

Ecocriticism and Literature in Victorian Era

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate eco-criticism and literature in the Victorian Era and clarifies the great recently science Eco-criticism which study literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view ,where literature scholars analyze texts that illustrate environment concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature.

Keywords: Eco-criticism –Literature in Victorian Era

Introduction

The researcher illustrates in literature as cultural ecology. This means first of all that imaginative literature, as a special form of cultural textuality, can be described in some of its characteristic themes and approaches to human and nonhuman reality with the help of categories from the discourse of ecology. Eco-Criticism is the study of literature and the environment. Eco-Criticism is often associated with the Association for the Study of the Literature and Environment (ASLE), which hosts biennial meetings for scholars who deal with environmental matters in literature. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) is the principal professional association for American and international scholars of ecocriticism. It was founded in 1992 at a special session of the Western Literature Association conference in Reno, Nevada, for the purpose of the sharing of facts, ideas, and texts concerning the study of literature and the environment. One of the most famous pioneers who works in this field is Cheryl Glotfelty. Her working definition in the *Eco-Criticism Reader* is that eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment, and one of the implicit goals of the approach is to recoup professional dignity for what Glotfelty calls the undervalued genre of nature writing. "The researcher recognizes the reader about Lawrence Buell who defines "eco-criticism as study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". Simon Estok noted in 2001 that "ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates note with standing, firstly by the ethical stand it takes in its commitment to rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and secondly, by its commitments to making connections". The field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works about human interaction with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations" during the Victorian Era.

The statement of the problem:

The problem of this study emerged from the notice that most literary Sudanese readers haven't a sufficient amount of knowledge about the relationship between ecocriticism and literature. This study is going to clarify ecocriticism as a science which has emerged recently.

Significance of the study:

It is observed that ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary with literature concerned with its importance. The results of this study are expected to be useful to literary readers and enable them to compose a huge knowledge about it.

Objectives of the study :

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between literature and environment from perspective scope and draw attention about the importance of Ecocriticism .it also aims to encourage other researchers to give more concern about Ecocriticism and literature in Victorian Era.

Questions of the study:

This paper is supposed to answer the following

- 1/What is the relation between ecocriticism and literature ?
- 2/What are the effects of ecocriticism on literature in Victorian Era?
- 3/What can it mean to refer literature as the medium of a cultural ecology?

Hypothesis of the study:

- 1/ The importance of Ecocriticism and literature in Victorian Era.
- 2/Aspects and perspectives of ecocriticism and literary ecology

Limits of the study

This study investigates Ecocriticism and literature from literary perspectives .This study aim to draw attention on Ecocriticism and literature.

1. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism developed out of more traditional scholarship about literary treatments of the natural world, such as studies of European pastoral and of the American nature writing genre practiced by authors from Jefferson and Bartram to Thoreau and Muir. It is not surprising that ecocriticism first emerged in the United States, because Americans have been obsessed with the landscapes of the ‘New World’ since European exploration of the continent began. Writers of the young American republic grounded their claims for cultural uniqueness on presumptions of unmediated access to Nature, as in Emerson’s famous essay of that name. Critical studies of these tendencies, such as Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land*, Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden*, and Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land*, were proto-ecocritical works which inspired more recent scholars to shape specifically environmentalist approaches to literature. In 1978, William Rueckert introduced the term “ecocriticism” in an article that appeared in the *Iowa Review* called “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” A decade later, in 1989, Glen A. Love called for “an ecological literary criticism” in his

presidential address to the Western American Literature Association, published the following year in *Western American Literature*. Glen Love inspired a group of young scholars who met in 1992 and founded the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment to promote “the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature [and interdisciplinary environmental research] that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world” (Glotfelty 1996: xviii). In only a decade this organization has grown to 1,000 members from 20 countries, with affiliated branches in Japan, Australia, the UK, Korea, and now Central Europe. The movement which it represents has developed rapidly in sophistication from a predominantly celebratory attention to nature writing, to a wide variety of more critical approaches to every kind of literature from around the globe. Familiar traditions of writing about place and setting are now being reexamined from environmental perspectives – for example Medieval European narratives of pilgrimage, Old Irish poetry of place – *dinshenshas* –, the European pastoral, Chinese and Japanese traditions of nature poetry, narratives of exploration from the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Theoretically, ecocritics are reevaluating the Kantian Sublime and other Romantic concepts of Nature in European and American nineteenth-century literature. Rigorous attention to twentieth-century theoretical approaches such as pragmatism, phenomenology, and various modes of poststructuralism informs vigorous debates about the relations of humans to the other animals, calling into question long traditions of human exceptionalism. Efforts to link ecocriticism with the sciences are also proving fruitful, with intellectual historians exploring interrelations between nineteenth-century natural science and writers like Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Hardy. Studies of Darwin’s influence upon nature writers and poets proliferate, and scholars of Modernism have also discussed the impact of Darwin as well as general relativity theory and quantum mechanics upon poets and novelists of the early decades of the twentieth century. More recently, ecocritics in the U.S. have devoted increased attention to the genre of ‘environmental justice literature’ in which Latino writers of the Southwest and Native Americans from many regions are especially prominent. Simon Ortiz, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, Linda Hogan, Rudolfo Anaya, and Ana Castillo are just a few whose work can be placed in this category. Because it is a new critical movement, ecocriticism is still working to define itself precisely, and many serious problems have yet to be resolved. The field is undertheorized, it is marked especially in the U.S. by a virile privilege in unconscious collusion with imperial and industrial forces, it often relies upon a naive realism and an unconscious Cartesian separation of the human ‘Me’ from the exoticized ‘Not me’ of a static and reified nature, and it has yet to seriously engage the technologized urban environments where most of its practitioners live. But increasingly, these problems are being addressed.

