

A Booklist of International Environmental Literature

Coordinated by Scott Slovic

I have given the compilers of the following lists an almost impossible task: to select no more than five important works of “environmental literature” from their home countries (or regions) around the world or from literary traditions in which they have particular expertise. The point here is not to produce exhaustive or definitive lists of “the best” works, but rather to give experts a chance to present some of their own favorites in the hope of inspiring readers to plunge into the wealth of additional works from these places and elsewhere in the world. Environmental literature is a vast and varied field, and it exists wherever human beings write (or speak) to each other about the physical places where we live, about the other species with whom we share this planet, and about the increasingly pressing questions of access to natural resources, mitigating toxic contamination, and how to control our species’ ecological footprint. In coordinating this list, I have tried to seek out scholars located in (or knowledgeable about) diverse regions of the world, but I realize many regions are not represented in this booklist. Each of these scholars responded within a few weeks’ time, so these are basically top-of-the-head lists, not products of lengthy consideration. The main criteria were that the works be from the past 250 years, that they display genuine “literary quality,” and that they have achieved popular appeal.

Argentina

Compiled by María Elena Aguirre
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina

Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo* (1845; Eng. *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, 2003)

This book of essays provides an analysis of the cultural and political reality of Argentina emphasizing environmental determinism. Sarmiento posits a direct relationship between ecology and anthropology, suggesting that *gauchos* and *caudillos* are the product of the soil. This work is written in splendid prose, but the strict binary opposition “civilización-barbarie” may be severely challenged today.

Eugenio Cambacérès, *En la sangre* (1887/1980; *In the blood*)

Following Émile Zola’s deterministic principles, Cambacérès explains the miserable behavior of the character Genaro (the son of an Italian immigrant) in this naturalistic novel on the basis of inheritance and environment. This well-known work of local color is considered by many to be ideologically biased.

Horacio Quiroga, *Cuentos escogidos* (2008; Selected stories)

This selection includes short stories by Horacio Quiroga taken from *Cuentos de amor de locura y de muerte* (1917; Tales of love, madness, and death); *Anaconda* (1921); *El desierto* (1924; The desert); *Los desterrados* (1926; The outcasts); and *Más allá* (1935; Beyond). Quiroga was born in Uruguay but spent most of his life in Argentina. The jungle province of Misiones provided the material for most of his stories. Strongly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and Rudyard Kipling, Quiroga's powerful stories portray the struggle of humans to survive in the tropical jungle.

Ricardo Güiraldes, *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926/2004; Eng. *Don Segundo Sombra*, 1995)

This novel is a canonical work in Argentine "gauchesca" literature, providing an elegiac vision of *el gaucho* and *las pampas*. The essence of Argentina is here related to the earth and the natural environment, which offers a natural and healthy life and a good place for meditation.

Leopoldo Lugones, *Selección Obertura* (2007; Eng. *Selected Writings*, 2008)

This collection contains poems by Lugones from different books written in the 1920s. The author is considered one of the outstanding figures in Argentine literature. In some poems he extols the beauty and richness of the Argentina countryside—e.g., "A los ganados y las mieses" ("To Cattle and Wheat") or various poems devoted to regional flora and fauna.

Australia

Compiled by Ruth Blair
University of Queensland, Australia

Elyne Mitchell, *Soil and Civilization* (1946)

A forgotten classic by Elyne Mitchell, best known for her *Silver Brumby* children's books, *Soil and Civilization* traces the seen and unseen presence of soil in our lives, our dependence on it, and our capacity to destroy its life-giving proper-

ties. Though it has a limited view of the role of Australian Aborigines as custodians of the land, the book is prophetic in its predictions of further depredations to be wrought by the settler culture of Australia. Its environmental awareness is ahead of its time, and it offers some of the finest lyrical writing about the Australian landscape.

Alec H. Chisholm, ed., *Land of Wonder* (1964)

First published in 1964 and reprinted several times up to 1981, *Land of Wonder* is a thematically organized anthology of writing about the Australian land, landscape, plants, and creatures. Its editor, Alec H. Chisholm, was himself a natural-history writer. His selection of authors and pieces ranges across nonfiction and fiction, books, essays, and newspaper articles. A strong sense of the value of good writing in fostering attention to the world around us pervades the book.

Eric Rolls, *They All Ran Wild* (1969)

They All Ran Wild, the influential masterpiece of farmer and poet Eric Rolls, was born of concern for settler Australian land-management practices. Its topic is introduced species; its strength lies both in its formidable research and in the quality of the writing, which, while recounting distressing events and consequences, also celebrates the land and its creatures in a beautiful, unadorned style. Through his writing, his activism, and his support for other environmental writers, Rolls became a revered figure in the environmental movement in Australia.

