



Environment & Society



White Horse Press

Full citation:

Fenner, David E.W. "Aesthetic Appreciation in the Artworld and in the Natural World."

Environmental Values 12, no. 1, (2003): 3-28.

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/5869>

Rights:

All rights reserved. © The White Horse Press 2003. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this article may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, including photocopying or recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission from the publisher. For further information please see <http://www.whpress.co.uk/>

Aesthetic Appreciation in the Artworld and in the Natural World

DAVID E.W. FENNER

*College of Arts and Sciences
University of North Florida
4567 St Johns Bluff Road, South
Jacksonville, Florida 32224-2664, USA
Email: dfenner@unf.edu*

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore some parallels and dissimilarities between aesthetic appreciation that takes as its focus art objects and that which focuses on natural objects. I cover three areas. The first deals with general approach, whether a paradigm of engagement is more appropriate to environmental aesthetics than one of detachment and disinterest. The second theme is about preservation and whether the appropriate model is static or dynamic. The final theme is about environmental criticism and the application of aesthetic theory to arguments for preservation.

KEY WORDS

Art, environmental aesthetics, environmental criticism, Nature, North America, sense of place

It is a rare thing in America for people to stay in one place for very long, but my parents have lived in the same house since 1966. It is a modest house, but the lot afforded plenty of space in which to run around. There were several trees, some fit for climbing. The lot came to an end at a large pond, which my family always called 'the lake'. I spent many hours walking around that lake, catching minnows in the shallows, and simply watching it from the comfort of my swing-set in the back yard. I still have vivid memories of so much about it. I remember the Muscovies swimming from side to side, the turtles who would sun themselves on the opposite bank, the coots who would scream at one another, the dense tangle of plants that bordered the western shore. I remember the sunlight. I remember the way the slightest wind would set up just enough motion for a cascade of diamonds to tumble around in the middle of the lake.

These are the sorts of experiences I believe that John Dewey would have referred to, any one of them, as *an* experience, the sort of experience that is whole, full, complete, the sort of experience that is highly aesthetic.¹ My first exposure to aesthetic goodness was not in an art gallery or even a movie theatre (as I think must be the case for many of my generation). My first sustained exposure to beauty came with my ongoing experiences in relation to the pond behind my parents' house.

I think this must be common, that the first aesthetic experiences of many occur not with artefacts but with nature. Using aesthetic terms as robust and varied as New York gallery critics, people freely relate stories from childhood about natural encounters, about an overnight camping trip, a hike through the woods, canoeing a river. This is common, and it is also common to find these same sorts of people the ones advocating preservation of the natural contexts which afforded them the deep and lasting aesthetic experiences they enjoyed. Although probably since history began humans have aesthetically appreciated nature, it is only recently that a literature has developed that is dedicated to examining arguments for environmentalism that have as their focus the aesthetic value of natural settings and experiences.

In this paper, I want to explore some of the parallels and some of the dissimilarities between aesthetic appreciation that takes as its focus art objects (or events) and that which focuses on natural objects (or events). I will cover three areas. (1) The first is the most basic, as it deals with the general approach that one may take toward aesthetic objects in either domain. Its history is recorded in the aesthetic attitude literature of the last three centuries, but Arnold Berleant takes up this topic in relation to appreciation of the objects and events of the natural world. Berleant, in several articles but most recently in a book called *The Aesthetics of Environment*² makes the case that a paradigm of relations, engagement and deep interest is more appropriate as an aesthetic paradigm for environmentalism than is one of detachment and disinterest. In short, the Deweyan model is preferable to the Kantian one. (2) The second theme to be considered has to do with whether the aesthetic paradigm we adopt ought to be static or dynamic. Most, vastly most, artefactual works of art are static. They are meant to stay as similar as possible to how they were at the point of their creation for as long as possible. Everything changes, of course, but most artworks are meant to be as stable and immutable as possible. Collectors and museums take great pains either to maintain a work in its original state – perhaps through special lighting, special air conditioning, and so forth – or to bring back very old works from their present states to states resembling their points of creation. Restoration is common today which aims not merely at stabilising works but at eliminating the dark, brown or yellow cast of years under old protective varnishes. This is not necessarily the best model for preservation of natural areas. Keekok Lee writes about this in 'Beauty for Ever?'³ (3) The third and final theme is about the application of aesthetic theory to arguments for

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

preservation, or more modestly conservation, of natural objects or areas (a natural area being a collection of natural objects and perhaps natural events). How do we bring our theories to action in environmental aesthetics? If this is not done, then environmental aesthetics loses out to ethical environmentalism as a pragmatic tool for nature preservation. In a section of his *The Aesthetics of Landscape*⁴, Steven Bourassa considers 'environmental criticism', a correlate to art criticism – art criticism I take to constitute the most systematic application of aesthetics and most organised expression of aesthetic appreciation.

HOUSEKEEPING

Before considering these three topics, a few housekeeping words are in order. First, it seems necessary to establish a distinction between the terms 'artefactual' and 'natural'.⁵ Generally we think of objects (or events) that are artefactual as being made by humans, and we think of those things which are natural as being unaltered by humans.⁶ This unfortunately will not do. Consider the pond which was the subject of the opening paragraphs of this chapter as well as my first ongoing source of aesthetic engagement. The chances are good that this pond was originally dug as a means of finding 'fill' to support the houses there as well as providing a means for controlling the wetness of the land (southern Florida is one huge experiment in water control). Besides thinking that objects are natural which are in a full sense human-made, we can find objects which are not human-made being adopted by the artworld as art objects.

We might attempt to say that artefactual objects are static and natural ones dynamic. This can be rejected, though, based on the fact that it is question-begging as regards the second theme we wish to consider in this paper. Both models, those of stasis or dynamism, can be brought to bear on both art and nature.

Furthermore, to make biological or biocentric moves to fashion a dividing line is also in the end useless. Although the vast majority of natural areas will be alive in the sense that they will contain plants and animals, and the vast majority of art objects will not (that is, if we think of actors, dancers, and the like as vehicles of the expression of an art object rather than the art objects themselves), it is quite possible to come upon a natural area which is devoid of life entirely. Deep ecologists, or perhaps those with deeper sensibilities still, find value not merely in lakes, mountains and lush valleys, but also in the moonscape (which, at least so far, we think to be lifeless). In other words, only those environmentalists who are also biocentrists can adopt such a dividing line as the one discussed in this paragraph. Even land ethicists, in the style of Aldo Leopold, will include nonliving elements in their inventories of objects of natural value.

The temptation at this stage is to say that a hard dividing line between the artefactual and the natural is simply undiscoverable. We might use the simple,

common-sensical definitions offered above, the ones focused on human involvement, as ways to distinguish the two poles of the continuum, but the overlap in the middle of the continuum between human-made objects and non-human-influenced objects seems inevitable.

A second housekeeping point is this: environmentalism is generally academically categorised as a kind of applied ethic, and as such is meant to provide arguments whose conclusions aim at offering reasons for commission of certain actions and the avoidance of others. Environmental aesthetics, if it is to be motivational or quasi-motivational (by which I mean at least gives us reasons to act), will be a hybrid discipline. It is not merely applied aesthetics, as art criticism might be thought to be, because environmental aesthetics will probably aim not simply at judgement but also at prescription of action.⁷ But it is not merely applied ethics because the theories for application are not theories of correct action but theories about aesthetic experience.