The emergence of an ecological paradigm in literary and cultural studies can be seen as a hopeful sign that the currently dominant economic form of globalization, which is based on what could be called a ‘free market fundamentalism’ (see Gras 2003) will not remain unchallenged in its monopolistic claims to the shaping of the future of humankind. Indeed, the dynamic development of ecocriticism within humanities departments all over the world suggests that the dialogue between literature, culture, and ecology, as it is documented in the present volume, promises not only to contribute to an interdisciplinary enrichment of the disciplines involved, but also to provide longer-term innovational perspectives that transcend the one-dimensionality of the homo oeconomicus, and that way help to reassert the much-disputed relevance of literary and cultural studies within contemporary society and the public consciousness. This innovative potential, however, can only be fully realised if some basic premises are observed. One of them is that an ecologically inspired reorientation of literary and cultural studies should not define itself in opposition to recent critical theory, as was the case in some, especially earlier versions of ecocriticism, but must position itself in conscious, if by no means uncritical, dialogue with the main assumptions, concerns, and approaches of theory which have established themselves as a necessary and irreplaceable dimension of the discipline in the later 20th century. The legitimate critique of the self-sufficient abstractions of some theoretical approaches should not lead to a negation of theory as such, with which ecocriticism would place itself outside the recent history and current state of reflection of its own discipline in the false expectation that the quasi-mystical authority of ‘nature’ could open up an unmediated access to ‘reality’ from which an unquestionable basis for knowledge could be (re-) gained. On the other hand, the ecocritical turn in literary and cultural studies also necessitates a reconsideration of the relationship of culture and literature to a – however defined – dimension of ‘nature’, which had been virtually banned from the characteristic approaches of cultural studies and critical theory in the past decades. To reflect on culture’s relationship to nature was considered politically questionable and epistemologically naive in the pansemiotic universe of poststructuralism in which every apparent reference to nature was deciphered as a linguistic-cultural construct that served only to hide the sociopolitical interests and ideologies from which it originated. Yet while it is true that in the course of history, nature has been frequently misused as an ideological instrument and a vehicle of power and manipulation – e.g. for the justification of supposedly ‘natural’ hierarchies of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and so forth –, this makes it all the more necessary to explore, in appropriately informed and complex ways, the significance and possible meanings of the concept of ‘nature’ within the spheres of culture. The postulate of interdisciplinarity, which was associated with cultural studies from their very beginnings, and which at least in theory opened them up, beyond the scope of humanistic disciplines, to the natural sciences as well, was

confronted with a double asymmetry. While the natural sciences tended to regard everything 'cultural' as naturally determined, the cultural sciences declared everything 'natural' a cultural construct. Against this institutionalized mutual blindness, it would be the task of ecologically inspired literary and cultural studies specifically to focus on the interaction and interrelatedness of culture and nature without neglecting the inescapable linguistic and discursive mediatedness of that interrelationship. For this interdisciplinary dialogue, such approaches within contemporary ecology itself promise to be of particular relevance which have moved beyond former one-sided, biological-deterministic views of the nature-culture relationship towards the recognition of the difference and relatively independent dynamics of cultural and intellectual phenomena, and as a result have begun to transcend the objectivist premises of traditional ecology towards a more comprehensive, transdisciplinary form of 'cultural ecology'.

