

literary studies, but also provide a solid entry to the major key texts that have shaped recent discussions of modern literary works and Third World writing.

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Five Emus to the King of Siam: Environment and Empire. Edited by Helen Tiffin. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007. Pp. 260. \$82.00 hardcover.

The intriguing title of this collection is drawn from the essay “Five Emus to the King of Siam: Acclimatization and Colonialism,” in which Chris Tiffin explains that acclimatization “strictly means the adaptation of individual specimens to a new environment, but the loose meaning of the word in the 1860s was the introduction of plants, animals, birds and insects into areas to which they are not endemic” (165). While this term may be read as metonymic for the broader invasion of settlers, languages, religion, and disease into colonial lands, it also gestures to the ecological focus of *Five Emus to the King of Siam*, an essay collection that foregrounds the environmental impacts of imperialism.

As Helen Tiffin explains in her introduction, the history of European imperialism and colonization “has generally been read and understood in primarily human terms, whether militarily, politically, socially, philosophically or culturally” (xii). Tiffin and her contributors seek to amend this anthropocentric focus by exploring various environmental consequences of colonialism, such as the introduction of non-native species, the introduction of agricultural practices unsuitable for the environments on which they are imposed, and the consequences of a globalized system of trade. In “Transported Landscapes,” for example, Ruth Blair discusses the tendency of colonizers in the South Pacific to prize only endemic or indigenous species that they deemed to have aesthetic or commercial value, and to pride themselves on successfully transplanting species from their homelands, regardless of the effect on native ecosystems. Leigh Dale offers an extensive account of such a species introduction in “Empire’s Proxy,” which details the transformative influence of merino sheep on the Australian landscape. While recounting the devastating effects of sheep farming on the land, the vegetation, and on indigenous land-use practices, Dale also addresses the irony that colonial writers often attributed agency for this damage to the sheep, rather than to the settlers who introduced them.

A focus on the representation of landscape and land-use practices informs many essays in this collection, including Catherine Howell's discussion of representations of Australian colonial settlement in the landscape paintings of John Glover; Carrie Dawson's consideration of Grey Owl's self-representation in *Pilgrims of the Wild*; and Meenakshi Sharma's exploration of how the Hindu belief in the purifying power of the Ganges is often at odds with the excessive pollution to which the river has been exposed. Sharma's intriguing account reveals a Ganges in whose waters the impacts of colonialism and modernization mix with long-held belief that the river can prevail over any threat of impurity or pollution. Sharma's discussion of religion, representation, and the environmental degradation of the Ganges reflects the nuanced consideration with which scholars throughout *Five Emus* approach the complex territory on which culture, colonialism, and environmental concerns collide.

Focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the essays of *Five Emus* strive not only to reveal the environmental impacts of colonialism in centuries past, but also to illustrate the ongoing connection between colonialism, neo-colonialism, and contemporary environmental degradation. In "Transported Landscapes," Blair links her discussion of past introductions of species to the islands of the South Pacific to contemporary projects of biotechnology companies, which she names the "new imperialists," insinuating that modern biotechnological ventures are carried out with no more concern for the ecosystems they disturb than were colonial agricultural endeavours. Similarly, Helen Gilbert's essay, "Ecotourism: A Colonial Legacy?," analyzes the rhetoric of ecotourism advertisements to question whether this new trend in "green" tourism constitutes a relatively ecologically benign form of travel or whether it mimics the invasive and appropriative practices of colonial exploration. Gillian Whitlock presents a related discussion in "The Animals are Innocent" as her visit to the Karen Blixen Museum encourages her to question how her perceptions of Kenya are moderated by female travellers and settlers who have previously represented the Kenyan landscape.

Five Emus will prove a very useful resource for scholars exploring the imbrications of colonialism and environmental issues. While many of these essays focus on ecocritical concerns, Tiffin explains in her introduction that she and her contributors have mostly avoided the use of the term 'ecocriticism' in order to encourage interdisciplinary approaches as well as to acknowledge that many scholars of environmental literature do not regard themselves as ecocritics (a term used predominantly in the U.S.). The interdisciplinary nature of this collection, which offers a broad geographical, historical, and theoretical range of essays, contributes to efforts to broaden the scope of

scholarship focusing on environmental literature, particularly in respect to issues of race and ethnicity. In “Back to the World’: Reading Ecocriticism in a Postcolonial Context,” Susie O’Brien argues that ecocriticism would benefit from learning from postcolonial studies the importance of progressing “from simply analysing texts to looking at the institutional structures that frame such practices” seeking to understand “how they work within, on, and through the categories of culture and environment” (196). By considering a number of environmental issues in light of the colonial and neo-colonial practices that precipitated them, the contributors to *Five Emus* have helped to move the study of environmental literature towards such an analysis, as they critique the imperial policies and institutions that shaped and continue to shape our planet.

Angela Waldie

D.H. Green. *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Pp. xi, 299. \$95.00 Hardcover.

The questions of who has access to intellectual property, namely textuality, and how far, are questions which implicate authority: who reads, who produces for the reader(s), and who is in power? In *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, D.H. Green takes on this panoramic subject by studying various reading practices between AD 700 and AD 1500, and how these reading practices were conducted. His case studies are drawn from England, France and Germany, focusing on the various categories of women for whom reading is attested, including laywomen, nuns, recluses, semi-religious women and heretics. D.H. Green thus testifies that the popularity of reading practices amongst medieval women was much more common than assumed. His study subsequently suggests that religious women were the vessels of written culture other than clerics and monks, and that laywomen in turn became responsible for the gradual expansion of literacy, especially in the vernacular, by bringing it from religious settings into homes and the court.

The book is divided into two respective parts, with two chapters each — Part I dealing with literal and figurative modes of reading, and Part II dealing with medieval women’s involvement with reading. Chapter I is foundational, where Green therefore defines the varieties of reading as “reading to oneself” as opposed to “reading to others,” with the first mode of reading to oneself being sub-divided into silent reading and reading aloud. Such distinctions are notably fine shading into one another, where private reading might involve