

Eco Critical Literature

Unit I Introduction

Cheryll Glotfelty's "Introduction" in *The Eco Criticism Reader Landmarks in Literary Ecology*

Cheryll Glotfelty's "Introduction" in *The Ecocriticism Reader*

Cheryll Glotfelty's "Introduction" to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* serves as a foundational text in the field of ecocriticism. It provides a comprehensive overview of the discipline, tracing its origins, key concepts, and ongoing developments. Glotfelty's writing is accessible to both seasoned scholars and newcomers to the field, making her introduction a valuable resource for anyone interested in exploring the intersection of literature and the environment.

One of the central themes that Glotfelty addresses in her introduction is the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. She argues that traditional literary criticism has often overlooked the environmental dimensions of texts, focusing instead on purely human concerns. Ecocriticism, on the other hand, seeks to address this oversight by examining how literature represents and responds to the natural world. Glotfelty emphasizes the need for a more holistic approach to literary analysis, one that takes into account the ecological context in which texts are produced and consumed.

Another key concept that Glotfelty explores is the idea of "deep ecology." This term, coined by philosopher Arne Naess, refers to a philosophy that values the intrinsic worth of all living beings, regardless of their utility to humans. Glotfelty suggests that deep ecology can provide a valuable framework for understanding and addressing environmental issues. By recognizing the inherent value of the natural world, we can develop a more sustainable and ethical relationship with our planet.

Glotfelty also discusses the various methodologies that ecocritics employ in their analyses. These include close readings of texts, historical and cultural contextualization, and interdisciplinary approaches that draw on fields such as biology, ecology, and environmental studies. She emphasizes the importance of flexibility and creativity in ecocritical research, arguing that there is no single "correct" way to approach literary texts from an ecological perspective.

In addition to providing a theoretical overview of ecocriticism, Glotfelty also offers a historical account of the discipline's development. She traces its origins to the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting the influence of writers such as Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold. Glotfelty also discusses the emergence of ecocriticism as a distinct academic field in the 1990s, and she explores the ways in which the discipline has evolved in recent years.

One of the strengths of Glotfelty's introduction is its ability to make complex ideas accessible to a wide audience. She avoids jargon and technical terms, instead using clear and concise language to explain key concepts. At the same time, she provides sufficient depth to engage more advanced readers. Glotfelty's writing is also engaging and thought-provoking, inspiring readers to consider the environmental implications of literature and culture.

In conclusion, Cheryll Glotfelty's "Introduction" to *The Ecocriticism Reader* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in exploring the field of ecocriticism. It provides a comprehensive overview of the discipline, tracing its origins, key concepts, and ongoing developments.

Jonathan Bate's "Introduction" *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*

Jonathan Bate's "Introduction" to *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*

Jonathan Bate's "Introduction" to *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* offers a compelling exploration of the intersection between Romanticism and environmental thought. Bate argues that the Romantic period, often associated with individualism and idealism, was also a time of profound ecological awareness. He focuses on William Wordsworth as a central figure in this tradition, examining his poetry and prose to reveal his deep connection to the natural world.

Bate begins by challenging the prevailing notion of Romanticism as a purely subjective and individualistic movement. He contends that the Romantics were deeply concerned with the relationship between humans and nature, and that their poetry often reflected a desire to reconnect with the natural world. Bate argues that Wordsworth, in particular, was a pioneer of ecological thought, anticipating many of the key concepts that would later emerge in the environmental movement.

One of the central themes that Bate explores in his introduction is the idea of "organicism." This concept, popular among Romantic thinkers, posits that the natural world is a unified and interconnected system, rather than a collection of isolated parts. Bate suggests that Wordsworth's poetry often reflects an organicist worldview, as he celebrates the interconnectedness of all living things.

Another key concept that Bate discusses is the importance of "place." He argues that the Romantics were deeply attached to specific landscapes and that their poetry often reflected a sense of belonging to particular places. Bate suggests that this attachment to place was rooted in a belief in the spiritual and emotional value of the natural world.