Judith Wright, *Collected Poems, 1942–1985* (1994)

Judith Wright, a fifth-generation Australian whose family had large farming interests in New South Wales, was one of the country's most distinguished poets of the twentieth century. Concerned with the fate of the land in the hands of settler Australians, Wright became an environmental activist and a campaigner for Aboriginal rights. Her poems, which are deeply tied to the landscapes in which she lived, have inspired a love and an informed understanding of the land for a generation of readers.

Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (2006)

The various cultural representations of the land by the Aboriginal peoples distinguish themselves as some of Australia's greatest environmental writing. A contemporary example is the prize-winning epic novel by Alexis Wright, set in her homeland, the Gulf Country of North Queensland. Wright weaves a story of knowledge, of dispossession, and of lives inextricably intertwined with the life of the land. *Carpentaria* is a superb environmental novel, telling powerfully of the role of the land in the physical, emotional, and spiritual lives of those who dwell within it. [Editorial note: An excerpt from *Carpentaria* appeared in the November 2008 issue of *WLT*.]

Canada

Compiled by Rebecca Raglon
University of British Columbia, Canada

Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836)

This collection of letters by a nineteenth-century naturalist provides a sensitive portrayal of settling in the Ontario wilderness.

Ernest Thompson Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898)

These dramatic short stories pioneer a sense of "fellow feeling" for wild and domestic animals.

Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf* (1963)

This delightful tall tale blends humor and seriousness in a study of wolves in the Canadian Arctic.

Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972)

Atwood's collection of essays is a witty and path-breaking discussion of Canadian "national nature" and key themes in the country's literature.

John Livingston, *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (1994)

This is an uncompromising and deeply moving philosophical analysis of the human place in the natural world.

China & Taiwan

Compiled by Wei Qingqi & Lu Shuyuan
Nanjing Normal University, P.R. China
Suchow University, P.R. China

Liu Kexiang, *Lü Niao de Yi Zhan* (1973; *A posthouse of migratory birds*)

This is one of the major works of contemporary nonfiction nature writing in Taiwan. In writing the book, Liu Kexiang reveals that concern for the remaining habitat of birds can be extended to concern for the whole ecological system; hence the author transforms himself from a lonely bird-watcher apart from the society to a social activist who devotes himself to environmental causes.

Xu Gang, *Fa Mu Zhe, Xing Lai* (1997; *Wake up, woodchoppers!*)

This volume of reportage is a strong and poetic critique of excessive deforestation. With a deep perception of life and nature, a detailed description of the beautiful wilderness, and a profound awareness of crisis, the book opens a green vision for readers. The impact of this book in China was similar to that of *Silent Spring* in America. Always filled with passion, Xu Gang has been praised as a poet of green dreams.

Wei An, *Tai Yang Sheng Qi Yi Hou* (2000; *After the sunrise*)

This nonfiction volume is a personal and elegant reflection on modern civilization. Wei An was born and brought up in Changping, a county at the foot of Mt. Yan, not far from Beijing. In this urban and rural interface, Wei An's lifelong sensitivity to both the environment and civilization is revealed in his

writing. His writing shows a surprising similarity to Western nature writing as well as a Confucian belief that a unifying, cosmic force connects all things.

Zhang Wei, *Ci Wei Ge* (2007; Song of the hedgehog)

After dozens of novels about his native land in Shandong, Zhang Wei published this century-long legendary story about peculiar love between man and other species, surging with vigorous symbolism and animism.

Yu Jian, *Yu Jian de Shi* (2007; The poems of Yu Jian)

Unlike those verses that are metaphysically suspended in the midair, Yu Jian's poems are "down to earth" in a literary sense. In a portrayal of life in the simplest, roughest language, the poet manages to fulfill his promise to "bring the wings of poems back to the land."

East Africa

Compiled by Timothy M. Arege
Catholic University of East Africa, Kenya

Euprase Kezilahabi, *Kichomi* (1974; Sharp pain)

This volume of poems, published in Swahili, includes such works as "Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria" ("Fishing in Lake Victoria"), which tells the story of over-fishing in Lake Victoria, exposing the consequences of greed and the need to reevaluate fishing as an economic activity, and "Namagondo," a nostalgic poem about the village of Namagondo, where traditional types of food, such as sweet potatoes, are no longer available and common agricultural techniques have been replaced by new farming technologies.

These works evoke serious environmental issues, issues that have become even more pronounced in the years since 1974.

Emmanuel Mbogo, *Bustani ya Edeni* (2002; Garden of Eden)

This environmental novel is set in the coastal Tanzanian town of Dar es Salaam, where various kinds of pollution affect the lives of local people. In particular, the narrative focuses on the problems caused by a chemical factory called Sagasaga. Factory workers get sick because they do not wear gloves or masks. The factory dumps waste materials directly into the Zamala River, poisoning plants and animals and threatening the people who use the river—for bathing, drinking, and washing clothes—with cancer. The novel tells the story of public resistance—led by a pastor, a journalist, and a lawyer—to the environmental destruction caused by the factory. Mr. Abdula, the managing director of Sagasaga, eventually is forced to close the factory and is reputed to have taken refuge from angry citizens by fleeing to the United States.