I.

It is difficult to ask ‘What aesthetic paradigm should be used in appreciating and defending nature aesthetically?’ without sounding obtuse. But that is the question at hand. How one approaches the sort of aesthetic framework one will adopt as a context for considering and constructing environmental-aesthetic theories is important and is the point of this section.

Perhaps we might start, since the topic is the approach to be taken, with discussion of aesthetic attitudes. The notion of the aesthetic attitude as a state of mind adopted specifically to evoke aesthetic experiences is a notion dating back to the eighteenth century. Theorists attempted to understand the conditions under which one could bring about the correct context either, depending on the theory, for accurate aesthetic judgement or rewarding aesthetic experience. The list of players⁸ includes a host of British empiricists – Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Addison, Allison, and to some extent even Hume – along with German metaphysicians like Kant and Schopenhauer. In the twentieth century we add such names as Edward Bullough and Jerome Stolnitz. And perhaps we add, for balance, John Dewey and perhaps Monroe Beardsley. The list, through Stolnitz, focused heavily on the idea of disinterestedness and varieties of disinterestedness like psychical distance⁹ as the basis of the content of the aesthetic attitude.

If I take on the attitude of disinterest, I consider the object under my attention only on its own terms. I consider it in the absence of its functionality, without interest in what it might be used for or how it might be made to serve me. I avoid thinking of its cost or investment value. I even, in some theories such as Kant’s, attempt to avoid thinking of it as an ‘existing thing’, but try to consider it only as a perceptual object, purposive in its formal character, but essentially merely

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

an object of sensuous attention and nothing more. I keep the object at a distance. I am detached.

The attitude of disinterest is clearly the majority view throughout the history of aesthetic attitude theorising. However, with the advent of George Santayana and John Dewey, theories about aesthetic detachment gave way to theories of intense aesthetic interest and connection between viewer and viewed. Monroe Beardsley, our recent, though late, contemporary, took up this approach.

Dewey describes aesthetic experience as one of wholeness, completeness, one of closure. Dewey uses the term 'experience' in two ways: (a) the first is to indicate the interactive relationship between the individual and the world around her; (b) the second way is to indicate a special sort of the first kind. This special sort Dewey calls *an* experience. *An* experience is any experience which principally has the character of being unified and complete. Any experience – regardless of whether it is *an* experience or just a garden-variety experience – is aesthetic to some degree, specifically, to the degree that it incorporates *unity*. But not every experience is as aesthetic as every other experience, because the degree of unity will vary from experience to experience. Those experiences which are truly aesthetic in character are those experiences which fit into his classification of *an* experience. It is those experiences that are *maximally* unified which are truly aesthetic experiences. When a moment is sufficient to itself, is individualised, this is *an* experience. When, Dewey believes, the common experience of humans is taken as basic, the focus is not on divorce from interest in aesthetic objects. Quite the reverse: Dewey shows a common person who is vitally interested in the objects he experiences aesthetically, and the interest and attention which he invests the objects with are just those characteristics which lead him to experience the object aesthetically.¹⁰

Environmental aestheticians, then, are faced with a choice. Should the aesthetic paradigm, the aesthetic approach, to developing environmental-aesthetic cases be essentially one of disinterest and detachment, appreciating nature on its own terms, without considering its functionality, its instrumentality? Or should the approach be one of connectedness and interest?

The argument for the former has the central advantage of being the less anthropocentric of the two. If the point is to move to a model of appreciation of nature for its own sake over a model of conserving natural resources (inherently meant for future consumption), then the model of detachment is the better. On the other hand, if the point is to move aesthetic attenders to realise obligations on their part to defend and protect natural areas and objects, then clearly the greater call to action, or constraint of action, is found through the model of greater intimacy, interest and relationship between nature and humans.

Arnold Berleant, in his book *The Aesthetics of Environment*, clearly prefers the Deweyan approach. Indeed, he extends the model (rightly and in the right direction, in my view) so far as to say that the greater the sensory engagement

and involvement – he coins the word ‘synaesthesia’ for the complete union of sensory modalities¹¹ – the greater the depth of appreciation, identity, and recognition of interconnectedness. And it is these things which will ground the deepest motivation for protection and defence.

Environmental appreciation cannot be directed toward an object for there is none. Appreciative engagement must replace the customary contemplative admiration.¹²

The boundlessness of the natural world does not surround us; it assimilates us.¹³

Berleant’s paradigm of environmental aesthetics is a sort of participatory aesthetic where the lines between human and nonhuman nature are blurred to erasure. The model of separation, with all the good that such non-invasive, non-instrumental models bring, is still inferior to an embracive, connective model. An attitude which seeks to find kinship with the natural context will afford experiences that are more genuine, deeper and more motivating.

This is consonant with Dewey’s vision. Indeed, it is more than consonant. *The unity and completeness that characterises aesthetic experience, for Dewey, can best be achieved through interaction with the world of nature.* Please be clear here: I mean to say not only that aesthetic experiences as described by Dewey can happen as easily in the woods as in the gallery. I mean to say that they can happen best there amongst the trees.¹⁴

When we have artefactual aesthetic experiences, ones had through attendance to paintings, sculptures, literature, symphonies, dance, song, film and so forth, at least one and usually some of our sensory modalities will be engaged. But throughout we are essentially viewers, hearers, audience members in the sense that we are not a part of the aesthetic object but through an invisible fourth wall we look on. Today some artwork events, even some art objects, use greater modalities, call on greater involvement and engagement by the aesthetic attender.

I recall attending a version of a Passion Play in which I along with the rest of the audience found myself one of the community of present Roman and Jewish onlookers to the Crucifixion. The engagement was great; the experience was incredible. But even there I recognised my distance from one of the crowd 2000 years ago. Though this context afforded me greater motivation for empathy with that 2000-year old crowd, my place at the end of this millennium allowed me to avoid any real feelings of involvement (or culpability or guilt or mob-mentality).

A walk through the woods is unlike this. A walk through the woods is immediately present. There is nothing more than the woods and me. I have to constantly negotiate my way through branches and over terrain. I have to deal with mosquitoes, ticks, and snakes. I have no idea whether I will see an eagle, a bobcat, or an alligator. I might not, but I might. I am alert. I look at the trail before me, at my footfalls, at the shrubs and trees around me. I hear the branches I step on, the birds overhead, occasional rustles in the brush nearby. I smell the pine;

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

I once smelled a skunk. I taste the air and the occasional saltiness of my own sweat. I feel hot, then a breeze, then a mosquito bite. My heart is pumping, and I'm sweating. I keep my balance on inclines, down slopes, on narrow trails, on slick mud – all negotiations on my part. This is my somatic engagement.

I think about my vulnerability here. I see a racoon washing a meal, and I think about which plants I could ingest without harm. I look for wild flowers, rare birds and animals, particularly large or old trees. I feel free from e-mail. I hear no cars. I think about my place here and now. And, with luck, I think about my place in the natural world. I think of my size in relation to what's around me: not just my physical size, but my temporal size and the size of my influence. I see myself, as a natural thing, in contact with other natural things. And, with luck, the dividing lines between me and my context disappear. This is a part of my psychological engagement.

