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Reinhard Henning, Anna-Karin Jonasson, and Peter Degerman, eds., *Nordic Narratives of Nature and the Environment. Ecocritical Approaches to Northern European Literatures and Cultures* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 252pp.



Despite the fact that the Nordic countries are internationally regarded as the forerunners of ecologically sustainable societies, there have not so far been many studies engaging critically with the origins and the factual background of this notion of Nordic environmental exceptionalism, especially outside of scholarship written in the Scandinavian languages. Even after ecocritical research has shifted its focus to consider various geographical regions and scales, non-Anglophone literatures have not yet found their way into the centre of ecocritical interest. *Nordic Narratives of Nature and the Environment* is the first collection of ecocritical research on northern European literatures written in the English language. The collection aims to bring the fruitful research area of Nordic ecocriticism closer both to those already working in the field of Scandinavian studies and to those unfamiliar with this field. In their introduction, Reinhard Hennig, Anna-Karin Jonasson, and Peter Degerman provide a short outline of the ethnic and linguistic groups comprising the Nordic countries, the various ways in which they are interconnected, and sketch out Scandinavian culture and history since the nineteenth century. This establishes a solid middle ground between experts on Scandinavia and those readers with a main focus on other geographical areas who want gain an introductory overview of the field.

The aim of the collection is to interrogate the construction of the Nordic regions' green image, to examine the degree to which the mediated narrative of environmental exceptionalism corresponds to sociocultural and historical realities, and to illustrate counter-narratives. It is structured around three sub-themes: Nordic Anthropocene narratives, language and aesthetics, and environmental justice. Within these overarching thematic blocks, the collection assembles articles that focus on a variety of genres, such as children's literature and dystopian fiction, as they appear in environmental cultural texts. Even though the novel appears as the most prominent object of analysis, the collection also includes chapters on film, photography, nonfiction writing, poetry, video installations, and even the narratives created through cultural preservation projects. It thereby highlights the multiplicity of narrative forms that play a role in the construction of Nordic natures. The sub-themes of the collection are further expanded through the inclusion of sub-fields of environmental studies such as critical plant studies, human-animal studies, postcolonial ecocriticism, and ecofeminism. Despite this vast array of perspectives, the collection does not create a feeling of disorientation but is visibly

structured around several common themes running through all of its chapters. Contemporary anxieties and concerns around attempts to understand the world in the age of the Anthropocene form a central part of most chapters, often in connection with the notion of modern risk society, the vulnerability and precarity of ecosystems, and a perspective on environmental concerns that moves across local, national, global and even planetary scales.

Within these debates, and in connection with scaling, the articles of the collection negotiate the situatedness of the works they examine within the special geographical, historical, and socio-political context of the Nordic countries while at the same time questioning the notion of the Nordic itself. As Katie Ritson argues in her chapter on Kjersti Vik's novel *Mandø*, set on a Danish Wadden Sea island of the same name that is characterised by its liminal and precarious geography, reading texts solely within their production context as Scandinavian literature discards their global relevance and neglects the fact that an environmental perspective necessarily transcends the notion of the nation state: "Nordic literature/culture as standpoint is limiting, because it necessarily has humans at the centre of its definition" (73). In congruence with Ritson's argument, the question of the reconceptualisation of nation states in an age of ecological crisis is addressed implicitly and explicitly throughout the collection. Many of the analyses further reveal connections between Scandinavian and canonical Anglophone narratives about the environment, highlighting similarities as well as differences and pointing towards the fruitful approach of looking at narratives about the environment from a wider European perspective and even beyond Europe. As Cheryl J. Fish's chapter on Liselotte Wajstedt and Marja Helander's indigenous photography and film demonstrates, locally produced ecomedia that are disseminated globally can engage in cultural work on a global scale and further communication between (indigenous) activists and artists around the world. New concepts introduced within the collection can be integrated productively into ecocritical research more widely, and are not limited to Scandinavian studies or even necessarily the study of specific media forms. Cheryl J. Fish proposes the term of "elegiac ecojustice" to describe media that combine an "image-world where human relationships to nature are disastrous" with the suggestion of "alternative outcomes and political agency" (210) and take into account issues of environmental injustice. Similarly, Beatrice M. G. Reed introduces the productive concept of "ecomorphism" which, aside from describing "a figural transmission of meaning from a natural or ecological to a human sphere" can also be understood as an overarching concept to structure ecological tropes and includes a variety of sub-categories such as geomorphism or aquamorphism (129).

In the current age of ecological crisis, ecocriticism needs to engage in broader discussions that move beyond the notion that environmental politics can be isolated through the notion of nation states. The collection provides an example of how this might be possible and succeeds in its aim to promote an interest in its audience to engage in comparative studies by destabilising conventional bordering concepts. *Nordic Narratives of Nature and the Environment* is an intriguing and comprehensive collection that makes the complex field of Scandinavian ecocriticism accessible to an Anglophone audience. One

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can only hope that it will encourage further ecocritical research in Northern European literatures.