

# The Future of Ecocriticism



The Future of Ecocriticism:  
New Horizons

Edited by

Serpil Oppermann, Ufuk Özdağ,  
Nevin Özkan and Scott Slovic

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

---

P U B L I S H I N G

The Future of Ecocriticism:  
New Horizons,  
Edited by Serpil Oppermann, Ufuk Özdağ, Nevin Özkan and Scott Slovic

This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

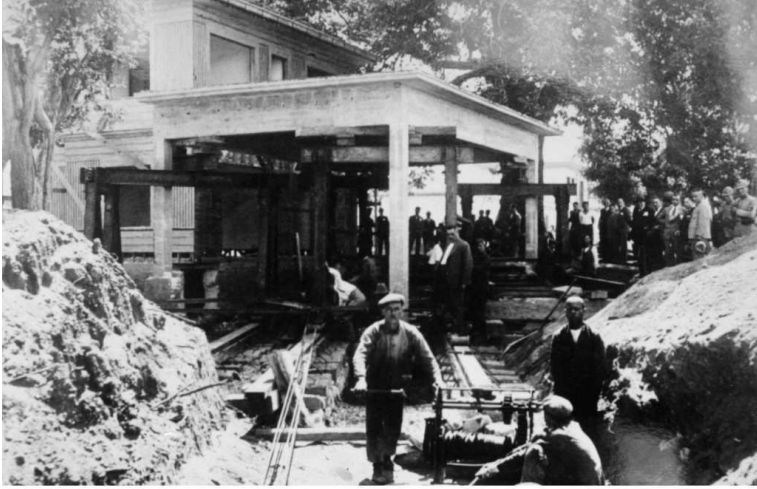
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2011 by Serpil Oppermann, Ufuk Özdağ, Nevin Özkan and Scott Slovic and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2983-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2983-0

*To the enduring memory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*



The historic “Walking Mansion” in Yalova, Turkey,  
during its move on tram rails, attended by Atatürk.  
*Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Library*

*A pivotal moment in world environmental history occurred in 1930 when Atatürk did not grant permission to cut the branches of a plane tree on account of their giving damage to a mansion close by. He famously stated, “Do not cut the branches, move the mansion instead!” Eighty years later, this real-life story is attracting people from around the world to Yalova, and the “Walking Mansion” has become a symbol for environmental protection.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	xii
Introduction .....	1
New Connections in Ecocriticism	
Poems by Linda Hogan.....	9
The Singers	
Not So Very Long Ago	
Valley of the Artists	
<b>Part I: Ecocritical Theory</b>	
Chapter One.....	14
The Future of Ecocriticism: Present Currents	
<i>Serpil Oppermann</i>	
Chapter Two .....	30
Ecocritical Theory, Presentism, and Praxis	
<i>Simon C. Estok</i>	
Chapter Three .....	43
Global Warming Narratives: A Feminist Ecocritical Perspective	
<i>Greta Gaard</i>	
Chapter Four .....	65
The Wilderness of the Human Other: Italo Calvino's <i>The Watcher</i>	
and a Reflection on the Future of Ecocriticism	
<i>Serenella Iovino</i>	
Chapter Five .....	82
The Nomad as Theoretical and Literary Model of Ecological Inhabitation	
in a Globalised World	
<i>Axel Goodbody</i>	

Chapter Six .....	100
Humanizing <i>Moby Dick</i> : Redeeming Anthropomorphism <i>Elizabeth Schultz</i>	
<b>Part II: Turkish Perspectives</b>	
Chapter Seven.....	118
Keeping Alive the Memory of the Amik: Environmental Aesthetics and Land Restoration <i>Ufuk Özdağ</i>	
Chapter Eight.....	136
The Sea Connects It All: Yaman Koray’s Deep Ecology and Turkish Environmental Thought <i>Pınar Batur</i>	
Chapter Nine.....	150
Doruk’s Plight: Human/Non-Human Relations in Abbas Sayar’s <i>Yılkı Atı</i> <i>Nevin Özkan</i>	
Chapter Ten .....	159
The Garip (Strange) Movement: A Poetic Return to “Naturalness” or a Deep Ecological Reappraisal of “Nature”? <i>Gülşah Dindar</i>	
Chapter Eleven .....	172
Nature in Anatolian Mystic Poetry and Folk Songs <i>Zafer Parlak</i>	
Chapter Twelve .....	188
Perceptions of Nature in Turkish Poetry: A Historical Perspective <i>G. Gonca Gökalp Alpaslan</i>	
Chapter Thirteen.....	202
An Ecocritical Analysis of a Children’s Picture Book: <i>Yürüyen Çınar</i> (The Walking Plane Tree) <i>Ayfer Gürdal Ünal</i>	



Chapter Fourteen .....	209
The Statist Environment: Gazi Orman Çiftliği and the Kemalist Modernization Project <i>John VanderLippe</i>	
Chapter Fifteen .....	227
Turks and Birds <i>Jak den Exter</i>	
<b>Part III: Cultural Ecology and Postcolonial Ecocritical Reflections</b>	
Chapter Sixteen .....	244
(Un)mapping (Ir)rational Geographies: Linda Hogan’s Communicative Places <i>Carmen Flys Junquera</i>	
Chapter Seventeen .....	256
Ecopoetics: Ethics of Body, Cyborg Writing, and Excess <i>Peter I-Min Huang</i>	
Chapter Eighteen .....	268
The Ecological Function of Imaginative Texts: A Recent Model in Theory and Practice <i>Christina Caupert and Timo Müller</i>	
Chapter Nineteen .....	279
“Portraits of Things”: Cultural Ecology and Gertrude Stein’s Modernist Experiments in <i>Tender Buttons</i> <i>Erik Redling</i>	
Chapter Twenty .....	288
Self, Community and Nature: Jacob Ross’ <i>Pynter Bender</i> <i>Şebnem Toplu</i>	
Chapter Twenty One.....	300
Henry Rider Haggard: An Early Ecocritic? <i>Sinan Akilli</i>	
Chapter Twenty Two .....	310
Byron’s “Darkness”: Prophet of Climate Change Past and Future <i>A. Clare Brandabur</i>	