When all of my sensory modalities are engaged – what Berleant calls *synaesthesia* – and when my thoughts and feelings are engaged, there I am totally immersed, there I can have the deepest, richest, most highly unified experiences I am capable of. And these experiences Dewey calls *aesthetic*.

It stands to reason that in the face of such depth of experience will flow the most genuine concern for those contexts. The most highly motivated environmentalists I encounter are not academics, or at least not the cloistered sort all too familiar. The environmentalists that feel their call and commitment to protection of nature the deepest are those that spend regular and sustained 'quality time' out in the woods, in the mountains, on the rivers. Berleant is, I think, right in making a case for preference of a model of aesthetic engagement over a model of detachment.

II.

Recently a native American, an indigenous person, named Harold Lock and I participated jointly in an exercise being run by the ecopsychologist Laura Sewell.¹⁵ Sewell asked Lock and me to imagine that one of us was a camera and the other a photographer. We were to walk around the campus taking photographs. First, the photographer would describe the scene that was about to be 'shot'. Then the photographer, with a tap on the head of his companion, would open the camera's shutter – the companion's eyes – for a brief time. I found that my descriptions, when I played the photographer, were very static. I focused on formal elements and compositions in my 'photographs'. Lock's descriptions, however, were always lively and dynamic. He focused on movement, and so, implicitly, he focused on change.

Many environmentalists have foci more like mine than like Lock's. They see natural areas, objects, and even events (which borders on the strange) in three dimensions rather than four. This may have positive roots: if environmentalists

experience in nature events of beauty and aesthetic goodness, and if Dewey is right that aesthetic experiences are characterised by completeness and unity, then aesthetic experiences will tend to be ones considered in three dimensions rather than four, since the fourth, time, necessarily brings change. But despite such positive psychological or experiential roots, viewing natural areas and objects simply in three dimensions limits our understanding. The world is four dimensional, and nature changes. The point now in understanding the natural world as four dimensional is to spend time in serious consideration of what 'preservation'¹⁶ means.

The word 'preservation' seems to have a decidedly static character. When we preserve art – primarily, I mean, autographic works of art¹⁷ – we work to maintain the original state of objects. When we make 'preserves' – in the sense of jam – we create a suspension of fruit and sugar that will last a great deal longer than the fruit on its own. What is it that we ought mean to do when we preserve nature? If we mean to keep a particular natural area – bordered perhaps by visual framing, by land development, or by ecosystem integrity – preserved, this cannot mean that we keep it exactly as it was when we first encountered it. This is impossible. Even the moonscape changes by collision and entropy. Moreover, this cannot be recommended: to preserve a natural area in a state in which a particular human being encountered it is taking anthropocentrism past the point of respectability.

If a small parcel of land is mine (so to speak), and I wish to spend every summer Saturday working to control it, keeping the field of grass at a uniform height, keeping the plants to tight little shapes – well, that's strange enough – but it borders on the absurd to think that this sort of control is warranted when the natural areas in question are the size of national or state parks. Furthermore, it would require a good deal of argument to show why 'control' of the land was warranted at all. Most large scale models of land preservation recognise the impossibility and unwarrantability of attempting to control the land in the way we think about maintaining the lawns around our houses. However, even in large scale projects, rangers will institute controlled 'burns', where large areas are set ablaze, culling herds, or even surgical tree-removal.

Keekok Lee discusses, in her 'Beauty For Ever?', the efforts taken by Britain's National Trust on behalf of Yew Tree Tarn¹⁸ in the Lake District. The National Trust, in its statement of purpose, has said that it has '... built a dam to prevent the tarn from draining, and the area has been landscaped to ensure its beauty will be *permanent*'. (The emphasis is that of the National Trust.)

But is this the right decision for a conservation body to take? Should the Trust have allowed itself to succumb to the temptation of piecemeal engineering in order to achieve such a goal? Or should it have adopted the alternative policy to let the shrinking lake to leak, to become eventually, perhaps, a peat bog?¹⁹

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

Ensuring the 'permanent' beauty of the tarn implies two things – (a) geological considerations come second to aesthetic ones and (b) moreover, a particular conception of the 'Englishness' of the English countryside be also preserved for generations to come.²⁰

Lee makes the point that the conservation actions taken in this situation are essentially instrumental. The tarn is not 'permanently' preserved for its own sake – indeed, there are hosts of natural areas that are not recipients of the Trust's attention – but for its ability to provide for viewers a certain aesthetic experience. This places, the point goes, the tarn in the same category as (artefactual) works of art. But

it is a philosophical error to regard works of art and natural objects as belonging to the same ontological category or reduce the latter to the category of the artefactual.... To regard (certain) landscapes as 'nature's works of art' can therefore be philosophically very misleading if not handled with care.²¹

...one might infer that as far as the National Trust and the Lake District National Park are concerned, nature has no intrinsic but only instrumental value for us humans...²²

To think of nature as four dimensional is to understand it as dynamic. But to what extent does this dynamism extend?

The 'natural' lively parts of nature contribute to the dynamism of a bioregion by constructing nests, digging burrows, effecting kills, and leaving tracks. These sorts of activities are necessary for their survival. But – and this has been a popular argument against environmentalism – are not humans natural creatures who effect changes in their environs for the sake of their survival and flourishing?²³ Does not the dynamism of nature include human activities such that the construction of (not to put too fine a point on it) a strip mall constitutes merely a facet of the natural dynamism – this given that humans are natural creations and human actions events of survival and flourishing?

The usual answer that is given to such a claim can I think be used here to address the question of 'permanence' in land preservation. Nature, if left to its own devices, tends toward variety and diversity. Natural areas where a single monoculture dominates are usually so because of the hand of man (fields of grain, lawns of grass). If an action is in concert with variety and diversity, of species, of natural community type, of event, then we have prima facie reason to see that action as natural or in harmony with nature. Human actions tend toward permanence. Strip malls are built to last as long as the owners anticipate deriving profits off their rent. Human houses – at least some, at least older ones – are built to last for lifetimes. Birds' nests, on the other hand, are built to last a season. Burrows are vacated and new ones found or dug as creatures move and grow. Even native American chickees are built to be temporary and mobile.

‘Preservation’ inherently includes the concept of ‘permanence’. This is seen clearly by Britain’s National Trust. But the sort of permanence that is appropriate for preservation of an essentially dynamic natural world is not the sort that seeks to keep things just as they are. Instead, what is permanently preserved is the *integrity* of the natural area or object. If nature is dynamic and changing, then the integrity of nature is preserved when that dynamism is preserved. Separate the dynamism from nature and one has removed a part of nature’s integrity.

If nature tends toward diversity and variety, then preservation of nature means that nature’s ability to change and diversify must be protected. But one must be careful here. Human beings must not set themselves up as absolute stewards of the land, because to take on such a role with the goal being the preservation of the integrity of the land is to have a full knowledge of what the ‘integrity of the land’ means. We do not yet have this. Consider the analogy of familial relations. Parents can, to a reasonable degree, set themselves up as, to use the words again, absolute stewards of their children. This is because, again to a reasonable degree, parents understand the needs and functions of their children. But this is not the case with the natural environment. Instead of proactively taking on stewardship of the land, we do much better to limit our actions to either of two things: avoidance of actions that clearly tend toward the minimising of natural integrity, or taking actions in correction of prior human action which resulted in diminished integrity.

