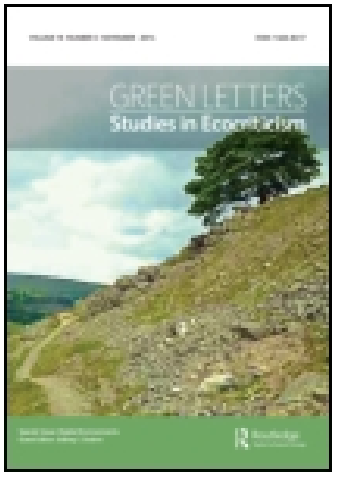

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Facing the change: personal encounters with global warming

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his identification with the dispossessed, but hardly show what Clare could do at his poetic best. The account of Edgeworth is more original, and will make readers turn to her work with new interest, but is sometimes insensitive to nuances of context. The 'intergenerational imagination' of landowners in Ireland, however attuned to the 'organic embeddedness' and 'reciprocity between landlords and tenants' that Edgeworth is said to advocate, could never have availed much against the forces which eventually dispossessed them, their estates (as Castellano never notes) being compulsorily purchased and parcelled out to former tenants in the last years of British rule and under the new Free State.

The book's argument often – indeed, generally and on principle – wants to find political hope in forms of argument that, like Edgeworth's, are 'residual', to use Williams' term (as Castellano does): they belong to modes of life and thought that are in process of being displaced. The sense of engaging with a corpus of texts and ideas that is in effect purely backward-looking is made stronger by the fact that Castellano has almost nothing to say about the major historical developments of her period: the symbiotically linked growth of the factory system and of major industrial cities, with all its consequences in demography, popular living conditions, and culture. All this appears only as a dim, ominous horizon, 'modernity as a threatening disjunction from the past' (so Bewick's image of coal being loaded onto Tyneside colliery ships is described). Notwithstanding references to a wide range of critical, scholarly and theoretical writing, the book has an unduly narrow scope. Given that the 'threatening modernity' inaugurated by the industrial revolution is where we all live now, 'residual' arguments – addressed like Burke's to the possessors of inherited acres, or like Cobbett's to labourers whose cottages have gardens with a pig-sty and some rows of cabbages – can only be brought to didactic life for us now by a critical and imaginative effort of interpretation and re-signification. The same goes for images and poems whose original location and address can have no exact contemporary counterparts. In her argument at the start, Castellano does not engage fully or clearly with these general problems. Nonetheless, the book offers some rewarding and carefully developed readings, and deserves to attract both Romantic specialists and ecocritics interested in the genealogy of green ideas.

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Facing the change: personal encounters with global warming, edited by Stephen Pavlos Holmes, Salt Lake City, Torrey House Press, 2013, viii + 178 pp., US$14.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-937226-27-5

When I picked up *Facing the Change*, I had been thinking about the inherent problems in framing climate change, considering the limited efficacy of apocalyptic visions, and pondering on how difficult it is to marry scientific accuracy with rhetorical appeal. I felt that – in theory, at least – I knew about the 'discursive problematic' of global warming: it is a hyperobject, deconstruction manifest as global crisis, an ontological dilemma. However, as I read through the essays, poems, and short stories that comprise this book, the components of my theoretical armoury became increasingly disarmed. Or, rather, my intellectual awareness about the ethical and psychological enormity of living with climate change was re-engaged at an entirely different level – an affective one.

This book enables its reader not only to reflect on the profound difficulties of talking and writing about climate change but also to work through the alienating effects of the process, for example, frustration, sadness, guilt, and anger. Divided into sections that deal with different aspects of climate change awareness and action, the book moves progressively from watching, to caring, to thinking, to the possibility of doing. 'Observations' explores individual encounters; 'Generations' deals with the intergenerational dilemmas to which global warming gives rise; and 'Revolutions' muses on its emotional impacts, both positive and negative. Many of these pieces are truly evocative: rich descriptions of the natural environment that we stand to lose (the polar bear antics described by Marybeth Holleman or the efforts to save the barred owl explained by Kathryn Miles) are punctuated by touching commentaries on the effects of environmental disaster – both present and future – on our loved ones (for example, the poems of Lilace Mellin Guignard, Dane Cervine, and Benjamin Morris). A high point, coming near the end, is Audrey Schulman's intelligent and generous reflection on the reservoirs of emotional energy that each of us possesses and hence the potential we all have to be heroes against climate change.

For all that this book achieves, however, one or two drawbacks must be noted. There is some unevenness in the quality of the writing here, for there are some notably less successful attempts amidst the lyrical beauty of much of this book. Moreover, readers outside the United States might notice a strongly American bias that borders on exceptionalism at times (though only at times). At its worst, such blinkers mean that the fact that the very process of change referred to in the book's title – global warming – will also be faced by those with far less wealth and technological assistance and far smaller carbon footprints fails to be noted by some writers. One potentially thought-provoking piece on the unexpected calm that results from the mundane action of hanging clothes on the line instead of relying on the ubiquitous tumble dryer seems utterly to ignore how most of the world's population cannot even imagine the luxury of a machine that would wash one's clothes, much less dry them. Fortunately, there are efforts at providing insights from less-privileged perspectives (for example, the jungles of East Malaysia in a piece by Sarawakian writer Golda Mowe) that allow for some balance.

One puts down this book, nonetheless, with a real sense of hope for the future. That is thanks to some careful selection and arrangement by Steven Pavlos Holmes as editor, as well as to the emotional depths plumbed by some of the writers, which enables a productive catharsis. It is also a book worth dipping into from time to time, yielding enough variety to sustain a re-reading, enough urgency in its many voices to remind us why we need to act, and enough wisdom in its insights to persuade us that we can each make a difference.

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Women in transit through literary liminal spaces, edited by Teresa Gómez Reus and Terry Gifford, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xiii + 197 pp., £50.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-137-33046-8

This collection brings together 11 essays on an eclectic range of Anglo-American writers from the Victorian period to the Second World War connected by their exploration of women's engagement with liminal spaces and spaces in transit. As the clear and thought-