1. Aspects and perspectives of ecocriticism and literary ecology

As far as I can see, ecocriticism as an emerging interdisciplinary paradigm within literary studies has developed especially in the following directions: (1) A content-oriented, sociopolitical form of ecocriticism in which literary and nonliterary texts are examined from criteria such as their attention to natural phenomena, their degree of environmental awareness, their recognition of diversity, their attitude to nonhuman forms of life, or their awareness of the interconnectedness between local and global ecological issues. In addition to the categories of race, class, and gender, the category of 'nature' (with related categories like place, landscape, earth, environment, bioregion, biosphere) has been established as a category of textual and cultural study, and has been applied to texts from different periods and genres. Literature is considered here as a potential medium of consciousness change and an increased ecological sensibility which, however indirectly, can help to contribute to a change of political and social practice. Methodologically, the combination of this new focus on the culture/nature relationship with established categories of cultural analysis, rather than the positing of oppositional, essentialist truth claims, has proved to be productive. Thus, the linking of ecological issues with questions and perspectives of gender studies has led to the emergence of ecofeminism as an important, and already in itself highly diversified, branch of ecocriticism; and the bringing together of issues of race and class with environmental issues has opened up new areas of research and cultural-political practice such as 'environmental justice'. (2) In a cultural-anthropological direction, ecocriticism has diagnosed and explored the deep-rooted self-alienation of human beings within the civilizatory project of modernity which, in its anthropocentric illusion of autonomy, has tried to cut itself off from and erase its roots in the natural world. Whereas in premodern, preindustrial societies, human life was embedded in concrete forms of interaction and exchange with natural life cycles – a situation

described by Jan Romein as the ‘Common Human Pattern’ (see Zijderveld 1970: 71ff.) – modern society has become abstract in the sense of increasing differentiation, specialization, division of labour, and the loss of concretely experientiable, ‘holistic’ ties with natural and social life. This loss has been turned into a virtue by the postmodern celebration of fragmented selves and multiple worlds, but nevertheless often involves deeper problems of isolation, rootlessness, and emotional displacement. Such symptoms give particular urgency to the question of a renewed relationship of modern individualistic selves to shared communities, and to the question of how they can reconnect in meaningful ways to more elemental, ‘biophilic’ needs on which the full self-realization of human beings seems to depend.¹ The social community on the one hand, and the biophilic life energies on the other, are two important ecocritical counterpoles to the extreme individualism and anthropocentrism of a one-sided, overeconomized civilization. (3) On an ethical level, ecocriticism strives for the revision of an anthropocentric cultural value system, which not only involves the recognition of the dignity and independent value of nonhuman nature, but turns it in some respects into a source of cultural values. The ‘intelligent imitation of nature’ becomes a procedure through which not only scientific, technological or aesthetic processes can be inspired, but which can also extend and enrich our ethical orientations. This applies, for instance, to observations such as that in the evolution of life, competition and the struggle for survival, but also and even more importantly, contact, cooperation, and coevolution have been the driving force; that living systems and ecosystems can only ensure their self-preservation if they are also open for constant change; and that individual phenomena of life develop in their uniqueness and diversity precisely by being part of complex webs of relationships. Some ecofeminists have especially emphasized this ethical aspect and the concomitant imagery of the web of life, of the Gaia hypothesis of the earth as an interrelated organism, and of respect and an attitude of “biophilic mutuality” (Ruether 1992) towards all living beings as a basis for a new, planetary ecological ethics which must become an integral part of the civilizational value system. (4) In an epistemological perspective, ecocriticism is part of a larger postclassical paradigm shift from causal and linear to complex, nonlinear forms of knowledge. With the acceptance of evolution as a basic axiom, processual interactions rather than isolated properties of individual phenomena are emphasized. Linear models of historical progress are as inadequate as causal models of explanation for natural processes, because the historical process is shaped by its own mixture of contingencies and feedback loops, and the productivity of culture remains dependent on elemental cycles of energy and their cyclical reproductive dynamics. Such considerations open up possibilities of dialogue with contemporary forms of complex thinking such as postclassical physics, cybernetics, systems theory, or chaos theory, a dialogue which has become another promising branch of ecocriticism. (5) A fifth

direction of ecocriticism, which is of specific importance to literary studies, is concerned with the potential implications and perspectives of the aesthetic and imaginative dimension of literature for an ecologically redefined model of humanity and of human culture. The question here is what function the fictional mode of literary communication, which is characterized not by direct imitation but by the defamiliarization and symbolic transformation of 'reality' and 'nature', can have within the larger system of cultural institutions and discourses. This question is increasingly raised in recent positions of literary ecology, and it is in the context of such considerations that I would like to position the approach which I will sketch in the following pages, the concept of 'literature as cultural ecology.'

