Fear and Nature: Ecohorror Studies in the Anthropocene**,** edited by Christy Tidwell and Carter Soles, University Park, PA.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021, vii + 292 pp., US$109.95, £87.95 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-0-271-09021-4

Amid the growing interest in environmental humanities and the impact of the Anthropocene, the recent volume of critical essays, *Fear and Nature* edited by Christy Tidwell and Carter Soles, offers an invaluable contribution to the relatively new fields of ecogothic and ecohorror studies. This collection focuses on ecohorror in, and *of* the Anthropocene as dark narratives that increasingly represent problems and anxieties of more 'far-reaching events or processes such as pollution, species extinction, or extreme weather' (2). The contributors investigate how 'ecohorror may be the dominant mode in which we talk to ourselves about the global climate crisis and the real-life ecological horrors of our current Anthropocenic moment' (3). Although some critics use the terms ecogothic and ecohorror interchangeably, (ostensibly as both can be considered genre and mode), Tidwell and Soles indicate clearly in their 'Introduction: Ecohorror in the Anthropocene', that ecohorror and ecogothic, like their broader fields, 'overlap and speak to one another in complicated and ever-shifting ways', clarifying that the collection does not attempt to 'define a relationship between the two' (7). Rather, this collection engages directly with horror (and gothic) narratives ecocritically, following the ecohorror definition asserted by Stephen A. Rust and Carter Soles in their special cluster of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (2014), wherein horror narratives and tropes highlight human offences against the natural world, represent ecological crises, or blur the boundaries of human and nonhuman beings. Complementing existing critical scholarship on animal horror and natural disaster films, this collection is important in its focus on ecohorror across a range of media, including television, poetry, manga, short fiction, novel, and film, as well as a broad chronology from 19th century to present-day texts, drawing on ecocritical theories to explore how horror tropes and narratives can encourage a closer look at human relationships to the natural world. For as Tidwell and Soles note, 'ecohorror is not defined solely by human fear *of* nonhuman nature but is also frequently concerned with human fear *for* nonhuman nature' (5; italics in original).

Following a comprehensive introduction, the volume is then divided into four thematic parts, although multiple cross-referencing of contributors demonstrates the interconnectedness of ecohorror themes. The first part, 'Expanding Ecohorror', explores developments in the field, with each of the three contributors illustrating how ecohorror as mode reaches across other genres, particularly albeit indirectly, towards the weird. Dawn Keetley, for example, draws on

the weird genre's multi-limbed monster of the deep in arguing for a 'tentacular ecohorror' to consider the trans-corporeal 'transformative merging of human and *vegetal*' (32; italics in original), linking descriptions of vegetal-human entanglements with the cephalopodic imagery so prevalent in weird tales. Christy Tidwell translates this tendrilled blurring of human/nonhuman boundary of ecohorror as the spiral imagery of Japanese horror manga. Tidwell invokes a Lovecraftian weird by drawing on a blurring of body and cosmic horror to interpret the graphic novel's spirals as invasive 'pollutant' (53) that trans-corporeally infests both the city environment and its people. Elements of the weird and cosmic horror also form part of Ashley Kniss's exploration of ecohorrorific blurring in the figure of the corpse in Edgar Allen Poe, whose Gothic tales of live burial 'thrive on liminality and introduce spaces that transcend otherwise seemingly inescapable dichotomies' (71). Aligning environmental ethics of green burial with Poe's tales of grave, corpse and decomposition and ecohorror's 'mingling of the human and the nonhuman' (79), Kniss highlights the weird aspect presented through 'the timeless perspective of nature itself' (81). These essays set the tone for the subsequent parts that address the various components of ecohorror outlined by Tidwell and Soles above.

Part 2: 'Haunted and Unhaunted Landscapes' draws attention to ecological crises and anthropogenic disaster, with Keri Stevenson offering the sea as 'the monster of one kind of ecological horror' (91). She explores the ecohorror of erosion on coastal habitats as disanthropic landscapes, devoid of humans yet still very much alive, in Swinburne's poetry. Similarly, 'anti-Gothic' texts where the landscape rejects human histories, Chelsea Davis argues, includes a setting that 'overtly declines to engage with human haunting' (111). Ecohorror as 'the self-renewing natural landscape' (112) that swiftly eradicates the evidence of war (and other human activities), underlines a 'form of cyclical forgetting via decomposition and regrowth' that mirrors '[h]umanity's amnesia' (126) towards the natural world. Conversely, the 'human-caused accident with long-lasting repercussions' (133) is the focus of Bridgette Barclay's material-ecocritical re-reading of the Salton Sea setting in *The Monster That Challenged the World* (1957) as she explores 'attitudes toward extinction, institutional science, and environmental toxicity' (134) not only in the creature-feature itself, but in the real-world ecological disaster of the Californian lake.

