Nature and Literary Studies offers a broad and accessible overview of one of the most important and contested keywords in modern literary studies. Drawing together the work of leading scholars of a variety of critical approaches, historical periods, and cultural traditions, the book examines nature’s philosophical, theological, and scientific origins in literature, as well as how literary representations of nature evolved in response to colonialism, industrialization, and new forms of scientific knowledge. Surveying nature’s diverse applications in twenty-first-century literary studies and critical theory, the volume seeks to reconcile nature’s ideological baggage with its fundamental role in fostering appreciation of nonhuman existence and agency. Including chapters on wilderness, pastoral, gender studies, critical race theory, and digital literature, the book is a valuable resource for students and professors seeking to understand nature’s role in the environmental humanities.

Peter Remien is Associate Professor of English at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho. His recent book The Concept of Nature in Early Modern English Literature, published by Cambridge University Press, traces a genealogy of ecology in seventeenth-century literature and natural philosophy.

Scott Slovic is University Distinguished Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Idaho. He was the founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and edited the journal ISLE for twenty-five years. His many books include Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing and The Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication.
CAMBRIDGE CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Cambridge Critical Concepts focuses on the important ideas animating twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary studies. Each concept addressed in the series has had a profound impact on literary studies, as well as on other disciplines, and already has a substantial critical bibliography surrounding it. This series captures the dynamic critical energies transmitted across twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary landscapes: the concepts critics bring to reading, interpretation and criticism. By addressing the origins, development and application of these ideas, the books collate and clarify how these particular concepts have developed, while also featuring fresh insights and establishing new lines of enquiry.

Cambridge Critical Concepts shifts the focus from period- or genre-based literary studies of key terms to the history and development of the terms themselves. Broad and detailed contributions cumulatively identify and investigate the various historical and cultural catalysts that made these critical concepts emerge as established twenty-first-century landmarks in the discipline. The level will be suitable for advanced undergraduates, graduates and specialists, as well as for those teaching outside their own research areas, and will have cross-disciplinary relevance for subjects such as history and philosophy.

Titles in the Series

Law and Literature
Edited by KIERAN DOLIN
University of Western Australia

Time and Literature
Edited by THOMAS M. ALLEN
University of Ottawa

The Global South and Literature
Edited by RUSSELL WEST-PAVLOV
University of Tübingen

Trauma and Literature
Edited by ROGER KURTZ
The College at Brockport, State University of New York

Food and Literature
Edited by GITANJALI SHAHANI
San Francisco State University

Animals, Animality, and Literature
Edited by BRUCE BOEHRER, MOLLY HAND AND BRIAN MASSUMI
Florida State University, University of Montreal
Terrorism and Literature
Edited by Peter Herman
San Diego State University

Climate and Literature
Edited by Adeline Johns
University of Surrey

Orientalism and Literature
Edited by Geoffrey Nash
SOAS, University of London

Decadence and Literature
Edited by Jane Desmarais and David Weir
Goldsmiths, University of London and Hunter College

Affect and Literature
Edited by Alex Houen
University of Cambridge

Sound and Literature
Edited by Anna Snaith
King’s College London

Magical Realism and Literature
Edited by Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser
University of Cambridge and Wheaton College, Illinois

Surrealism
Edited by Natalya Lusty
University of Melbourne

Globalisation and Literary Studies
Edited by Joel Evans
University of Nottingham
NATURE AND LITERARY STUDIES

EDITED BY
PETER REMIEN
Lewis-Clark State College
SCOTT SLOVIC
University of Idaho
Dedicated to Katherine Eggert, David Glimp, and Barton St. Armand for their inspiration and mentorship, and to the memory of Barry Lopez
Contents

List of Figures ................................................................. xi
List of Contributors ......................................................... xii
Acknowledgments ............................................................ xviii
Introduction: The Nature of Literature ................................. 1
Peter Remien and Scott Slovic

PART I ORIGINS ................................................................. 29
1 The Book of Nature ......................................................... 31
   Rebecca Davis
2 Pastoral ........................................................................ 49
   Terry Gifford
3 Wilderness ..................................................................... 65
   Debbie Lee
4 Lucretian Materialism ..................................................... 87
   Brent Dawson
5 Natural Philosophy ......................................................... 103
   Mary Thomas Crane
6 Natural History ............................................................... 122
   Ashton Nichols

PART II DEVELOPMENT ..................................................... 139
7 Romantic Nature ............................................................. 141
   Mark S. Cladis
## Contents

