

When the Whole Earth is Ground Zero

Sanjay Mukherjee

Professor, Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies, Saurashtra University

Abstract: Among the many binaries familiar to the human world – from the pastoral to the postmodern times—the country vs the city gained prominence since the beginning of the industrial age, often considered as the start of the Anthropocene, with the city becoming not just the opposite of natural landscape, but took on a larger cultural significance and an economic marker of human development. Ecocriticism, a late theoretical entrant at a time when other postmodern theories like Deconstruction, Postcolonialism, New Historicism and the likes were on the wane, acknowledged its disciplinary limitations and stressed upon a new sense of urgency beyond gender, race, class, identity and all such divisive human-made borders. Put simply, it stressed on raising awareness on a global scale about the precarious condition the Earth—the only inhabitable human space in this universe as of now – has been pushed into due to rampant material needs and greed. And since ecocriticism arose, broadly speaking, out of literary-critical studies, it felt that literature (and other arts), one of the most ancient markers of culture, might also be turned into effective and emotive dialogues of critical redressal due to the irreversible damage human activities have triggered putting into peril their own survival. The proposed paper will attempt theoretically to deal with these issues by punctuating ideas with literary examples.

Keywords: Ground Zero, The Anthropocene, Country vs City, Ecocriticism

Ground Zero has two meanings: the negative one refers to the point on the earth's surface directly above or below an exploding nuclear bomb. The nuclear capability of human beings is often considered the stronger point of reference for the beginning of the Anthropocene, the other being the start of the industrial age—although, Geologists disagree about the onset of this epoch. Noam Chomsky has the following opinion on the event of the dropping of the Hiroshima bomb: “[I]t was

apparent that the genie was out of the bottle and that technological development would soon reach that stage—as they did in 1953, with the explosion of thermonuclear weapons. That led to the setting of the Doomsday Clock by the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* at two minutes to midnight—meaning global termination” (2).

The other, the more hopeful meaning refers to Ground Zero being a starting point or base for an activity, usually one of redemption or redressal. Now, the data for the impact of such redressal is not convincing; rather it is the opposite—for example, the heatwave experienced in the month of May 2024 in India has been recorded to be 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than the last measured heatwave data available.^[1] Whereas, debates on issues of counter-steps against global warming are as yet inconclusive. Rather, the reality is, that every time a natural disaster strikes, the event itself is treated as a starting point for a short-term urgency to gather data which is often very likely forgotten till the next calamitous happening. This became evident in India in the wake of the recent devastating landslides in the Wayanad district of Kerala state (known to depend very strongly on tourism revenue) on the 30th of July 2024. The Kerala High Court had to initiate a *suo moto* proceeding asking the state government to document a study on the inherent geological characteristic of the affected landscape, its bio-diversity, natural resources and allied aspects to factor in what kind of developmental activities could be ecologically sustained.^[2] Dave Petley, a global expert on the study and management of landslides has come up with a detailed report on the 6th August 2024 with satellite images of the affected sites sourced from ISRO and Google Earth before and after the disaster.^[3] The debatable and uncertain issues arising here is, would such data be sufficient for a proper ecological and human redressal to the calamity, or, would the race for development again change the very nature of the problem to make it occur again as a new disaster? Similarly, there are several websites with data on the plastic pollution in our oceans^[4] with how many million tons of plastic dumped into the oceans every year, breaking it up into daily dumping data, percentage of plastic in overall marine debris, what amount of micro-plastics enter our bodies through food, and what it does to our bodies etc.; with probable statistics of how much from this dumping can be dredged and used for landfills, what

percentage can be recycled, what incinerated and so on; yet, most of the counter-measures read like theoretical discourses as of now. But, since it is common sense to predict that if 71% of earth's surface is covered by oceans that are beyond the political boundaries, the entire earth ought to be considered as Ground Zero for any redemptive measures, in actuality though, environmental issues are fraught with such divides like the North-South, or the developing vs the developed nations. The El Niño crisis for example which is a measure of above-average sea/ocean surface temperatures with polar glaciers sliding into oceans at an alarming rate since the 1990s is going to eventually affect all countries but at the moment only the smaller island nations like the Maldives seem to be at the receiving end of this climatic situation. Yet, that the present environmental realities are of prime importance at the policy level of countries can be seen by a recent article in the editorial section of the *Times of India* where, advising Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister of Narendra Modi led government for the third term, the chief economist of Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited (CRISIL), Dharmakirti Joshi puts his primary suggestion^[5] as:

The ongoing heatwave is a grim reminder that climate risks are real and present. A study by Council on Energy, Environment and Water shows that monsoon patterns are changing. Inclement weather has been largely responsible for persistently high food inflation. This has been holding banks from cutting rates. So, increasing budgetary allocation and frontloading spending are important, as is improving early warning systems, developing weather-resistant crops, improving storage and food processing to curb wastages. (10)

This observation is also a reminder how issues of environment—besides impacting a basic human necessity, food (and calling for the implementation of the latest in crop technology like genetically modifying crops to become weather-resistant)—are deeply linked with a nation's economy.

Still remaining on our key concept Ground Zero vis-à-vis the Earth, it becomes apparent that we cannot restrict this term to merely within our known spatial parameters, albeit, this would now include the entire landscape (and waterscape) of the Earth which technology has probably measured and geo-tagged down to the last square foot. If in the real sense space has to be measured, astronomers

are already grappling with distances in light years ^[6] in an attempt to understand how our universe was formed, and how mapping this knowledge can be utterly mortifying. In a recent interview with *Times Evoke*^[7], astronomer Kevin Hainline who specializes in studying the earliest formed galaxies after the Big Bang emphasized how humans ought to drop their egotistic baggage about being the best species on Earth by observing:

We humans tend to think we come into existence when we are born. We imagine we possess our cells and atoms—but we are just borrowing these, from the food we eat, the air we breathe. These atoms are ours for the tiniest moment. If we trace the energy that goes into our thinking, our heart beating, our blood pumping, you’ll see this has always existed. Eventually, the atoms in your fingertips and brain, the carbon in your body, go into the centre of stars. Astronomy is very humbling—it teaches us that we are the product of so many things happening in the universe. Looking back at these galaxies^[8] helps us learn how the universe began to put life together; starting with the earliest stars, with complex materials which formed other stars and eventually—in one galaxy, around one planet—we formed. All these things had to happen and go right for us to be here—this teaches us life is incredibly precious. We humans don’t treasure life in the way we should or see it as this magnificent product of 14 billion years of things happening. We tend to look at trees, plants and other animals and think, ‘We can do what we want with them because we’re better than them’—but they are just different expressions of the same idea in the universe, which is putting all life together, atom by atom. (13)

Besides getting an idea of how humans suffer from narcissism and myopia, the immensity of space and time can be gleaned from this observation that almost blends science and spirituality: it informs us how vast and infinitely complex the cosmos is, and, in contrast, how insignificant is the human presence and human agency. And, as regards the human concept of ‘real estate’ always being *terra firma*, it is again illuminating to know that most of the mass of not just planets but galaxies is made up of what is termed as ‘dark matter’ and corresponding ‘dark energy’ is the mysterious driving force for the continuous expansion of the universe.^[9] Further, as a humble reminder to our discussion about

the earth as Ground Zero within these few sentences till now, we have already touched upon the disciplines of crop science, economics, hydrography, climatology and astrophysics which in turn is a further reminder of the cross-disciplinary nature of the discipline of Environmental Studies, and commensurately, the necessity for coming together of various disciplines of knowledge for sustainable human life on earth. For that to happen, the prerequisite is a coming together of the concerned thinkers from various societies all around the world. As Fred Dallmayr in his *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Its Meaning and Purpose* observed:

As we learn today with growing insistence, civilizational “progress”—if unchecked—can lead and will lead to the steady subjugation and ultimate spoliation or destruction of our natural habitat. Hence, we are faced today with an urgent ecological problem—a problem crystallized in the question: is civilizational or technological progress “sustainable” in the long run? Differently phrased how can human civilization be sustained in the face of looming ecological disaster?^[10]