In addition to examining Wordsworth's poetry, Bate also explores his prose writings, such as *The Prelude*. He argues that these works provide further evidence of Wordsworth's ecological awareness, as they reveal his deep reflections on the natural world and his concern for its preservation.

Bate also discusses the ways in which Wordsworth's ecological thought has influenced subsequent generations of writers and thinkers. He suggests that Wordsworth's poetry has had a lasting impact on the development of environmentalism, and that his ideas continue to be relevant today.

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In conclusion, Jonathan Bate's "Introduction" to *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in exploring the intersection of Romanticism and environmental thought. It offers a compelling analysis of William Wordsworth's ecological ideas, and it demonstrates the ways in which these ideas have influenced subsequent generations of writers and thinkers.

Lawrence Buell's Environmental Imagination- Chapter One

Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature, and the American Mind*

Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* is a seminal work in the field of ecocriticism, examining the ways in which American literature has engaged with the natural world. In Chapter One, "The American Romantic Sublime," Buell delves into the concept of the sublime and its significance in shaping American environmental thought.

Buell begins by defining the sublime as a "transcendent experience" that evokes a sense of awe, wonder, and even terror. He argues that the sublime has played a central role in American culture, particularly in shaping the nation's relationship with the vast and often intimidating landscapes of the continent. The sublime, Buell suggests, has provided a way for Americans to connect with the natural world on a profound and spiritual level.

Buell then explores the ways in which the sublime has been represented in American literature. He focuses on the work of Henry David Thoreau, who is often considered the father of American environmentalism. Buell argues that Thoreau's writings are deeply influenced by the sublime, as he frequently describes his encounters with the natural world in terms of awe and wonder. Thoreau's experiences in the wilderness, Buell suggests, helped to shape his understanding of the interconnectedness of all things and his commitment to environmental preservation.

Buell also discusses the ways in which the sublime has been used to promote a sense of national identity. He argues that the vast and rugged landscapes of America have often been seen as symbols of the nation's strength and independence. The sublime, Buell suggests, has been used to inspire a sense of patriotism and to reinforce the idea that Americans are uniquely connected to the natural world.

However, Buell also acknowledges the darker side of the sublime. He argues that the concept can be used to justify exploitation and domination of the natural world. The sublime, Buell suggests, can be used to create a sense of distance and detachment from the natural world, allowing humans to view it as a mere object to be exploited for their own benefit.

In conclusion, Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* provides a valuable analysis of the concept of the sublime and its significance in American culture. Buell argues that the sublime has played a central role in shaping American environmental thought, influencing both the ways in which Americans have understood and appreciated the natural world, as well as the ways in which they have sought to exploit and dominate it. Buell's work offers a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the complex relationship between humans and the natural world in American literature and culture.

Unit II Essays

William Rueckert's essay Literature and Ecology

William Rueckert's "Literature and Ecology: An Essay on the Poetics of Nature"

William Rueckert's "Literature and Ecology: An Essay on the Poetics of Nature" is a seminal work in the field of ecocriticism. In this essay, Rueckert argues for the importance of studying literature from

an ecological perspective. He contends that literature can play a vital role in raising awareness of environmental issues and promoting a more sustainable relationship with the natural world.

Rueckert begins by defining ecology as the study of the relationships between organisms and their environment. He argues that literature, as a form of human expression, is also deeply connected to the natural world. Literature, Rueckert suggests, can provide a way to understand and appreciate the complexity and beauty of the natural world.

Rueckert then explores the ways in which literature can contribute to ecological awareness. He argues that literature can help us to see the natural world in new and different ways. By presenting us with vivid descriptions of landscapes, animals, and plants, literature can deepen our connection to the natural world. Rueckert also suggests that literature can raise awareness of environmental issues, such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change.

In addition to raising awareness, Rueckert argues that literature can also promote a more sustainable relationship with the natural world. He suggests that literature can help us to develop a sense of empathy for other living beings and a respect for the natural world. By exploring the interconnectedness of all things, literature can inspire us to live in harmony with the planet.