Rangers set controlled fires. They may cull herds. They may even sanction limited, surgical tree harvesting. These actions, to be justified on the above criteria, must be in remedy of prior human action. If we will not allow lightning strikes to burn invasive lower understory vegetation, we diminish the diversity of an ecosystem. So controlled burns can be justified. If we kill every coyote in a bioregion, then we sentence the coyote’s natural prey to the ravages of overpopulation. So culling herds can be justified. If a tree farm is abandoned, but efforts are not made to reduce the original impact of the regimentation of tree farming, then surgical tree harvesting can be justified as a remedy. *In all cases, the diversity of the ecosystem, as a hallmark of that ecosystem’s integrity, is the central focus of the preservation.*

Our interest in the preservation of nature may have noble roots in genuine aesthetic experiences, experiences characterised by closure and completeness – by a three dimensional vision. But a true understanding of nature is one which is four dimensional, recognising that change is integral to the integrity of nature. This understanding ought prompt in us the aesthetic appreciation of nature as a dynamic, moving, changing system. This is an evolution of aesthetic experience as experience of the static. Yet without this evolution, we will continue to treat nature, or that piece of it which fits in a single visual field, as a painting or a sculpture. Natural aesthetic appreciation limited to three dimensions attempts to force nature into the model of artefactuality.²⁴

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

Before leaving this section, I want to take a moment to talk not about another dissimilarity between artefactual aesthetic objects and natural ones, but about an apparent parallel. The natural world is diverse and dynamic, but so too are the contexts of our most common artefactual aesthetic experiences. Consider the following metaphor.²⁵

I hesitate to call anything centrally paradigmatic or canonical anymore, but suffice it to say that there are certain aesthetic experiential contexts which are more popular or common, at least in America, than are others. One of these common contexts is an art gallery. When one enters an art gallery the first decision one must make is whether to go to the left or to the right. Many galleries arrange their artworks chronologically, and perhaps in the interest of appreciating the development or evolution of styles, one may be interested in heading to the oldest works in the gallery first. This usually will be the case even where it is a 'one-man' or 'one-woman' show. The audience expects diversity. That diversity may have a great range as we find in a museum where the collection includes early renaissance works, baroque works, impressionist works and also perhaps pop works. Or the diversity may be limited, as we see the unfolding of works in a gallery that move from the 1970s to the 1990s. Or, finally, the diversity may consist in artworks of different media, moving from the two dimensional to the three dimensional. Yet in almost all gallery experiences, at least the common sorts, viewers will have the opportunity to experience a range of works demonstrating a variety of styles.

This is how it is with natural areas, too. There is a common misconception that what needs saving is only some identifiable and conceptually isolatable piece of nature. 'If only we could save the wetlands.' But this is ecologically specious. The wetlands, to take that case, only function with integrity when there is contiguous functional exchange and overlap with uplands, lands that are not wet. Without the uplands, the wetlands' functional integrity is diminished. To find a great area of wetlands is unusual; certainly they occur, but they are unusual. It is much more common to see a regional interplay between wetland and upland. The campus of my university, the University of North Florida, is approximately 1200 acres in size. Approximately 350 of those acres are developed or built upon. Of the 850 acres left, approximately 550 acres are wetland. The university will not build on that land, because (everyone knows) if there is dry land to be had, one does not think to go to the bother of draining and raising wetland to be buildable. But of greater interest is the fact that of the 300 remaining acres of dry land, of upland, the university will not be in the position of building on all it (if the university should even want to develop all of it): much of those 300 acres is 'wet-locked'. Much of that upland is situated in narrow bands bordered widely on the sides by wetland. Without hiking trail bridges, it would be very difficult to reach that land. The university will not try to take bulldozers there; it is highly impractical.

It is common to have this sort of interplay between wetland and upland, and this interplay is highly visible from the air. Wetlands are dark green and run along like rivers. Uplands are less dense and lighter green. But this sort of diversity is only the beginning. Were one to spend a couple of hours hiking around the University of North Florida's nature preserve, one will find, in as short a time as a hike of two hours, approximately *eight* different natural community types:

- Sandhill
- Pine Flatwood
- Mesic Hammock
- Cyprus Swamp
- Cyprus Bog or Pond
- Seepage Slope
- Hardwood Bottomland
- Freshwater Lakes

This is what an ecosystem is. An ecosystem is not a single natural community type. It is a contiguous system of a variety of different land types which all function together, the integrity of any one land type dependent on the integrity of the others. Ecosystems are places of great diversity.

When one hikes through the woods one may move from wetland to transition land to pine flatwoods to oak hammock and so forth. This is very much like moving from a room of renaissance artworks to baroque to rococo to impressionism to post-impressionism. Moving through natural areas is like moving through galleries or museums of fine art. Diversity is expected and appreciated.

One lesson to be taken from this is that the aesthetic appreciation of nature will be the appreciation of diversity of natural community type. Above I discussed one danger attached to thinking of natural areas and objects like we think of artworks: artworks in the main are static and meant to be, for as long as possible, immutable. The natural world, by contrast, is dynamic and changing. What makes it natural is its dynamism, and so a true understanding and appreciation of nature on aesthetic grounds will include an appreciation of this dynamic aspect. Here I discussed a point, albeit metaphorical, of parallel between the contexts of our natural aesthetic experiences and the common contexts of our artefactual aesthetic experiences. Both involve variety. To move in a gallery from room to room, leaving one style for another, is analogous to moving from one natural community type, one sort of land, to another and then to another. Although to straightforwardly treat a natural ecosystem as if it were an art gallery is to invite problems, the point is that there is a mirroring between the variety expected in our most common, most entrenched, most popularly acceptable forms of aesthetic attention, the visit to the art gallery, and the variety which will be found in any functionally thriving ecosystem.

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

I said at the start of this sub-section that the diversity one experiences in an art gallery and the diversity one experiences in nature constitute an apparent parallel, and I have tried to establish that parallel above. Not all readers will see this as a parallel, however. The reality is that diversity in an art gallery is a choice, a decision made by the art director or the curator. If there is diversity – and I assume that this is generally the case – that diversity is present as a matter of convention (as is the chronological organisation of the works). Diversity in nature is not a matter of convention or design (in the straightforward sense). It is inherent. So while I may see diversity as analogous in the two separate arenas, it is not a given that this analogy will be obvious to all who consider it.

III.

Can our aesthetic theories about the natural world give us more than mere models of how we can or ought appreciate nature? Can we bridge the gap between theory and action?

I wrote early on that environmental aesthetics is a hybrid discipline. Environmental aesthetics is clearly about aesthetics: about the character, context and control of aesthetic experience, about aesthetic objects and attitudes. Environmental aesthetics is also about ethics, about how we should act given our recognition of particular aesthetic values and our motivation for protecting natural objects as the vehicles of those values. Does environmental aesthetics give us clear instruction for action? Stan Godlovitch, in his article 'Evaluating Nature Aesthetically',²⁶ discusses both the need for aesthetic evaluation of nature and for a 'public metric': 'Only if natural aesthetic value is measurable will it stand a chance of influencing conservation priorities'.²⁷ Godlovitch points to the need for action-instruction, but the offering of his public metric is not apparently yet at hand. If environmental aesthetics does not offer us action-instruction, then it serves only as an academic or theoretical model. If it does not, then, for environmentalists, it had better get out of the way to make room for ethical theories that have clear and direct application.