2. Literature as cultural ecology

What can it mean to refer to literature as the medium of a cultural ecology? Generally speaking, it means first of all that imaginative literature, as a special form of cultural textuality, can be described in some of its characteristic themes and approaches to human and nonhuman reality with the help of categories from the discourse of ecology. This is, on one level, not much more than a generalized version of an assumption which underlies the practice of a considerable part of contemporary ecocriticism, namely the assumption that literature, in its long history, has already symbolically addressed some of those issues which in more recent times have been explicitly addressed by ecology as a scientific and cultural-theoretical discipline. In the same way in which, in Sigmund Freud's view, psychoanalysis was a modern scientific version of the knowledge of the unconscious and of the human drives which had already been part of the literary imagination of humankind since ancient tragedy, the literary works of the past appear, to a number of ecocritics, as anticipating the ecological knowledge of modern times. To an extent, this assumption seems to be quite persuasive. Literature has always been the medium of a 'cultural ecology' in the sense that it has staged and explored, in ever new scenarios, the relationship of prevailing cultural systems to the needs and manifestations of human and nonhuman 'nature'. Early examples are the mythological tales of premodern cultures in which human beings interpreted themselves in close proximity and exchange with their environment. More specific cases are genres like pastoral, georgic, eclogue, bucolic or idyll, in which literature, from its very beginnings, has contrasted alienating structures of civilization with alternative forms of life embedded in concrete forms of a culture/nature exchange. Within the classical tradition, one of the most powerful influences on the evolution of literature until the very present has probably been Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which represents human existence as part of a larger web of life characterized by multiformity, constant change, and mutual correspondences between human and natural phenomena, and thus not only posits the interrelatedness between culture and

nature as a defining condition of human life, but establishes its symbolic exploration as a central domain of the literary imagination. Since the era of romanticism, of course, that is to say since the first sustained response of literature to the era of beginning modernization, this affinity of literary and ecological concerns has become more and more explicit, and has led, in the 20th century, to the emergence of various forms of environmental literature, of nature writing, of ecologically inspired art, poetry, and fiction. Yet the function of literature as cultural ecology, as it is conceived here, goes beyond such affinities of content. It is not adequately grasped as a mere illustration of extraliterary issues and forms of knowledge. Thus it is remarkable and indeed impressive when Karl Kroeber compares English romantic poems with modern biological concepts of the human mind and finds correspondences that make romanticism appear, to a surprising degree, as an anticipation of modern ecobiology. But taken as the sole aspect from which literature is related to ecology, this approach in effect reduces the texts to forms of a protoecological knowledge which inevitably becomes obsolete with the advance of ecology as a science – and this is indeed what Kroeber seems to imply (see Kroeber 1994). Such a view, however, is insufficient since it neglects the semi-autonomous dynamics into which the process of aesthetic transformation in literature draws the systems of knowledge, discourses, and signs which are the cultural material of texts. The thesis put forward in this paper thus relates not only to a thematic level but to the specific structures and functions of literary textuality as it has evolved in relation to and competition with other forms of textuality in the course of cultural evolution. It suggests that imaginative literature, in comparison with other textual genres and types of discourse, can be described in its functional profile in such a way that it acts like an ecological principle or an ecological energy within the larger system of cultural discourses. This function varies, of course, according to period, genre, author, and the historical conditions of production and reception. It has gained heightened significance with the process of modernization since the 18th century, with which the tension between linear, progress-oriented economic, technological and scientific developments and the nonlinear holistic world models of literary art has become one of the characteristic shaping forces of literary evolution. This function basically manifests itself in a two-fold way. On the one hand, literature appears as a sensorium and imaginative sounding board for hidden problems, deficits, and imbalances of the larger culture, as a form of textuality which critically balances and symbolically articulates what is marginalized, neglected, repressed or excluded by dominant historical power structures, systems of discourse, and forms of life, but what is nevertheless of vital importance to an adequately complex account of humanity's existence within the fundamental culture-nature-relationship.² On the other hand, by breaking up closed circuits of dogmatic world views and exclusionary truth-claims in favour of plural perspectives, multiple meanings and dynamic

interrelationships, literature becomes the site of a constant, creative renewal of language, perception, communication, and imagination. As a metadiscursive form of textuality, it restructures the material of language and of the prevailing cultural sign systems in such a way that its forms of self-organization resemble the processes in which, in an ecological view, life organizes itself. 'Liveliness' as a criterion of literary texts, compared with the scientific, ideological, pragmatic, political, or economic functionality of other text types, here gains a new meaning and context. To Nietzsche already, art had the power to revitalize dionysian life energies paralyzed by apollonian order and socratic rationality, and was therefore a medium of civilizational critique as well as of civilizational self-renewal. The work of art was both *ergon* and *energeia*, an exemplary expression and aesthetic intensification of the processes of becoming and vanishing, of productivity and metamorphosis, of composition and decomposition which are the shaping forces of life itself. A more recent, more explicitly ecopoetic formulation of this view, which builds on Heidegger's idea of poetic language as an expression of man's 'dwelling' on the earth, is Jonathan Bate's when he calls the poet a 'keystone figure' in the cultural ecosystem who maintains and restores its inner diversity and living interrelationships (see Bate 2000, esp. 205-42). In yet another but still comparable way, Gary Snyder states that literary art symbolically brings the cultural ecosystem into a state of highest variety, complexity and vitality by dissolving "blocks of inner energies" and focussing on the "leaffall of day-to-day-consciousness", the "recycling of neglected inner potential". It is thus "an especially efficient system for recycling the richest thoughts and feelings of a community. Every time we read or discuss a poem, we are recycling its energy back into our cultural environment. That is how the process of survival and modification functions in the realm of art" (qtd. in Bate 2000: 246). An interesting clue to the way in which the affinity between literary and ecological processes which becomes visible here can be more specifically conceived has been given by Gregory Bateson, one of the leading proponents of cultural ecology. He suggests a similarity between the processes of life as they are characterized by selforganization, feedback relations, and infinite structural analogies, and the basic poetic form of speech, the metaphor. His own ecological thinking, he states, follows a metaphorical rather than a classical logical principle, and in this respect, his mind functions like the mind of a poet, focussing not on the generalizing logic of the subject but on the analogies which can be constructed between different spheres and phenomena of life on the basis of shared predicates. Relational, metaphorical thinking, rather than syllogistic reasoning, corresponds to the principles on which the biological world is built and on which an ecology of the mind can orient itself. An example of a traditional, subject-centered syllogism is "All men die/ Socrates is a man/ Socrates dies", which Bateson replaces by what he calls "[a]ffirming the consequent", or "syllogism in grass": "Grass dies/ Men die/ Men are grass". According