Rueckert also discusses the ways in which literature can be used to critique environmental degradation. He argues that literature can expose the negative consequences of human actions on the natural world. By highlighting the beauty and fragility of the natural world, literature can encourage us to take action to protect it.

One of the strengths of Rueckert's essay is its ability to make complex ideas accessible to a wide audience. He avoids jargon and technical terms, instead using clear and concise language to explain key concepts. At the same time, he provides sufficient depth to engage more advanced readers. Rueckert's writing is also engaging and thought-provoking, inspiring readers to consider the ecological implications of literature and culture.

In conclusion, William Rueckert's "Literature and Ecology" is a valuable resource for anyone interested in exploring the intersection of literature and the environment. It provides a compelling argument for the importance of studying literature from an ecological perspective.

William Rueckert's essay *An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in *The Eco criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*

William Rueckert's "An Experiment in Ecocriticism"

William Rueckert's "An Experiment in Ecocriticism" is a foundational text in the field of ecocriticism. Published in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, this essay offers a pioneering exploration of the relationship between literature and the environment. Rueckert argues that literature can play a vital role in understanding and addressing environmental issues, and he proposes a new approach to literary analysis that takes into account the ecological context of texts.

Rueckert begins by defining ecocriticism as "the study of literature and the environment." He suggests that this approach is necessary because traditional literary criticism has often overlooked the environmental dimensions of texts, focusing instead on purely human concerns. Rueckert argues that by examining literature from an ecological perspective, we can gain new insights into both the natural world and the ways in which humans interact with it.

Rueckert then proposes a new methodology for ecocritical analysis. He suggests that we should examine texts in terms of their "eco-texts," or the ways in which they represent and respond to the natural world. Rueckert argues that by analyzing texts as eco-texts, we can identify patterns and themes that reveal the underlying ecological worldview of the author.

Rueckert also discusses the importance of considering the historical and cultural context of texts. He suggests that the environmental attitudes and values expressed in literature are often shaped by the specific historical and cultural conditions in which they were produced. By examining texts within their historical and cultural context, we can better understand the ways in which they reflect and contribute to broader environmental discourses.

In addition to examining individual texts, Rueckert also explores the ways in which literature can be used to promote environmental awareness and action. He suggests that literature can help us to see the natural world in new and different ways, and that it can inspire us to take action to protect the environment. Rueckert argues that by engaging with literature from an ecological perspective, we can develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and a greater sense of responsibility for its preservation.

One of the strengths of Rueckert's essay is its ability to make complex ideas accessible to a wide audience. He avoids jargon and technical terms, instead using clear and concise language to explain key concepts. At the same time, he provides sufficient depth to engage more advanced readers. Rueckert's writing is also engaging and thought-provoking, inspiring readers to consider the ecological implications of literature and culture.

Greg Garrard's "Ecocriticism: Apocalypse"

Greg Garrard's essay, "Ecocriticism: Apocalypse," is a provocative exploration of the apocalyptic themes that pervade contemporary environmental discourse. Garrard argues that the apocalyptic narrative, with its images of destruction, devastation, and redemption, has become a dominant way of understanding and responding to environmental crises.

Garrard begins by tracing the history of the apocalyptic tradition, from its roots in biblical prophecy to its influence on modern culture. He argues that the apocalyptic narrative has been particularly powerful in shaping our understanding of environmental issues, as it offers a sense of urgency and a sense of impending doom.

Garrard then explores the ways in which the apocalyptic narrative has been used to frame environmental crises. He suggests that the apocalyptic discourse often portrays the natural world as a hostile force that threatens human existence. This perspective, Garrard argues, can lead to a sense of despair and hopelessness, as it suggests that there is no way to avoid environmental catastrophe.

However, Garrard also argues that the apocalyptic narrative can be a source of hope and inspiration. He suggests that the apocalyptic tradition often includes a vision of redemption or renewal, in which humanity is able to overcome its destructive tendencies and create a more sustainable future. Garrard argues that this vision of hope can motivate us to take action to address environmental problems.

