

Westling, Louise (ed.). 2014. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 266 pages.

*The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, edited by Louise Westling, proposes to lead its reader through the multifaceted field of environmental literary criticism. The editor states that the book is intended as an accompaniment to an earlier Cambridge offering, Timothy Clark's *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2011), but Westling's volume also stands up well on its own as an overview of the current state of the field. Literature in this book is understood appropriately broadly, and it also deals with both film studies as well as with decidedly theoretical ecocritical issues. Contrary to Lawrence Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) and such recent publications as *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons* (Oppermann et al. 2011), and *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (Gaard et al. 2013), it does not have an explicitly stated interest in either the specific future of the field, or in non-Anglophone and feminist issues, but instead focuses on providing a more general companion to readers interested in the subject.

The book is divided into four parts. The first, "Foundations," opens with Terry Gifford discussing the post-pastoral as a viable framework in studying environmental literature in his essay "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, Post-Pastoral," and then moves on to explore Early Medieval literature's use of the green world trope (Alfred K. Siewers). It then contrasts that with the complex relationship between land politics and the subjugation of women's bodies in Native American literature (Shari Huhndorf). The Arthurian character of The Green Knight appears in Siewers's essay "The Green Otherworlds of Early Medieval Literature" as a model of a proto-ecological masculinity. This represents a fairly fresh direction within environmental literary criticism as it has traditionally focused on analyzing representations of nature and those representations' gendered aspects based on an ecofeminist hermeneutics, such as in Huhndorf's "Mapping by Words': The Politics of Land in Native American Literature" that interprets "land and women's bodies as intersecting sites of colonization" (51).

The second part of the book, "Theories," presents several theoretical approaches to the study of literature and the environment, and Axel

Goodbody's outlining of various European philosophical traditions such as phenomenology and Marxism, posthumanism and geocriticism, as well as the problematizing of ecocriticism's traditional ties with deep ecology, is especially pertinent to contemporary theoretical debates on the future of the field. Goodbody's essay "Ecocritical Theory: Romantic Roots and Impulses from Twentieth-Century European Thinkers" draws heavily on Marxism, as it sees "alienation" and "capitalist production" as foundational problems (66–67) that cause ecological devastation.

The influence of the material turn in cultural studies is evident also in Timothy Clark's essay "Nature, Post Nature" that follows Goodbody's. Clark sees tangibly material issues such as climate change as being able to finally challenge the age-old "nature/culture distinction" (76), and he also discusses the controversial sociobiology of Edward Wilson in his essay. The essay by Catriona Sandilands, "Violent Affinities: Sex, Gender, and Species in *Cereus Blooms at Night*" deals with issues such as gender, colonialism, and inter-species relations, and Leo Mellor's "The Lure of Wilderness," on bioregions and the wilderness rounds out the theoretically inclined portion of the book.

In the third part of the book, "Interdisciplinary Engagements," Wendy Wheeler's investigation of biosemiotics in her essay "Tongues I'll Hang on Every Tree": Biosemiotics and the Book of Nature" is especially fresh as it utilizes a truly interdisciplinary approach to studying both nature and language. She specifically looks at the "semiotic interaction" that all of the "living organisms" on the planet engage in (122) and challenges notions of more-than-human nature being mechanistic and non-communicative. On the other hand, Janet Fiskio's "Sauntering Across the Border: Thoreau, Nabhan, and Food Politics" approaches interdisciplinarity from an environmental justice viewpoint and stresses the importance of political engagement to interdisciplinary environmental literary criticism. She offers Henry David Thoreau's "sauntering" (136) as an alternative form of political action. Sarah E. McFarland investigates human-animal relations, and the implications of scientifically engineered new animal species, in her essay "Animal Studies, Literary Animals, and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*."

The name of the fourth and concluding part, "Major Directions," may lead some readers to await bold openings into new directions, but its foci on environmental justice, eco-catastrophe, and postcolonialism do not offer such new directions, and were also discussed by the essay

contributors earlier in the book. However, one issue that will likely be important in the future of environmental humanities is climate change, as it will have implications for environmental justice and will force ecocritics to consider environmental issues in the Global South.

Joni Adamson's essay "Environmental Justice, Cosmopolitics, and Climate Change" discusses environmental justice from the points of view of Amazonian pink dolphins, sandhill cranes, and the people cohabiting with them, gradually deteriorating their environments. It also discusses the implications of the Amazonian peoples' financial hardship for interspecies contact. Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt's "Systems and Secrecy: Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*" discusses postcolonial ecocriticism and environmental justice by analyzing Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*, and nature's silence that has in the past given a *carte blanche* to its colonial exploitation. Roos and Hunt pertinently argue that even though nature may "be visible in postcolonial texts," it nevertheless still is "often quietly in the interstices, inextricably bound within systems of language, justice, economics, and power" (196). Karen Thornber's "Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures: Uncertain Presents and Futures" keeps the book's focus on non-Western issues. It deals with literature about East Asian environmental destruction. The essay discusses the poetry of Nanao Sakaki, but also presents the counterpoint to postcolonial environmental justice views that besides the colonialists, populations in East Asia have been altering and destroying their environments well before influences from the West, much like Native Americans (cf. Hämäläinen, 2009) on 'their' continent before Western colonization.

Kate Rigby, in the book's penultimate essay "Confronting Catastrophe: Ecocriticism in a Warming World," examines climate change and natural disasters devastating the earth, by discussing Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man*. She also, quite rightly, criticizes environmentally inclined researchers because climate change and its effects have been conspicuously missing from ecocriticism. Indeed, it is only in the past few years that research on climate change and global warming has started to expand, or even, figuratively speaking "swell into a flood" (212) within ecocriticism. Stephen Rust ends the collection with his "Ecocinema and the Wildlife Film" where he draws attention to the film industry's exploitation of animals (such as in the famous but

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completely staged mass suicide by lemmings in Disney's *White Wilderness*). In our increasingly urbanizing civilization, human encounters with more-than-human nature often take place via computer, film, and television screens. While such 'encounters' may foster feelings of connection and care towards that nature, Rust nevertheless argues that those encounters are "inseparable from the constant flow of targeted consumer advertising" and essentially mean that animals during those encounters function as "capitalist commodities designed to maximize the company's profits" (234). The last essay, by readdressing issues raised earlier by Goodbody, thus ties the collection well together by questioning the compatibility of a growing consumerist economy with the wellbeing of the planet and both its human and more-than-human nature.

Overall, the book does what it sets out to do. It is a good resource for both undergraduate students as well as more experienced scholars. It somewhat lacks the distinctly activist approach often present in ecocritical research, partly because issues such as the politics of meat and sexuality, queer ecology, and the contemporary problematization of ecofeminism (see, e.g. Oppermann 2013) are, if not absent, then certainly not foregrounded in this volume. This does, however, lend it an air of objectivity, and considering its broad target audience this generalist approach is mostly successful. Also, food politics in general, and the postcolonial environmental justice issues that the book does discuss, do have the potential of leading readers to seek out more and varied readings in those matters. Had there been space to include even more essays to the current fifteen contributions in the volume, other new directions such as ecomasculinity, (see, e.g. Allister 2004; Gaard 2014) and "eco-cosmopolitanism" (Heise 2008, 59) as a counterweight to ecocriticism's traditional emphasis on a place-centered epistemology, would have been welcome additions.

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