to Bateson, this meta-phorical procedure, which relates areas separated in traditional categories of thought to each other on the basis of common predicates, is closer to the processes of life, which are characterized by structural similarities and shared properties, than the abstract classifications and exclusionary boundarylines of logical-conceptual thought (see Bateson 1991: 237-42). Bateson's "syllogism in grass" raises immediate associations in students of Anglo-American literature. To cite a well-known example: William Wordsworth's programmatic poetological poem, "The Daffodils", has a comparable structure, for in it, metaphorical analogies are drawn not only between different natural phenomena like daffodils, waves, and stars, but also between these and the interior world of the poetic self, who from the memory of his intensive experience of nature derives therapeutic power and poetic inspiration by identifying himself with the dancing daffodils. "Men are daffodils", or more precisely, "poets are dancing daffodils", is Wordsworth's version of Bateson's formula, which underlies the language, the rhythm, and the poetic meaning of the text. Even more obvious is the parallel to Bateson in Walt Whitman's collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, in which the title already establishes the central analogy between man and grass that is explored in ever new variants in the texts, and thereby becomes a main source of their poetic energy and creativity. Grass alternately becomes an expression of the inner state of the poet, a hieroglyph of the creation, a sign of democracy, a symbol of the cycle of death and rebirth, an analogue to poetic polyphony ("O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues"). It is the basis for always new metamorphoses of the self and the world in which the poet, too, includes himself, and which he passes on as his testimony to his readers: "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love/ If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles". "Men are Grass" – Bateson's ecological syllogism is transformed by Whitman into a poetic process, which at the same time extends and expands the metaphor into a source of constant metamorphosis. Several times so far, the term 'energy' has been mentioned. As the cultural ecologist Peter Finke maintains, descriptions of cultural processes do indeed require the concept of energy. Unlike logical space, according to Finke, ecological space "is characterized by webs of complex energetic relationships, and the unceasing processes by which it is shaped are feedback processes: something acts upon something else, and the result of this process, together with additional factors, in turn acts back upon the source" (Finke 1998: 130, my translation). This energy, it is true, is originally derived from physical sources (most fundamentally, the all-sustaining energy of the sun), but is transformed in the cultural process into various forms of social, psychic, or creative energy. How these forms of cultural energy can be more specifically described seems to be still quite unclear and open to further research. But it is a factor which must be included in any adequate account of cultural, and therefore also of literary, phenomena. Literature, indeed, appears as a textual medium in which the sources of cultural energy can be

activated and expressed in particularly intensive and productive ways. This seems to be connected with specific properties of the aesthetic as it has emerged in a long process of cultural evolution, and has grown, with its historical emancipation from the authority of politics, religion, philosophy, and science, into a significant factor in the shaping of the ambivalent dynamics of modernization. How can this evolutionary function of literature as an ecological energy field within culture be more concretely understood? Let us briefly return for this purpose to the example of Whitman, where the concept of energy, quite explicitly, plays a crucial poetological role. At the beginning of his *Song of Myself*, he describes the source from which his poetry is to spring as “nature without check with original energy.” In this phrase, he names an original creative power which has its roots in life itself, and which is to be translated, through procedures of metaphorization, metamorphosis, and the pluralization of linguistic signs, images, and meanings, into poetry. Poetry in this view, then, is characterized by its purpose and ability, as it were, to stage in always new imaginative scenarios the symbolic transformation of primary, natural, into secondary, psychic and cultural energy, while at the same time maintaining the awareness of and feedback relationship to those primary sources of energy. In the interplay between these poles, an important source of literary creativity seems to be located which is closely connected with its cultural function, and which, as a paradoxical, pre- or transdiscursive mode of discourse, distinguishes it from other forms of textuality. At the end of the *Song of Myself*, where the individuality of the speaker merges with and dissolves into the metamorphic cycle of nature, and where the productivity of the poetic process simultaneously explodes into cascades of ever new images, the poetic self is transformed, in one of its most striking incarnations, into a spotted hawk, into the voice of precivilizational nature: “I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world”. Whitman here radicalizes a poetological tradition which has always transgressed the boundaries of its own medium by searching for a language before language, a pre-discursive knowledge before discursive knowledge. The song of the nightingale in Keats, the blowing of the west wind in Shelley, the voice of the sea in Kate Chopin, the primal scream “Howl” in Allen Ginsberg or the spiral movement of the eagle’s flight in Simon Ortiz’ “Eagle Poem” are taken as inspirational sources for their texts, which from this very regression gain their poetic productivity, differentiation, and ‘modern’ innovational power. Whitman presents his *Song of Myself* as a “barbaric yawp”, an expression of the living primordial language of precivilizational nature itself, which transcends the limitations of cultural sign systems, but nevertheless remains dependent on them in the manifold act of poetic self-articulation that the poem performs. The cultural-ecological energy which in Wordsworth expresses itself in a romantic-pastoral, in Whitman in a radical-visionary way, can be traced, as has been said above, to basic aspects of literature and the

