



Local Natures, Global Responsibilities: Ecocritical Perspectives on the New English Literatures. (Asnel Papers)

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In the New Literatures in English, nature has long been a paramount issue: the environmental devastation caused by colonialism has left its legacy, with particularly disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable parts of the world. At the same time, social and cultural transformations have altered representations of nature in postcolonial cultures and literatures. It is this shift of emphasis towards the ecological that is addressed by this volume. A fast-expanding field, ecocriticism covers a wide range of theories and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and other 'texts' and the environment. Rather than adopting a rigid agenda, the interpretations presented involve ecocritical perspectives that can be applied most fruitfully to literary and non-literary texts. Some are more general, 'holistic' approaches: literature and other cultural forms are a 'living organism', part of an intellectual ecosystem, implemented and sustained by the interactions between the natural world, both human and non-human, and its cultural representations. 'Nature' itself is a new interpretative category in line with other paradigms such as race, class, gender, and identity. A wide range of genres are covered, from novels or films in which nature features as the main topic or 'protagonist' to those with an ecocritical agenda, as in dystopian literature. Other concerns are: nature as a cultural construct; 'gendered' natures; and the city/country dichotomy. The texts treated challenge traditional Western dualisms (human/animal, man/nature, woman/man). While such global phenomena as media ('old' or 'new'), tourism, and catastrophes permeate many of these texts, there is also a dual focus on nature as the inexplicable, elusive 'Other' and the need for human agency and global responsibility.

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