Kithaka wa Mberia, *Redio na Mwezi* (2005; Radio and moon)

The poem "Johari Bamburi" in this Swahili collection starts with an unpleasant scene in a mining quarry caused by a tractor and presents a narrative of reforestation, showing the once-devastated landscape re-filling with life—trees, animals, and insects. This is actually a historically accurate poem, telling the story of Bamburi, an area near Mombasa where cement mining has been going on for many years, and where the vegetation was eventually replanted, restoring the ecosystem and creating a popular location for ecotourism. The region now brings in income from tourism rather than from destructive mining.

Germany

Compiled by Axel Goodbody

University of Bath, United Kingdom

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh” (“Over all hilltops / Is Still”) (1780)

The second of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Wayfarer’s Night Songs” is a quintessential statement of Romantic empathy with nature. In eight short lines, it models successively the harmonious integration of humankind in the mineral, vegetable, and animal spheres, ending with a hint that final peace may only be found in death, which is understood as a return to nature. One of the best-known and loved poems in the German language, it was originally penciled by the poet on the wall of a hunting hut in the woods near Ilmenau in Thuringia, on an evening in September 1780. The lyric simplicity and tranquility of the poem are complemented by Schubert’s moving musical setting (D768). This is a miniature masterpiece by the author of Germany’s national epic, *Faust*.

Wilhelm Raabe, *Pfisters Mühle* (1884; Pfister’s mill)

This short novel was inspired by an actual court case. The owners of a sugar refinery are sued by a miller and innkeeper for pollution of a river near Hannover, because the stench has driven away his customers. Idyllic scenes from the narrator’s childhood in the family mill are evoked on the eve of its demolition, but nostalgia is framed by recognition of the need to live with the nation’s rapid industrial development, despite the environmental damage and the cultural loss incurred. Raabe represents the dilemmas posed by industrialization unusually directly for his time, but set them in an elegantly written, complexly structured narrative incorporating many cultural allusions. A profound reflection on industrialization in the second half of the nineteenth century by one of the leading proponents of poetic realism.

Bertolt Brecht, *Leben des Galilei* (1937–57; Eng. *Galileo*, 1966)

This historical drama is concerned with the background to and consequences of the Renaissance scientist’s famous recanting of his assertion that the earth revolves around the sun (and not the sun around the earth), under threat of torture from the Inquisition. It was originally written during Brecht’s exile from Hitler’s Germany and was conceived as an allegory of the ultimate triumph of reason and democracy over the forces of obscurantism and the vested interests of power elites, despite temporary setbacks. Brecht rewrote the play at the end of the Second World War. Prompted by the use of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he adopted a more critical attitude toward Galileo and inserted a famous speech warning of the possibility that scientists might come to endanger humanity with their discoveries and inventions rather than work toward its good. This is a classic of modern epic theater, raising important questions concerning the ethics of science.

Christa Wolf, *Störfall: Nachrichten eines Tages* (1987; Eng. *Accident: A Day’s News*, 1989)

This diary-essay depicts Wolf’s personal response to the news of the Russian nuclear accident at Chernobyl in April 1986. Disillusionment with nuclear technology is mapped onto broader and more profound disappointment with socialism and loss of confidence in human civilization and progress. Though Wolf juxtaposes the rays of what she sees as an inherently destructive atomic science with the benign rays of medical technology (her brother is undergoing surgery for a brain tumor in the narrative), the ending is deeply pessimistic. The book—which locates the reasons for humanity’s seeming tendency toward self-destruction at least partly in male psychology and patriarchal society and is enriched with intertextual literary allusions—triggered a fierce debate on the safety of nuclear power in the last years of the German Democratic Republic and reached an international audience.

Frank Schätzing, *Der Schwarm* (2004; Eng. *The Swarm*, 2006)

This thousand-page environmental sci-fi thriller depicts nature striking back by means of a chain of seemingly unrelated natural disasters. These prove to be intentional attacks by an unknown sentient species living at the bottom of the oceans. Suffering increasingly from our pollution and destruction of marine ecosystems, the Yrr have decided to bring human civilization to an end. The plot is gripping, and the geophysics and marine biology are carefully researched. (Yrr are single-cell organisms that operate in groups or swarms [hence the novel's title], controlled by a single hive-mind.) The book was Germany's best-selling publication for eight months, has been translated into eighteen languages, and is currently being filmed. Coinciding with the release of the film *The Day After Tomorrow*, it sparked intensive public debate on climate change and the environment.

