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David E. Nye and Sarah Elkind (eds.), *The Anti-Landscape* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 217 pp.

The landscape of environmental criticism continues to change. While early ecocriticism tended to focus—with a few notable exceptions—upon texts describing wild, pastoral, sublime, or romantic landscapes and the issues that shape them, today we see ecocritics engaging landscapes that are urban and suburban, toxic and degraded, georgic and working class, and even artificial. In her "hitchhiker's guide" to the field, Ursula K. Heise neatly summarizes this transition as a shift in interest from deep ecology to social ecology. Similarly, in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, Lawrence Buell describes "second-wave" ecocriticism as working to "develop a 'social ecocriticism' that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as 'natural' landscapes" (22). In their descriptions of such changes to the field, both Heise and Buell appropriately suggest that a refocusing upon a broader set of social issues can in many ways be credited to the activism and scholarship of individuals and collectives concerned with environmental justice. However, in recent years, fields as diverse as geography, sociology, philosophy and rhetoric, history, and visual studies have turned their attention to previously overlooked landscapes. Good examples of this kind of social ecocritical work include Michael Bennett and David W. Teague's ground-breaking collection *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments* (1999), Karla M. Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace's collection *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of* Ecocriticism (2001), many of the essays and interviews collected by Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein in *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy* (2002), Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), and Sarah Jacquette Ray's *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture* (2013). This trend is also advanced by *The Anti-Landscape*, a collection of interdisciplinary criticism edited by David E. Nye and Sarah Elkind, published by Rodopi in 2014 as the first book in their promising new series "Studies in Environmental Humanities."

The collection of twelve brief chapters, adapted from presentations originally given at the 2011 conference of the Nordic Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES) research group, takes as its starting point cultural geographer John Brinkerhoff Jackson's definition of landscape in his 1984 book *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*: "a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence" (8). From this foundation, co-editor David E. Nye offers the counterpoint that drives the collection, defining "anti-landscapes" as "spaces that do not sustain life," (11) a concept which he argues offers common ground

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for "work that deals with sustainability, the limits to growth, dystopia, environmental degradation, 'the tragedy of the commons,' and the overuse of resources. It is specific enough to create a focused conversation but capacious enough to link with much current research" (14). Though as a reader, it is hard not to feel that this neologism moves the collection toward the kind of binary that environmental criticism has worked to dispel, the objects which the "anti-landscape" term studies are of central importance in the Anthropocene, not only because industrialized and even degraded landscapes are proliferating, but also because at a moment when human influence shapes every possible ecosystem and region, such landscapes *are* "nature." To say that degraded landscapes do not sustain life is in some ways to contradict the evidence offered by many of the essays included in this collection: that though toxicity and degradation may be no fault of their own, families and communities continue to choose to live and work in such places. Ably described by many of the chapters in *The Anti-Landscape*, such communities engage in complex and vibrant environmental, cultural, and artistic projects deserving of close attention from scholars and activists alike.

Two essays included in this volume assess the landscape/anti-landscape binary in beneficial ways. First, Mark Luccarelli takes J. B. Jackson's landscape philosophy as his primary text in order to suggest how the differences between landscapes and anti-landscapes can be "understood as the expression of a conflict over the formulation and reformulation of the environmental attributes of space" (70). Similarly, in the book's epilogue, co-editor Sarah Elkind usefully challenges the landscape/anti-landscape binary, indicating that these two labels may in fact be more of an imbricated mesh, or that a re-contexualization can change an anti-landscape (e.g. a trash heap) into a life-sustaining landscape for the scavengers living around it. In general, the environmental humanities will benefit from more criticism like this that articulates the sometimes non-linear and ambiguous life cycles of anthropocene landscapes, as well as the complexities of the cultural projects which represent such contested spaces.

The Anti-Landscape is organized in three parts: "The Threatened Landscape," "Anti-Landscapes," and "Recoveries." In the first section, James Rodger Fleming, a historian of science specializing in meteorology, uses visual studies methodology to track the changing aerial aesthetics of frequently overlooked "skyscapes." Maurits W. Ertsen next offers a history of irrigation in Pakistan and the threats such a system presents to the Indus Basin, followed by Luccarelli's essay which variously draws upon Buell's "toxic discourse," Henri Lefebvre's triad of abstract, perceived, and represented spaces, and Denis Cosgrove's thinking regarding the symbolic or ideological significance of landscape. It is somewhat unclear what distinguishes the "threatened" landscapes of the first section from the full-on "anti-landscapes" of the second, but this next section is the longest of the book and probably of most interest to readers of *Ecozon@*. It also represents the greatest disciplinary diversity, featuring ecocritical readings of novels like Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby,* Carver's *The Big Sleep,* and McCarthy's *The Road*, visual studies of American landscape photography and Finnish landscape painting, considerations of the spatial imagination of films like Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* and Sam Mendes's *American Beauty*, and even readings of suburban American and Cold War-

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era Soviet architecture. The book's third section, and its most brief, offers two descriptions of restoration projects: the first is a history of two industrial sites—the Malmberget open-pit mine in Sweden and the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania—and the important roles these troubled spaces play in the heritage of their local communities; the second is a description of the success of New York City's High Line as a project that both commemorates the city's past and points toward sustainable possibilities. Such narratives of landscape reinhabitation are vitally important and underrepresented in environmental humanities scholarship at the moment; another case study or two that indicated the implications of restoration efforts for literature or visual art would help balance the volume against the number of essays which focus on increasingly-blighted landscapes.

Diverse as they are in methodology and focus, the essays collected in *The Anti-Landscape* are useful in the way that they highlight promising avenues of scholarship in the environmental humanities. For instance, with the exception of Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher's edited collection *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, few ecocritical projects have embraced theories from visual studies or opportunities to interpret the ecological significance of visual culture. In *The Anti-Landscape*, Hannes Bergthaller's chapter on photographer John Ganis' book *Consuming the American Landscape* offers a good model for visual ecocriticism of this kind, by drawing upon one particular theoretical concept—Wolfgang Welsch's "dialectic of the aesthetic"—to identify the ways that images of landscapes of waste, labor, and recreation challenge traditional senses of both ecology and aesthetics. The essay is simultaneously historical—offering a narrative synopsis of landscape aesthetics generally and American landscape photography specifically—and contemporary in the way that it focuses upon "what collective human life on the land actually *looks* like today—no more, and no less" (128).

Beyond Bergthaller's standout piece and others like it that make critical studies of visual texts, readers interested in the intersection of geography, literature, Scandinavian Studies, and environmental justice issues will find many of the methodologies and case studies presented in this collection to be very engaging. The critiques offered here help deepen the discourse surrounding issues related to environmental degradation and restoration, labor, class, and the literary and artistic projects which engage such issues. In sum, *The Anti-Landscape* provides a provocative example of what environmental humanities scholarship might look like as it considers the politics and aesthetics of a rapidly changing world.

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