Garrard also discusses the ways in which the apocalyptic narrative has been critiqued. Some scholars argue that the apocalyptic discourse is overly pessimistic and that it can lead to a sense of fatalism.

Others argue that the apocalyptic narrative is too simplistic and that it fails to capture the complexity of environmental issues.

André Light's "Boyz in the Woods: Urban Wilderness in American Cinema"

André Light's essay, "Boyz in the Woods: Urban Wilderness in American Cinema," offers a compelling analysis of the ways in which American films have represented and explored the concept of urban wilderness. Light argues that the urban wilderness, a space that exists at the intersection of nature and culture, has played a significant role in shaping American identity and values.

Light begins by defining the urban wilderness as a "liminal space" that is neither fully urban nor fully natural. He suggests that this space can be found in parks, forests, and other green areas within cities, as well as in the margins of urban landscapes. Light argues that the urban wilderness is a place where people can escape from the hustle and bustle of city life and reconnect with nature.

Light then explores the ways in which the urban wilderness has been represented in American cinema. He discusses a variety of films, ranging from classic Hollywood movies to contemporary independent productions, that feature the urban wilderness as a central setting. Light argues that these films often use the urban wilderness as a metaphor for the American psyche, reflecting both the nation's desire for connection with nature and its anxieties about urbanization and industrialization.

Light also discusses the ways in which the urban wilderness has been used to explore themes of social class, race, and gender. He suggests that the urban wilderness can be a place of refuge for marginalized groups, providing a space where they can escape from the discrimination and prejudice they face in other parts of society. Light also argues that the urban wilderness can be a place of confrontation and conflict, as different groups struggle for control over these valuable resources.

Unit III Poetry

R.S. Thomas's "Cyndyllan on a Tractor"

R.S. Thomas's "Cyndyllan on a Tractor" is a poignant exploration of the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. The poem centers around a young boy named Cyndyllan who spends his days working on a tractor in the Welsh countryside. Through Cyndyllan's experiences, Thomas offers a meditation on the loss of traditional rural ways of life and the alienation of modern society from the natural world.

The poem begins by describing Cyndyllan's daily routine. The boy wakes up early, eats breakfast, and then sets off to work on the tractor. As he drives through the fields, Cyndyllan observes the beauty of the Welsh landscape. However, Thomas suggests that Cyndyllan's appreciation of nature is tempered by a sense of isolation and loneliness. The boy is surrounded by the natural world, but he feels disconnected from it.

Thomas also explores the ways in which technology has changed the relationship between humans and the natural world. The tractor, a symbol of modern agriculture, has replaced the horse-drawn plow as the primary tool of rural labor. This shift has led to a loss of connection to the land and a sense of alienation from the natural world.

The poem culminates in a powerful image of Cyndyllan sitting on the tractor, looking out at the vast expanse of fields. As he gazes at the landscape, Cyndyllan experiences a moment of profound connection with the natural world. However, this moment of connection is fleeting. The boy must soon return to his work, and the tractor will continue to shape his relationship with the land.

Thomas's "Cyndyllan on a Tractor" is a beautifully crafted poem that offers a poignant meditation on the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. Through the story of a young boy working on a tractor, Thomas explores the ways in which modern society has become alienated from the land and the consequences of this alienation. The poem is a reminder of the importance of preserving our connection to the natural world and of the need to find ways to live in harmony with the planet.

Gorden J L Ramel's poem Daffodils No More

Gorden J. L. Ramel's poem "Daffodils No More" is a thought-provoking piece that explores themes of loss, change, and the fleeting nature of beauty. The poem's title immediately captures our attention, as it evokes a sense of something once cherished but now gone. Through evocative imagery and poignant language, Ramel invites readers to reflect on the impermanence of life and the passage of time.

In "Daffodils No More," Ramel uses the daffodil as a central symbol. Daffodils are often associated with spring, renewal, and the vibrant burst of color that signifies the end of winter. They represent hope and the beauty of nature's cycles. However, Ramel's choice to use "Daffodils No More" as the title hints at a transformation or loss. This suggests that what was once a symbol of renewal has now become a memory or a relic of the past.