India

Compiled by S. Murali
Pondicherry University, India

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, *Chemmeen* (1962)

Pillai's novel, which has been translated into more than thirty languages and made into a film, revolves around a myth about chastity among the fishing communities along coastal Kerala—Hemingway's influence is evident. This is one of the early works in Malayalam centering on the physical landscape and its people.

O. V. Vijayan, *Khasakkinte Itihasam* (1969; Eng. *The Legends of Khasak*, 1994)

This novel, written originally in Malayalam, tells the story of a young man who takes up teaching in a small school in a tiny village in north Kerala and suffers existential anguish. The land and the people both figure prominently in this excellent early instance of magical realism in India.

Ashokamitran, *Tannir* (1973; Eng. *Water*, 2001)

Published originally in Tamil, this novel offers a tale of two sisters and a people, describing the months of drought in Chennai in 1969, keenly observing the daily struggle by ordinary men and women to find enough water for their needs, their ingenious strategies for survival, their ability to search out any source, and their interaction with an inept municipal staff incapable of providing the infrastructure necessary for a growing urban population

Perumal Murugan, *Koola Madari* (2000; Eng. *Seasons of the Palm*, 2004)

This regional novel, written in Tamil, represents the protest genre of Dalit literature. This tragic pastoral subverts the traditional Indian pastoral trope in which the god Krishna entertains village boys, herding their livestock in the beautiful forest. This work vividly displays the lives of struggle, magic, and superstition among India's rural poor.

Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (2004)

The Hungry Tide is a compelling novel about ordinary people bound together in an exotic place—the Sunderbans—that finally comes to consume them all.

Italy

Compiled by Serenella Iovino
Università degli Studi di Torino, Italy

Andrea Zanzotto, *Dietro il paesaggio* (1951)

Versatile and multifaceted (his writing deals with many subjects, from linguistics and landscape to political historiography and the natural sciences), Zanzotto is considered Italy's most influential living poet. *Dietro il paesaggio* represents his first attempt to build that bridge between language and landscape which will characterize his poetry. A bilingual anthology of his work was published in 2006 (*The Selected Poetry and Prose of Andrea Zanzotto*, trans. Patrick Barron).

Italo Calvino, *Marcovaldo, ovvero, Le stagioni in città* (1963; Eng. *Marcovaldo, or, The Seasons in the City*, 1983)

Calvino is the most celebrated contemporary Italian writer. This book is the paradoxical epopee of Marcovaldo, an unskilled worker and dreamer, stubbornly hunting for nature in a northern Italian industrial city. But the nature he finds is “mischievous, counterfeit and compromised with artificial life.” The book becomes then a mirror game that, showing humans an estranged nature, finally reveals the self-estrangement of humans, themselves “artificial” beings.

Laura Conti, *Una lepre con la faccia da bambina* (1978; A hare with the face of a child)

Anti-fascist partisan, scientist, writer, and political activist, Conti devoted her life to the struggle for social and ecological issues. She was also a pioneer in environmental education. The book narrates the story of two children who go through the disaster that occurred in Seveso (near Milan) in 1976: a toxic cloud of dioxin burst out from an industrial site, causing one of the most serious environmental catastrophes Italy has experienced.

Anna Maria Ortese, *Corpo Celeste* (1997)

This book is a monologue about the intellectual legacy of Ortese, herself one of the most original Italian writers of the twentieth century. It represents a plea for a non-anthropocentric culture and for the dignity of the other-than-human: “Freedom is a breath. But the whole world breathes, not only the human.”

Giorgio Bassani, *Italia da salvare: Scritti civili e battaglie ambientali* (2005)

Author of the famous novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (1962), Bassani was an *engagé* intellectual and an environmental activist. He was among the founders of “Italia Nostra,” the first organization intended to protect Italian landscape, both natural and cultural. This book testifies to his commitment and civil battles for this cause.

Japan

Compiled by Ken-ichi Noda
Rikkyo University, Japan

Ishimure Michiko, *Kugai Jodo: Waga Minamata Byo* (1972; Eng. *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow: Our Minamata Disease*, 2003)

This best-selling book reports on Minamata Disease, a neurological disorder caused by methylmercury poisoning, which affected a small town in southern Japan, Minamata, in the early 1960s. The author is a well-known female novelist, poet, and local activist who has worked to assist the victims of this disease.

Fujiwara Shinya, *Tokyo Hyoryu* (1983; *Drifting into Tokyo*)

The author of this collection of essays is a photographer and writer who spent many years in India and other Asian countries. With a returnee’s eye, he writes about what he found in Tokyo, metropolitan city of Japan, during the early 1980s—what he found was the complete disappearance of nature.

Ishimure Michiko, *Tenko* (1997; Eng. *Lake of Heaven*, 2008)

Tenko a novel about a rural mountain village submerged under the water by the construction of a dam. The story focuses on the encounter between an old woman who once lived there and a young man who visits from Tokyo. [Editorial note: An excerpt from *Lake of Heaven* appeared in the July 2008 issue of *WLT*.]