8 The Sublime  
*Michele Speitz*  
161

9 Toward a Transatlantic Philosophy of Nature  
*Samantha C. Harvey*  
177

10 Indigenous Naturecultures: Ecocosmopolitanism in Northeast Indian Poetry  
*Rayson K. Alex*  
194

11 Postcolonial Nature  
*Philip Aghoghovwia*  
211

12 Extinction  
*Timothy Sweet*  
229

13 Nature in the Anthropocene  
*Ken Hilner*  
245

**PART III APPLICATIONS**  
259

14 Nature, Gender, Sexuality  
*Greta Gaard*  
261

15 Nature and Race  
*John Gamber*  
280

16 The Nature of Animality  
*Michael Lundblad*  
296

17 Cultivating Nature  
*Shiuhhuaah Serena Chou*  
310

18 Narrating Nature: Narrative Theory and the Unnatural Nature of Climate Change  
*Erin James*  
325

19 Digital Nature  
*Lai-Tze Fan*  
339

20 Toxic Nature: Narratives of Biocultural Precarity  
*Pramod K. Nayar*  
355

21 Messages from Within: Primo Levi, Biosemiotics, and Freedom  
*Serenella Iovino*  
372

*Further Reading*  
391

*Index*  
410
Figures

5.1 Frontispiece to Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*, Strasbourg, 1504

17.1 Shiuhhuah Serena Chou, *Rooftop Garden in Taipei*, 2020

19.1 Shelley Jackson, *Snow*

page 106

312

341
Contributors


RAYSON K. ALEX is Associate Professor at BITS-Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus, India. He is one of the editors of *Essays in Ecocriticism* (Oslo-India, 2007), *Culture and Media: Ecocritical Explorations* (Cambridge Scholars, 2014), *Ecodocumentaries: Critical Essays* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and *Ecocultural Ethics: Critical Essays* (Lexington, 2017). He is the founder and codirector of tiNai Ecofilm Festival.

SHIUHHUAH SERENA CHOU is Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica. She has published widely on food and agriculture studies, environmental ethics, and urban studies, with a particular focus on organic farming and the work of David Mas Masumoto. Her articles on agriculture and literature have been published in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, *Neohelicon*, *Tamkang Review*, and *MELUS*.

MARK S. CLADIS is Brooke Russell Astor Professor of the Humanities at Brown University. His work often pertains to the intersection of modern Western religious, political, and environmental thought, and it is as likely to engage poetry and literature as it is philosophy and critical theory. He has recently published the book *In Search of a Course* (Regal House...
List of Contributors

Publishing, 2021), and he is currently working on the book Radical Romanticism: Democracy, Religion and the Environmental Imagination.


Rebecca Davis is Associate Professor of English at the University of California–Irvine. Her research and teaching focus on medieval representations of nature, including animals in narrative and the medieval bestiary. In Piers Plowman and the Books of Nature (Oxford University Press, 2016), she explores allegorical traditions of nature from antiquity to the fourteenth century. Her work has been published in postmedieval, Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Chaucer Review, and the Yearbook of Langland Studies.

Brent Dawson is Assistant Professor at the University of Oregon. He is currently finishing his first book, Worldly Muck: The Matter of Universality in English Renaissance Literature, looking at early modern ideas of materialism and universalism in Spenser, Shakespeare, Cavendish, and Milton. His work has been published in ELH, Renaissance Drama, and NLH.

Lai-tze Fan is Assistant Professor of Technology and Social Change in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo, Canada. She researches digital storytelling, systemic inequalities in technological design and labor, media theory and infrastructure, and research-creation and critical design. Fan is an editor as well as Director of Communications of electronic book review and Editor of the digital review. She is coeditor of the 2020 collection Post-Digital: Dialogues and Debates from electronic book review (Bloomsbury Academic), and the editor of special journal issues on “Canadian Digital Poetics” and “Critical Making, Critical Design.”

Greta Gaard is Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. From her first anthology, Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature (Temple, 1993), to her coedited volume (with Simon Estok and Serpil Oppermann) International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism (Routledge,
List of Contributors

2013), to her monograph *Critical Ecofeminism* (Lexington/Rowman, 2017), Gaard’s work focuses on the narratives and intersections of feminism, environmental justice, queer studies, and critical animal studies. She is coeditor of *Contemplative Practices and Anti-Oppressive Pedagogies for Higher Education* (Routledge, 2022).

**John Gambrer** is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California–Irvine. Their monograph *Positive Pollutions and Cultural Toxins: Waste and Contamination in US Ethnic Literatures* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012) was a finalist for the ASLE award for ecocriticism. They have published widely on the intersections of Indigeneity, race, and environment.


**Samantha C. Harvey** is Professor of English at Boise State University. She has published widely on British Romanticism, poetry, and the environment. Her books include *Coleridge’s Responses: Coleridge on Nature and Vision* (Continuum, 2008) and *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013). She is the director of the Idea of Nature Public Lecture Series at Boise State University.

