This Companion offers a capacious overview of American environmental literature and criticism. Tracing environmental literatures from the gates of the Manzanar War Relocation Camp in California to the island of St. Croix, from the notebooks of eighteenth-century naturalists to the practices of contemporary activists, this book offers readers a broad, multimedia definition of “literature,” a transnational, settler-colonial comprehension of America, and a more-than-green definition of “environment.” Demonstrating links between ecocriticism and such fields as Black feminism, food studies, decolonial activism, Latinx studies, Indigenous studies, queer theory, and carceral studies, the volume reveals the persistent relevance of literary methods within the increasingly interdisciplinary field of environmental humanities, while also modeling practices of literary reading shaped by this interdisciplinary turn. The result is a volume that will prove indispensable both to students seeking an overview of American environmental literature/criticism and to established scholars seeking new approaches to the field.

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This Companion is dedicated to our students
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10.1 Dawoud Bey, “Untitled #15 (Forest with Small Trees).” Gelatin-silver print 44 x 55 in. 2017. Copyright Dawoud Bey, Courtesy of Stephen Daiter Gallery


15.1 Poster for the First National Conference on Black Women’s Health Issues, Boston Women’s Health Book Collective Subject Files, Black Women’s Health Project folder, Harvard Medical Library in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine

15.2 An American kestrel feather (left) and mallard duck feather (right) that Lorde pressed in her original Hugo journal. (The phrase “what it means to be beautiful” would eventually become the title of a poem in *Marvelous Arithmetics.*) Journal entries, December 24–25, 1989, Audre Lorde Papers, Series 2, Subseries 5, no. 35, 1989–90, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, GA
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2019), Louis Agassiz: Creator of American Science (2013), and the Library

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A Note on the Cover Image

The book’s cover image – Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City – was painted by Henry Ossawa Tanner around 1885. Made while Tanner was completing his study with Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy, it is the first work by an African American to be collected by the White House, which purchased the painting from the artist’s descendants in 1995. Tanner’s mother was born into slavery, escaping north via the Underground Railroad, and his father was a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. They gave the artist his middle name, Ossawa, to reference the place where John Brown began his militant abolitionism: Osawatomie, Kansas. Though Tanner moved to Paris in 1891 to avoid racism in the US, he wrote that “deep down in my heart I love it and am sometimes sad that I cannot live where my heart is.” To make Sand Dunes, the artist mixed sand into his pigments, raising questions about the relation of art to nature, his painting being indexical, archival, and figural all at once. Also noteworthy is Tanner’s indirect representation of the unseen: we see the illuminations and shadows of the sun while looking at a rising moon, and the force of the invisible wind, as we look at the slanting grasses. Other forms of the unseen – this time historical – may be present here too. Might the ship, sailing on the horizon, suggest Frederick Douglass’s description of standing, in bondage, on the shores of the Chesapeake while watching “beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen,” but which were to him “so many shrouded ghosts”? This tactile near shore, these elusive boats, and this eastward-looking view of the Atlantic Ocean, orient us as we prepare to think about the American histories of environmental attachment and human dislocation that subtend US history and inform so many of our essays.