Yamao Sansei, *Shinrabansho no nakae* (2001; *Into the secret world of nature: With an awareness of being a fragment of the great whole*)

Living in and observing a forest on an island in southern Japan, the author of this book of essays recounts his encounters with many things and happenings in the natural world that make him contemplate more who we are as human beings.

Kato Yukiko, *Ikebe no Sumika* (2003; *Living by a pond*)

This is a novel about an old woman who lives by a small pond in the middle of Tokyo. Living with the pond, which is visited by many kinds of birds (more than thirty species), she becomes aware of herself as a part of the natural world.

Korea

Compiled by Won-Chung Kim
Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

Se-hui Cho, *The Dwarf Launches a Small Ball* (1976)

This collection of short stories mainly depicts the problems of the rapidly industrialized Korean society in the 1970s. Cho graphically portrays how the relentless drive for economic development deteriorates the environment. His book was translated into English by Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton and published under the title *The Dwarf* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

Wonil Kim, "Meditation on a Snipe" (1979)

A pioneering work of Korean environmental writing, Wonil Kim's novelette deals with the many issues caused by building an industrial society, including chemical toxins, soil contamination, and the extinction of birds.

Hyonjong Chong, *Trees of the World* (1995)

Chong portrays the joy of genuine correspondence between man and nature, arguing for a different perception of nature through his eloquent poetry.

Sungho Choi, *Reservation for the Glowworm* (1995)

After graphically depicting the dismal landscape of the consumption-oriented society in his early works, Choi, with his Zenic insight, investigates a possibility of harmonious living alongside nature in this volume. Choi's major ecological poems (and those of Chiha Kim and Hyonjong Chong)

were collected and translated by Won-Chung Kim and published in the volume *Cracking the Shell: Three Korean Eco-poets* (Homa & Sekey, 2005).

Chiha Kim, *Heart's Agony* (1996)

As a poet and philosophical thinker, Kim investigates how his lifelong yearning for democracy has developed into the dream of ultimate democracy of all life forms in the universe in this book of poems.

Latin America

Compiled by Charles Bergman
Pacific Lutheran University, USA

Pablo Neruda, *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (1924; Eng. *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, 1969)

Neruda was, famously, a great lover of the natural world. He had many rare books about plants and animals in his personal library. When he delivered his collections of books to the University of Chile, he said: "Also it will be asked, why so many of the books are about plants and animals. The answer is in my poetry." This passion for the natural world, and his emotional attachment to it, can be seen in the early metaphorical evocations of nature in works like *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*. It abides in such poems as "Naciendo en los Bosques," in the 1947 collection *Tercera Residencia* ("Born in the Forests," *Residence on Earth*), and other important poems like "Leviathan," "El Gran Océano" ("The Great Ocean"), "No Solo el Albatrós" ("Not Only the Albatross"), and "Aves Maltradas" ("Brutalized Birds"). In *Canto General* (1950), he includes classic poems about nature in South America, such as "Amor América," "Los Ríos Acuden" and "Algunas Bestias." He also published the 1966 book *Arte de los Pájaros* (Eng. *Art of Birds*, 1985). Later environmental works include "Bestiario" in the 1958 volume *Extravagaría* ("Bestiary"; *extravagaría* is a made-up word), and nature was frequent as a theme in his later works.

José Eustasio Rivera, *La vorágine* (1924; Eng. *The Vortex*, 1935)

This Colombian novelist creates the first great “novel of the jungle” in *La vorágine*. The novel follows the fortunes of a fugitive from the city who heads first into the plains of Colombia and then deep into the jungle to become a rubber worker. The jungle is famously characterized in the apostrophe to part 2: “O jungle, wife of silence, mother of solitude,” and which he goes on to describe as the “green prison.” The jungle becomes a character in its own right in this novel, and the suffering of rubber workers in the jungle is a central theme.

Jorge Carrera Andrade, *Lección del Árbol, la Mujer, y el Pájaro* (1948; selections in *Century of the Death of the Rose*, 2002)

An Ecuadorian poet, Andrade is not well known outside his native country. His poetry includes careful attention to the importance of nature in the foundation of an Ecuadorian national identity, which he calls “Teoría de los Guacamayos” (“Theory of the Macaws”) in the 1963 volume *Floresta de los Guacamayos* (Greenworld of the macaws). He explicitly turns to nature and natural objects as a way of linking human beings to their natural contexts in such poems as “Lugar de Origen” (“Place of Origin,”), “El Viaje Infinito” (“The Infinite Voyage”), “Lenguaje Elemental” (“Elemental Language”) from *Lección del Árbol, la Mujer, y el Pájaro*, published in 1948 and “Cada Objeto Es un Mundo” (“Every Object Is a World”), from the 1958 work *Taller del Tiempo* (The workshop of time). His 1929 *Microgramas* (Micrograms) are short, haiku-like poems, focusing on his sense of the poetic essence of natural objects, such as “Colibrí” (“Hummingbird”), “Guacamayo” (“Macaw”), “Golondrina” (“Swallow”), and many more.

Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* (1953; Eng. *The Lost Steps*, 1956)

Well known for his theory of *lo real maravilloso*, which contributed to the Latin American style of “magical realism,” the Cuban Alejo Carpen-

tier founded his sense of the Latin American identity on the baroque magnificence of nature, first defined in the preface to the 1949 work *El reino de este mundo* (Eng. *The Kingdom of This World*, 1957). He later wrote of America: “Our nature is indomitable, like our history, which is the history of ‘lo real maravilloso’ and of the unusual in America” (“Lo baroco y lo real maravilloso” / “The Baroque and the Marvelous Real” [1975]). His theory is developed in *Los pasos perdidos*, his complex novel about a musician who returns to the roots of humanity in an ascent of a wild and unnamed tropical river in South America.

Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (1970; Eng. *Open Veins of Latin America*, 1973)

Galeano is an Uruguayan writer best known for his journalism and his nonfiction representations of Latin American culture. *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* is perhaps his most widely read work, in which he offers a history of exploitation of people and of nature in Latin America, from gold and silver, to sugar and rubber, and into the “contemporary structure of plunder.” In the 1994 work *Úselo y tírelo: El mundo del fin del milenio, visto desde una ecología latinoamericana* (Use it and toss it: The world from the perspective of a Latin American ecology), he offers essays that explore how the world in general, and Latin America in particular, have been “desollado.” The book also seeks to articulate some of the lost aboriginal wisdom of the continent. The essay “Cinco frases que hacen crecer la nariz de Pinocho” (Five phrases that make Pinocchio’s nose grow) attacks the role of multinational corporations and the creation of consumer cultures in destroying Latin American ecological health as well as the language under which this enterprise of global markets is conducted. This essay offers an interesting comparison and contrast in “ecological perspective” with, for example, Aldo Leopold’s “The Land Ethic.” *Úselo y tírelo* includes extracts from many of Galeano’s books.

Malaysia & Singapore

Compiled by Agnes Yeow
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Cecil Rajendra, *Bones and Feathers* (1978)

Malaysian poet Rajendra's eco-political activism and anti-establishment views find eloquent and formidable voice in this volume as he takes on issues ranging from poverty and corruption to unchecked development and other ecological injustices. The poems show us that many of these evils are interlinked and underscore the need for a conservation ethics and a radical transformation in our environmental attitudes and values.

Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *Monsoon History: Selected Poems* (1994)

Lim's quest for identity in the many places she calls "home," including Malaysia and the United States, is characterized by an earth-centered approach to landscape and dwelling. While pre-occupations with identity, memory, diaspora, gender, and ethnicity are at the core of her oeuvre, these issues find their most profound and important expression in the elements, in childhood places, and in the community of the land.

Haji Salleh Muhammad, *Rowing Down Two Rivers* (2000)

This collection of poems by one of Malaysia's poet laureates celebrates the bounty and inner life of nature as well as the intricate web that connects the seasons, soil, water, air, flora, and fauna with those who earn a livelihood from the land and sea. In articulating his attachment to the land and the vast changes affecting his earth and its traditions, Muhammad draws inspiration from the intimate and at times difficult relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds.

Alvin Pang & Aaron Lee, eds., *No Other City: The Ethos Anthology of Urban Poetry* (2000)

In this anthology of Singapore's most compelling urban verse, the poets focus on the complex relationship between city-dwellers and their ultra-modern city-state. Combining urban concerns

of alienation and the utter mechanization of life with a consciousness of environments past and present, this book explores the urban ecology of life on the island-metropolis.

Phui Nam Wong, *An Acre of Day's Glass: Collected Poems* (2006)

This major Malaysian poet here grapples with the challenges of living in a multiracial, postcolonial country fraught with challenges. He does so by mythologizing the landscape and by invoking apocalyptic visions and the exilic wilderness to rediscover and redefine the ancient bond between the self and the land, working through a discourse that "catches echoes from places and times when the word was still interfused with the world as presence."

Nigeria

Compiled by William Slaymaker
Wayne State College (Kansas), USA

Wole Soyinka, *Wole Soyinka: Collected Plays 1 & 2* (1973–74)

Soyinka's early plays, especially *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) and *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), are examples of his concern for the sacredness of Nigeria's forests and its resources, which are often exploited by corrupt politicians and outside forces.

Niyi Osundare, *The Eye of the Earth* (1986)

A collection of nature praise poems that support sustainable and traditional agricultural practices by Nigerian farmers. Love of land and conservation are key values.

