



## SPECULATIVE FICTION

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**Annotation:** *This article analyzes the essence, roots and features of the eco-fiction genre. The formation of the ecotopia genre in world literature and its specificity as a variety of the eco-fiction genre is explored, and the development of this genre in literature, including the artistic expression of nature and human relations, is highlighted.*

**Key words:** *eco-fiction, environmental defense, eco-action, nature, speculative fiction.*

Since the earth's current ecological crisis knows no boundaries, it is hardly surprising to find ecofiction being written and read almost everywhere. Before embarking upon this study, I believed that contemporary ecofiction was primarily a product of the American West in the 1970s. I still maintain that that time and place can be considered the golden decade of ecofiction, but having been exposed to such a wide variety of relevant. This article is something of a literary expedition traversing a vast body of work, beginning closest geographically and culturally to the United States in Canada and then coming full circle in another similar culture, Australia, with interesting stops all along the way. In some locales, such as eastern Europe, South America, Asia, and the Arab world.

### Canada

Ernest Thompson Seton was a naturalist and prolific author/ an illustrator of animal books appropriate for young adults and adults. He flourished throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Seton believed to have the closest connection with the natural world. For the best introduction to his work, see *Selected Stories of Ernest Thompson Seton* (1977) and *The Best of Ernest Thompson Seton* (1974). Martha Ostenso (*The Waters Under the Earth*, 1930) was an important proto ecofeminist whose works feature women struggling against patriarchy and environmental ruin.<sup>14</sup>

### Mexico

Homero Aridjis, one of Mexico's most outstanding poets, is also the author of *Persephone* (1967), a highly poetic and erotic adaptation about the classical goddess of fertility. In *1492: The Life and Times of Juan Cabezón of Castile* (1985) he depicts the horrors of the Inquisition and explores the Spanish mentality that made the devastation of the New World not only possible but inevitable. *La Leyenda de los Soles* (1993), based on a Nahuatl myth about the elements.

### United Kingdom

Recent British authors provide a very wide range of ethical positions on nature and on environmental action. They include Graham Swift (*Waterland*, 1983; *Ever After*, 1992),

<sup>14</sup> Karl Guthke, B. Traven: *The Lives Behind the Legend* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1991) p:587



Jenny Diski (*Rainforest*, 1987) and Nicholas Mosley (*Children of Darkness and Light*, 1997). Will Self's novel *Great Apes* (1997) and the short stories in *Grey Area* (1995) are dark satires. The work of A. S. Byatt is marked by subtle, complex spirituality and psychology: "these novels approach nature and environmentalism obliquely, with their main concern being to contextualize it, or explore its psychology."<sup>15</sup> The superb *Angels and Insects* (1992) and *Babel Tower* (1996) are perhaps her most overtly environmental work. Ronald Wright employs H. G. Wells's time machine to travel to twentieth-century England, now a depopulated tropical isle in *A Scientific Romance* (1998).

France

Christian Léourier has written several science fiction novels with ecological themes, but only one has been translated into English to date. In *The Mountains of the Sun* (1971, trans. 1973), colonists from Mars return to Earth where society has devolved to a point where it wages war against nature. Poet and novelist Gustaf Sobin's novel *The Fly-Truffler* (2000) is about preserving love, nature, a rural way of life, and the Provence dialect.

Italy

Many of Italo Calvino's dense, complex novels include elements of fables and nature lore. The only two that might be considered ecofiction, though, are *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979), which presents the concept of infinite evolutions, variations, and mutations in all living things, and *Marcovaldo* (1963). *Codex Seraphinianus* (1981, trans. 1983) by Luigi Serafini, a highly surrealistic pastiche of illustrations and prose, is both an "encyclopedia" about an alien world that is a thinly veiled version of our own and a critique of the information age.

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Kerridge "Nature in the English Novel," p:155