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Marcus Axelsson and Barbro Bredesen Opset, eds., *Fortellinger om bærekraftig utvikling. Perspektiver for norskfaget* [Narratives of Sustainable Development. Perspectives for the Norwegian Subject], (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2021), 192 pp.

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Scandinavian countries are well-known for promoting nearness to nature as a social value and for advocating green politics even beyond their national borders. The concept of sustainable development, popularized by the Norwegian prime-minister Gro Harlem Brundtland's report *Our common future* from 1987, has gradually been integrated in the Norwegian educational system as well. In 2020, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training took the decision to implement 'sustainable development' as one of the interdisciplinary topics in the national curriculum for primary and secondary education, along with 'health and life skills' and 'democracy and citizenship' as the other two themes (Utdanningsdirektoratet). This is the context in which the volume *Fortellinger om bærekraftig utvikling. Perspektiver for norskfaget* [Narratives of Sustainable Development. Perspectives for the Norwegian Subject] was published at the end of 2021, with the aim of providing a framework for working with this topic inside the Norwegian language and literature classroom.

Edited by Marcus Axelsson and Barbro Bredesen Opset, the book is directed toward students and researchers in the field of literature and didactics, practicing teachers and, largely, toward anyone interested in sustainable development, as the editors state in the introduction (9). Written by scholars with a significant background in literary studies and pedagogy, the eight chapters of the book examine a range of texts including contemporary climate fiction, canonical works, children and young adult literature, as well as non-fiction texts. Thus, the volume seeks to outline the ways in which literature and the humanities can contribute to a critical reflection on sustainable development.

Opening the discussion, Reinhard Hennig reviews the context in which the concept of sustainable development was initially used in connection to the UN's environmental politics and was then integrated in the UNESCO's educational programs. In Norway, sustainable development was first introduced in educational curricula as part of the natural science disciplines. Hennig shows that the development of environmental humanities and the rich literary tradition engaging with ecological issues and climate change in Norway provides the necessary context to put in practice an ecocritical teaching pedagogy in the humanist disciplines as well. Importantly, however, he emphasizes that

ecocritical pedagogy should avoid essentializing the debate by reinforcing the duality between nature and culture. Ecocritical teaching practices, as Hennig suggests, should rather invite students to a critical reflection around the entanglements between these concepts. Anje Müller Gjesdal puts forward a different perspective that similarly stresses the importance of a critical approach to environmentalism and sustainability. Employing methods from corpus linguistics, Gjesdal shows that, in parliamentary debates, the expression ‘sustainable development’ has been used statistically more often in connection to economic and social terms than in relation to the environment. From this vantage point, Gjesdal argues that humanities and, particularly, ecocriticism have the role to displace the anthropocentric perspective that seems to be at the heart of political discourse on sustainability.

Following these introductory discussions on the subject matter of the book, the next chapters provide insight into literary texts that deal with the theme of sustainable development. Per Thomas Andersen and Sissel Furusetth contribute with ecocritical readings of contemporary works of fiction. In his analysis of Øyvind Rimbereid’s long poem “Solaris korrigeret” (“Solaris Corrected,” 2004), Andersen suggests that reading this type of literary works elicits readers’ understanding of the implications of the impending ecocatastrophe and incites them to imagine forms of solidarity necessary for dealing with such dystopic scenarios as the one depicted by Rimbereid. In a similar fashion, Furusetth sheds light on the didactic dimension of the internationally acclaimed series by Maja Lunde: *Bienes historie* (*The History of Bees*, 2015), *Blå* (*Blue*, 2017), and *Przewalskis hest* (*Przewalski’s Horse*, 2019). Throughout her examination of the three novels, Furusetth shows how the dilemmas they encompass can enhance fruitful discussions with students on the topic of climate change, lack of resources, and environmentalism.

Moving from contemporary texts to canonical works of Norwegian literature, Mads B. Claudi revisits Henrik Ibsen’s *Vildanden* (*The Wild Duck*, 1884), showing how one can go beyond Ibsen’s symbolism when interpreting the play. The literary theorist employs synecdoche, and not symbol, as the key for reading Ibsen’s drama from an ecocritical perspective. In this way, he sheds light on the characters’ attitudes toward animals and the preservation of natural resources. Claudi’s thought-provoking analysis is thus mostly valuable in that it calls attention to how ecocritical reading practices reveal that older, classical texts can be relevant for today’s environmental debates.

The last three chapters of the volume focus on children and young adult literature. Camilla Häbler and Marion Elisenberg outline an ecocritical theoretical framework for reading children’s picture books. Through their analysis of Stian Hole’s *Garman trilogy* (2006-2010) and Kari Stai’s *Jakob og Naikob. Stormen* (*Jakob and Neikob. The Storm*, 2019), they further lay out the possibilities to build a critical, nature-oriented reading method for the younger readers. In her discussion of young adult literature, Barbro Bredesen Opset draws on ideas from sociology (Ulrich Beck’s cosmopolitanism) and ecocriticism to put forward the concept of ‘ecocosmopolitan empathy,’ which “calls attention to feelings of empathy and solidarity for the well-being of everyone on the planet, not just humans” (170). Focusing on Simon Stranger’s *Verdensredderne* (*The Rescuers of the World*, 2012), the chapter thus emphasizes the need of utilizing literary

texts for young adults in schools as a point of departure for discussions regarding how younger and older generations relate to the environmental issue.

Among the discussions on children's literature, Marcus Axelsson's contribution throws light on the possibility of converging the fields of translation studies and ecocriticism. With a case study on Helen Wells' *Vicki Finds the Answer* (1947) and its renderings in Norwegian and Swedish, Axelsson attentively iterates the role a translation has in conveying an ecological message. This perspective, not yet very common among ecocritical scholars, seems nonetheless to offer new understandings of the representation of nature and the environment in different cultures.

Viewing sustainable development as a concept which entails many complex dilemmas, every chapter of this book points out how literature provides the necessary context for teachers to approach sustainable development in the classroom. *Narratives of Sustainable Development. Perspectives for the Norwegian Subject* creates a bridge between academic research in environmental humanities and the pragmatically oriented and pedagogical dimension of teachers' work with students. This open-access volume can thus be an inspiring and guiding resource for teachers interested in integrating the sustainable development theme in their classes, but also as a significant reference for Scandinavian ecocriticism, to be used by scholars and researchers interested in this topic.

Works Cited

Utdanningsdirektoratet, "Interdisciplinary topics." 2019, www.udir.no/lk20/overordnetdel/prinsipper-for-laring-utvikling-og-danning/tverrfaglige-temaer/?lang=eng, Accessed 15 Jan. 2022.