

long. Besides Fromm's, one now sees books with titles like *Evolution and Literary Theory*, *The Literary Animal*, *Shakespeare's Brain*, *The Meaning of the Body*, *What Science Offers the Humanities*, *Consilience*, and *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*.

Fromm's new book, formed around the three linked topics of ecology, evolution, and consciousness, is an excellent introduction to this cognitive revolution. It has the additional merit of being immensely readable, the work of a professional ecocritic, stylist, and thinker who reminds us that our primary business as humanists is to keep learning what it means to be human.

Glen Love
University of Oregon

doi:10.1093/isle/isq021

Advance Access publication April 13, 2010

Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 17.2 (Spring 2010)

© The Author(s) 2010. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. All rights reserved.

For Permissions, please email: journals.permissions@oxfordjournals.org

***The Poetics and Politics of the Desert: Landscape and the Construction of America.* By Catrin Gersdorf. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2009. 355 pp. Cloth \$101.00.**

The smartly written and well-researched *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert* takes an interdisciplinary approach to its subject. Gersdorf's monograph is the sixth in the series *Spatial Practices: An Interdisciplinary Series in Cultural History, Geography, and Literature*. Combining fiction, non-fiction, and photography of the deserts of the American Southwest with works from environmental historians and cultural, literary, and environmental theorists, Gersdorf investigates "the employment of the desert in articulations and negotiations of America's cultural identity" (21).

Gersdorf draws together the metaphors of garden, Orient, wilderness, and heterotopia. Her book is organized into four chapters, each of which explores and interrogates the ways American culture has imagined and re-imagined the desert through those metaphors. Chapter 1, "Garden," investigates the economic responses to the desert in the works of John Wesley Powell, William E. Smythe, and Gary Paul Nabhan. Chapter 2, "Orient," a trope not typically associated with the

American desert but for which Gersdorf constructs a convincing argument, surveys aesthetic responses through the works of Susan E. Wallace, Charles F. Lummis, and John C. Van Dyke. Chapter 3, "Wilderness," delves into Wallace Stegner, Edward Abbey, Barry Lopez, Charles Bowden, and Ann H. Zwinger. Finally, chapter 4, "Heterotopia," explores the socio-cultural responses to the desert through the works of Mary Austin, Joseph Wood Krutch, Richard Misrach, and Alfredo Véa, Jr. Arranged according to "the chronology of the historical appearance of these spatial paradigms" in American culture (39), the chapters expand these tropes in interesting and significant ways. For example, while most ecocritics are familiar with the use of wilderness as an ecological metaphor, Gersdorf uses the works of these various artists to interrogate and subvert wilderness as an ethical response to the desert. The garden paradigm arose as a response to the collision of manifest destiny with the realities of the conditions of aridity in the West, and the paradigm of the Orient created a literary and artistic space for American conceptions of the desert.

The Poetics and Politics of the Desert is important not only for those already well versed in the literary and cultural history of the American desert but also for those with an emerging interest in the field. Gersdorf brings various depictions and conceptions of the deserts of the American Southwest together in a careful examination of how those paradigms emerged from and have, in turn, shaped American culture. In addition, Gersdorf's organization of the text allows the chapters to be used individually in the classroom.

Kerry Fine
Texas Tech University

doi:10.1093/isle/isq017

Advance Access publication April 14, 2010

Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 17.2 (Spring 2010)

© The Author(s) 2010. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. All rights reserved.

For Permissions, please email: journals.permissions@oxfordjournals.org

***Catlin's Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature.* By John Hausdoerffer. Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2009. 208 pp. Cloth \$34.95.**

The virtues of this revised doctoral dissertation from Washington State University's American Studies program include its willingness to reconsider George Catlin in a fresh light. In the end, however, the

Copyright of ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature & Environment is the property of Oxford University Press / UK and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.