In this final section we shall discuss applied environmental aesthetics. We shall begin by drawing on parallels with applied aesthetics in general, and then move to how this sort of applied aesthetics can turn into applied ethics.

The most common sort of applied aesthetics, taking the theories of aesthetics and applying them to actual works of art, to actual aesthetic experiences, objects, attitudes and contexts, is in the practice of art criticism. In art criticism the theories of aesthetics, at least indirectly, meet the artworld itself. Steven Bourassa, in his *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, discusses 'environmental critics' and a concrete plan of implementation of what he refers to as 'scenic beauty estimation'.²⁸ Instead of spending time here discussing Bourassa's ideas about

implementation or attempting to, I will start fresh with his idea of the environmental critic and build from there. This is because Bourassa is primarily interested in landscape, and although that is certainly an important area in which to discuss aesthetic evaluation, it is only one of several. Bourassa is interested in primarily visual beauty, and, having covered the ground thus far covered in this paper, to think just of visual beauty in perhaps simply a two dimensional way would seem over-limiting.

The idea of the environmental critic is not an uncontroversial proposition. The idea that an environmental critic can and should aesthetically evaluate natural environments rests on two suppositions that have been the focus of much interesting debate in the environmental aesthetic literature over the past several years. The first supposition is that nature appreciation is sufficiently relevantly similar to art appreciation that we will be able to move the principles of art criticism over to environmental criticism more-or-less wholesale. The second supposition is that nature can be evaluated aesthetically. Evaluation suggests comparison, and it suggests the potential that some comparisons will feature negative judgements. Can one have an evaluative aesthetics of nature as contrasted with an exclusively positive aesthetics?

Allen Carlson, one of the foremost environmental aestheticians today, questions both of these suppositions. In the matter of the first supposition, Carlson states that '[f]requently the appreciation of nature is assimilated to the appreciation of art. Such an assimilation is both a theoretical mistake and appreciative pity'.²⁹ Carlson offers several arguments for his view, three of which I will note here. First, nature appreciation is different from art appreciation in that while the aesthetic object in the case of art is localised and (almost always) distinct from the appreciator, the object of nature appreciation is all around the appreciator, encompassing her, forming a living and dynamic context for her appreciation, changing as she moves through it, with the appreciator not as distinct from the environment but as part of it. This is, I think, the strongest point of agreement between Carlson and Berleant. '[W]e must experience it not as unobtrusive background, but as obtrusive foreground.'³⁰ To further this point, nature appreciation is not like art appreciation in terms of the number of sensory modalities that are engaged. Carlson writes

Certain complexities make it even more difficult to develop an aesthetics of environment than of art. For one thing, environment involves perceptual categories that are wider and more numerous than those usually recognised in the arts. No single sense dominated the situation; rather, all the modes of sensibility are involved.³¹

The norm in art appreciation is that only one or two senses will be used in appreciation of the object (and usually this is either sight or hearing or both). Nature appreciation is different from most of our art experiences because of the sensory envelope it creates around us. Second, while in art appreciation we

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

typically pick out formal qualities both as a focus of our attention and as evidence for our judgements, we cannot do the same in nature appreciation. Part of the reason for this is that nature can only be framed artificially. 'Without imposing a frame on the natural environment, it is not possible to see it as having formal qualities.... The natural environment... has a certain openness and indeterminateness that makes it an unlikely place to find formal qualities'.³² Third, in attending to art we typically appreciate both (1) the design of the artist along with how well that design was executed and (2) the order and organisation of the work itself.³³ But it is far from clear that in aesthetic attention to nature there is any correlate to design appreciation. Unless one were to bring a divine creator into the picture, (virginal) nature does not have a designer.³⁴ These arguments and others are advanced by Carlson to demonstrate that art appreciation and nature appreciation are, in terms of those items relevant to suggesting that the environment can be aesthetically approached as one would approach an art object, dissimilar. This certainly would have an impact on the construction, perhaps even the plausibility, of developing a concept of an environmental critic.

On the matter of the second point, that nature can be aesthetically evaluated, Carlson advances the consideration that the only appropriate environmental aesthetic is exclusively a positive one.³⁵ His argument for this rests on his construction of and commitment to a cognitive model of natural appreciation which emphasises scientific knowledge as the means through which to appropriately understand the correct classification of the natural aesthetic object.³⁶ Carlson writes:

That science has played a role in the development of both the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the positive aesthetic position is, I think, clear. What is less clear is exactly why this should be so, although in general the answer is obvious enough: science provides knowledge about nature.³⁷

If the natural world seems aesthetically good when perceived in its correct categories, this cannot be simply because they are correct; it must be because of the kind of thing nature is and the kinds of categories that are correct for it. This is because the analogous position in art appreciation does not justify positive aesthetics concerning art.³⁸

A more correct categorisation in science is one that over time makes the natural world seem more intelligible, more comprehensive to those whose science it is. Our science appeals to certain kinds of qualities to accomplish this... ones such as order, regularity, harmony, balance, tension, resolution, and so forth... These qualities that make the world seem comprehensible to us are also those that we find aesthetically good. ... The determination of categories of art and of their correctness are in general prior to and independent of aesthetic considerations, while the determinations of categories of nature and of their correctness are in an important sense dependent upon aesthetic considerations. ... These categories not

only make the natural world appear aesthetically good, but in virtue of being correct determine that it is aesthetically good.³⁹

To complete the point, in reference to why a positive aesthetic may be the only one appropriate in nature appreciation and why this implicitly makes construction of an environmental critic – at least one which advances negative aesthetic claims⁴⁰ – implausible, Carlson writes:

If all nature 'is equal in beauty and importance', this is a significant difference not simply between nature appreciation and the order appreciation of some works of art and anti-art but between nature appreciation and art appreciation in general.⁴¹

Carlson's is not, however, the only voice on this issue.⁴² One who believes differently is the aforementioned Stan Godlovitch, who writes:

Though I try to indicate how and why this transfer of discrimination from art to nature might be resisted, I am also aware that it cannot be, and, more tellingly, must not be resisted. For if resisted too religiously, the aesthetic dimension will simply be cancelled out as an effective factor in nature conservation policy.... The latter view, an expression of positive aesthetics, effectively eliminates the relevance of appreciative value in nature conservation policy by failing to provide any pertinent aesthetic or other nonfunctional and noneconomic differentiae on which to ground differential treatment of the environment... appreciation which involves no evaluation cannot play any role in setting conservation priorities. If aesthetic appreciation does have a role to play in priority setting, however, then it must resort to art-aesthetic-like evaluative imperatives, and thus forsake the spirit of valuing every natural thing as it is as the basis of natural appreciation.⁴³

Unless defensible aesthetic rankings are available, aesthetic criteria will fail to interest conservation policy makers.⁴⁴

Berleant writes in a similar vein:

The normative range of aesthetics has also been extended to allow for negative values: a significant part of the criticism by the environmental movement is aesthetic in character.⁴⁵

And Berleant and Carlson, writing together, say

Programs for the purchase of development rights in order to preserve agricultural landscapes express moral commitment and political will in the service of an aesthetic end. Aesthetic value can indeed become a moral goal. The relation between environmental ethics and aesthetics is rich in possibility for elaboration. Do aesthetic values play a part in the overall structure of an ethics of environment as one of the factors to be sought out and safeguarded?⁴⁶

If we are to take up conservation priorities, if environmental aesthetics is to have any policy or ethical dimension, then some means of addressing this need will

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

have to be found. If Carlson is right that the appropriate model of nature appreciation is found through objective, scientific knowledge of the natural object, and if he is also right that attention to formal qualities in nature is misguided, then I come back again to my suggestion that perhaps a means to address the practical aims of environmental aesthetics is to construct a picture of the environmental critic, taking what we can from a historically-informed conception of the art critic, and leaving out those elements which, due to the dissimilarities between art appreciation and nature appreciation, do not translate over.

