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Review of *Writing the Environment in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: The Ecological Awareness of Early Scribes of Nature.* Edited by Steven Petersheim and Madison P. Jones IV.

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As editors Steven Petersheim and Madison Jones acknowledge in their Introduction, the field of ecocriticism owes much to the work of scholars such as Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Leo Marx. Petersheim and Jones’s intention for Writing the Environment in Nineteenth-Century American Literature is to extend the conversation about American writers of nature in a similar vein as Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace’s Beyond Nature Writing (2001). One would expect names such as Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, and Melville to be included in a conversation about nineteenth-century American “nature” or “environmental” writing. Although these canonical names do indeed crop up throughout the essays in this collection, they do not monopolize the conversation. Thus, in addition to the expected nature writer canon, one encounters a number of less discussed “scribes of nature.”

The ten essays that constitute the book itself are arranged in three sections. As Petersheim and Jones explain, the first set seeks to investigate the “prospects and problems” in early Romantic depictions of the environment (xvi). Further, the second group transitions into the difficulties in representing American exploration of “uncivilized” places, domestically and internationally (xvii). The third and final section moves to the emergence of American conservation and environmental ethics. The individual writers often focus their projects on either one or two period authors, yet in toto their ecologically driven theoretical approaches and nuanced readings provide a dynamic survey of trends in ecocriticism, including spatial geopolitics, new materialism, and ecofeminism, to name a few.

With regard to the many insightful contributions in the collection, there are a few especially noteworthy essays. Christopher Sloman’s
“Navigating the Interior” is a thought-provoking analysis of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly*, cartography, and the early republic. Likewise, Scott Honeycutt’s connections between “walking” and becoming “native” (in “John D. Godman and the Creation of the Ramble”), as well as Cecily Parks’s argument about Emily Dickinson’s use of swamps as a space for gender fluidity and subversion (in “The Swamps of Emily Dickinson”) provide innovative readings of both the canonical and the previously overlooked.

That said, readers will encounter a variance in the freshness and quality of arguments throughout. The largest blind spot in the collection is the lack of attention given to marginalized voices, such as black slaves and Native Americans. If the goal of *Writing the Environment in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* is to extend the scholarly conversation, then it remains necessary for further critical discussion about the natural world that takes into account more than a single, homogeneous American culture throughout the nineteenth century.

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