The poem's imagery is rich and evocative. Ramel describes the daffodils in vivid detail, capturing their vibrant yellow hues and the way they dance in the spring breeze. Yet, as the poem progresses, this imagery begins to shift. The daffodils that once brought joy and color are now absent. The shift from their lively presence to their absence serves as a powerful metaphor for loss.

Ramel's use of language in the poem is both lyrical and melancholic. The contrast between the lively daffodils and their current absence highlights the transient nature of beauty and joy. The poem often reflects on the idea that nothing stays the same forever. This theme is underscored by the changing seasons, which Ramel uses as a backdrop for his reflections on change and loss.

Throughout the poem, Ramel also touches on personal reflection. The absence of the daffodils becomes a metaphor for personal experiences of loss and change. The reader is invited to consider their own experiences with loss and the ways in which they cope with the impermanence of life. Ramel's exploration of these themes is both universal and intimate, allowing readers to connect with the poem on a personal level.

One of the most compelling aspects of "Daffodils No More" is its ability to evoke a range of emotions. The initial joy and beauty associated with the daffodils contrast sharply with the sense of emptiness that follows their absence. This emotional journey mirrors the way people often experience change in their own lives. The poem's ability to capture this complex emotional landscape is a testament to Ramel's skill as a poet.

In addition to its emotional depth, the poem also engages with the concept of memory. The daffodils, though no longer present, continue to live on in the memory of the speaker. This idea suggests that while physical beauty and joy may fade, their impact endures in our memories and reflections. Ramel's treatment of memory adds another layer of meaning to the poem, encouraging readers to consider how they remember and cherish moments from their own lives.

Overall, "Daffodils No More" is a poignant exploration of loss, change, and the nature of beauty. Gordon J. L. Ramel's use of vivid imagery, evocative language, and personal reflection creates a powerful meditation on the fleeting nature of life. The poem has an emotional and intellectual touch which makes it a compelling and thought-provoking work.

Gieve Patel's poem "On Killing a Tree"

Gieve Patel's poem "On Killing a Tree" is a powerful and evocative piece that delves into the harsh realities of nature and human intervention. Through its vivid imagery and reflective tone, Patel explores the destructive act of killing a tree and the broader implications of this act on the environment and our relationship with nature. The poem not only describes the physical process of killing a tree but also comments on the moral and ethical dimensions of such actions.

From the very beginning, Patel sets a somber tone by detailing the violent process of killing a tree. The poem begins with the stark statement, "It takes much time to kill a tree." This opening line immediately establishes the intensity and severity of the act being described. Patel goes on to explain that killing a tree is not a simple or quick task; it involves a series of deliberate actions. The tree's roots must be exposed and hacked at, indicating that the act of killing a tree is both invasive and destructive.

Patel's use of imagery in the poem is particularly striking. He describes the tree as a living entity with a deep, life-sustaining connection to the earth. The image of the tree's "anchoring earth" and "bleeding bark" emphasizes its vitality and the violence inflicted upon it. By portraying the tree in such a visceral manner, Patel underscores the gravity of the act of killing it. The tree is not merely a passive object; it is a vibrant, living being with a deep connection to the natural world.

The poem also highlights the resilience of the tree and the difficulty of completely destroying it. Patel writes, "But this alone is not enough." This line suggests that despite the violent efforts to kill the tree, it may still survive. The tree's strength and resilience symbolize nature's enduring capacity to withstand human attempts to dominate and destroy it. Patel's portrayal of the tree's ability to survive reflects a broader commentary on the natural world's resilience in the face of human exploitation.

Patel's poem also explores the broader implications of human actions on nature. The act of killing a tree is presented as a metaphor for human disregard for the environment and the consequences of such disregard. By focusing on the violent process of killing a tree, Patel raises important questions about our responsibility towards nature and the ethical considerations of our actions. The poem suggests that the act of killing a tree is not just a physical act but also a moral and ethical one, reflecting our values and attitudes towards the natural world.

