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Aurélie Choné, Isabelle Hajek and Philippe Hamman (eds.), *Rethinking Nature: Challenging Disciplinary Boundaries* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 268 pp.



Rethinking Nature is a cross-disciplinary volume introducing fields of study that have followed “the green turn” within the humanities in the last three or four decades. Calling on approaches belonging to anthropology, ecology, economics, history, literary criticism, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and urban planning, this collection of essays provides a sweeping panorama of the environmental humanities. In addition, each chapter ends with a comprehensive bibliography that will be helpful for students or scholars new to any of these individual branches. Bringing together contributions from European scholars, this book casts light on significant work being carried out across the borders of Europe, with the greater portion of essays written by French scholars.

Tackling many of the epistemological crises of the twenty-first century, this book invites us to rethink the concept of “nature” together with many of its related notions, such as the “environment” or “the animal.” Encompassing twenty-one chapters, the collection seeks to challenge conventional boundaries separating various academic fields of study in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, most of which intertwine when it comes to re-envisioning the concept of nature. The book opens with an introductory essay by the three editors presenting the aims and objectives of the volume. It closes with another joint piece by the editors highlighting the results of the collective work, providing insights into reflexive and pragmatic dynamics for humans to reconsider and reinvent healthier relationships with the living world. The book is then divided into five parts, each with its own, short introduction that contextualizes the theme and synthesizes very briefly the individual chapters that follow.

Part I, entitled “Values and Actions,” moves from environmental ethics to ecosophy, ecospirituality, and ecopsychology. Questioning the values nature has been assigned by modernity, this first part deals with their relevance and pitfalls. Because most of our concepts have been greatly influenced by myths, much focus has recently been paid to the symbolical dimension of ecological awareness. French philosopher Catherine Larrère takes up various strands of ethics of respect and of responsibility in the light of seminal writings by Aldo Leopold, Lynn White Jr., John Baird Callicott, and Hans Jonas, to name but a few. Hicham-Stéphane Afeiss then introduces ecosophy, or deep ecology as founded by Arne Naess, in a chapter that closely connects with the previous one on environmental ethics. In Naess’s wake, Afeissa distinguishes between ‘shallow’ and ‘deep’ ecological approaches. He then broaches the question whether the nonhuman possesses inherent or instrumental value, to conclude on the essentially

relational properties of the living world. The following two chapters might have come as one, with Aurélie Choné focusing on ecospirituality and Dennis L. Merritt on ecopsychology. Both chapters deal with beliefs in the sacred, with myths, and practices that define the ties between our *oikos* and aspects of our psyche. Choné grapples with the greening of religion and the spiritualization of ecology. While it briefly touches upon the neopagan influence of Earth goddess religions and Native peoples' beliefs and practices, this chapter mostly foregrounds the contributions of white, male thinkers to the field. Merritt synthesizes Theodore Roszak's elaboration of ecopsychology, retracing its roots in and emancipation from Freudian and Jungian theory. He further draws connections with social psychology, behavioral psychology, cognitive, Gestalt, transpersonal, and humanistic psychologies. Stressing the importance of notions such as the numinous and the sacred, Merritt looks into what they may bring to modern society and science; he recalls the endurance of "a totemic self," or "the indigenous within" (Kahn and Hashbach), or again of an "ecological unconscious" (Roszak) within our modern selves. If there is one complaint to be lodged about the chapters in this section, it would have to be that they give short shrift to ecofeminism's significant contributions to ecopsychology.

Part II deals with "Writing and Representations". It starts with a contribution by Nathalie Blanc discussing the notions of nature, forms, and environments, to distinguish between aesthetics of nature and environmental aesthetics. The next chapter by Emmanuelle Peraldo focuses on ecocriticism, seeking to synthesize the birth of the field, its goals and ambitions, which today tie in with geocriticism, an approach advanced by the French scholar Bertrand Westphal. Laurence Dahan then presents "Epistemocritical Perspectives on Nature". She first situates the notion of nature in relationship to culture, then, relying much on Goethe, retraces the naturalization of social and moral relations in the eighteenth century. She further deals with inclinations to humanize nature, tackled through the notions of gardens and grafting, and eventually moves away from the image of nature as harmonious and stable to introduce the posthuman paradigm.

Part III covers "Movements, Activism and Societies". Focusing on the social sciences, it highlights the way many schools of thought and disciplines have evolved to be driven by an "eco" orientation. Catherine Repussard concentrates on the birth and growth of political ecology and the different eras of ecologism, the organizations and intuitions borne from them, and the ideas prevailing within various strands of political ecology. She defines "green capitalism", conviviality, or economics of happiness, as ways to negotiate some of the tensions between market ecology and growth objectors. Margot Lauwers's chapter on "Ecofeminism" first summarizes the history and some of the issues at the heart of the movement, from internal divisions to common misconceptions of ecofeminism, mostly when it comes to essentialism and Eurocentrism. Lauwers then gives an overview of some recent developments in ecofeminist theory. She finally underlines the avant-garde, theoretical and conceptual shifts ecofeminism sometimes fails to be credited for, despite its having laid the grounds for many of the perspectives that are currently being presented as new. The following chapter by Graham Woodgate follows the shift from environmental sociology—focusing on the impacts of

