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*Affective Ecocriticism* ed. by Kyle Bladow and Jennifer  
Ladino (review)

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(Review)

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The chapter on Leslie Marmon Silko's *Sacred Water* (1993) and *Turquoise Ledge* (2010) will interest students of ecocriticism, eco-memoir, and animal and plant studies as it addresses Native perspectives on environmental justice and explores how Silko asserts "an indigenous-centered critique of land desecration, exploitation, and genocide" (18). The section on *Sacred Water*, an "experimental multi genre life story" that "incorporates pictures, glyphs, and written text," may also interest visual studies scholars (57). After reviewing the history of non-Native peoples' use of photography "as a tool of domination against Native American communities" (54) through appropriation, misrepresentation, and stereotyping, Portillo argues that "images of landscape, clouds, sky, and animals" (53) in *Sacred Water* continue Silko's family's traditions of looking at "photos . . . to complement the narratives and stories told by her relatives" (56). Portillo coins the terms "phototelling" or "photomemories" to name Silko's method of juxtaposing photography with written narrative as a form of storytelling that "rejects the idea that photos alone speak for themselves or that they disclose reality" (60). *Turquoise Ledge* narrates Silko's relationships with nonhuman animals, insects, plants, rocks, and "ancestors who come in the form of rain clouds and Star Beings" (71). In this section she quotes at great length from interviews with Silko but doesn't comment on what this material adds to the literary or visual studies analyses. Portillo's view of the relationship between storytelling as art versus conversation is unclear. Is Portillo implying that interviews constitute autobiographies or sovereign stories?

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Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino, eds., *Affective Ecocriticism*. U of Nebraska P, 2018. 360 pp. Cloth, \$60; paper, \$35; e-book \$35.

This volume provides a refreshingly sophisticated approach for integrating the interdisciplinary field of affect theory with ecocritical analysis. While all too frequently recent books that claim to provide new developments in ecocriticism merely reinvent the wheel and

reveal the lack of homework on the part of their contributors, such is not the case with *Affective Ecocriticism*. Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino have edited every chapter impeccably and provided an excellent introduction for those of us not yet conversant with affect theory. In only one instance did I find a chapter that would have benefitted from the insights of another chapter, while the rest of the contributions show their authors are conversant with the latest work in their fields. Even for a reader not that interested in ecocriticism per se, many of these chapters will prove beneficial for rethinking approaches to teaching and analyzing numerous texts of western American literature. Reading through this book from cover to cover, I frequently thought about how its insights would have altered the way I approached teaching and writing about Mary Austin's *The Ford*, Frank Waters's *The People of the Valley*, Frank Norris's *The Octopus*, and Robinson Jeffers's long narrative poems.

Bladow and Ladino introduce affect theory and its relevance for ecocriticism and, by extension, much of western American literature in the context of the concept of the "Anthropocene," human modulation of global environments, and the contemporary political phenomenon of antifactual rhetoric. Clearly written, their introduction orients readers utterly unfamiliar with affect theory and helps prepare them for the theoretically focused first of four sections. Section one's first three chapters introduce some tongue-twisting neologisms and portmanteau words, such as "solastalgia" and "ficto-regionality," but invariably the contributors explain the meaning of these concepts and their pertinence for critical analysis. I never felt the terminology obscuring comprehension, as with much poststructuralism, but rather these new concepts reorient a reader's conceptions of the more-than-human world in which we participate.

The next three sections focus more on applications of the affective theories already introduced, with the authors identifying the key thinkers guiding their analyses. As to be expected with any edited volume, these chapters are somewhat uneven in the depth of their discussions and the drawing of far-reaching conclusions. I did find Jobb Arnold's chapter on representations of the Canadian tar sands exceptional. Allyse Knox-Russell's "Futurity without Op-

timism: Detaching from Anthropocentrism and Grieving Our Fathers in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*” deeply impressed me, making me rethink not only my understanding of that excellent film but helping me think more seriously about the role of grieving in relation to our climate crisis. Certainly western American literature has its share of grieving and sense of loss, beginning at least as early as James Fenimore Cooper and continuing through T. C. Boyle’s *A Friend of the Earth*. Knox-Russell’s arguments about grief are applicable to many literary texts, especially the subgenre of contemporary fiction labeled “cli-fi” (climate fiction). Although not usually set in space, these science fiction works have much in common with their Space Western counterparts in their depictions of postapocalyptic landscapes. That is especially true of cli-fi film and television series. Likewise I noted in the margin of the table of contents that Lisa Ottum’s chapter on “the power of negative thinking” makes an important argument about dejection and setbacks in this know-nothing Trumpian moment.

Although the fourth section is subtitled “Politics and Pedagogy,” only one chapter focuses on classroom practice and feels somewhat tacked on rather than an integral part of the book. Sarah Jaquette Ray does raise important issues, however, about the emotional toll that some environmental humanities courses may take on their students, especially those focused on climate change or environmental justice.

Part one of *Affective Ecocriticism* and its introduction alone are worth the price of admission. This is one of only a few new books I have felt compelled to add to my library.

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Justin A. Joyce, *Gunslinging Justice: The American Culture of Violence in Westerns and the Law*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2018. 248 pp. Cloth, \$120.

In *Gunslinging Justice: The American Culture of Violence in Westerns and the Law* Justin A. Joyce demonstrates how what he calls