In the rest of this paper, I want to briefly sketch out the properties we might be looking for in an environmental critic. What should environmental critics do? Let's start with this question: what do art critics do? Art critics write (or construct) art reviews. Art reviews generally have four components:

- (1) Description of the art object under review: here the reviewer offers, in language that is as value neutral as possible, a formal description of the art object (or event) so that the reader has some basic conception about what object the reviewer is reviewing.
- (2) Information about the art object, its history, its creator, its interconnections with other objects and events in and out of the artworld.
- (3) Interpretation of the object: what does or can it mean? Does the artist offer an explanation of the work? Are there competing interpretations?
- (4) Evaluation: this is the most important part of the review, and some reviewers, for lack of space or time, will condense their reviews to just this component: this is where the reviewer offers her best reasons for why this object is worthy of attention (or not).

Can environmental critics engage in a similar exercise? I think the answer is either yes or close.

Some art critics write for newspapers, some read for radio or television. Some write brochures and plaques that are placed in art venues like galleries. Environmental critics can do the same. They can and do write for various media. Newspapers regularly carry features about great spots for family vacations, national parks, things like dolphin encounters, vast forests, wildlife refuges, and the like. Most national and state parks have the two sorts of literature mentioned above: brochures and plaques. Indeed, brochures collected at the gates of parks and nature preserves along with trail signs highlighting special features are as common in natural settings as in galleries.

Furthermore, the environmental critic's objective (descriptive and informational) review can be every bit as full as the art critic's review. The environmental critic can offer a description of the natural site, emphasising the most noteworthy aspects of the area under consideration. She can offer information about the site;

she can discuss the history of the site, both from a cultural standpoint and, perhaps more importantly, from a natural perspective. For instance, at the University of North Florida, the character of the nature preserve is dependent on the receding shoreline of Florida thousands of years ago. Now UNF is at least nine miles from the coast, but one can see the campus as a series of coastal recessions. Furthermore, in this nature preserve there is a cypress tree that dates back to before the voyages of Columbus. This sort of information can be offered by the environmental critic about a site and will almost certainly offer the visitor a means for a richer aesthetic experience.

Generally, in a full art review, readers will learn facts and theories about the artwork that will provide for the reader-turned-audience-member a fuller appreciation of the work and its various contexts. The value of this lies in the probability that with greater information and theoretic discussion, the aesthetic experience of that audience member will be richer and deeper than it otherwise would have been. In parallel to this, Carlson writes:

In clarifying concepts such as environmental aesthetic value, scenic beauty, and aesthetic degradation, environmental aesthetics can contribute to formulating clearer and sounder criteria for judgement.⁴⁷

... to aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of the different environments of nature and of the systems and elements within those environments. In the ways in which the art critic and the art historian are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate art, the naturalist and the ecologist are well equipped to aesthetically appreciate nature.⁴⁸

Marcia Eaton writes:

Knowledge does not simply deepen the experiences that imagination provides, it directs them, or should direct them if we hope to preserve and design sustainable landscapes.⁴⁹

Information offering is an important part of the role of the environmental critic. And this information, on a Carlsonian cognitivist model, should come from science. He writes

[S]erious, appropriate appreciation of the *Guernica*... requires that we appreciate it as a painting and moreover as a cubist or neo-cubist painting, and therefore we appreciate it in light of our knowledge of paintings in general and of cubist paintings in particular.⁵⁰

...particular natural kinds (elephants, horses) constitute categories that function psychologically as do categories of art...⁵¹

A strong theme in Carlson's writings about nature appreciation focuses on the need to understand nature within the bounds of science as it is science that offers

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

us knowledge about nature; it is science that tells us the correct categories under which to consider a natural object.

Interpretation and meaning may not as easily translate from artefactual aesthetic objects to natural ones. The reason for this is obvious: (most) art objects had to undergo a process of creation in the mind and at the hand of an artist. Unless we import a teleology concerning nature, how nature, or perhaps God, 'designed' the site in question, there is no easy correlate to development of art interpretations. Carlson discusses this thoroughly in 'Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature', and this well may constitute a place where the conception of the environmental critic cannot be fully taken from the model of the art critic. But perhaps there is a metaphorical correlate. Environmental critics can offer particular points of view which can be used by the visitor to see the site in question in a new way. Earlier we talked about the apparent parallel with regard to variety between the visual art gallery and an ecosystem. This is a metaphorical interpretation of a natural area: as an art gallery. Environmental critics can offer other experiential guides as well: 'the uniformity and considerable height of the trees, coupled with the silence of this area, put one in mind of a medieval cathedral..'. These sorts of connection are akin to what art critics do in offering interpretations, and they can function to enliven and open the visitor's aesthetic experience of an area every bit as much as art interpretation assists artefactual aesthetic experiences.

Evaluation, if environmental criticism is to have political teeth, is of great importance. Just as the art critic evaluates a work of art, so too may an environmental critic evaluate a natural object or area. To speak to the promise of a certain site offering richer aesthetic experiences than would other sites is a valuable service to potential visitors. But there is still more in this field that the environmental critic can do. The National Endowment for the Arts makes decisions about which art projects to fund with federal tax dollars. Similar State agencies do the same sort of thing at the State level. The Federal Department of the Interior decides, or can decide to recommend, that certain areas of the United States be preserved as national parks or preserves. And similar State agencies do similar things for States. The NEA makes decisions on the recommendations of boards of advisors; the same dynamic occurs in the States. These boards will include art critics; indeed, in some sense it may be correct to refer to these advisors as art critics.

Environmental critics can, and to the extent that we have *de facto* environmental critics, do, the same sort of thing. Environmental critics would be the experts who can advise on which areas are aesthetically most valuable. And it could be these areas that are targeted for preserving. This is the second of the two-fold role of the environmental critic: to advise to the end that certain areas, areas of great aesthetic value, be preserved. Natural aesthetic 'resources' can most effectively be protected if bona fide environmental critics offer expert advice to

Federal, State, Municipal and even private agencies/owners to preserve beautiful and aesthetically engaging lands, and such agencies acknowledge, in the way the NEA does, the value of such advice.

The next step in this sketch, then, is to specify what makes a bona fide environmental critic. Not every visitor with a camera and hiking boots should be considered an expert. Surely, though, it is the everyday visitor who is at the heart of the issue, just as the focus in medicine is the health of the patient. But just as patients ought not treat themselves, in spite of the fact that they are the most motivated parties in seeking their own health, casual visitors to natural sites will benefit if there are expert environmental critics to advise them and to protect the areas that will offer the visitors rewarding aesthetic experiences.