environments onto societies—to ecosociologies, studying the impacts, conversely, of society onto the environment. Woodgate synthesizes how some of the foundational works of sociology (Durkheim, Marx, Weber) have been revisited through a green lens in recent work by Rosa, Richter, Foster, and Holleman. He then elaborates a framework for ecosociologies, defining key concepts such as “conjoint constitution”, the “coevolution” of society and nature, “socioecological agency”, and taking up Carolan’s distinction between “Nature, nature, and ‘nature’”. Extending Marx’s concept of the “metabolic rift” to those of a “planetary rift” (Foster) and a “knowledge rift” (Schneider and McMichael), Woodgate concludes with environmental justice issues such as the ecological debt of the global North to the global South. The chapter written by Eric Navet takes us from anthropogeography to ethnoecology. Starting from the influence of early explorers and geographers on Western thinking, Navet links ethnocide with ecocide while retracing the emergence of a so-called “naturalistic” form of knowledge leading to the modern split between the “natural” sciences and the humanities. He then tackles problematic notions such as “primitive”, “traditional” and “pre-industrial societies” which have divided geographers and ethnologists, with each discipline taking a different view of the increasingly complex interactions between human groups and other geographical agents. Navet gives a few examples of the non-Western conceptualizations of the world (Ojibwa, Inuit, Teko, Tupi-Guarani) which ethnologists and anthropologists have studied and which question our own notion of the “environment” (Tim Ingold, Philippe Descola or Jared Diamond), paving the way for ethnoecology and human ecology.

Under the heading “Renewed Ecologies”, part IV deals with recent ecological concerns with urban and rural areas. Owain Jones looks at the dichotomy between rural and urban spaces, which has become meaningless in the face of the ongoing ecocide. Eradicating the lines previously separating urban from rural—or “wild”—nature, new ecologies focus our attention and efforts onto urban green spaces, urban wilderness and food production. Isabelle Hajek and Jean-Pierre Lévy’s piece on “Urban Ecology” examines the history of the concept from the eighteenth century to the present, where the city is perceived as an urban metabolism (Coutard and Lévy, Barles). Following a paradigm shift from a catastrophic conception of the city to one with more positive takes on urbanization, Hajek and Lévy show that urban ecology has provided a conceptual framework for public action, leading to a variety of “top-down” and grass-roots initiatives. Lionel Charles then summarizes the history of environmental health, shedding light on its ties with the evolution of the very concepts of “health” and “environment”. Philippe Hamman’s chapter on “Sustainable Urbanism” surveys the interactions between sustainable development and urban development, tackling notions such as “smart cities”, “nature in the city”, “natural capital”, “urban green spaces”, and “ecological gentrification”. Linked to a form of utopia, the concept of the “sustainable city” provides a new meta-narrative which is wielded at a local level in the era of postmodernity and globalization. Hamman explains that it is based on four major models, i.e. the “recyclable city”, the “compact city”, the “mixed city”, and the “participatory city”. Finally, Hamman broaches the problematic notion of urban “resilience” as compared with the emerging movement of “transition towns”. Taking up

the metaphor of the metabolism, Nicolas Buchet delves into various models and visions of nature in industrial ecology and their implications. While industrial ecology aims to achieve a closed loop of material and energy flows, it is often built upon the development of environmental technologies, with a questionable belief in the development of geoengineering to save the Earth. Roldan Muradian's chapter then grapples with the "Ecosystem Services Paradigm", another metaphor that has been adopted as a framework in policy and academic circles, based on the notion that nature provides services for the benefit of people. Categorized as "supporting", "provisioning", "regulating", and "cultural", ecosystems services are connected with human well-being and have provided a successful paradigm to renew environmental discourse, despite the analytical problems it poses.

Part V explores human-animal relationships and issues. Eric Navet here again draws from various civilizations and religions in the light of their tendencies toward ecocide and ethnocide. In contrast with the various attempts to do away with nature and to deny humans' kinship with the animal world and the rest of nonhuman nature which have characterized hegemonic civilizations, Navet examines some of the ecological, social and spiritual values at the heart of various indigenous civilizations. Roland Borgards scrutinizes the recent "animal turn" in the humanities and some of the terms, theories, and approaches that have emerged in an effort to rethink animals, namely "animal studies", "human-animal studies", "critical animal studies", and "cultural animal studies", "literary animal studies", and "cultural literary animal studies". Borgards goes over some of the main thinkers of animal studies and key concepts—Foucault's "biopower" and "biopolitics", Agamben's "anthropological machine", Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-animal", Derrida's insistence on plurality, Haraway's notions of "becoming-with" and "companion species", and the new materialist approaches of both Haraway and Latour, with his "actor-network theory" and "political ecology". Eric Baratay then calls for the elaboration of a non-anthropocentric "animal history", or a history of animal cultures, which would combine historical methods with ecological and ethological knowledge, show empathy, and consider animals as fully-fledged subjects. Consequently, a second type of history focused on individuals could lead to the composition of animal biographies. Finally, Sabine White provides an "Outlook" on the Environmental Humanities, presenting some of the institutional frameworks, journals and programs dedicated to the field, its emerging paradigms, and the questions it has opened for future research—a section that might have been better suited at the beginning of the book.

It might be asked whether this collection of essays effectively challenges disciplinary boundaries as suggested by the book's title, considering the subdivision into 21 chapters which actually tends to perpetuate disciplinary boundaries. While the greater themes and parts of the book lend themselves to cross-disciplinary approaches, it might have been more convincing for each part to include one, longer essay braiding together in one piece the various movements and approaches while underscoring their articulations and cross-overs. One area in which this book might be found wanting is the lack of attention paid to ecopoetics, specifically but not solely in the light of material

ecocriticism, to zoopoetics, as well as to biosemiotics—fields which play a crucial role in reconnecting language with “nature”, interweaving and urging us to rethink many discourses not only within the environmental humanities but also within popular and scientific discourse. Nevertheless, this book offers a great introduction to the environmental humanities, providing a kaleidoscopic vision of the idea of “nature” which can help us rethink how we have arrived at the present moment of crisis and, potentially, where to look for better ways forward.