Yet, although the maxim: ‘Study Nature, Not Books’ is known since the 18th century, this multidisciplinary branch of knowledge called Environmental Studies was slow to enter into the academia, and was not visible in any higher educational institution in the world before the mid-twentieth century.^[11] Within literary-critical studies, Ecocriticism as a discipline emerged in the early 1990s with the establishment of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE, pronounced ‘Az-lee’) in 1992 in America with the specific purpose of “sharing of facts, ideas and texts concerning the study of literature and the environment.”^[12] As it is true that theory follows praxis, Ecocriticism actually reminds us that before the formulation of a critical-discursive discourse on ‘literature and the environment’, literature has been responding to the environment, as well as the irreversible changes human activities have been flinging upon it. As an example from the Indian knowledge systems, the *Shantih Path Mantra* in the *Yajurveda* can be considered as an example of one of the earliest ponderings on the health of this earth and all the beings in it.^[13] On the other hand, M.H. Abrams, tracing the literary representation of natural environment in the West mentions that

these are “as old as recorded literature” citing the emergence of the Pastoral form with Theocritus in Greece in the 3rd century BC, carried over during the Roman empire by Virgil, and then with the mention of the Garden of Eden in the Hebrew Bible (98). He notes the gradual shift in perception of the concept of wilderness from the Puritan view of it as a dark and ominous thing, possibly the abode of demons, which needs to be overcome, appropriated, and cultivated by human beings, to the view expressed by Thoreau two centuries later that ‘in wilderness is the preservation of the world’ (100). It is common knowledge now that Thoreau’s spot by the Walden Pond was merely two miles away from the nearest town, Concord, which in a way is restating the fact that real wilderness would gradually start disappearing from the late nineteenth century, or, what is more true in our own century that wilderness is ‘conserved’ within human habitats, or, wild areas and forests have become ‘reserved’ areas from which human activities like grazing, lumbering and hunting are banned by law. But much before industrialization, poets brought into sharp juxtaposition human civilizational spaces (towns and cities) with Nature through the pastoral. Besides Abrams, Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism* devotes an entire chapter to the pastoral opining that “No other trope is so deeply entrenched in Western culture, or so deeply problematic for environmentalism. With its roots in the classical period, pastoral has shown itself to be infinitely malleable for differing political ends, and potentially harmful in its tensions and evasions” (33). For example, reading “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” the famous pre-industrial pastoral by Christopher Marlowe, one is hardly in any doubt that the confident speaker of the poem betrays the fact that his community—besides domesticating sheep and cattle for their produce—freely indulges in mining the surrounding “Valleys, groves, hills, and fields, / Woods, or steepy mountain” for their yields.^[14] And, from the Renaissance to the Romantic periods, pastoral poetry steadily reminded readers of the vanishing clans and their rustic lands as Wordsworth’s famous pastoral poem “Michael” narrated. As about the predominant change in the landscape, that of the expanding cities like London, both Wordsworth and his senior contemporary William Blake would write poems—Blake’s “London” chronicles class and gender exploitation, and Wordsworth’s “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge” becomes a rare poem in

praise of the city, albeit captured in the early morning before the sky above got enveloped in smoke from the factory chimneys. A little later, Byron's poem "Darkness" almost anticipates the apocalyptic strain becoming prevalent in so many works of literature since the mid-twentieth century building up an entire sub-genre of dystopic writing that texts like *1984* and *Silent Spring* ushered in. City-life started gaining focus with the turn of the twentieth century with the accompanying portrayal of a mechanized human life, a sense of urban desolation, alienation and ennui captured so well in the modern poems like that of Thomas Hardy's "Nobody Comes," Ezra Pound's "In A Station of the Metro," Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The American modern poets like William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens as well as the post-Eliot generation of British poets like Auden and Larkin were predominantly engaged in representing the psychological, existential and the quotidian human lives in the cities. Besides, the two world wars and the increasing postmodern consciousness to technically better poetic craft beyond the Moderns hardly left any scope for poetry to look beyond the human world towards the natural environment and ecology ^[15] and write what came to be known only from as late as the 1990s as Eco-poetry. It focused on the relationship between human beings and the non-human world in such a way that it is both about the environment—a larger presence and reality than human existence on earth—and is environmentalist, i.e., prioritizing this environment, although most humans actually tend to believe that it is themselves and their plight that is prior. A few other expectations from eco-poetry are that the underlying strong environmentalist message in the poems must also hint at an awareness to resolve the environmental crises, and indicate mechanisms of healing not just within the human societies full of schisms, but also between the human and the non-human world. And yet, an eco-poem must also be a poem, its diction qualifies as 'poetic' and not just lines strung up with 'nature' terms.^[16] Eco-poetry, as defined by Craig Santos Perez in his article "Teaching Eco-poetry in a Time of Climate Change" refers to "poetry about ecology, ecosystems, environmental injustice, animals, agriculture, climate change, water, and even food. It emerged in the 1990s as poets questioned the naturalness of 'nature poetry,' especially since nature itself was rapidly changing due to global warming and environmental destruction."^[17]

