

Coupe, Lawrence. The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism.
London: Routledge, 2000. 309 pp. \$37.75.

In the glossary of *The Green Studies Reader: from Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, Lawrence Coupe defines ecocriticism as “the relationship between human and non-human life as represented in literary texts and which theorizes about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction.” Coupe is the senior lecturer in English at Manchester Metropolitan University and teaches a class on ecological literary theory there. In *The Green Studies Reader*, the author gives pieces of writing that he believes answer the questions of what ecocriticism is and who could fall into its category. His table of contents outlines his chronological view of green literature, and he defines his sections by how each answers a certain aspect of the genre.

Coupe splits the first section, “Green Tradition,” into two parts: “Romantic Ecology and its Legacy” and “The Earth, Memory, and the Critique of Modernity.” With these parts, the author sets up how his research will be structured, introducing a general introduction of the points he wants to discuss in each part and then following with essays and stories that he believes explain his beliefs further. The diversity in the pieces offered in both parts is enjoyable. It would be beneficial for fellow readers to continue through all the narratives given. The pieces are all interesting as some are from the authors themselves and some are written about authors from what Coupe calls “romantic ecology”. An example of this would be the last piece in the first section which uses William Wordsworth to explain Coupe’s understanding of “green language,” which he titled the work. Another piece that is worth mentioning is also the last work in the second part. “Against Single Vision” leaves the first section on a strange note as it starts off about William Blake and how the writer did not like nature. Seeing as Coupe’s book had

been seen as a “pro-green literature” collection, this was an attractive surprise to see.

Starting with section two, “Green Theory”, the reader is introduced to less literary authors and more philosophers. The third part, entitled “Nature/Culture/Gender,” also offers a more philosophical side to Coupe’s book. This part could pose a challenge for those who do not like philosophy. Claude Lévi-Strauss’s piece “The Environment Myth” was good to start, beginning with a myth that could appeal to readers, but his references to mentalists, idealists, and structuralists might be lost on those who have not taken introduction to philosophy. Compared to the next part of the section, “Ecocritical Principles,” the fourth part focuses more on the outside view on ecocriticism and gives the reader pieces from fellow professors and organizations such as ASLE (Association for Study of Literature and Environment). This part provides a more critical side of green literature as it examines literature and continues to expand the basis of opinion in the book. The reader receives a much larger body of research outside of this single author’s thoughts, a good move for the author as he is admitting to the fact that he is not the only source on the subject.

Like the last section, the third and final section, titled “Green Reading,” is a series of essays and pieces given to the reader to reveal the potential for continued growth within ecocriticism. This section is by far the most modern of the three. Readers may be particularly attracted to the second part, “The Nature of the Text,” which includes readings of the perennially popular *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Overall, *The Green Studies Reader* is a valid source and a useful entry into green literature. It is accessible to undergraduates and enjoyable thanks to Coupe’s simple explanations and understandable language. His target audience is not apparent, as he does

not say specifically who he wants to read his book, but rather he opens it up to everyone and anyone interested in green studies. Coupe's introductions are generally entertaining in their detailed backgrounds of the authors he will present in that section and how these authors have contributed to ecocriticism or green literature. All the same, this does not mean the book is without its struggles. The background details given in each introduction are useful, but limited to Coupe's "loosely chronological" organization. Readers would do well to carefully pay attention in these introductions in order to understand what beliefs were held by which author and how the authors influenced one another.

However, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism and Ecocriticism* has the tools to start an undergraduate student on the topic of green literature. Coupe is a reliable source on the subject and has the background to prove it. Despite the fact that Coupe did not, and most likely could not, mention every eco-writer ever to be published in the literary world, his *Green Studies Reader* presents an extensive amount of sources that a student would still find useful.

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