



The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination

By Lawrence Buell

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Written by one of the world's leading theorists in ecocriticism, this manifesto provides a critical summary of the ecocritical movement.

- A critical summary of the emerging discipline of “ecocriticism”.
- Written by one of the world's leading theorists in ecocriticism.
- Traces the history of the ecocritical movement from its roots in the 1970s through to its diversification and proliferation today.
- Takes account of different ecocritical positions and directions.
- Describes major tensions within ecocriticism and addresses major criticisms of the movement.
- Looks to the future of ecocriticism, proposing that discourses of the environment should become a permanent part of literary and cultural studies.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Where did ecocriticism spring from? What directions has it taken on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond? What have been its key debates? What are its most radical strands that should take environmentally aware literary criticism into the future? Economically and elegantly, Lawrence Buell develops an astutely judged overview of a richly diverse but crucially important movement in literary studies. A leading practitioner in the field, Buell reveals how his own work has been influenced by the key debates and identifies the challenges for us all, writers and readers, local neighbours and global species, in facing the future our literary culture mediates and influences." *Terry Gifford, author of Pastoral (1999) and The Unreliable Mushrooms (poetry, 2003).*

"A much needed overview of a vital new field, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* captures the ecocritical movement's present state of dynamic metamorphosis as it opens into post-humanism and ecofeminism, engages poststructural theory and environmental justice, and tests out alliances with various scientific fields and critical science studies in an increasingly international context. Nobody could accomplish this task better than Lawrence Buell, whose earlier books *The Environmental Imagination* and *Writing for an Endangered World* have become defining works for the environmental turn in literary scholarship. The previous works were primarily American in focus, while the new one begins in an Anglo-American context and broadens to a global literary scope. This latest volume completes an indispensable trilogy." *Louise Westling, University of Oregon*

"Buell (Harvard) is one of the US's major voices on environmental criticism-.a fairly recent area of literary and cultural studies known as "ecocriticism." Several recent works have offered suggestions about how this movement or approach can be defined, but none addresses the subject so broadly, so authoritatively, and in such precise and carefully considered terms as this one does- Buell helped establish the terms for humanistic environmental writing with *The Environmental Imagination* (CR, Sep'95, 33-0121) and *Writing for an Endangered World* (CH, Nov01., 39-1386), and he perceives the present study as a "roadmap of trends, emphases, and controversies within green literary studies more generally.' Comprising five brief chapters, all accessible and extraordinarily well informed, the book starts with a history of environmental criticism and writing; moves to a consideration of the relevant major writers involved in complicating its issues; considers its impact in terms of ethics and gender and of the judiciary and politics; and finally looks at its future, The glossary, full notes, and extended bibliography make it clear that the book's main thrust is definitional, though Buell sees the study as more 'essayistic" than definitive, Summing Up: Essential: All academic libraries." *T. Loe, SUNY Oswego*

"Buell's survey, framed by chapters about the emergence and possible future development of ecocriticism, organizes its material through a focus on issues of literary realism and representation in their relation to nature (chapter 2); the central role of place, space, and imagination for ecocritical thought (chapter 3); and a discussion of politics and ethics in ecocriticism that ranges from deep ecology to ecofeminism and environmental justice (chapter 4). These broad but well chosen categories allow Buell to cover an enormous range of creative and theoretical material that he discusses with the encompassing mastery and insight that

readers of his two earlier works on ecocriticism ... have come to expect.”

Contemporary Literature

"This is an important beginning that shows how the *future* of the book lies in the past." *Travis V. Mason, Canadian Literature 191*

“An extremely methodical, accessible, and timely introduction to the field of environmental criticism for specialists and non-specialists alike, a teasing insight into ecocriticism at work, and an excellent exposition of the development and evolution of the discipline in its most recent manifestations.”

Ruth Glynn, University of Bristol, Modern Language Review

From the Back Cover

This manifesto summarizes the disparate critical practices that constitute “ecocriticism.” Lawrence Buell, one of the world’s leading theorists in ecocriticism, traces the ecocritical movement back to its roots in the 1970s, through its coalescence into a recognizable entity in the early 1990s, to its diversification and proliferation today. He shows how, from an initial focus on such genres as nature writing and nature poetry, ecocriticism has come to take all of literary history and discourse as its arena; and he addresses questions currently facing the discipline, such as: Why has the interest in environmental literary and cultural studies so quickly increased? Can the nature-preservation emphasis of first-wave ecocriticism be reconciled with second-wave concerns with issues of environmental justice? What is the meaning of “place” in a globalizing world? And how do aesthetic, ethical, and political concerns interact and collide in ecocritical work? Finally, Buell looks to the future of ecocriticism, predicting that discourses of the environment will become a permanent part of literary and cultural studies.

About the Author

Lawrence Buell is Professor of English at Harvard University. He is best known for his two previous books on environmental criticism, *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) and *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001). His book on *Emerson* (2003) was also widely admired.

Users Review

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Sandra Snyder:

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