## **Part IV: Eco poetics and Ecological Narratives**

Chapter Twenty Three .....	324
“I Pull the Parapet's Poppy / to Stick Behind My Ear”: Nature in the Poetry of World War I <i>Huriye Reis</i>	
Chapter Twenty Four .....	337
The Politics of Disengagement: An Ecocritical Reading of Wang Wei <i>Guangchen Chen</i>	
Chapter Twenty Five .....	352
Ecocriticism, the Germinating Instance and the Four Landscapes of Nature Writing <i>Christian Hummelsund Voie</i>	
Chapter Twenty Six .....	362
‘Sacred’ ‘Ecology’: The Significance of Ancient/Aboriginal Consciousness during the Downfall of the West <i>Nevio Cristante</i>	
Chapter Twenty Seven.....	379
<i>The Stone Gods: The Story of a Repeating World</i> <i>Nurten Birlik</i>	
Chapter Twenty Eight.....	392
“Nature Is the Second God”: The Human Claim to Mastery over Nature and Its Negation in Medieval German Literature <i>Robert Steinke</i>	
Chapter Twenty Nine.....	407
Primo Levi’s Ecocritical Stance <i>Raniero Speelman</i>	
Chapter Thirty .....	420
Children’s Literature and the Ecocritics <i>Anthony Pavlik</i>	
Chapter Thirty One.....	436
Linking Foreign Language Education and the Environment <i>Uwe Küchler</i>	

Chapter Thirty Two .....	453
Nature's Response to Harmful Human Activities: Calvino and Buzzati's Views on the Environment <i>Elis Yıldırım</i>	
Conclusion.....	459
A Roundtable Discussion on Ecocriticism <i>Serpil Oppermann, Ufuk Özdağ, Nevin Özkan, and Scott Slovic</i>	
Contributors .....	480

## CONCLUSION

### A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON ECOCRITICISM

SERPİL OPPERMAN, UFAK ÖZDAĞ,  
NEVİN ÖZKAN, AND SCOTT SLOVIC

The following questions, posed by Scott Slovic, have triggered a lively discussion among us. We present our responses below with which we wish to provide a satisfactory conclusion to this volume. By way of preliminary outline, this roundtable discussion also underlines some of the characteristics of Turkish ecocriticism as an emerging field in Turkish humanist academia.

**Scott Slovic:**

Perhaps it would make sense to start out with something very basic. I'd like to ask each of the editors to offer a definition of "ecocriticism." Not only will this help to explain the essential scope of this book, but it will, I hope, enable readers to think about the breadth and flexibility of the field in general. Serpil, perhaps you could start the conversation.

**Serpil Oppermann:**

For me ecocriticism is a form of philosophical liberation from logocentric and anthropocentric thought. In my view, ecocriticism designates a site at which material-discursive practices are invested with post-anthropocentric meanings. Broadly speaking, ecocriticism is a multi-faceted discursive formation without disciplinary boundaries, as it is both transdisciplinary and transnational in its relations with literatures, cultures, and local-global ecological issues. Ecocriticism is, in this sense, a relatively new movement in the humanist academia that has brought about an effective ecological turn to literary and cultural studies. Ecocriticism also stands out, among other literary-critical movements in the humanities and social sciences, as a polycentric praxis that follows a remarkable rhizomatic trajectory among

diverse socio-cultural, ethical, ecological, and literary interrelations. What is most compelling about ecocriticism is its specific emphasis on the significance of having a strong sense of ethical responsibility towards the planet, its ecosystemic processes, its now fragile bioregions, and its human and non-human beings. Therefore, ecocriticism holds a unique promise of establishing a non-anthropocentric paradigm.

### **Ufuk Özdağ:**

To answer this question, let me tell a story first. It is a story of one of İstanbul's oldest regions—the historic narrow inlet of the Bosphorus (7.5 kilometers long), known as the Golden Horn. In my childhood years, the Golden Horn was an area fellow “İstanbulular” constantly avoided! Over the years, it had been polluted—with industrial waste—to such an extent that there was no sign of life in its waters. The severely polluted inlet was an eye sore, and there was no hope for its future. Then, a visionary mayor took office in the 1980s and he initiated its restoration. Years later, the marine life in these waters started recovering. Today the Golden Horn is a beauty. Now, whenever I visit İstanbul, the elegant parks lined up on its shores are my favorite places to breathe the fresh İstanbul air. Its recovery is such a grand psychological relief! Although I live in Ankara—450 kilometers away from this area, its phenomenal restoration—to see that such a polluted ecosystem can in fact recover—impressed me tremendously. Years later, when I found my way into environmental literature, I was attracted to Aldo Leopold's idea of land restoration. I singled him out because I admired his life-long efforts for “land doctoring”—and he did this through a remarkable ability to connect people in the local areas for collective action. Recently I learned that Leopold was the figure behind the entire Coon Valley restoration project in the US, in the 1930s. There is no other story that has left such a deep imprint on me. I really think that now is the time to be an ardent advocate for land restoration efforts through our writing, and also connecting people, from all walks of life, to create change in local areas. Since land restoration is securing such a grand psychological, social, cultural, economic relief, why not use the powerful ecocritical pen in its service? As a Turkish ecocritic, the area I'm committed to—the area that is awaiting urgent restoration—is the Amik watershed in Southern Turkey. So far I've delivered a number of talks on the Amik—both in Turkey and abroad—to draw attention to the tragedy there (please see my essay on the Amik in this volume). I sincerely believe that scholars finding their way into ecocritical studies around the world should also be dedicated to conservation work, as well as land restoration; this ultimately means the recovery of hundreds, perhaps

thousands of places of misery, and thus the salvation of the planet. I see absolutely no excitement in ecocritical publications confined to the academia, and not to public outreach. Ecocritics need to step outside the classroom and be a connector, i.e., there should be a “tangible” problem—awaiting urgent solution—for ecocritics, and their essays should take up this real problem. The ecocritical pen should hit the target. For me this is what ecocriticism is. The blunt truth is today there is no place on earth that has not seen devastation. In my country, numerous wetlands have been drained, rivers have been polluted, soil erosion is a massive problem, woodlands have been clear-cut, marine ecosystems have been devastated, fisheries have collapsed, past biodiversity has vanished, our waterbirds have left our skies.... There are hundreds of diminished areas in Anatolia that need to be taken up by Turkish ecocriticism so that recovery efforts can possibly take place. A restoration ecocriticism I’m talking about has the potential to transform the field.

