Literary Environmentalism*, Mazel expands this notion some, and offers a number of other provocative, theoretically informed readings.

21. See Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

22. June Jordan, "Poem about My Rights," in *Naming Our Destiny: New and Selected Poems* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1989), 102.

23. Adrienne Rich, "Trying to Talk With a Man," in *Diving into the Wreck: Poems, 1971–1972* (New York: Norton, 1973), 3–4.

24. For a rich environmental justice reading of this Western nuclear landscape, see Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert*.

25. Given her own antiracist work, I like to imagine that Rich would welcome such a reading of her poem. For a related perspective, see also Rachel Stein's reading of Rich in "'To make the visible world your conscience': Adrienne Rich as Revolutionary Nature Writer," in *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*, ed. by John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).