This brings us to the real problem which is a kind of a paradox: all art, in order to qualify as ‘art’ has an element of the figurative, whereas nature and its problems constitute the real. Thus, we are in the Heideggerian dilemma about the inability of accessing a thing in itself, especially through the agency of language. In fact, Robert Haas, the Pulitzer and the National Book award-winning author, as well as a former Poet Laureate of the United States, while writing a new introduction to Gary Snyder’s famous book of essays on the nature-culture interface titled *The Practice of the Wild* opines somewhat similarly when he says that “our language for the dynamism of the ecosystems has been impoverished (x)”. Put in another way, only nature, in itself, is ecocentric, whereas art becomes, by default, anthropocentric. However, some ways to overcome this problem has been suggested by Richard Kerridge in his essay “Environmentalism and Ecocriticism” (2006) where he enlists the emphasis by several ecocritics to move away from postmodernist critical theory “that has become so caught up in analyses of language that the physical world, if not denied outright, is ignored” (531). Kerridge also, citing Jonathan Bate, supports the demand for a literal reading of literature, whereby “Wordsworth’s owls and Keats’ swallows should be read, first and foremost, as real owls and swallows. To read them otherwise is now the evasive reading” (532). But much before Kerridge, Jean-Paul Sartre, in his prescient essay “Why Write” published just after World War II with the knowledge that human beings now possessed the atomic button for self-destruction, reminded us of an ethical dimension to the whole anthropocentric enterprise about thinking, writing and reading when he said:

With each of our acts, the world reveals to us a new face. But, if we know that we are directors of being, we also know that we are not its producers. If we turn away from this landscape, it will sink back into its dark permanence. At least, it will sink back; there is no one mad enough to think that it is going to be annihilated. It is we who shall be annihilated, and the earth will remain in its lethargy until another consciousness comes along to awaken it. (Lodge 371)

This brings us to the final question about how, if at all, can literature contribute to environmental well-being which in turn would contribute to human sustenance on this earth. And, the allied issue of

identifying acclaimed writers who are environmentalists too. It has already been discussed that literature has been a conscience-keeper through its records of all kinds of applaudable and forgettable human activities, including those towards ecology and environment much before the onset of the Anthropocene. It has also been mentioned that Ecocriticism is aware of its limitations towards environmental redressal and needs to work in tandem with other disciplines of knowledge, especially with technology to think of ways to slow down at first and then to gradually reverse the already massive damage inflicted upon this earth. But the environmental crises have reached such levels that mere reflection, contemplation and raising awareness would not do—it requires activism; and ours (i.e., for students of literary-critical studies) would be, as a first step, to include Ecocriticism as a compulsory course in the syllabus. Actually, very few writers come to mind who are acknowledged and awarded for their creative writing, including devoting entire anthologies or texts to issues on the environment and ecology, and, as well, renowned for their eco-activism. From India, Amitav Ghosh qualifies as a strong contender for eco-literature, but is not an eco-activist. Vandana Shiva is a well-known eco-feminist, but doesn't shape her activism into creative writing to the extent that Mahasweta Devi did. The historian and environmentalist Ramachandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* is an exemplary text that connects his academic-intellectual work with activism.^[18] But above all, the critically acclaimed Pulitzer Prize-winning and National Book award-nominated American poet and an equally committed environmentalist Gary Snyder merits to be named first. Snyder (b.1930) grew up in his parents' farm in Washington State and while doing his higher education did his summer jobs with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service. He chanced upon writing poetry in the mid-1950s quite accidentally, as he confesses: "I began to meditate nights, after work, and I found myself writing some poems that surprised me" (Snyder, 1992:391). Robert Haas captures the American poetic scenario of that time:

The most striking voices in North American poetry in the 1950s and early '60s—post-Hiroshima, post-Auschwitz (what W.H. Auden called "the age of anxiety")—wrote a poetry of psychological crisis: the ferocious poems of Sylvia Plath, the struggles of Robert Lowell and

Theodore Roethke with bipolar disorder and of John Berryman with alcoholism and depression, and Allen Ginsberg's hyperbolic address to a generation "destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked." There was a slight shock turning from that work to Snyder's evocation of the sheer energy of the living world. (Snyder, 2020: XXI)

The 'sheer energy of the living world' would be realistically recorded in Snyder's many poems, always encountered by the domineering energy of human agency (be it religion, or the government—versions of the Church and the State since the olden times) as when he writes in the poem "The Call of the Wild" featured in his Pulitzer Prize-winning anthology *Turtle Island*:

The heavy old man in his bed at night
Hears the Coyote singing
in the back meadow.
All the years he ranched and mined and logged.
A Catholic.
A native Californian.
and the Coyotes howl in his
Eightieth year.
He will call the Government
Trapper
Who uses iron leg-traps on Coyotes,
Tomorrow.
My sons will lose this
Music they have just started
To love. (Snyder 1992: 220)

Incidentally, this eighty year old rancher, miner and logger in this poem can be juxtaposed with the eighty year old Michael in Wordsworth's pastoral poem of the same name to arrive at a graph of the incremental rise in human colonization of Nature and, since the twentieth century, the rapid

elimination of flora and fauna.^[19] Another important divergence between Wordsworth and Snyder is that the former urged people to learn from Nature^[20] whereas Snyder, considered as the foremost eco-poet alive writing in English today^[21], remains skeptical, and even ironical about this aspect while redrawing the scope of both human and non-human nature as he does in his brief preface to his 1992 anthology, *No Nature*:

Nature also means the physical universe, including the urban, industrial and toxic. But we do not easily *know* nature, or even know ourselves. Whatever it actually is, it will not fulfil our conceptions or assumptions. It will dodge our expectations and theoretical models. There is no single or set “nature” either as “the natural world” or “the nature of things.” The greatest respect we can pay to nature is not to trap it, but to acknowledge that it eludes us and that our own nature is also fluid, open, and conditional. (Preface)

Right from the Renaissance however, the human tendency has been to trap nature. It is in this sense that Ecocriticism is a discourse which is post-Postcolonial, not just literally that it comes after Postcolonialism has had its day with its appalling history of slavery (including women confined as sex slaves), indentured labour, and other forms of tortures on the colonized human beings, but because it ought to be seen—considering the whole Earth as ‘ground zero’—as the despoliation and territorialization of the entire earth, making Pramod Nayar describe this reality with the coinage of a portmanteau word ‘toxicorography’ in his recently published book *Vulnerable Earth: The Literature of Climate Crisis*. Thus, the hopeful meaning of ‘ground zero’ rests on practice and prayers. The practice rests—as suggested by Snyder in his collection of essays *The Practice of the Wild* about necessary and conscious activism for environmentalist virtue and political keenness to prioritize the quality of living of all beings and natural resources on earth over the quantitative accumulation of materials by humans alone eliminating the non-human in the process. And the prayer can be Snyder’s poem “Prayer for the Great Family” that he borrows from an old Mohawk prayer, and interestingly echoes our own *Shanti Path Mantra*:

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day—

and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf

and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind

and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Air, bearing and soaring Swift and the silent

Owl at dawn. Breath of our song

clear spirit breeze

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brothers and sisters, teaching

secrets, freedoms, and ways; who share with us their

milk; self-complete, brave, and aware

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers;

holding or releasing; streaming through all

our bodies salty seas

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Sun: blinding pulsing light through

trunks of trees, through mists, warming caves where

bears and snakes sleep—he who wakes us—

in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Great Sky

who holds billions of stars—and goes yet beyond that—

beyond all powers, and thoughts

and yet is within us—

Grandfather Space.

The Mind is his Wife.

so be it. (1992: 223)

Ecopoetry and Ecocriticism might thus be a stark reminder that our advancing knowledge of territorial mapping, AI-generated climate prediction, geo-tagging and satellite imagery might just become technology too little too late hurtling us towards a zero-sum game.

Notes

[1] *Business Insider* article, June 7 2024; www.businessinsider.in.

