

becoming “native” (in “John D. Godman and the Creation of the Ramble”), as well as Cecily Parks’s argument about Emily Dickinson’s use of swamps as a space for gender fluidity and subversion (in “The Swamps of Emily Dickinson”) provide innovative readings of both the canonical and the previously overlooked.

That said, readers will encounter a variance in the freshness and quality of arguments throughout. The largest blind spot in the collection is the lack of attention given to marginalized voices, such as black slaves and Native Americans. If the goal of *Writing the Environment in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* is to extend the scholarly conversation, then it remains necessary for further critical discussion about the natural world that takes into account more than a single, homogenous American culture throughout the nineteenth century.

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***The Green Thread: Dialogues with the Vegetal World.* Edited by Patrícia Vieira, Monica Gagliano, and John Ryan. Lanham: Lexington, 2016. 306 pp. Cloth \$95.00. eBook \$94.99.**

Ambitiously conceived and admirably developed, *The Green Thread: Dialogues with the Vegetal World* is a timely and thoughtful addition to the nascent ecocritical field of Plant Studies. As the editors write in their introduction, this book contributes to the critical “shift from plants-as-lifeless-objects to plants-as-living-agents,” while it also “exemplifies the richness of the growing field of plant studies and paves the way for further investigations into the crucial role of the botanical world in human culture” (xxi).

The fourteen essays that comprise the book each present an important contribution to this overall goal, and the editors have deftly organized the text into three main sections. The first, entitled “Disseminating Plants,” contains essays that, as the editors assert, “explore new territories where the re-conceptualization of vegetal beings as active agents in social and cultural environments becomes possible” (xi). The goal of the second section, “Politicizing Plants,” is—as the title suggests—to

engage the concept of the plant as a political entity, with essays addressing questions of how the human political realm intersects with the actual vegetal world and its ecological interests. The book's final and most potentially controversial section, "Performing Plants," combines plant studies with performance studies, offering essays that promote an understanding of plants—in their roles as both cultural objects and subjects—as agentic entities engaged in a form of performance. As the editors state, the essays that fall under this category ask us to recognize "the specific comportment of the vegetal" by "looking beyond human-focused conceptualizations of performance" (xviii).

*The Green Thread* joins other recent academic studies that ask us to rethink the cultural implications of the vegetal world, including Matthew Hall's *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (2011), Michael Marder's *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013), and Jeffrey T. Nealon's *Plant Theory: Biopower and Vegetable Life* (2016). Where this book excels is in its unapologetic opening up of the critical conversation. The essays that form the book's three sections address an impressive variety of topics, ranging from the concept of plant agency to Tolkien's Middle-Earth, from Cold War Era film to seed banks, and beyond. These essays more than make good on the editors' promise to "embrace interdisciplinary and, even, transdisciplinary frameworks to interpret the complex lives of plants, including their capacities to sense, learn, and behave" and to initiate "conversations about plants that transcend the strict disciplinary boundaries separating the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities" (x). The essays of this volume are well written, richly researched, and—above all—thought provoking. While the array of subjects covered may at times make the book seem diffuse, this tendency serves as a reminder of the intellectual richness of Plant Studies itself. Ultimately, *The Green Thread: Dialogues with the Vegetal World* serves as an inviting and critically sophisticated introduction to a valuable and still-emerging facet of the ecocritical universe.

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