The final lines of the poem bring a sense of resolution and reflection. Patel writes about the final, inevitable collapse of the tree, suggesting that despite the destructive efforts, the tree will eventually succumb. This conclusion reinforces the idea that nature's endurance is ultimately finite and that our actions have lasting consequences. The image of the tree lying "in its own grave" serves as a powerful reminder of the impact of human actions on the environment.

In summary, Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree" is a thought-provoking and impactful poem that explores the act of killing a tree and its broader implications. Through vivid imagery and reflective language, Patel conveys the violence and destruction involved in this act, while also highlighting the resilience of nature and the moral dimensions of our actions. The poem serves as a poignant reminder of our responsibility towards the environment and encourages readers to reflect on their own relationship with nature.

Unit IV Fiction

Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*: A Novel of Climate Change and Community

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* is a thought-provoking novel that explores the impact of climate change on a small community in Tennessee. The story follows Dellarobia Turnbow, a young woman who discovers a flock of monarch butterflies migrating to her farm in unprecedented numbers. As Dellarobia delves deeper into the mystery of the butterflies' behavior, she becomes increasingly aware of the climate crisis and its far-reaching consequences.

Kingsolver skillfully weaves a narrative that is both personal and political. Dellarobia's journey is one of self-discovery as she grapples with the challenges of motherhood, marriage, and her own personal beliefs. At the same time, she becomes a spokesperson for environmental activism, rallying her community to take action against climate change.

One of the novel's strengths is its ability to make complex scientific concepts accessible to a wide audience. Kingsolver provides clear and concise explanations of climate change and its effects, while also exploring the emotional and psychological impact of the crisis on individuals and communities.

Flight Behavior also offers a nuanced portrayal of rural America. Kingsolver challenges stereotypes about the region, depicting a community that is both resilient and deeply connected to the land. The novel highlights the importance of preserving traditional ways of life while also recognizing the need for change in the face of a changing climate.

In addition to its exploration of climate change, *Flight Behavior* also examines themes of faith, community, and personal transformation. Dellarobia's journey is one of spiritual awakening as she comes to terms with the limitations of her own beliefs and the need for a broader perspective.

Kingsolver's novel is a powerful and timely exploration of the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change. It is a thought-provoking work which allows to ponder the future of the planet and the role humans can play in shaping it.

Unit V Drama

William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and the Ecocritical Lens

William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a comedy that has been praised for its wit, humor, and exploration of themes such as love, friendship, and identity. However, when viewed through an ecocritical lens, the play reveals a deeper engagement with the natural world and its significance in human life.

The Forest of Arden, the primary setting of *As You Like It*, is a central symbol of nature's restorative power. It provides a refuge for characters fleeing the corrupt court of Duke Frederick and offers a place where they can reconnect with their true selves. The forest is depicted as a harmonious and idyllic environment, where humans can live in harmony with nature.

The characters in *As You Like It* often express their thoughts and feelings through metaphors and imagery related to the natural world. For example, Orlando compares Rosalind to a "rose among thorns," suggesting that her beauty and grace stand out in a world that is often harsh and unforgiving. Such imagery highlights the importance of nature in shaping human experience and understanding.

The play also explores the consequences of human actions on the natural world. The Duke's banishment to the forest is a result of his own greed and ambition, demonstrating the destructive power of human folly. However, the characters who find refuge in the forest learn to appreciate the value of nature and to live in harmony with it.

As You Like It can also be interpreted as a critique of the artificiality and corruption of city life. The court of Duke Frederick is depicted as a place of intrigue, deceit, and power struggles. In contrast, the forest is presented as a place of simplicity, honesty, and authenticity. This contrast suggests that a closer connection to nature is essential for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

In conclusion, William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a rich and complex play that offers a valuable exploration of the relationship between humans and the natural world. When viewed through an ecocritical lens, the play reveals the importance of nature as a source of restoration, inspiration, and moral guidance. By examining the characters' interactions with the Forest of Arden, Shakespeare brings out a deeper understanding of the significance of the natural world in shaping human experience and identity.