**Nevin Özkan:**

For me, ecocriticism is a serious and objective reconsideration of the relations between human and non-human life. It offers new perspectives for further study, research, and observation. In today’s world where human and animal rights are constantly violated, such a reconsideration seems to be crucial. In this respect, ancient Eastern philosophers’ works could be reread and reconsulted. It is a matter that concerns the entire educational process as well. We are obliged to raise consciousness in young people who are entrusted to our care on a broad range of issues, of which this is the one I consider most essential, since we have the task of passing the world on to the next generations. This process is universal and should start from elementary school onwards, as we actually observe in some schools. In higher education, teaching environmental literature is important as well. Then, many students and academics will have the critical tools to think globally and thus move beyond the local and national rhetorics. If we train them in the appreciation of environmental literature, we can initiate parallel mental processes around the world. I am glad and proud to see that we are not alone in this work and that many modern textbooks have decisively moved toward policies of raising global awareness in young people. But, for me, literature, in the first place, makes it possible. Because literature can both confront and subtly change awareness.

**Scott Slovic:**

It’s fascinating to see the definitions of ecocriticism from all three of you. I do see a common thread in your comments, despite the fact that you

express yourselves rather differently. Serpil's concluding emphasis on "ethical responsibility toward the planet" resonates with Nevin's concern about the violation of human and non-human rights—and Ufuk's discussion of place-based activism comes directly out of an ethical framework. Without an ethical foundation, how would we know when and where to intervene in the world's problems? The very fact that we're talking about ethics and activism in the context of a form of literary scholarship (that is, ecocriticism) indicates what is particularly poignant about this field for many of its practitioners. I certainly agree with what you've all said, but my own definition of the field, for better or worse, may be somewhat broader. Let me explain.

On many occasions over the years I've articulated a rather broad definition of ecocriticism, at times prompting colleagues to refer to this as my "open-door definition." The way I usually phrase this is to say that ecocriticism is the study use of any scholarly approach to study artistic texts (not only literature) that foreground the human-nature relationship or, conversely, the scrutiny of this relationship (or the implications of its absence) in any text, even one in which non-human phenomena are not explicitly present.

To a certain extent, I developed this broad definition in order to help nudge the field of ecocriticism forward in the early 1990s, a time when few people had ever heard of the field. Even now, as we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, there are quite a few scholars throughout the world, to whom this is a relatively new perspective. Looking at ecological patterns and various human-nature relationships in literature and other kinds of artistic texts? What's that all about? Isn't art an expression of human experience and an examination of human-to-human relationships, human language, and human psychology? Sure, I'd say—but that's not all there is: humans examining humans. There's more to human experience than our relationships with each other.

Sometimes when I'm introducing a new group of students to ecocriticism, I like to contrast "textual criticism" and "contextual criticism." Textual modes of criticism would include New Criticism, Deconstruction, stylistics, and other approaches to analyzing styles of communication—formalism, in a nutshell. Contextual approaches that we're all familiar with would include historical readings of artistic texts (what some might call "New Historicism") and various other strategies that consider artistic expression in various social and psychological contexts—biographical criticism, gender-based reading, Marxism and cultural materialism, etc.

Ecocriticism is basically an *expanded* mode of contextual criticism. It might include formalist analysis and analysis of various social and psychological contexts, but it also, ultimately, operates on the premise that there is a physical planet and there are other organisms aside from human beings—and the planet and its other residents have profound impacts upon our material and emotional lives ... and our artistic, scientific, journalistic, and other modes of communication. Ecocriticism helps us to understand how and why we use various kinds of expression to articulate our experience of a world that encompasses more than ourselves.

Perhaps it would make sense now to consider whether there might be some unique characteristics of Turkish ecocriticism or environmental literature? What do the three of you think?

**Serpil Oppermann:**

Turkish environmental literature is quite diverse, paralleling the rich biodiversity of Turkey's many regions. The coastal cultures of the Mediterranean and Aegean regions, as well as the Marmara and the Black Sea regions, are significantly different, for example, from the land cultures of inland Western and Eastern Anatolian regions. In keeping with Turkey's unique geographical position as a natural-cultural bridge between continents, the literature produced here shows a colorful amalgamation of various socio-cultural and ecological orientations. Hence Turkey's unique biodiversity and cultural variety, as well as the great antiquity of Anatolia, capture the imagination of Turkish writers. Turkish literature reflects this cultural richness and diversity and remains shaped by its deep roots in Anatolian civilizations from the Sumerians to Hittites, Phoenicians, Carians, Lydians, and Trojans to Roman-Byzantines and to Seljuk Turks, and from Ottomans to the present Turks. The distilled wisdom of countless civilizations is inevitably interwoven into the literary imagination of many Turkish writers. For example, Sait Faik Abasıyanık, The Fisherman of Halicarnassus, Yaman Koray, Alev Alatlı, İhsan Oktay Anar, Buket Uzuner, Latife Tekin, and Nedim Gürsel, to name a few, and the new generation of nature writers, such as Tarık Günersel, Gizem Altın Nance, and Nasuh Mahruki, have an intrinsic sense of ethical care for the land and its peoples and natural habitats.

This is, however, most evident in Turkish folk literature deeply rooted (in its form) in Central Asian nomadic traditions and in Anatolian cultures, and also in Turkish epic literature similarly Asian and Anatolian in its roots. *The Book of Dede Korkut* of the Oğuz Turks (the linguistic and



cultural ancestors of the modern Turkish people) can be considered as one of the earliest literary examples of environmental sensibility in its mixture of natural and cultural elements that shape one another. Following this tradition, Yunus Emre (1240?–1321?), one of the first known Turkish poets who had written holistically about the interconnectedness of human and non-human life in Central and Western Anatolia, stands out as a perfect example. *The Book of Dede Korkut* and anonymous folk-poets, folk-songs, fairy tales, riddles, and proverbs from Turkish folk tradition had inspired Yunus Emre, who was also a Sufi mystic, to write about an ecocentric way of life. His influence on Turkish literature continues to the present. Another mystic poet from the same era is Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi, whose verses deeply rooted in a holistic worldview, are also well-known. This Turkish folk and epic literature tradition that produced such outstanding bards as Pir Sultan Abdal (1480-1550), Karacaoğlan (1606-1680), and Dadaloğlu extends from the 10th or 11th century to today, reinvigorated by such influential modern folk poets as Aşık Veysel (1894–1973), Aşık Mahzuni Şerif (1938–2002), Neşet Ertaş (1943– ), and others. The topics of Karacaoğlan’s poetry that reflect the natural environment that he had internalized in his poems, along with the Turkish nomadic culture of the Taurus mountains and the flora and fauna of these regions, for example, reappear in Yaşar Kemal’s *Memed, My Hawk* (1955), the first of his *Ince Memed* tetralogy, which have also drawn upon another 11<sup>th</sup> century Turkish epic, *Epic of Köroğlu*. This natural-cultural blend, however, find its best expressions in Turkey’s romantic-communist poet Nazım Hikmet Ran (1902-1963). Ecological and cultural issues and challenges are transmitted also in the stories of Sait Faik Abasıyanık (1906–1954), and novels of Kemal Tahir (1910–1973), Orhan Kemal (1914–1970), Tarık Buğra (1918-1994), and Fakir Baykurt (1929-1999), and more recently Latife Tekin, to name a few modern writers. Turkey’s most outstanding environmental writer, however, is The Fisherman of Halicarnassus, the pen name of Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1890-1973). He wrote about Halicarnassus, the ancient name of Bodrum, its flora and fauna, and people who lived on the Aegean coast of Anatolia since the ancient times. His deep love of the Aegean and the Mediterranean marine life in Bodrum qualify him as Turkey’s unique environmentalist writer.