A good art critic has many, perhaps all, of the following traits (the names in parentheses are those aestheticians who have proposed those criteria):

- (1) The art critic should know the various genre of art that he criticises, so that he can make comparisons with standards of those genre (Aristotle, Hume).
- (2) The art critic should be objective and impartial (Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Kant).
- (3) The art critic should be sensitive and introspective to his own appreciation/experience of the work (Hume, Kant). His reactions provide (i) a more eloquent account of his judgement of the work, and (ii) a basis for comparison with the reactions of his readers.
- (4) The art critic should have a delicacy of taste (Hume).
- (5) The art critic should have a serenity of mind (Hume), be able to focus, concentrate, and be highly attentive.
- (6) The art critic should be well practised (Hume), he should know his subject.
- (7) The art critic should have keen senses (Hume).
- (8) He should be able to pick out what he values in his experience of the work (Dewey, Beardsley). He may value order (Aristotle, Kant), symmetry (Aristotle), definiteness (Aristotle, Kant), unity (Dewey, Beardsley), intensity (Beardsley), complexity (Beardsley), unity-in-multiplicity (Shaftesbury), uniformity-amongst-variety (Hutcheson), or any other of the myriad of properties of the work, or his experience of the work, which contribute to the aesthetic value of the work.
- (9) The art critic should be equally clear about what it is that he believes *harms* the value of the work.

Items (8) and (9) amount to saying that the critic ought to provide *reasons* in support of his judgement. The critic's job, many would assert, is to offer *reasons*

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

for his likes and dislikes. This is a popular conception of the role of the critic. And it is something that takes training and practice.⁵²

The environmental critic might have the same sorts of qualities:

- (1) The environmental critic should know the natural world; she should understand biology, ecology and perhaps geology and climatology. She should understand the scientific concepts relating to natural integrity.
- (2) The environmental critic should be objective and impartial (though not necessarily disinterested or detached).
- (3) The environmental critic should be sensitive and introspective to her own appreciation and experience of the site.
- (4) The environmental critic should have good (i.e., an educated) aesthetic taste.
- (5) The environmental critic should have a serenity of mind, be able to focus, concentrate, and be highly attentive.
- (6) The environmental critic should be well practised.
- (7) The environmental critic should have keen senses.
- (8) The environmental critic should be able to articulate reasons and offer evidence for why she judges a site to be of high aesthetic value.
- (9) The environmental critic should be equally clear about what it is that she believes limits that aesthetic value.

This strategy for defining what goes into a good environmental critic – or an *expert* environmental critic – focuses on the characteristics that person will possess. This is the clearest way to specify expertness, to focus on the critic's traits.

Environmental critics, properly trained, properly disposed and attentive, can bridge the gap between theory and practice. They can bring to action the aesthetic environmental theories that academics create. Their role is of greater importance than that of the art critic. This is due to the hybridisation of aesthetics and ethics in environmental aesthetics. The art critic can tell you what you should find artistically valuable, but this is merely a prediction, and you are not held blameworthy should you disagree with his view. On the other hand, the environmental critic in part tells us what natural objects and areas should be preserved due to their possession of high aesthetic value. If we as a society fail to listen to them, if we develop those identified areas, we are culpable for eliminating venues which would have, were it not for short-sightedness, provided deep and rewarding aesthetic experiences for aesthetic attenders for generations to come. If I destroy a great work of art, I am culpable for destroying much more than merely canvas and pigment. The same is true of natural objects

and areas. If I destroy a site of great aesthetic value, I destroy more than an assemblage of plants and animals. I have destroyed part of the planet's beauty. And whether we think in terms of aesthetic value being possessed by natural objects or in terms of aesthetic value being actualised only through human attendance, still if we destroy areas of great beauty, we have diminished the world's wealth.⁵³

NOTES

¹ Dewey 1934, chapter 2.

² Berleant 1992.

³ Lee 1995.

⁴ Bourassa 1991.

⁵ I use the word 'artefactual' rather than 'artificial' because the former is more precise; the latter, in part, brings with it negative connotations.

⁶ Ronald Hepburn (1967) makes the distinction between the artificial and the natural in terms of alteration. He says that what is natural is what is not altered by alien causality but by 'its immanent causality alone'. I take this position to be, first, the most popular conception of the distinction, and, second, a sophisticated version of the one criticised here.

⁷ 'What we must aim for is generating aesthetic response that will lead to sustainable care.' Eaton 1998, p. 151.

⁸ The 'list of players' includes the following: Addison, 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination' (1712); Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1968); Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1981); Bullough, "'Psychical Distance" as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle' (1912); Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934); Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste' (1757); Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1726); Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (1790); Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (1896); Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1964); Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism* (1960).

⁹ See, for environmental implications of psychical distance, Loftin 1986.

¹⁰ This account is taken principally from the third chapter of *Art as Experience*, 'Having an Experience'.

¹¹ Berleant 1992, p. 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁴ In 'Having an Experience', Dewey lauds the artistic – art created by artists – as clearly prompting experiences of 'internal integration and fulfilment reached through organised and ordered movement' (1934, p. 38), and this suggests that for Dewey the most central paradigm of aesthetic experience is through art appreciation and not through nature appreciation. This may be, in some measure, because Dewey believes that in art appreciation, the viewer can appreciate the artist's design (qua design) in a way that may be absent in nature appreciation (although, of course, Dewey does not take up the discussion). Allen Carlson (1993) discusses design appreciation and what he calls 'order

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

appreciation'. If nature appreciation is properly informed by order appreciation, and informed to a high degree through imbuing our appreciation of nature with 'organised and ordered' scientific knowledge, then perhaps a case could be offered that Dewey's strongest conception of what constitutes *an* experience, even given what he praises about the artistic, may still find its best expressions in nature appreciation.

¹⁵ This exercise took place at the 1997 Earth Kinship Conference at the University of North Florida. I owe many thanks to the chair of this conference, Joe Halusky, for encouraging and inspiring my thought and work as an environmentalist.

¹⁶ 'Conservation' seems for many to have an inherently instrumental character; 'preservation' does not seem to have such a character, so here it is the preferable term.

¹⁷ Autographic works of art, following Nelson Goodman, are those which exist in single instantiations (such as paintings and sculptures). Allographic works (such as music, prints and literature) do not. One can discuss preservation of allographic art in similar ways to discussing preservation of autographic, but what is to be preserved in allographic art is not the work itself, as allographic artworks exist in their plural instantiations, but the means of insuring that each allographic instantiation is relevantly similar to the others. In music, the focus might be on the score, in literature, on the text, and in dance, the original choreography.

¹⁸ A 'tarn' is a small, steep-banked mountain pool or lake.

¹⁹ Lee 1995, p. 217.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²³ Eaton mentions this point, as well, in her 'Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature', p. 150.

²⁴ David Halusky, a young artist, is one who recognises the dynamism of nature. One of his recent works is a small iron sculpture called 'An Elder's Lament for the Famished Youth'. The work, of a native American elder holding up a prayer-offering protected by an eagle feather, is meant to be placed and left on a mountainside. David intends that the sculpture deteriorate as the iron rusts. At some point the sculpture will completely disintegrate. This artefactual work of art is meant to fit in with the dynamism and nature, changing with it until it finally disappears.

