

**Greg Garrard. *Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 142 pp. \$22.95.**

Greg Garrard's book *Ecocriticism* walks the reader through the many different views of what ecocriticism is and how it relates to different cultures. With the definitions and suggested readings, as well as the organization of the chapters and the overall generalization of the overall topic, Garrard's book offers a thorough beginning into the study of ecocriticism. Garrard grounds his study in the relationship between ecocriticism and culture, namely American and British culture. While this is a limitation to the study (readers interested in non-western ecocritical literary traditions will need to look elsewhere), Garrard has also wisely narrowed his focus, so that *Ecocriticism* never feels too ambitious or unwieldy.

Garrard's structure of *Ecocriticism* provides an organized base for a broad understanding of ecocriticism. He divides the book into chapters that he calls "tropes." Most of the tropes he further divides into time period and place, which supports his thesis that ecocriticism is a cultural affair. Garrard shows an understanding that through time and different cultures, terms take on different meanings and definitions. Garrard makes sure that the reader knows how he defines culture and ecocriticism so that he can relate the two and make his argument without confusing the reader on ambiguous definitions.

Garrard titles his chapters according to various tropes in literature, finding the cultural and political meanings of the words in their various contexts. He understands that definitions change over time, and that the meanings of the words "pollution," "position," "pastoral," "wilderness," "apocalypse," "dwelling," "animals," and "earth" are not the same as they were once defined. This organization of ideas is fashioned for his audience, whom he intends to be those who are beginning a study into ecocriticism.

This split of ideas helps the readers understand more than just the definition of the words; it provides a source that gives the readers a deeper look into the idea of the words themselves in a past and present context.

Garrard includes at the end of *Ecocriticism* a glossary, bibliography, and suggestions for further reading. In the section for further readings, Garrard lists websites, articles, and books that the reader may be interested in if they desire to further their knowledge of ecocriticism. This section is complete with the title, the author, and short descriptions of the selections so that the reader can have an idea in order to better choose for themselves what to read. The bibliography is also useful to the reader. The bibliography does not have descriptions of the books, articles, essays, and poems that Garrard uses in his book like the further reading section does, but the bibliography does remain a useful tool in its more extensive list of readings. The bibliography has a broader range of references that will go more in depth into ecocriticism than the suggested reading list. Garrard also provides a glossary in the back of the book, which is useful only to an extent. Its restrictions lie in that it is only two pages long, with twenty terms and very brief definitions. It could be more useful to the reader if Garrard had extended the definitions and added more terms.

Some readers may find the writing style Garrard employs in *Ecocriticism* to be somewhat loaded. While most of the book remains intelligible, Garrard may overwhelm the reader with lists of names and detailed definitions. However, when read carefully, the lists and definitions provide the reader with a starting guide into further research outside of the book. Garrard constructs the lists and definitions usually at the beginning of each chapter. Once past the initial paragraphs of the chapter, the book continues on in a

discernable manner. Garrard falls into second person narrative occasionally, which can be off-putting to the reader, especially if the reader does not agree with what is being said or does not understand what Garrard is arguing.

Overall Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* is useful to university students with a desire to begin studies in ecocriticism. For one, the book is inexpensive: the price being \$17 leaves the contents of the student's wallet mostly intact. The book provides many names the reader can research and further study in depth. The book also provides many different ideas about ecocriticism and different social and political standpoints. Through the use of past and present American and British literature, Garrard presents a general, but useful discussion of the many different views about ecocriticism and how it is relative to culture.

*Stephanie Blackburn*