**Ken Hiltner** is Professor of the Environmental Humanities at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he is the inaugural and current director of the Environmental Humanities Initiative. He has published widely on the environment and early modern English Literature. His books include *Milton and Ecology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), *What Else is Pastoral?: Renaissance Literature and the Environment* (Cornell University Press, 2011), and *Writing a New Environmental Era: Moving forward to Nature* (Routledge, 2019).
List of Contributors

Serenella Iovino is Professor of Italian Studies and Environmental Humanities at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has coedited Material Ecocriticism (Indiana University Press, 2014), Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017) – both with Serpil Oppermann – and Italy and the Environmental Humanities: Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies (University of Virginia Press, 2018), with Enrico Cesaretti and Elena Past. Her monograph Ecocriticism and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation (Bloomsbury, 2016) was awarded the American Association for Italian Studies Book Prize and the MLA Prize for Italian Studies. With Cambridge University Press she has recently published Italo Calvino’s Animals: Anthropocene Stories (2021). A former president of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment, Serenella is series editor of Under the Sign of Nature (Virginia University Press) and Elements in Environmental Humanities (Cambridge University Press).

Erin James is Professor of English at the University of Idaho and Cofounder of the Confluence Lab, a humanities-led interdisciplinary lab that studies environmental issues in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives (University of Nebraska Press, 2015), Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology (Ohio State University Press, 2020, coedited with Eric Morel), and Narrative in the Anthropocene (The Ohio State University Press, 2022), she has published essays in Journal of Narrative Theory and Poetics Today.

List of Contributors


Ashton Nichols is Walter E. Beach ’56 Distinguished Chair Emeritus in Sustainability Studies and Professor of English Language and Literature Emeritus at Dickinson College. He has published widely on British Romanticism, natural history, and the environment. His books include The Revolutionary ‘I’: Wordsworth and the Politics of Self-Presentation (Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and the edited anthology Romantic Natural Histories (Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

Peter Remien is Associate Professor of English at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho. His recent book The Concept of Nature in Early Modern English Literature (2019), published by Cambridge University Press, traces a genealogy of ecology in seventeenth-century literature and natural philosophy. His work on economic and environmental issues in early modern literature has been published in a number of journals including PMLA, Modern Philology, ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, Spenser Studies, Studies in Philology, and Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies.

Scott Slovic is University Distinguished Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Idaho. The founding president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) from 1992 to 1995, he also edited ASLE’s journal ISLE: Interdisciplinary...
List of Contributors


Timothy Sweet is Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of American Literature at West Virginia University. His publications include Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), Extinction and the Human: Four American Encounters (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), and an edited collection, Literary Cultures of the Civil War (University of Georgia Press, 2016).
Acknowledgments

The world changed dramatically as we worked with our contributors to complete this volume. Our initial outreach to potential chapter authors occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we began to receive drafts and refine manuscripts in 2020 while many of the contributing scholars were wearing face masks, maintaining “social distance,” teaching classes remotely, and enduring “lockdowns” of various kinds. Our relationships with each other and with the realm of other-than-human nature shifted accordingly.

Several of the contributors to this volume also wrote short essays considering various environmental humanities responses to the coronavirus pandemic for the Swedish website www.bifrostonline.org, exploring how this public health crisis has inspired new thinking about human vulnerability to environmental change, the messages we receive from natural phenomena, the similarities and differences between government lockdowns and unjust incarceration, how the pandemic is actually just one facet of a much more complex “syndemic,” what it means to coexist on the planet with other beings, and how we might wish to adjust our lives as scholars and teachers (traveling less, eating differently) in order to support a more just and sustainable civilization in the future.

We mention the pandemic context for the creation of this volume not as a way of “thanking” the virus for providing more time for us to write our chapters but as an “acknowledgment” of the unique circumstances in which this book germinated and developed. We would like to thank our contributors for persevering and producing learned, insightful essays despite the challenges of 2020.

The two of us came to know each other through the Ecocriticism Reading Group in Moscow, Idaho, which began in the fall of 2012, meeting monthly every academic year since then to discuss the latest ecocritical scholarship. These friendly and energizing conversations have bolstered the scholarship and teaching of all of the participants, including
Acknowledgments

many students and faculty members from Lewis-Clark State College, the University of Idaho, and Washington State University, and the dozens of visiting international ecocritics who have passed through Moscow during the past decade. In particular, we would like to nod to our colleagues Anna Banks, Erin James (a contributor to this book), Jenn Ladino, Debbie Lee (also a contributor), Xinmin Liu, and Donna Potts, and to remember our colleague Kota Inoue, thanking all of them for the camaraderie that helped to inspire our work on this project. In addition, Peter would like to thank his colleagues Marlowe Daly-Galeano, Chris Norden, and Renee Harris from Lewis-Clark State College for offering useful suggestions as we planned the book. He would also like to thank the college for awarding him a sabbatical to work on the book.

We are particularly grateful to Ray Ryan from Cambridge University Press for suggesting a volume on nature for the Cambridge Critical Concepts Series, and we thank Edgar Mendez from the press for his behind-the-scenes logistical work, as well as Cara Chamberlain and Niranjana Harikrishnan for their work copyediting and producing the volume.

There is an ever-growing tsunami of environmental humanities scholarship, and it’s easy for new publications to disappear in the rising tide. We hope readers will find this book, with its systematic historical arc and its topical breadth, to be a unique contribution to the field.