REVIEW

Philippe Laplace, ed., *Environmental and Ecological Readings. Nature, Human and Post Human Dimensions in Scottish Literature & Arts (XVIII-XXI c.)*. Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté, n° 947 and Recherches Interdisciplinaires et Transculturelles, n°89. Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté. 2015. Pp. 308. ISBN 9782848675305. €16.

The articles found in this volume engage with the work of key scholars in the field of ecopoetics and nature narrative, including Jonathan Bate (1991) and Louisa Gairn (2008). Like Gairn's *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, Laplace's collection has a Scottish focus; however, through the inclusion of seventeen articles it covers a wider timeframe and range of genres, exploring how "preoccupations with nature, the environment, and the landscape are intrinsically linked to ... the culture and literature of Scotland" (Laplace, 2015, 20). This collection is organized in two sections with articles presented chronologically, the first section focusing on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets, novelists, artists or travel writers, many of whom have been undervalued or neglected. The second section of the collection focuses on twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers and artists, and centers on modern and postmodern considerations. Notably, several of the authors make use of previously unpublished material to construct their arguments, providing new and engaging material to a wider audience. While this decision to structure the collection as two chronological periods may initially appear arbitrary, each section includes authors who engage with new and unfamiliar material.

Essays are organized around several key themes, including the sublime and the picturesque, outsider perceptions of the Scottish Highlands and of Scotland as a whole, and the relationship between land and identity. Anne Mackim's work highlights a change in British perceptions with the Scottish Highlands shown through early eighteenth-century travel writing, from desolate and dreary to sublime. By the late eighteenth century, Sarah Bisson

argues that Walter Scott's work had shaped contemporary representations of Scotland, which encompassed both the sublime and the picturesque through an imposed vision of a national landscape. Daniele Berton-Charière highlights a return to earlier ambivalence, showing the paradox of the Scottish landscape as it is presented in plays by David Greig and Henry Adam, where typical pastoral depictions of Scotland are displaced by a barren set, which presents the land as barren and desolate.

Several contributions, including those of Anne Mackim, Marion Amblard, and Alan Riach, engage with perceptions of the Scottish highlands, and Scotland as a nation. While Mackim's piece engages with the sublime and the picturesque, she also argues that through the rising popularity of the British national tour the Highlands began to be presented not as dour, isolated, and hopeless, but rather as possessing a sublime beauty. Amblard discusses the shift in artistic representations of Highland landscapes created from the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries. Like Bisson, Amblard highlights the significance of Walter Scott's novels in the creation of these sublime landscape paintings, noting that naturalism has become a dominant feature not only of representations of the Highlands, but of Scotland as a whole.

Perhaps the most engaging theme with which many of the essays in this collection interact is the connection between land and identity, whether this be Gaelic, Scottish or Bilingual Identity. Christian Auer's paper focusing on the Highland clearances highlights social and economic relationships between nature and the peoples of Scotland, and through focus on the polysemy of the word land, argues that the clearances were an attack not only on nature, but on the identity of Highland Gaelic society as well. Through examination of Christopher Whyte's *The Warlock of Strathearn*, Robin M. J. Mackenzie highlights a connection between ecology, gender, sexuality and personal identity. By highlighting tension between fluid and ridged senses of self, Mackenzie argues that sensitivity and fluidity lead to an attentive reverence the natural world. Jessica Aliaga Lavrijsen also focuses on personal identity, linking personal identity to national identity, and arguing that through post-human convergences of biology and technology, Brian McCabe highlights distortion of and longing for

stability and fixed identity. Through the instability of his own physical body, McCabe's protagonist highlights the instability of the Scottish body politic. Through a close reading of Meg Bateman's English poems, William Welstead examines Bateman's position as a bilingual writer, and argues that through the lens of a fused Gaelic/English identity, the world is held in balance.

Significantly many of the contributions to the collection show that environmental and ecological readings of Scotland are still ongoing, playing a large role in such issues as the recent Scottish independence referendum. Camille Manfredi highlights the significance of oil for the economic future of an independent Scotland, but notes the paradoxical environmental rhetoric that formed a key part of the Yes Scotland campaign. The decision to end the collection without a distinct and separate conclusion hints towards the ongoing debates in ecocriticism.

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