
Sarah Nolan. *Unnatural Ecopoetics: Unlikely Spaces in Contemporary Poetry*. Reno: U of Nevada P, 2017.

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Can text provide a window? Can words beg deeper engagement with a world committed to “the assumed parallel between ‘eco’ and ‘natural’” (122)? In this work of fourth wave ecocriticism, Sarah Nolan says indeed, they can. But, she adds, one must imagine a space where the word *natureculture* exists. Her recently published *Unnatural Ecopoetics: Unlikely Spaces in Contemporary Poetry* moves readers quickly and directly into the experience of *natureculture*—a term taken from scholar Donna Haraway—the place where the worlds of nature and culture “implo[de],” building on “material ecocriticism’s proposed breakdown of recognizable boundaries between natural and human spaces, objects, thoughts, and agencies” (4). Using a Frank O’Hara lunch poem as introduction, Nolan works from the foundations of ecopoetics to differentiate ecopoetry from ecopoetics, the former with a nearly exclusive focus on poetry about nature. *Unnatural ecopoetics* offers a textual experience of *natureculture*, presented initially through O’Hara’s poem about a vibrant, pulsating city at lunch hour—a meshing of the material and nonmaterial world.

For Nolan, unnatural ecopoetics delineates “extrapoetic forms and self-reflexive commentary” which counter “the failures of words to accurately express material reality” (4). This failure “foreground[s] naturecultures within the distinctly textual space [...] where the agentic power of the material and nonmaterial world are revealed as equals” (4). Definitions of material and nonmaterial are critical to understanding her core premise—“material” referring to “all physical objects and places, whether man-made or occurring naturally in the world” and “nonmaterial,” representing “invisible, emotional, historical, political, and personal elements that influence the speaker’s experience of space and translation of it to the textual space of the poem” (4). Her use of unnatural poetry is grounded in a merger of the material and nonmaterial to reveal the ways which “physical, cultural, technological and social shifts” have “broken down the nature/culture binary”—resulting in a textual space where this combining of elements can be experienced (10). Although *natureculture* is not a new idea, Nolan has introduced another layer of ecocritical complexity by using the *natureculture* perspective to analyze purposefully self-reflexive, unnatural poetic texts.

After Scott Slovic’s forward, which establishes contextual grounding for the book, Nolan proceeds through a substantive history of ecopoetics and new ecocritical theory before providing introductory material for the fol-

lowing four chapters. This organization is commendable, as the subject matter is dense and an historical perspective is warranted. The care with which she has arranged her material shows consideration for readers.

Unnatural ecopoetics offers four distinct poetic encounters with her unnatural ecocritical analysis. Beginning with perhaps the most obvious example of connection to the unnatural environment, A.R. Ammons's *Garbage* takes the Florida trash heap off 1-95 as its subject, thereby "conflat[ing] the human and the natural worlds" (26). Arguing that the trash heap represents a "space of new creations," Nolan's critical analysis "recognizes both the role of nature in the garbage dump" and, specifically, "the alterations that occur as it fuses with cultural debris" (34). This reading ultimately reveals the role of language as an altered version of itself, having entered the trash heap and emerging "covered with the detritus of decay, filth, and dirt" (34). By focusing on the textual spaces created through Ammons's self-reflexive commentary, Nolan argues that the poem fuses *naturalcultural* elements through its "persistent limitations of language" (37).

The chapter on Ly Hejinian's *My Life* explores the poet's life experiences, while the following chapter on Susan Howe's *The Midnight* provides "middle space"—the latter a mix of culture, history, environment and genealogy. Hejinian, a widely acknowledged language poet, offers a self-aware "express[ion] [of] the complexity of real-word experiences," an idea that Nolan argues "lies at the core of ecopoetics" (50). Howe's poetic expression fuses an environment shaped by elements of landscape, history, and culture, creating a "middle ground" ripe for unnatural poetics (80). Nolan's fourth and final poetic analysis of Kenneth Goldsmith's *Seven American Deaths and Disasters*, that transcribes television and radio reports of several national deaths and disasters, including 9/11, JFK and John Lennon's deaths, and the Columbine High School shooting, among others. This intentional culling of media broadcasts into textual space allows an alternate "environmentality" (118). Goldsmith's book, therefore, "investigat[es] the ways in which individuals experience the world around them" by "examin[ing] the multiple spaces that compose a lived moment" (119).

For this reviewer, the concern permeating Nolan's text of "To what end?" is answered in her concluding chapter "The Future of Ecopoetics in New Poetries and New Spaces," the crowning achievement of the book. She responds to Timothy Morton's argument of ecocriticism as "too enmeshed in the ideology that churns out stereotypical ideas of nature to be of any use" (2007, 13). If, as Slovic contends in his forward, the field "demands a more complex discussion of how we perceive [...] environment" Nolan has answered the call to relevancy (12). Where traditional writing about nature tends to keep humans separate from the very environments within which

they are inextricably tied, unnatural poetics defiantly expands environment's definition. Nolan's widening of textual spaces worth ecocritical exploration offers not simply a fresh approach, but perhaps a view toward conceptualizing daily possibilities that exist within the material world in which we dwell and extends no less than an invitation to explore what it means to live in perpetual *natureculture*.

Gustavo Pérez Firmat. *Sin lengua, deslenguado*. Editors Yannelys Aparicio and Ángel Esteban. Madrid: Cátedra, 2017. 292p.

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The sophisticated black covers of Spain's Cátedra editions always convey a classy and classical message. Further enhanced with Humberto Calzada's watery painting, *The Collapse of an Island*, with its layers of placid aquamarine ocean water rising and engulfing the interior of a stately, but abandoned, stain-glass windowed and cathedral-ceilinged Cuban mansion, *Sin lengua, deslenguado* anthologizes one of the most influential 1.5 generation Cuban exiles to lift anchor when his island, and his world, collapsed. Now, almost sixty years after landing on U.S. shores and setting up a lifelong residence, Pérez Firmat has gathered selected poetry and poetic prose essays into a volume whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

In their panoramic introduction, editors Aparicio and Esteban, using a characteristic bilingual neologism, explore Pérezfirmatian *Writinerarios*—the written wonderings and wanderings of the hybrid paths that he has travelled, always thinking that he'd spend "next year in Cuba," but always facing the reality that his place and language would forever be perched on the hyphen that sits between Cuban-American. Their informative "life and works" traces his sojourn and the shifting constants and consonants that have always been his trademarks: tensions between what language to write in, what nationality to claim, and what tongue defines him. "Sin lengua" translates as "without a tongue," but also as "without language." Despite that negative claim, what he has done with both languages isn't a minus sign at all - not a hyphen - but a plus sign.

The anthology's pluses that add to our understanding of his lifelong oeuvre include Spanish translations of poems originally written in English, beginning with his first published verse in *Carolina Cuban* (1987). Welcome footnotes disclose that the author loves to rework his poems, always seeking the precise word, as well as the precise wordplay, his exceedingly diffi-