Ken Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (1995)

The writer reveals his thoughts and intentions in a prison diary. He defends his engagements against large oil cartels linked to corrupt politicians who exploit the environments of localized groups such as the Niger Delta group, the Ogoni.

Tess Onwueme, *What Mama Said* (2003)

An ecofeminist revolutionary drama that condemns the misappropriation of oil resources by foreign oil companies, which impoverish the people of Nigeria and help maintain the traditional oppression of women.

Tanure Ojaide, *The Activist* (2006)

A novel from a prominent poet about a Nigerian who returns from America to help the peoples of the Niger Delta reclaim their heritages and regain access to natural resources now polluted and degraded by oil companies.

South Africa

Compiled by Julia Martin

University of the Western Cape, South Africa

***The Bleek-Lloyd Collection of /Xam testimonies* (1870–84)**

This extraordinary archive (now available online at www.lloydbleekcollection.uct.ac.za) is a compendium of interviews with /Xam and !Kun Bushmen in the 1870s and 1880s in Cape Town. As a collection of oral narratives from a group of men and women whose cultural practices were on the brink of extinction, it is a powerful and poignant testimony to ways of seeing human beings and their relation to the nonhuman world that sustained pre-colonial hunter-gatherers in this region.

Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948)

This classic of South African fiction movingly links the symptoms of a dysfunctional society (the injustices of racial capitalism, the breakdown of traditional tribal identities, rural and urban poverty . . .) with severe environmental degradation, both in the rural areas of Natal and in the city of Johannesburg.

J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (2001)

In the voice of a fictional character called Elizabeth Costello, J. M. Coetzee's seminal work presents a compelling philosophical argument for

ethical responses to nonhuman animals that is grounded in what he calls the sympathetic imagination.

Zakes Mda, *The Whale Caller* (2005)

In this magical-realist novel, Zakes Mda tells a story of the lyrical, passionate relationship between a socially marginalized man known as the Whale Caller and a Southern Right whale called Sharisha.

Nadine Gordimer, *Get a Life* (2006)

This thoughtful and unsettling novel presents an ambivalent view of forms of environmentalism practiced by members of a globalized middle class in post-apartheid South Africa.

Sweden

Compiled by Håkan Sandgren

Kristianstad University College, Sweden

Carl Linnaeus, *Iter Lapponicum* (1732; Eng. *A Tour in Lapland*, 1971)

Not intended for publication, this travelogue is full of spontaneous reactions to and minute descriptions of wild nature in northernmost Sweden, at that time virtually unexplored. When finally translated into Swedish in 1889, it had a tremendous impact on the nation's view of man's relation to and responsibility for the wilderness.

Sten Selander, *Det levande landskapet i Sverige* (1955; *The living landscape in Sweden*)

By all accounts the standard volume on Swedish nature and one of the first examples of the growing concern for man's uncontrolled exploitation of cultured landscapes. This mistreatment, Selander argues, threatens not only to destroy other living organisms and biotopes but also to change human society as a whole.

Harry Martinson, *Naturessäer* (2000; *Essays on nature*)

A collection of four books, written between 1937 and 1963. Martinson's view is thoroughly

biocentric here, and with great care he describes nature's processes of growth and decay, thereby creating a unique style rich in metaphor and simile but still firmly rooted in the soil.

Kerstin Ekman, *Herrarna i skogen* (2007; Masters of the forest)

It took almost twenty years for Ekman to complete this combination of literary essay, autobiography, and history of Swedish forestry and on the importance of the woodlands in the everyday lives of Swedes. Even though more than half of the country's area today is covered with forests, only a fraction of them are considered worthy of protection. [Editorial note: An excerpt from *Masters of the Forest*, and an interview with Ekman, appeared in the July 2008 issue of *WLT*.]

Isabella Lövin, *Tyst hav* (2007; Silent sea)

A personal and strongly emotional account of the deadly combination of politics and the fishing industry, Lövin's book actually urged the Swedish government to reconsider their policies on fishing and the reader to think twice before going to the fish market.

Turkey

Compiled by Serpil Oppermann & Ufuk Özdağ
Hacettepe University, Turkey

Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (The Fisherman of Halicarnassus), *Aganta Burina Burinata* (1945; Haul out the bowlines)

Loaded with environmental awareness, ecological sensitivity, and environmental concerns, this novel introduces the lives of fishermen and their close ties with marine life in the Aegean Sea. It deals, in a poetic style, with fishermen's deep love of nature in all its colorful life forms, both on land and sea, and their emotional and physical connectedness with this biological richness.

Sait Faik Abasıyanık, *Mahalle Kahvesi* (1950; Provincial coffee house)

This is a collection of environmentally conscious short stories. In the story "Karanfiller ve Domates Suyu" (Carnations and tomato juice), the attempts of a villager to transform a barren land into a fertile place so that he can grow tomatoes is narrated. His joy in serving tomato juice to surprised bypassers is especially stressed. "Ermeni Balıkçı ve Topal Martı" (The Armenian fisherman and the lame sea gull) and "Sakarya Balıkçısı" (The fishmonger of Sakarya) focus on the connections between humans and animals. "Sinagrit Baba" (Sinagrit Baba) is a dramatic story about a fish who consciously chooses death.