aesthetic as it has developed in its historical evolution as a distinct form of cultural textuality. Indeed, the affinity between aesthetic and ecological processes is already implied in the very act of aesthetic representation, whose fundamental ‘generative signature’ (Iser) consists in interrelating and breaking down the boundaries between idea and matter, the abstract and the concrete, the intellect and sensory experience.³ The overcoming of the mind-body-dichotomy is thus an inherent part of the aesthetic mode. The “First Law of Ecology”, as Barry Commoner calls it, namely that “everything is related to everything else,” is an insight which is actualised in literary texts as their central principle of composition and communication (see Commoner 1971). In staging constant feedback relationships between conceptual, moral, and ideological abstractions on the one hand, and concrete human interactions, emotions, and sensory experiences on the other, literature is especially capable of representing the complex energetic processes that also characterize the ecological space (see Finke 2002). The logic of conceptual thinking, with its tendency to generalization and classification, to inclusion and exclusion, in short: to the hierarchization and separation between spheres of consciousness and reality, is transformed in the aesthetic mode into a dynamic energy field of language and signs characterized by constant boundary-crossing, dehierarchization, interrelating separated spheres, and opening abstract conceptual systems towards the multiformity of concrete life processes. This applies to the microlevel of linguistic signs, which through the defamiliarization of their conventional use become ‘fluid’ and subject to a process of transformation, condensation, and pluralization of meanings. And it also applies to the macrolevel of prevailing cultural concepts, ideologemes, and systems of interpretation, which the text exposes in their limitations by confronting them with the simulation of concretely imagined human characters, interactions, and processes of experience. Literary works of art in this view are two things at the same time: they are laboratories of human self-exploration, in which, as it were, basic assumptions of prevailing systems of interpretation are ‘tested’ in the medium of simulated life processes; and they are imaginative biotopes in which the dimensions and energies of life neglected by these systems find the symbolic space to develop and express themselves. As a form of cultural textuality that specifically stages the tension between regimes of discursive civilizatory power and prediscursive life processes, literature is therefore both discourse and a ‘nonplace’(Foucault) of discourse. It constitutes itself in a ‘counter’- or ‘in-between’-space of discourses as a paradoxal form of textuality which constantly transgresses and shifts the boundaries of what can be known, said, and thought within a culture by opening them towards their excluded other, which remains unknowable, unsayable, and unthinkable within its rules of discourse.

3. Triadic functional model: literature as cultural-critical metadiscourse, imaginative counterdiscourse, and reintegrativeinterdiscourse
In the following, I propose a