²⁵ My thanks to John M. Golden for offering this metaphor to me and for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

²⁶ Godlovitch 1998.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

²⁸ Bourassa is not necessarily the first to discuss environmental criticism in the style of art criticism. Allen Carlson first introduces it in 'On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty' (1977), and further develops it in 'Whose Vision? Whose Meanings? Whose Values? Pluralism and Objectivity in Landscape Analysis', (1990). The concept of the environmental critic is also discussed by Yrjö Sepänmaa (1986).

²⁹ Carlson 1993, p. 213.

³⁰ Carlson 2000, p. 48, in his chapter entitled 'Appreciation and the Natural Environment' (originally published in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, 1979, pp. 267–75). Earlier in *Aesthetics and the Environment*, in a chapter entitled 'Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment' (originally published in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 19, 1979, pp. 99–114), Carlson writes:

[t]hus aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment is not simply a matter of looking at objects or 'views' from a specific point. Rather, it is being 'in the midst' of them, moving in regard to them, looking at them from any and every point and distance, and, of course, not only looking, but also smelling, hearing, touching, feeling. It is being in the environment, being a part of the environmental, and reacting to it as a part of it. It is such active, involved appreciation, rather than the formal mode of appreciation nurtured by the scenery cult and encouraged by photographs, that is appropriate to the natural environment (p. 35).

³¹ Carlson 1993, p. 117.

³² Carlson 2000, p. 37, in his chapter 'Formal Qualities in the Natural Environment'. On page 38, he writes that '[t]he assumption that formal qualities have the same place and importance in the aesthetic appreciation and evaluation of the natural environment as they do in the appreciation and evaluation of art must be abandoned'.

³³ This distinction echoes the division that was a hallmark of New Criticism or really any art critical view that seeks to separate the artist, or the artist's intentions, from the object itself.

³⁴ Carlson 1993.

³⁵ Carlson (2000, p. 4) writes 'John Muir saw all nature and especially wild nature as aesthetically beautiful and found ugliness only where nature was subject to human intervention'. Later, in his chapter 'Nature and Positive Aesthetics' (originally published in *Environmental Values* 6, 1984, pp. 5–34), he writes 'All virgin nature is essentially aesthetically good. The appropriate or correct aesthetic appreciation of the natural world is basically positive and negative aesthetic judgements have little or no place' (p. 72).

³⁶ Carlson (2000, p. 85) writes that '[c]onsideration of science suggests a more plausible justification for positive aesthetic than any of those examine in the last three sections'. His case for relying on science and scientific classification is constructed in 'Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity', which is chapter five of *Aesthetics and the Environment* and was originally published in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40 (1981), pp. 15–28.

³⁷ Carlson 2000, p. 86, in his chapter 'Nature and Positive Aesthetics'.

³⁸ Carlson 2000, p. 91, in his chapter 'Nature and Positive Aesthetics'.

³⁹ Carlson 2000, p. 93–4, in his chapter 'Nature and Positive Aesthetics'. On pages 221–2 of 'Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature', (1993) he writes: 'All of nature necessarily reveals the natural order. Although it may be easier to perceive and understand in some cases more than in others, it is yet present in every case and can be appreciated once our awareness and understanding of the forces which produce it and the story which illuminates it are adequately developed. In this sense all nature is equally appreciable... In this way the stories that play a role in the order appreciation of nature work toward making natural objects all seem equally aesthetically appealing'.

⁴⁰ A positive environmental aesthetic does not necessarily imply the implausibility of environmental criticism. One natural aesthetic object can be judged to be better than another without necessarily advancing a negative aesthetic claim about the lesser. Consider the work of Janna Thompson (1995), where she considers evaluation of nature in a manner similar to evaluation of art while still holding a position something like positive aesthetics.

⁴¹ Carlson 1993, p. 221.

⁴² One such voice is that of Yuriko Saito (1998, p. 109), who writes: 'I take exception to the claim that everything in nature is aesthetically appreciable'. In arguing against the

AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

view that nature as a whole must be taken as beautiful, Saito writes: 'In fact, if the beauty of an ecosystem determines the beauty of each of its members, the positive aesthetic value of each of its members is predetermined, rendering our actual experience of their colours, shapes, smells, textures, and movements irrelevant' (p. 104). A purely positive aesthetic would similarly limit our actual aesthetic responses to nature in an unrealistic and inappropriate way.

⁴³ Godlovitch 1988, p. 113–114.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 127.

⁴⁵ Berleant 1998).

⁴⁶ Berleant and Carlson 1998, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Carlson 1993, p. 118.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁹ Eaton 1998, p. 152.

⁵⁰ Carlson 2000, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵² This list comes from my forthcoming *Introducing Aesthetics*.

⁵³ My thanks to Professor Keekok Lee, to Professor Allen Carlson, and to an anonymous referee for *Environmental Values* for their excellent advice on improving this paper.

REFERENCES

- Addison, Joseph (and Steele) [1712]. 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination'. Nos. 411–421. In Robert Allen (ed.), *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957.
- Alison, Archibald 1968. *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Beardsley, Monroe C. 1981. *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Berleant, Arnold 1992. *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Berleant, Arnold 1998. 'Environmental Aesthetics'. In Michael Kelly (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, p. 115. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berleant, Arnold and Allen Carlson 1998. Introduction to the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56(2), Special Issue on Environmental Aesthetics.
- Bourassa, Steven 1991. *The Aesthetics of Landscape*. London: Belhaven Press.
- Bullough, Edward 1912. "'Psychical Distance" as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle', *British Journal of Psychology*.
- Carlson, Allen 1977. 'On the Possibility of Quantifying Scenic Beauty', *Landscape Planning* 4: 131–72.
- Carlson, Allen 1990. 'Whose Vision? Whose Meanings? Whose Values? Pluralism and Objectivity in Landscape Analysis'. In P. Groth (ed.), *Vision, Culture, and Landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Carlson, Allen 1993. 'Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature'. In Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (eds), *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carlson, Allen 2000. *Aesthetics and the Environment*. New York: Routledge.

- Dewey, John 1934. *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Eaton, Marcia Muelder 1998. 'Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* **56**(2): 149–56.
- Fenner, David E.W. (forthcoming). *Introducing Aesthetics*. Praeger/Greenwood.
- Godlovitch, Stan 1988. 'Evaluating Nature Aesthetically', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* **56**(2): 113–25.
- Hepburn, Ronald 1967. 'Nature, Philosophical Ideas of', in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp. 454–8. New York: MacMillan.
- Hume, David [1757]. 'Of the Standard of Taste', *Four Dissertations*. New York: Garland, 1970.
- Hutcheson, Francis [1726]. *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. New York: Garland, 1971.
- Kant, Immanuel [1790]. *Critique of Judgement*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.
- Lee, Keekok 1995. 'Beauty for Ever?' *Environmental Values* **4**(3): 213–25.
- Loftin, Robert W. 1986. 'Psychical Distance and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Wilderness', *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*.
- Saito, Yuriko 1998. 'The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* **56**(2): 101–11.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur 1896. *The World as Will and Idea*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sepänmaa, Yrjö 1986. *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica. (Second Edition, Denton: Environmental Ethics Books, 1993).
- Shaftesbury, Anthony 1964. *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Stolnitz, Jerome 1960. *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Thompson, Janna 1995. 'Aesthetics and the Value of Nature', *Environmental Ethics* **17**: 291–305.