Given this variety, one would expect a vibrant ecocritical activity in Turkey; but the truth of the matter is ecocriticism is a newly introduced field of study in this country, not yet institutionalized in the universities. Turkish ecocriticism is, therefore, quite young. With this volume our hope is to spread the word and recruit as many young scholars as possible from

both the social sciences and the humanities. Although ecocriticism is a late comer in Turkey, I think that it will flourish and produce its own standpoints in the near future; because there is such a rich reservoir here for Turkish ecocriticism to develop its own literary-cultural approach to literature. The essays in this volume already indicate that Turkish ecocritics are engaged with various ecocritical issues. And this is a promissory note in my view. What I think will be unique to ecocriticism in Turkey will be ecocritical explorations of Anatolia's biological and cultural diversity and the environmental problems Turkey is facing, such as earthquakes, drying up of its fresh water rivers and lakes, as well as the environmentally degrading effects of increasing consumerism and waste disposal. When more and more writers focus on these issues, it will be inevitable to analyze their works from ecocritical perspectives.

### **Ufuk Özdağ:**

That's a great overview of Turkish literary heritage, Serpil. Ecocriticism, on the other hand, is still an emerging field in Turkey. I would add to Serpil's comments by pointing out that explorations of texts from the past ages to the present will undoubtedly reveal our past Shaman culture as a significant force in shaping unique characteristics of Turkish ecocriticism. This enduring culture is deeply embedded in the Turkish imagination. From the earliest *Orhon Inscriptions* (eighth century) to Kâşgarlı Mahmut's *Divanü Lügati't-Türk*; from *The Book of Dede Korkut* to Turkish folk literature; from Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* down to the present, traces of this culture can be found. Another significant force will be our strong Sufi tradition—the mystical dimension of Islam. That said, I'd like to share a few ideas/books/names that I find important for a unique Turkish ecocriticism. Abdülkadir İnan's *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm* [Shamanism in History and Today]; Bahaeddin Ögel's *Türk Kültür Tarihine Giriş* [Introduction to Turkish Cultural History] (10 vols) and *Türk Mitolojisi* [Turkish Mythology] (2 vols) are significant works for a historical perspective. A source book for those just stepping into the field is Professor Şükrü Elçin's *Türk Edebiyatında Tabiat* [Nature in Turkish Literature] published in 1993. Sadık Tural's "Edebiyat Eseri ve Çevre Arasındaki Bağlar" [The Relationship Between the Literary Text and Environment], Ahmet Edip Uysal's "Edebiyat ve Tabiat" [Literature and Nature], Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil's "Türk Halk Şiirinde Tabiat" [Nature in Turkish Folk Literature], Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar's "Tabiat Sevgisi" [Love of Nature], as well as nature-oriented poems and prose writings from folk, Divan, and new Turkish literature make up the bulk of this book. As for Turkish nature writing, perhaps, Hikmet Birand (1904-1972) is singularly

the most important name. After having received his PhD on plant sociology in Germany, Professor Birand returned to Turkey in 1933, founded this branch of study and contributed to its advancement. Apart from his scientific writings, Birand has lyrical pieces on ecosystem integrity/nature's balance. His influential book on the connectedness of all life, *Alıç Ağacı ile Sohbetler* [Conversations with the Hawthorn Tree] (1966), is still a widely read book. Other books by Birand are *Anadolu Manzaraları* [Anatolian Landscapes] (1957), *Büyükada'nın Yeşil Örtüsü* [The Green Cover of Büyükada] (1936), *Keltepe Ormanlarında Bir Gün* [A Day in Keltepe Woods] (1948), *Bitkilerde Ekonomi Prensipleri: Biriktirme ve Artırma* [Economy Principles in Plants] (1950), and *Türkiye Bitkileri* [Plants of Turkey] (1952). Another important Turkish nature writer is the marine ecologist, Sargun A. Tont. His works, such as, *Sulak Bir Gezegenden Öyküler* [Stories from a Watery Planet] (1997), *Nereden Geliyorsun? Kuzeyden* [Where Are you Coming from? From the North] (2008), and *Solucanlara Piyano Çalan Adam* [The Man Who Plays the Piano to the Worms] (2010) are all important books as regards creating environmental awareness. Now an important task for Turkologists and ecocritics is to master ecocritical theory and praxis in all its diversity, and study our environmental literatures—both old and new—from an ecocritical lens. Starting from the earliest *Orhon Inscriptions*, a study of our written texts from an ecocritical perspective will open up new horizons for our literary scholars. This approach, keeping in mind the global-scale problems, will ultimately be an important step towards a healthy future both for the Turkish lands and for the planet.

### **Nevin Özkan:**

Yes, as Serpil and Ufuk have observed, there is a long tradition of environmental thinking in this part of the world, but here in Turkey we can also see a growing concern for the environment, especially for the seas surrounding Turkey, for the forests, and for the animals. We can find good examples of Turkish environmentalism in some works of writers such as Yaşar Kemal, Elif Şafak, Latife Tekin, and Orhan Pamuk. The fact that many of their works have been translated into English makes it possible for foreign readers to familiarize themselves with contemporary Turkish environmental problems, which are pretty serious: burning forests in order to build housing complexes, searching for metals by using chemicals in rivers, destroying villages to install dams. These have been drastic issues with which Turkish journalists and writers have dealt with in the recent past. If I may give an example from Italy: Italo Calvino is an Italian writer who as a biologist's son recognized at an early stage what was going

wrong in the delicate ecological balance in his native Liguria, though he was born in Cuba. His novellas, *La speculazione edilizia*, *La formica argentina* and *La nuvola di smog* are about topics, such as building on speculation, insect plagues, and smog. The latter are not particular to Liguria, but are parables for the global situation. It could be one of our tasks to try to reconstruct in what way Calvino and his colleagues actually contributed to legislation and to find solutions in these fields.