functional model of literature as cultural ecology which builds on the foregoing observations. On the most general level, this model can be described as a combination of three major, often interrelated functions and procedures. The first of these functions consists in the representation of typical deficits, blind spots, imbalances, deformations, and contradictions within dominant systems of civilizatory power. On this level, the dynamics of the texts follows a cultural-critical impulse which characteristically presents these systems as structures of severe external or internal constraint, as often traumatizing forms of negating difference and multiplicity, and which lead to chronic states of self-alienation, failed communication, and paralyzed vitality. They are associated with overpowering demands and conformist pressures on the individual, and are frequently expressed in the imagery of death-in-life, waste land, paralyzation, stasis, blindness, uniformity, vicious cycles, and psychic or physical imprisonment. The deep-rooted civilizatoryselfalienation which these images suggest is often seen to result from dominant conceptions of human reality based on dogmatized hierarchical oppositions, such as mind vs. body, intellect vs. emotion, order vs. chaos, culture vs. nature, thus frustrating fundamental communicational and 'biophilic' needs of human beings (see Kellert/Wilson 1993). This function can be described as the function of a culturalcriticalmetadiscourse. Within the limited space of this article, I can only briefly refer to a few examples from American literature: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in which the puritan system of early America is presented, from the opening scene of the novel, in the image of a prisonhouse of culture, whose conformist pressures not only contradict the official self-image of a 'New World', but paralyze vital energies and cause severe symptoms of crisis in all main characters; Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* in which the expansive politico-economic system of mid-nineteenth century America is personified, in its anthropocentric will to power over nature, in Captain Ahab, whose mission of annihilating Moby-Dick turns the whale ship itself, as a symbol of the technological supremacy of modern man over the nonhuman world, into a prison which, at the end, is pulled with its crew into the abyss; Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, in which the system of 19th century slavery appears as a prisonhouse and source of collective traumatization of the black population of America, a system represented by the figure of 'Schoolteacher', and thus not interpreted as an aberration from but an institutionalized manifestation of modern 'civilization' itself. The second function can be described as a counterdiscursive staging and semiotic empowering of that which is marginalized, neglected or repressed in the dominant cultural reality system. In its alternative worlds, literature articulates what remains unavailable in the established categories of cultural self-interpretation, but what appears as indispensable for an adequately complex account of the lives of humans and their place in the world. In this process, literature not only actualizes the repressed and lifts it into consciousness, but invests it with special imaginative energy.

It activates the culturally excluded as a source of its own creativity by transforming it, in ever new forms, from its amorphous semiotic alterity onto the level of language and cultural communication. That way, the culturally excluded is foregrounded and charged with special aesthetic energy. It is associated both with the pluralization of semiotic possibilities and with a mythopoetic potential that builds up a kind of 'magical' counterforce to the cultural reality system. It is typically expressed in images of nature, the body, the unconscious, dreams, flux, change, contact, openness, vision, magic, multiformity, biophilic intensity. This function can be called the function of an imaginative counterdiscourse. Thus in *The Scarlet Letter*, the letter A, which initially seems to designate only one meaning, namely 'adulteress', gradually changes from a negative signifier of cultural exclusion into an imaginative counterforce to the fundamentalist dogmatism from which it originated. In the process of the novel, it loses all determinacy and instead becomes the medium of always new, changing meanings (e.g., able, angel, apocalypse, America or art), which, in the openness of their constant semiosis, transgress the exclusionary force of the cultural power regime, and are simultaneously associated with a dimension of elemental vitality, eros, and creativity. This is signified, from the very beginning, in the wild rose bush that grows at the door of the cultural prisonhouse and becomes a leitmotif for the presence of the imaginative counterdiscourse in the text. – In *Moby-Dick*, the white whale becomes the incarnation of an imaginative counterdiscourse which represents the extrahuman, precivilizational world that resists Ahab's civilizational will to power over the creation. The whale, as the demonized other of Ahab's anthropocentric ideology, is presented, in a series of mythopoetic scenes and images, as an alter ego of the human actors, which, however, like Hawthorne's scarlet letter, remains inaccessible to any final interpretation and instead becomes the source of a potentially infinite semiosis that resists and transcends all forms of discursive appropriation. – In Morrison's *Beloved*, the imaginative counterdiscourse is personified in the ghost of Beloved, the murdered child who returns into the present as an incarnation of the repressed past. She makes possible the confrontation and overcoming of the trauma of slavery in the polyphonic story-telling which her reappearance initiates, and in which Morrison combines postmodern forms of plural stream-of-consciousness narration with premodern traditions of African-American magic and folklore. This counterdiscursive revision of a traumatizing past becomes especially visible in a central symbol of the text, the deep scar on the back of the protagonist Sethe, which is the brutal mark of the violence of slavery but has assumed, in the course of time, the shape of a tree. The semiosis of this mark from the bodily trace of her suffering to the sign of a regenerative cycle of life is a process which characterizes the novel as a whole, and which shapes the various ramifications of its texture (see Bonnet 1997). The third functional aspect or dimension of literature as the medium of cultural ecology can be described as the reintegration of the excluded