[2] Giti Pratap's report dated 8 August, 2024 on the website <https://www.barandbench.com> accessed on 9 August 2024.

[3] Petley's report is on the site, <https://www.eos.org> accessed here on 9 August 2024.

[4] Sites like sas.org.uk and news.un.org among others.

[5] *The Times of India* (Ahmedabad Edition), June 11, 2024.

[6] One light year is about 6 trillion miles or 9 trillion kilometres.

[7] *The Times of India* (Ahmedabad Edition), June 12, 2024.

[8] Hainline is credited with being the first person to spot one of the earliest galaxies recorded so far with the help of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), one that formed just 290 million years after the Big Bang. By contrast our life on earth began 4 billion years after.

[9] <https://cfa.harvard.edu> accessed on 17 June, 2024. Since knowledge in this area is still developing and is at present hypothetical, hence the prefix 'dark' given by astro-physicists.

[10] In a talk he delivered at the Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics & Other Human Sciences, Baroda on 21 May 2009 subsequently published by the Centre as a monograph.

[11] The New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University is often considered as the first to establish a BS in environmental studies degree in 1952, awarding its first degree in 1956. (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Environmental_studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_studies); accessed on 10 June, 2024.)

[12] <https://www.asle.org> accessed on 17 June, 2024.

[13] *aum dayuh shantih...prithvih shantih, aapah shantih, vanaspatayah shantih...* connects humans with all other beings and entities in Nature in reciprocal peace and harmony. ‘May peace radiate in the whole sky as well as the whole ethereal space everywhere. May peace reign all over the earth, in water and in all herbs, trees and creepers.’

[14] The quoted lines are from the first stanza of the poem that by the fourth becomes even more evident of the exploitation of Nature by the Shepherd community: “A gown made of the finest wool / Which from our pretty Lambs we pull; / Fur lined slippers for the cold, / With buckles of the purest gold.”

[15] One exception would be Ted Hughes; yet he is a *postmodern* Nature poet, meaning that his natural world is not so much *for* nature as it was a conscious rebellion against the Moderns and their metropolitan culture as was his conscious shaping of his Yorkshire dialect into poetry as a deliberate movement away from the city-bred erudite Modern diction, his use of animals and birds as tropes, like his “Thought-Fox” becoming symbolic of poetic inspiration, and his crow series of poems metaphoric of the anti-God.

[16] In an earlier essay, I identified Elizabeth Browning’s 1862 poem “A Musical Instrument” as an example of an ecopoem. See my article entitled “Ecological Awareness in (English) Poetry: A Working Paper” in the text *Interpretations of Literature: Theory and Practice* (2020) edited by Prashant Sinha and Prabhanjan Mane, Aadi Publications, Jaipur.

[17] <https://thegeorgiareview.com/posts/teaching-ecopoetry-in-a-time-of-climate-change/> (accessed on 15 September, 2024).

[18] In the preface to the anniversary edition of *The Unquiet Woods*, Guha remembers another academic from Kumaun University, Uttarakhand, Shekhar Pathak, who was an equally fierce activist

and edited the ‘outstanding journal’ on Himalayan ecology, *Pahar* (which in English means ‘mountain’).

[19] Registering data on birds alone, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History mentions that over 40 species of birds have become extinct since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The list of other creatures is much larger.

[20] As in “The Tables Turned” Wordsworth exhorted his readers ‘Let Nature be your teacher.’

[21] Mary Oliver (1935-2019) comes closest to Gary Snyder as a Nature poet. But she’s more introspective bordering on the metaphysical (e.g., her poem “Summer Day”) recollecting in tranquillity instead of a more direct poetic and personal (activist) response like Snyder’s.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (11/e). Cengage Learning, 2015.

Chomsky, Noam and Robert Pollin. *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal*. Verso, 2020.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2004.

Guha, Ramachandra. *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. Permanent Black, 1989.

Lodge, David and Nigel Wood (eds.). *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*. Routledge, 1988.

Nayar, Pramod. *Vulnerable Earth: The Literature of Climate Crisis*. Cambridge UP, 2024.

Snyder, Gary. *No Nature: New and Selected Poems*. Pantheon Books, 1992.

---. *The Practice of the Wild*. Counterpoint, 1990.

Waugh, Patricia (ed.). *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford UP, 2006.