Sample Thesis Prospectus and Bibliography

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Working Title: Food in the American Experience: A Rhetorical Analysis of Attempts to Change How We Grow and Consume

Thesis Prospectus

The first purpose of this thesis project is to explore a common trend in environmental thought known as ecospeak, a trend that causes individuals to hold fast to their philosophical beliefs regarding the environment and inadvertently prevents creative thinking and improvement in human behavior toward the environment. The examples of environmental thought to be evaluated are deep and social ecology.

The second purpose of this thesis will be to observe the arguments that surround a particular issue in environmentalism, agriculture, which has been brought to the forefront in recent years as a result of growing public awareness of the human and environmental issues related to the American food system. In the years following World War II the practice of American agriculture dramatically changed as a result of the introduction of chemical pesticides, the movement of farm animals to feedlots, and the practice of large scale monoculture, all of which are affected by one another. The consequences of this shift have significantly altered the way individuals view their relationship to the land and the biotic community, as well as negatively affected the quality of health amongst the members of the biotic community including the soil, plants, animals, and people.

Barbara Kingsolver’s Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life (2007), Michael Pollan’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma (2006), and Wendell Berry’s The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture (1977) are the main texts I will examine in order to illustrate the rhetorical tactics and ideologies expressed by proponents of industrialized agriculture and to show how these authors are working against those principles in order to promote sustainable growing and consuming habits. By drawing connections between these texts and deep and social ecology, I hope to show that these texts also work to break down ecospeak in order to promote progressive and creative thinking on the level of environmental philosophy.

Working Bibliography