We shouldn't forget that Asia Minor/Anatolia is one of the first regions in Eastern Europe to have been hit by irresponsible exploitation of the environment. In fact, the landscapes of Turkey have changed considerably after Antiquity. First the Romans, then the Ottomans cut the Anatolian forests, starting a nearly irrevocable process of erosion. The reforestation program has always been very important to Kemalist thought and, however difficult to realize, makes the Turkish Republic's environmental policy one of the first ecological programs in the world.

**Scott Slovic:**

You three clearly know a lot more about Turkish culture (including environmental thought) than I do. To be honest, I'm not sure I've observed an entirely idiosyncratic and "unique" tendency in Turkish ecocriticism or literature. However, as is indicated in various articles we're including in this book, there are certain "vernacular tendencies" in Turkish ecocriticism that lead Turkish scholars to look for traditional attitudes and beliefs about the natural world and their development in more contemporary writing (most of the Turkish ecocriticism I've encountered so far focuses on *literature* rather than on the visual arts, music, or popular culture). Participants in the 2009 conference that resulted in this book gave papers that ranged from an environmental reading of Rumi's classical poetry to analysis of Yaşar Kemal's contemporary novels, demonstrating the broad scope of Turkish ecocriticism in considering the local, or vernacular, aspects of Turkish environmental experience and expression. I have noticed in some Western European and North American ecocriticism a strong inclination to focus on twentieth-century and contemporary environmental literature, but in Turkish ecocriticism there has always been an openness toward early texts (even *ancient* texts) and toward authors and texts that might be considered "mainstream" or non-environmental. In a way, the relatively late emergence of Turkish ecocriticism (in contrast, for instance, to the emergence of the field in the 1970s and '80s in the United States) has enabled Turkish scholars to leap-frog over the earlier phases of American ecocriticism which led to initial focus on contemporary

literature (in particular, literary nonfiction) and on texts that emphasized non-human phenomena and wilderness.

In my initial encounters with Turkish scholarship and Turkish literature, I've been strongly impressed with the attention given to special landscapes and urban locations in Turkey, such as the arid eastern sections of the country, the waters and coasts of the Mediterranean and the Bosphorus, and the fascinating cultural layers and complexities of Istanbul. My own initial attempts to read Turkish literature ecocritically have focused on Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, which is a beautiful and intriguing sense-of-place memoir. Pamuk offers what he describes as a uniquely Turkish variety of melancholy longing that he calls "hüzün." In addition to describing this special local kind of place-based melancholia, he demonstrates the extraordinary cosmopolitanism of Istanbul, showing how our contemporary understanding of the city has been shaped over the centuries by visitors from various parts of the world, particularly Europe. This cosmopolitanism reveals that İstanbul may be one of the best places in the world to observe what Lawrence Buell and other ecocritics have identified as the "translocal forces" that truly shape our experience of place. In a sense, İstanbul was self-consciously "translocal" long before most other places.

I wonder if we could now discuss Turkish ecocriticism per se. What would you say is the current status of this scholarly field in Turkey, the eastern Mediterranean region, Turkic cultures more broadly, or even more broadly in the Middle East?

### **Serpil Oppermann**

Ecocriticism in Turkey is still in its emergent phase. Although there are a number of young scholars, mostly in the departments of English, who are developing ecologically informed criticism, they are not yet organized into an identifiable and distinct ecocritical group. Ecocriticism, therefore, does not yet have an academic presence in the humanities. There are, however, a growing number of graduate students who are very enthusiastic about writing their dissertations on ecocritical approaches in cultural and literary studies. Although some of the older generation of traditional scholars tend to view ecocritical studies suspiciously, it is my hope that in the hands of the younger generations ecocriticism will eventually make its presence felt in our profession.

I am not in a position to comment upon eastern Mediterranean regions and the Middle East more generally.

**Ufuk Özdağ:**

I'd like to say that Turks are finally coming to terms with their wanton exploitation of the land. Finally we've started understanding that our natural resources were not inexhaustible. Ecocriticism is obviously an emerging field of study in Turkey, and our 2009 conference made it clear that our scholars will, after all, put their time and energy into this topic of urgency, and will do ecocritical explorations of both old and new Turkish texts. Works by Sait Faik Abasıyanık, Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (The Fisherman of Halicarnassus), Yaşar Kemal, Haldun Taner, İlhan Berk, Oktay Rifat, Yaman Koray, Oruç Aruoba, Latife Tekin, Nazım Hikmet, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, and Cahit Külebi will be studied extensively, for their works display a special nature consciousness; one can add other poets and fiction writers to this list. I believe that apart from Turkey's environmental literary heritage, the environmental literatures of the Turkic world—an area that stretches from Southeast Europe, to the Near East, Central Asia, and to Russia, China and Mongolia—will also capture the attention of our future ecocritics. A few names figure prominently: the Kyrgyz writer, Cengiz Aytmatov (his works have been translated into many world languages) are very environmentally oriented; his novels, such as *Beyaz Gemi* [*White Steamship*], *Dağlar Devrildiğinde: Ebedi Nişanlı* [When the Mountains Fall Down: The Eternal Bride], *Dişi Kurdun Rüyalari* [*The Place of the Skull*], *Elveda Gülsarı* [*Farewell Gulsary*] are a treasure as regards the Turkic outlook on nature and nonhuman life. Another important name is Cengiz Dağcı—the author of Crimean origins, and is currently living in the UK. He writes in the Turkish language and all his works have been published in Turkey; thanks to these published works, now we know a lot of things about the lives of the Crimean Tatars. Dağcı writes about the town of Gurzuf (Crimea)—where he was born and raised—and its environs, as well as the landscapes of Yalta—its flora, rivers, etc. His novels, such as, *Yurdunu Kaybeden Adam*, *O Topraklar Bizimdi*, *Onlar da İnsandı*, and *Korkunç Yıllar*, are powerful narratives of human/nature relationships. Another well known name is the Kazakh author and linguist, Muhtar Avezov. His fictional works, such as *Abay Yolu*, are about the vast Asian steppes, as well as the peoples' relationship with the land. Olcas Süleymanov, the Kazakh linguist, poet, geologist, and diplomat who is acclaimed as the most important figure behind the environmental movement in Kazakhstan—he led the Anti-nuclear Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement for the closure of nuclear testing facilities in

Kazakhstan—has written such powerful works as *Fizikçinin Duası*. Elçin Efendiyevev, the author and literary critic—also statesman and academician—from Azerbaijan is the author of such novels as *Şuşa Dağlarını Duman Büriüdü*, *Mahmut ile Meryem*, and the short story collection, *Sarı Gelin*—all narratives of a society that has not yet gone through its process of industrialization. The writer from Kosovo, Hasan Mercan, is another name that comes to mind—significant from an environmental perspective. I believe that ecocriticism will have a dual function in our part of the world: it will help fight many environmental ills. Besides, it will reveal the fascinating nature-friendly cultures of the speakers of Turkic languages.

