Teaching Literature and the Environment

In recent decades there has been a growing consciousness in literary studies of the need to address contemporary environmental issues. The research-area of ecocriticism is now a burgeoning branch of literary critical theory, within an even broader area of environmental humanities. Concurrently within the area of education there has been an upsurge of interest in and development of pedagogies that focus on nature, the environment, climate change, and sustainability; notably transformative pedagogy and sustainable pedagogy. This environmental cognizance in general has therefore become a seminal issue in both education and the humanities. And yet specifically, it is not always clear how this *new* principle for the teaching of literature filters down to the classroom or lesson plan. Consequently, within the Swedish higher-education context and in light of the growing ascendency of teacher education, the aim of this paper is to advance shared-practice examples of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching literature: broadly literature didactics, literary criticism, and environmental education. Beginning with a brief sojourn in educational policy and curricula related to the subject of English in Swedish education, raising environmental awareness, and providing a sense of environmental agency among students; this paper will then examine a number of key working examples where literary critical approaches and methods (literary historical/formalist/close reading) have been combined with a study of complex cultural and environmental topics. Finally this paper will reflect on what these environmentally-based approaches offer to the teaching of English literature in Sweden.

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