The essays in Part 3: 'The Ecohorror of Intimacy' approach the question of human kinship and boundaries with the natural world. Arguing for an urban environmental gothic that 'recasts in more materialist and ecological terms the … dynamics of repression' (156), Marisol Cortez

explores the significance of the bathroom as 'the site of inexplicable violence' (153) and as 'a liminal space where opposing distinctions between culture and nature are both erased and reaffirmed' (161) in the novels of Stephen King. Cortez argues 'the trans-corporeal porosity of bodily boundaries to invasion and toxicity' (168) of the natural world are viscerally visualised within the bathroom space 'that recalls what we want to disavow' (160), problematising as it does so, the environmental issues of capitalist modernity. Focusing on 'our sometimes-violent ecological kinship with [our nonhuman companions]' (175), Brittany R. Roberts explores how elements of ecohorror underline the 'unsettling connections that can develop between "owner" and "pet" … [and the] ethical responsibility toward animal Otherness' (174) in Stephen Gregory's *The Cormorant*. The precarious cross-species kinship and varying degrees of bond between the narrator, members of his family and the unusual seabird serve to emphasise the need for humans to respect our nonhuman neighbours, something the violation of kinship bonds in the story spotlight. Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann expand the unconventional human/nonhuman relationship further in arguing for a post-pastoral ecohorror in Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (2017). The mutually beneficial 'interconnected relationships between human and nonhuman nature' (198) highlighted in the film, they argue, stems from del Toro's blurring of genre boundaries, merging fairy tale pastoral with the monster movie to create a post-pastoral ecohorror 'that combines the ecology of the pastoral with the horror of exploitation' (196). Underlining the monstrous exploitation of 'the gendered, sexualised, and racialized Other' (198) alongside nature, the film transforms ecohorror tropes into a post-pastoral vision that 'suggests something new' in how we 'rethink our relationship with the natural world' (209).

Part 4: 'Being Prey, Being Food' includes essays that consider the concept of animal kinship through the inversion of human power dynamics. The remaining essays focus on the ecohorror of humans violating the natural world, figuring the humans as monstrous and deserving of their fate as stressed by the animals in visual media. Kristen Angierski explores how the South Korean Netflix film, *Okja* (2017) satirically critiques the global environmental devastation caused by factory farming and the political responses to animal rights movements. The anti-pastoral ecohorror of the film, she argues, 'highlights the links between animal cruelty and sexual violence' (221), and placing the rights of farmed animals within our nonhuman kinships, as the eponymous pet pig is abducted, victimised, and tortured by the corporate agribusiness. Sharon Sharp makes a case for ecohorror scholarship to consider 'the exploitation of nonhuman animal labor' (238) both on- and off-screen in her examination of the CBS television series,

Zoo (2015-17). The narrative's premise that '[a]nthropogenic causes of environmental destruction' (240) incite an animal rebellion that see them 'work together to better prey on humans' (241) as ecohorror that highlights human-animal relationships, Sharp argues, is 'undermined further by the real-life horrors of animal labor on which *Zoo* depended' (252). Carter Soles completes the section and volume with an ecofeminist reading of race and gender in *The Shallows* (2016). Focusing on the instances of whiteness in this and other shark movies, Soles demonstrates how both human protagonist and shark are coded as masculine and white, simultaneously blurring the human/nonhuman boundaries and highlighting 'those death-inflicting qualities intrinsically possessed yet abhorred and denied by ordinary whites' (272).

This is a well-orchestrated volume of ecohorror criticism that highlights the complex interdependent relationship of human and nonhuman that these essays call into focus. As this collection asserts, ecohorror 'has the potential to reinforce our fears and estrange us further from the nonhuman world' (14), but it also allows us to see the ways in which we are interdependent. Scholars of (eco)gothic, (eco)horror, and ecocriticism will find this volume foundational, while researchers interested in environmental humanities will also want to add this book to their reference library.

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