### **Nevin Özkan:**

In Turkey a rising interest in environmental issues can be observed, thanks to certain environmentalist writers and journalists. As mentioned above, famous writers, such as the Nobel Prize winner for literature Orhan Pamuk, have dealt with ecological issues in some of their works. Despite the fact that these writers' initiatives have played a major role in raising awareness in Turkish society, it is not enough. Universities should start founding departments which will offer courses in this field and educate students at MA and BA levels. Classical and modern texts of world literature should be reread from an ecocritical perspective. New strategies and approaches are needed here. The problem is that no country has so many newly founded universities as Turkey, but humanities at these universities are lagging behind in their educational fields. I should also mention that we have a Ministry of Environmental Affairs whose minister had his education in the Netherlands and has done much in the last years. A separate ministry for the environment in a big country like Turkey opens up huge possibilities.

### **Scott Slovic:**

Thanks for your comments. By observing your passion for this field, I can tell that ecocriticism will eventually have a very strong presence in this part of the world, even though the scholarly discipline has been somewhat delayed in its arrival in Turkey. The term “ecocriticism” was coined in 1978 in the United States, and the field became quite active here in the 1980s and ‘90s (and this continues to the present). The U.K., Japan, and various other countries have had many outstanding scholars doing ecocriticism since the 1990s as well. People in India were teaching courses in environmental approaches to literature (perhaps not using the exact term

“ecocriticism”) in the 1980s. But ecocriticism is now rapidly emerging in Turkey. When Professor Clare Brandabur hosted the World Association for the Study of Literatures in English Conference at Doğuş University in İstanbul in November 2005 with a special focus on environmental approaches to literature, that was a major moment in the history of Turkish ecocriticism, drawing together quite a few scholars who have become major forces in the Turkish ecocritical movement. That initial momentum was really crystallized in the fall of 2009 when the “New Horizons” conference took place in Kemer, Turkey. Yes, there were a number of conference participants from other countries, but I think the large number of Turkish speakers was particularly impressive and important. This book seeks to combine a sample of international ecocritical perspectives with significant number of Turkish articles.

What exactly is the current state of Turkish ecocriticism? I would say that, at this moment, the field is still nascent. The two conferences mentioned above have played a major role in attracting initial attention to the field in Turkey. The special ecocriticism issue of the *Journal of American Studies of Turkey (JAST)*, which appeared in early 2011 (but is officially dated Fall 2009), will also help to energize Turkish ecocriticism, I hope. This new book, based on papers initially presented at the 2009 conference in Kemer, is important because it offers a number of examples of Turkish ecocritics studying Turkish writers, placed in the context of an international conversation about ecocritical topics. What’s needed in the future will be additional collections like this one, new monographs by Turkish ecocritics, more conferences, and eventually academic programs and scholarly organizations devoted to ecocriticism and environmental literature per se or to the environmental humanities more generally.

Let’s turn in a slightly different direction now. Ufuk certainly touches upon the need for environmental activism in specific regions of Turkey in her opening definition of ecocriticism, but I wonder if the three of you could comment a bit on whether there are any pressing environmental concerns in Turkey that have inspired relevant literary works.

**Serpil Oppermann:**

The most urgent environmental challenges Turkey faces are frequent earthquakes, deforestation, land erosion, extinction of endemic species in the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas, and drying up of Turkey’s biggest rivers and lakes. I would also include the flora in Turkey—Anatolia’s unique biodiversity—forests, grasslands, and pastures under severe threat



of an excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and human destruction. In general terms, housing, food and water management, and especially waste disposal seem to produce conflicting responses from both NGOs and the State institutions. The waste landfills with the potential methane gas explosions pose a serious threat to both the animals nearby and extremely poor who live in the surrounding areas. Such a problem occurred in İstanbul's Ümraniye district in 1993. A methane explosion at the waste disposal site triggered a landslide, killing 30 people. Anticipating this problem, Latife Tekin wrote *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* [*Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*] (1984). Other urban ecological issues, especially with regards to İstanbul appear in Orhan Pamuk's more recent work.

Although environmental issues have caught more attention for the last few decades, there is still a lack of effective public response to ecological problems. Turkey also lacks an efficient environmental education in raising awareness about environmental protection, attitudes, values, and health related environmental issues. Turks, who for thousands of years had lived in a state of natural balance and held nature in high esteem, must be reminded of and taught this ecological heritage, and must relearn their environmental values. It is important to note here that Turkey's environmental problems started in the late 1950s with the mass migration of people from the Eastern regions of Turkey into the cities in the West. Therefore, Turkish Association for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Sources was founded in 1955, with which Turkish environmentalist movement started. Turkish environmentalists were actively involved in opposing thermal power plants at Gökova (1986), Aliğa (1989), and Yatağan (1989), and nuclear power plant at Akkuyu (1993). But the most conspicuous development occurred in 1989 in Bergama which turned into a popular movement in the following years. The villagers actively participated in protests against the use of cyanide in gold mining here.

### **Ufuk Özdağ:**

I would say that environmentally concerned literary works are on the rise. Our writers no longer celebrate an abundant and *inexhaustible* nature, the breathtaking beauty of our shores, mountains, marine life, the flora and the fauna; instead, one comes across narratives of unprecedented losses. Today, our lands, seas, waters are all *cross* with us; I'm using the term to refer to Yaşar Kemal's title for his 1978 novel, *Deniz Küstü* [*The Sea-*