with the cultural reality system, through which literature contributes to the constant renewal of the cultural center from its margins. This reintegration does not mean any superficial harmonization of conflicts, but rather, by the very act of reconnecting the culturally separated, sets off conflictory processes and borderline states of crisis and turbulence. The alternative worlds of fiction derive their special cognitive and affective intensity from the interaction of that which is kept apart by convention and cultural practice – the different spheres of a society characterized by institutional and economic specialization and differentiation, social roles and private self, publicity and intimacy, intellect and passion, the conscious and the unconscious, and, pervading them all, the basic ecological dimensions of culture and nature. It is particularly the process or moment of bringing together the culturally separated spheres or discourses which, even if it results in failure and catastrophe on the level of action, on a symbolic level often appears as a process or moment of regeneration and the regaining of creativity. In this way, the initial systemic death-in-life-situation is broken up in processes of personal and interpersonal experience, and a reaffirmation of the damaged energies of life is at least implied. Characteristic images here are the web, the network, communication, dialogue, metamorphosis, descent into/return from the underworld, rebirth, regeneration. This function, in which literature relates the culturally excluded in new ways to the cultural reality system, can be called, with a term borrowed from Jürgen Link, the function of a reintegrativeinterdiscourse (see Link 1992). In *The Scarlet Letter*, this bringing together of culturally separated spheres is already inscribed into the basic conception of the novel in that the spiritual representative of the puritan community from which Hester Prynne has been excommunicated is revealed to be the father of the illegitimate child which was the reason for her punishment. The moments in the texts in which this long repressed tension rises to the surface of action and consciousness, and in which the separated poles are brought to direct interaction, are clearly marked as moments of revitalization and symbolic rebirth, even though they lead to the tragic catastrophe in the end. Thus when Dimmesdale meets Hester again in the forest after seven years of separation, he says: “I seem to have flung myself, sick, sin-stained, and sorrow-blackened - down upon these forest leaves, and to have risen up all anew” (Hawthorne 1986: 219). And when he returns home from this encounter to his study, he is all at once able to write the text of his greatest sermon, of which only an uninspired draft had existed before, and which he now finishes throughout the whole night as if in trancelike productivity: “There he was, with the pen still between his fingers, and a vast, immeasurable tract of written space behind him” (240). This is a key passage in the novel, a parable of literary creativity, which renews itself at the very moment in which the culturally separated spheres of religion and eros, self and other, culture and nature are symbolically reconnected.

Similarly in *Moby-Dick*, while Captain Ahab's monomaniacal pursuit of the whale moves towards its tragic conclusion, the internal interrelatedness of the antagonists man and whale, culture and nature is increasingly raised into consciousness by the narrative perspective. Here, too, the two poles are directly brought together at the end, and the spectacular external catastrophe nevertheless contains the potential of a deeper cultural self-renewal. On the one hand, the book ends in death and annihilation, and the indissoluble interdependence between man and nature, which Ahab had negated, is ironically underlined by the fact that he and his ship are entangled with the white whale as they are pulled down into the depths of the ocean. On the other hand, this scene becomes a scene of rebirth for Ishmael, who is drawn towards the vortex of the sinking ship, but survives through Queequeg's coffin, which miraculously emerges from the center of the whirl. The whole process of the novel has moved towards this vortex, as it were, which thus configures both the abyss into which the civilizatory project of absolute supremacy over nature threatens to plunge, and the 'cyclical' forces of regeneration which the symbolic restoration of the broken relationship between humanity and elemental nature sets free. This is at the same time the condition for the literary creativity of the novel itself, because only through this borderline experience and Ishmael's 'return from the underworld', the narration of the events becomes possible which the novel, in its combination of modern-experimental and archaic-mythopoetic forms of the imagination, performs. – In *Beloved*, too, the imaginative counterdiscourse, which revolves around the figure of the returned dead daughter, only gains its regenerative potential by being related back to the real cultural world. Sethe, the mother who in her guilt and self-sacrificing love towards *Beloved* totally isolates herself from the external world, must be readmitted into the black community from which she has been excluded, before the ghost of *Beloved*, together with that of the white slaveholder, can be exorcized and a new beginning for human relationships can be imagined.

Conclusion:

Obviously, these three procedures of literature as cultural ecology do not always occur in the sequence or schematized form as they have just been presented but are frequently interwoven, overlap, compete with, condition, and modify each other. But they seem to me to be three major ways in which the function of literature as an ecological force within its larger cultural system can be described. Literature here fulfils a function which cannot be fulfilled in the same way by other forms of discourse, but which is nevertheless of vital importance to the richness, diversity, and continuing evolutionary potential of the culture as a whole. The special generative and innovational power of literature, as has been seen, is always also a power of recycling and regeneration. Literature binds back, in ever new ways, the discourses of civilizatory rationality to the

living memory of those elemental creative energies which are stored in the history of the literary imagination. Successful works of literature are therefore, in a radical sense, new and old, modern and archaic, historical and transhistorical at the same time. Literature keeps alive its productivity by relating, in ever new forms, the cultural memory to the biophilic memory of the human species.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

- 1- More time and care should be given to studying English literature.
- 2- Novels conclude ecocriticism should be used to encourage students.
- 3- Curriculum should contain lessons that support and stimulate ecocriticism.
- 4- More listening should be given to students
- 5- Students should practice sufficient reading about English literature.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests the following topics should be investigated for further studies in the future. The researcher suggests the following for further studies :-

- The researcher suggests that literary interested circles should attach more care to reinvestigate the novels of Thomas Hardy in general .
- The researcher suggests that the fiction of Thomas Hardy , and particularly novel which include ecocriticism .must be searched in universities around the world .

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