

Review: Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies

Greg Garrad (Editor)

Reviewed by Yves Laberge

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Garrad, Greg, editor. *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. xiii+174 pp. ISBN: 9780230235038, US\$80.00 (hardback).

Linking environmental studies with culture, and in this case Cultural Studies, *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies* comprises thirteen chapters, organised in three sections about scales, interdisciplinary approaches, and the media. Many essays are written by teachers who share their experience of teaching Green Studies in their literature classes. Although this discipline is not defined as such here, “Cultural Studies” are understood as a critical study of how mass culture is produced, shaped, framed, distributed and consumed in ways we (wrongly) believe to be spontaneous. As a subfield, “Green Cultural Studies” is based on ecocriticism as a motor for investigating literature, moving images, and mass culture in general (magazines, television, fashion, etc.).

In his Introduction, Editor Greg Garrad indicates there are many publications and anthologies in environmental literature combining ecocriticism, English literature, and literary studies, having a common interest for teaching and a focus on how nature can be represented in numerous works (p. 1). He also says that “most of these essays are about what teachers of ecocriticism and green cultural studies can *do*, immediately and practically” (p. 4).

The opening chapter reminds the reader that before the 1970s environmentalism movement, there was already an “ecological thought”, understood as “a thinking that is ecological” (p. 12). Here, Richard Kerridge provides various examples of novels related to environmentalism or even Deep Ecology, for example James Lovelock’s *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006) (p. 21).

In his revisiting of how Ecocriticism appeared in the USA, and especially in its wilderness imagery, Anthony Lioi’s chapter 11 argues that Ecocriticism “began by defending a related set of genres – nature writing, wilderness literature and natural history”; it was made in the West, “against an urban, Eastern élite” which often (wrongly) conceived nature as the opposite of modernity (p. 135). Lioi also refers to advertisement and marketing as daily examples of how “teddy bear environmentalism” is used to promote electric vehicles, even if these cars probably “could be powered by electricity from a coal-burning plant” (p. 140).

Among the most interesting essays, Adrian Ivakhiv’s chapter 12 on “Teaching Ecocriticism and Cinema” focuses on a great diversity of materials, sources, and channels including feature films, documentaries, and new media such as YouTube. This focus on television was already present in Chapter 9 studying human / animals representations, interactions, and anthropomorphic comparisons in series about animal life like “*Wild Encounters*” and the odd “*Green Porno*” (on the Sundance Channel), with actress Isabella Rossellini playing animal roles, for instance a snail in reproduction phases (p. 110).

All essays commissioned for *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies* have the common goal to transfer environmental studies into unusual intersections, territories, and comparative methodologies like literature, new media, postmodernism, and Postcolonial theory. For the moment, contributors only focused on English Literary Studies while there are as well various examples in French, German, and Latin American cultures not discussed here; this book only opens a few doors to inspire other scholars to follow and adopt the same comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. Graduate students in Education,

Cultural Studies, or literary studies will appreciate its critical focus, while educators in these fields might discover new intersections. Some teachers might find here an inspiration and many references for environmentally-related works, films, and programs to bring into the classroom. Some authors such as Louise Westling even suggest ideas and topics for assignments about the ecological dimensions of selected novels (p. 87). Anthony Lioi's chapter 11 also proposes "assignments of ideological critique" of environmental issues in the media (p. 140). This very practical dimension adds to the interest of this collection of essays about how environmentalism and nature are present in our culture.

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