*Crossed Fisherman*].<sup>1</sup> Our environmental writer Latife Tekin, in her last work, *Rüyalar ve Uyanışlar Defteri* [Notebook on Dreams and Awakenings] (2009) points at many pressing environmental concerns, such as the projected two nuclear power plants, the tragic decision to divert Kızılırmak waters to Ankara (two years ago) during a severe water shortage, a plant that did not bloom [this] spring, and others. Tekin's novel, *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* [*Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*] (1984), discussed above by Serpil, is about the phenomenon of shanty towns of big cities. Some of our writers in the past drew attention to massive environmental problems—problems that still persist; for instance, the scarcity of water in Anatolia—Anatolian lands are faced with the threat of drought more severely every other year. In a predominantly agricultural country, water problems found their way into our literary texts. An important novella that comes to mind is *Susuz Yaz* [A Summer Without Water] (1960) by Necati Cumalı, on the predicament of an entire agricultural village faced with water shortage—the film version has won an award. This is a very typical problem for Turkey. Deforestation and accompanying ills come to the fore in numerous literary works. Yaşar Kemal's *Yanan Ormanlarda Elli Gün* [Fifty Days under Forest Fires] is a case in point. Today, soil erosion is another threat that our lands face. Another pressing environmental concern is the collapse of fisheries in our waters; harmful fishing methods combined with massive industrial pollution brought smale-scale fishing to a tragic end. Our renowned writer Yaşar Kemal's non-fictional work, *Denizler Kurudu* [The Seas Dried Up], points at the biodiversity loss in our once abundant waters, as early as the 1970s. Our Marmara Sea was the home for numerous species of fish until the 1970s; now this number has gone down drastically. This is tragic. Karekin Deveciyan's important work, written 100 years ago, *Türkiye'de Balık ve Balıkçılık* [Fish and Fisheries in Turkey] (1915), is an important work to compare the past fish biodiversity in our waters, with the present. Although we've lost numerous fish species over the last 40 years or so, we, Turks, still keep hearing the *strategic* significance of the Turkish Straits System and never its ecological significance. I find this hilarious! Another topic of urgency is the drainage of wetlands in the second half of the twentieth century; wetlands as large as the Marmara Sea were drained to open up new croplands leading to losses, including losses in our waterbird populations. Still 450 species of birds are observed in the Turkish skies, but their populations have immensely decreased. Our major

---

<sup>1</sup> The English title for *Deniz Küstü* is *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman*, but the exact translation is “the sea became cross.”

nature writer, Hikmet Birand, a botanist, draws attention to the losses in Anatolia's flora. And yet, I haven't encountered a single literary work on the tragic impact of Chernobyl on our Black Sea coastal areas; as I always say, we need a writer like Terry Tempest Williams urgently to take up this issue. In the face of deepening environmental crisis, I believe our writers will soon make the environmental turn; and perhaps we will see the rise of a Turkish nature writing. What will, perhaps, speed up the process will be the translation of nature writing texts from English into Turkish.

**Nevin Özkan:**

What first comes to my mind is the nuclear disaster that took place in 1986 in Chernobyl. That event in the Soviet Union was actually an important issue for Turkey. Thirteen years later, another big disaster occurred: the 1999 İstanbul earthquake. Concerning natural disasters, people have realized how dangerous the consequences can be if necessary precautions are not taken. They have also realized that the construction of nuclear power plants is not to be encouraged. On the contrary, people should stand up against their construction, and other ways of supplying energy should be found and applied. Many journalists and writers have written about these facts, and as regards the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent nuclear disasters in northern Japan, the topic of nuclear energy's inherent risks is receiving a lot of journalistic attention around the world.

Another hot topic is the water issue, considered as one of the main problems of the twenty-first century. Our country gives birth to the two most important rivers of the Near East, Euphrates and Tigris, whose joint basin (Mesopotamia) is considered to be the cradle of civilization. On the one hand, protecting and developing our water reserves are essential to Turkish agriculture and economy; on the other hand, we are responsible for sharing water with neighbouring countries.

**Scott Slovic:**

I must say I feel a bit awkward responding to my own question in this case. Turkish environmental issues are a bit beyond my area of expertise, but I do know from reading Ufuk's work and from various conversations with Ufuk and other Turkish friends that writers like Yaşar Kemal have been responding in powerful ways to environmental concerns in Turkey, such as the killing of dolphins in the Sea of Marmara—this is the topic of Kemal's novel *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman*, which appeared in English translation in 1985. I know there are many other social and environmental issues in Turkey, ranging from endangered wetlands to the sprawling

shantytowns on the outskirts of İstanbul, but I am not familiar with literary treatments of these topics.

To conclude our roundtable conversation, let's talk a bit about this book itself. The title of this collection is *The Future of Ecocriticism*. So what notions about this "future" emerged from the conference in November 2009 and what other thoughts have you three had since that time about the future of this field?

**Serpil Oppermann:**

First of all, this conference was Turkey's first ecocriticism conference which enabled some Turkish scholars to present papers on Turkish writers from ecocritical perspectives, and thus to pave the way toward establishing ecocriticism in Turkish academia. Secondly, other participants from various countries around the world presenting papers on their literatures and cultures, indicated an important aspect of ecocritical studies; namely that despite cultural and other differences, human cultures share similar ecological challenges that trigger more or less similar literary responses from writers. But more importantly, because of Turkey's unique position as a bridge between continents and cultures, this conference fulfilled a symbolic role in bringing the West and the East together in creating a truly eco-cultural bridge between Western and Eastern perspectives. This is where the future of ecocriticism lies in my opinion, for we are all citizens of the Earth which knows of no boundaries when its ecosystems are disrupted. Although the wide variety of perspectives in the presentations makes it impossible to form a final homogeneous purview of the conference, it is possible to state that many of these papers contributed to the formation of this emergent picture. In other words, the future of ecocriticism points to a transnationalization process.

I would, however, also like to offer a philosophical outlook for the future of ecocriticism. The growing interest in theorizing "matter" in ecocritical studies today highlights one of the most significant paths ecocriticism is embarking upon. We now think of the matter of the planet to be coextensive with discursive practices (race, gender, identity, class, justice, etc). The future of ecocriticism, in this regard, lies in thinking the material and the discursive together. They are no longer thought as separate categories. That means, ecocriticism will work "being" (ontology), "knowing" (epistemology), and "valuing" (ethics) through one another to provide the necessary theoretical framework for the understanding of the

relationship between discursive practices and the material world, between culture and nature, and between human and the non-human existence.

The emerging knowledge practices in ecocritical scholarship concerning the interactions of cultural and natural ecologies evidence the interconnectedness of all earth-agencies. In this context, contemporary ecocriticism views humans as ecologically embodied and socially embedded beings and focuses on the sphere of materiality and the body. It emphasizes the significance of embodied knowledge with regards to issues of sexuality, race, class, and gender, as well as environmental justice, health, risk and activist issues. The future of ecocriticism is thus being shaped by new materialisms that offer a compelling model which casts matter (all physical substances) and bodies (human and non-human) not as mere objects of knowledge, but as agents with vitality of their own, and as interrelated forces beyond human control, linking human corporeality with the non-human life processes. In short, the present ecocritical scholarship indicates a significant move towards incorporating the material turn taking place in environmental humanities and science studies.