Fakir Baykurt (Village Novelist), *Kaplumbağalar* (1966; The turtles)

Set in a barren village called Tozak in central Anatolia, this novel portrays the efforts of the villagers to create a vineyard. Since this is the only green land, the turtles start moving in. One evening a black object falls from the sky and attracts the attention of the state authorities who come to investigate and who also declare that the vineyard belongs to the state. The villagers, despite all legal attempts, fail to prove that the land belongs to them, and in the end they destroy the vineyard, which turns into a barren land again. The turtles leave the village.

Yaşar Kemal, *Deniz Küstü* (1978; Eng. *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman*, 1985)

This novel gives expression to the human-induced devastation of the environs of Istanbul and the Sea of Marmara. *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman* is an open critique of the inhuman modification of the land and marine life (brutal dolphin hunts and exploitative fishing methods) and calls for moral responsibility toward the environment.

Akın Tekin, *Sahipsiz Gezegen* (2000/2004; Ownerless planet)

The events in this futuristic novel take place in the year 5021 when the planet is facing a global ecological destruction with overpopulation and total depletion of the natural habitats. An American family finds an ancient book in which a young boy is trained by an order of Turkish knights as a boxer and who gains a deep ecological awareness. He fights against the enemies of nature.

United Kingdom

Compiled by Terry Gifford

University of Chichester, United Kingdom

University of Alicante, Spain

Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789)

This founding text of British nature writing combines scientific discoveries with vivid writing of both accuracy and historical significance. The vicar of Selbourne studied local evidence of migrations and hibernations for thirty years in journals with an attention that amounted to an enquiring awe.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850)

This is the personal history of an education through immersion in nature. The poetry follows a pattern of powerfully evoked, detailed experience followed by profound reflection that brings human experiential and moral learning into the patterns of all nature environing human culture.

John Ruskin, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884)

From his pastoral home on Lake Coniston in the English Lake District, John Ruskin noticed that the clouds were changing their nature, probably as a result of the newly developed industrialism upwind. These two lectures became a symbolic moral wake-up call to the nineteenth century concerning the environmental effects of new economic and technological developments.

James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979)

Perhaps the major British contribution to notions of the environment, second only to Darwin, was the idea that the total environment of our planet is a self-regulating organism. Lovelock marshaled evidence, into hypothesis, into environmental debate that called for informed responsibility in scientific and passionately eloquent nonfiction.

Ted Hughes, *Collected Poems* (2003)

More than any other British poet of the twentieth century, Hughes consistently explored, with increasingly explicit urgency, the question of what should be a right relationship between humans and our home planet. Beginning with an attack on hubris, Hughes went on to understand the way human culture is nature, just as nature is, in his powerful poetry, stories, and plays, respectfully and inquiringly constructed by culture.

October 2008

Scott Slovic was the founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) from 1992 to 1995, and since 1995 has served as editor of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. The author, editor, or co-editor of fifteen books, his most recent publication is *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreat, and Ecocritical Responsibility* (2008). Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, he spends much of his time traveling physically and virtually around the world, supporting the development of ecocriticism and environmental literature.

Humans have been writing about the environment for centuries, and the environment has figured prominently as a theme in both Western and Eastern philosophies. Books about or featuring the environment as a prominent theme have proliferated especially since the middle of the twentieth century. The rise of environmental science, which has encouraged interdisciplinary approaches to studying the environment, and the environmental movement, which has increased public and political awareness of humanity's International environmental law began to emerge in a significant way, however, only in the late s and s, as part of a growing concern about environmental problems in many developed countries and their growing awareness of the inter-national and global nature of many environmental issues. During this period, states negotiated conventions on the protection of the marine environment from oil. Since then, despite ebbs and ows in international concern about the environ-ment, there has been a remarkable growth, overall, in the number and range of inter-national instruments and institutions addressing environmental problems. Indeed, such is the growth of the discipline that, by now, the study of international environ-mental law has become virtually an industry. ENVIRONMENT. Italy has been slow to confront its environmental problems. Air pollution is a significant problem in Italy. United Nations sources estimate that carbon monoxide emissions increased by 12% in the period between 1985 and 1989. In the 1990s Italy had the world's 10th highest level of industrial carbon dioxide emissions, which totaled 407.7 million metric tons per year, a per capita level of 7.03 metric tons. According to a 2006 report issued by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), threatened species included 12 types of mammals, 15 species of birds, 4 types of reptiles, 5 species of amphibians, 17 species of fish, 16 types of mollusks, 42 species of other invertebrates, and 3 species of plants.