**Ufuk Özdağ:**

I've been "thinking like a mountain" about this for quite a while now, and I'd like to say a few things. But please bear with me for a very personal story first. I've taught at least one art course at Hacettepe University for the past ten years, and each time I'm teaching this course, I refer to the phenomenon of Bauhaus ("house for building")—the German art school that came into being following the first world war to rebuild a devastated country. Through the collective action of architects, designers, artists, painters, craftsmen, and others, all working under the same roof for a grand purpose, the distinction between fine and applied arts was eliminated. Today, I see a parallel situation between the past war-ravaged Germany and the present environmentally ravaged planet, and I sincerely believe that now what the world needs is another Bauhaus ideology to conceive, create, and to rebuild the world, to restore the countless damages that have been inflicted on the earth. To make a long story short, I see in the future of expanding ecocriticism its leap out of the English departments, into a discipline in its own right, such as the evolution of Human Rights Studies and Women's Studies Programs across the world. I'd like to call this new discipline "Land Ethic Studies" in honor of the enduring vision articulated by Aldo Leopold in his now classic *A Sand County Almanac*. In the face of the degradation of terrestrial, aquatic, and marine ecosystems across the world, I really think that Leopold's "land

ethic” is more relevant today than it has ever been—and I know of no other such powerful term that would strike a common chord across the world. The proposed term, “Land Ethic Studies,” for the new interdisciplinary field of study—indicative of arts, humanities, and sciences merging—would secure the desired impact. Already, the present trend in ecocriticism is a merging of arts, humanities, and sciences—what Leopold, himself, practiced in his entire career. Scott, you are teaching a class at UNR with an atmospheric chemist, right? The new discipline of “Land Ethic Studies” would blur the boundaries of established disciplines, and bring together ecocritics, land artists, environmental engineers, environmental ethicists, ecopsychologists, renewable energy experts, ecological economists, environmental sociologists, systems thinking scientists, conservation biologists, conservation practitioners, restoration ecologists, all under the same roof, for collective action to rebuild the damaged lands of our planet—our true home. The reason I’m proposing the term “Land Ethic Studies” is that the bulk of Leopold’s writing, more than 60 years after his death, embraces all the present trends of today’s world. Please see Leopold’s biographer Curt Meine’s “Preface to the 2010 edition” to his *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* where he states, “[Leopold’s] impact is evident in many of the trends that have reshaped conservation thought, science, policy, and practice since this book was first published,” and Dr. Meine lists all the present “converging” trends: “*dynamic ecology and landscape change*”; “*biodiversity and conservation biology*”; “*the critique of wilderness*”; “*landscape-scale approaches*”; “*private land conservation*”; “*food, agriculture, and conservation*”; “*ecological restoration*”; “*ecosystem services*”; “*community-based conservation*”; “*the greening of religion and philosophy*”; “*environmental justice*”; “*sustainability and resilience*.” In such collective action in the name of “a new relationship between people and land,” as well as “land doctoring,” ecocritics will play an enduring role—perhaps the most significant role—in public outreach, in popularizing science, in communicating scientific facts to the public, in teaching reverence for life, and collectively, in healing the earth. I can think of no other better way of overcoming the *four challenges* that Lawrence Buell articulated in the concluding section of his influential book *The Future of Environmental Criticism*.

Yes, in the future of ecocriticism, I envision more outreach and efforts contributing to ecological restoration. I really think the Deepwater Horizon disaster has helped humanity to grow up a bit. I wish such a violent alteration in the Gulf hadn’t happened for human beings to come to their

senses. But it has happened, and there is no turning back from this now. This dead zone will be a huge scar in the human psyche for the years to come, and it will be difficult to get over with. At the same time, this dead zone will be a kind of an everlasting reminder to humanity to, at least, change towards a “culture of conservation” as Scott Russell Sanders has so wonderfully put in his book titled *A Conservationist Manifesto*.

**Nevin Özkan:**

Many participants in the conference, “The Future of Ecocriticism,” have stressed the importance of raising awareness in their own countries. International conferences should be organized more frequently, with the participation of universities, institutions and vocational schools. I think that the role instructors can play in raising awareness is highly significant. So, first of all, programs to train instructors on the importance of the environment and on protection measures should be initiated. Co-operation with universities from all around the world could be very fruitful and students from different countries could meet on a regular basis and discuss issues such as raising awareness and ways of protecting the environment.

**Scott Slovic:**

This is a huge topic, and I was not only hesitant to ask you three to look into your crystal balls and predict the future, but I’m also hesitant myself to prognosticate too broadly at this time. I’ll offer a few concluding thoughts, though, just in an attempt to be helpful. There have been some fascinating and troubling recent developments in ecocriticism since the November 2009 gathering, such as the flare-up between pro-theory and anti-theory ecocritical factions that appeared in the pages of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, the journal I’ve been editing for quite a few years. I hope the Special Forum on Ecocriticism and Theory, which appeared in the Fall 2010 issue of *ISLE* (including Serpil Oppermann’s article on the anxiety about theory that has long existed in ecocriticism), will offer a constructive step toward future discussions of the appropriate, helpful incorporation of theory in ecocritical practice.

From where I sit (in Reno, Nevada, in the United States), ecocriticism continues to be a vibrant, hopeful branch of both environmental and literary studies. There are many areas in the world, including sections of Africa and much of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where only a few isolated scholars are doing this work—I hope it will be possible to bring these scholars into the international community of ecocritics in the coming

years and to develop ecocritical movements in those regions as well. Yesterday I was looking over the newly published program for the June 2011 biennial conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment in the U.S., and I was amazed to see how diverse the 600 or so speakers (and their paper topics) are. The field has come a long way since I organized the program for ASLE-US's first conference back in 1995, when we had about 300 participants, mostly from North America and with a much narrower focus on "nature writing," wilderness literature, and sense of place.

This new collection of articles, featuring work from East Asia and Central Europe, from North America and the Mediterranean, hints at the cultural and intellectual diversity that will increasingly characterize the field of ecocriticism in the coming years. I think this is a great thing, a great trend. While I do not believe we will ever "solve" our environmental problems once and for all, I do hope ecocriticism will join other environmentally engaged academic disciplines in seeking to understand, and perhaps improve, human culture and the human character, coaxing our species to live more lightly on the planet.