

Paige Tovey, *The Transatlantic Eco-Romanticism of Gary Snyder*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 244. £69.99. ISBN 9781349464746.

The growing field of transatlantic literary studies explores the ways in which the different national cultures of the Atlantic rim, previously conceived as distinct and bounded, are in fact mutually constituted through Atlantic networks of circulation and exchange. Consequently, at the foundation of much contemporary transatlantic studies is the image of an Atlantic world which is significantly more than the sum of the nation-states which comprise it. Palgrave's series *The New Urban Atlantic* edited by Elizabeth A. Fay, seeks to provide a multi-disciplinary and historical picture of the Circum-Atlantic world from the early Colonial period to the present day. The fourth title in the series, Paige Tovey's *The Transatlantic Eco-Romanticism of Gary Snyder*, sets itself the complex task of linking the work of Pulitzer Prize-winning contemporary poet Gary Snyder to the poetic precedents of British Romanticism. She draws a line of literary descent from English Romantic poetry in the form of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Blake, through the work of the American Transcendentalists and Modernist poetic innovators such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, all the way to Snyder's eco-poetic vision. In this narrative, Snyder is cast as a post-Romantic ecopoet whose body of work reflects a 'reignited, reformed and current Romanticism' (14).

Tovey's monograph does not follow in the footsteps of explicitly eco-critical studies of Snyder which focus on the philosophical and moral aspects of his ecological literary vision. Instead she emphasises Snyder's Romantic poetic inheritances by building on Charles Altieri's work on the influence of British Romanticism on twentieth-century American poetics in *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry During the 1960s* (1979), and Albert Gelpi's scholarship on the surprising continuities between Romanticism and Modernism in *A Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance, 1910-1950* (1987). Tovey paints Snyder as a mediating figure: between Romantic and Modernist poetic visions, in connecting Eastern and Western cultural modes with his Buddhist practice and East-Asian influences, and in terms of his choice of a poetic role which negotiates between the natural environment and urban America. In her account, Snyder emerges as an artist intent on bridging these apparent dichotomies, placing him within a distinct Romantic tradition exemplified by acts of 'embracing contradiction in order to articulate comprehensive vision.' (8). Snyder therefore becomes a composite and even paradoxical figure, interceding between humanity and nature, East and West, rural and urban, while his nuanced vision rejects any artificial reconciliation of these oppositions.

In Tovey's study Snyder can be seen to perform Shelley's poetic role of 'unacknowledged legislator', a task which is attended by familiar Romantic-era authorial anxieties about the role of the poet in his or her community, and she argues that in sympathy with his Romantic-era forbears, Snyder is a poet who consciously searches for an idiom that will be fully accessible to his readers. Snyder's formal innovations are also examined in terms of Romantic bequests, with his experiments in free form echoing debates on poetic form in the Romantic period. Through her careful and elegant readings Tovey guides us through Snyder's sparse and subtle poetry, where at one moment his poetic eye beholds an inner Romantic epiphany, and at another evokes the piercing clarity of the Modernist vision of Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams. She lucidly articulates the significance of Snyder's understated poetic devices and 'micro-effects' (84), revealing his elusive, and often unacknowledged, borrowings from English Romantic predecessors. While Wordsworth is an influence which Snyder has in fact openly rejected, Tovey successfully demonstrates the legacy of the English poet within his oeuvre.

Despite the clear achievements of her study in traversing several cultural movements and periodisations, Tovey's model of literary influence, which draws on Harold Bloom, raises some obstacles in terms of the transatlantic approach. Her poetic line of descent through the Romantics to Snyder is thoroughly chronological and represents the inheritance of a specifically Western and masculine conception of the natural world and the role of the poet. In this way, Tovey's study does not engage the more radical critical strategies which transatlantic approaches invite, principally a reconfiguration of linear models of influence and national tradition. Established understandings of key canonical writers, periods and movements instead remain intact from the separate domains of English Romanticism and American Literature. In this sense, perhaps Tovey's monograph does not quite meet the more comprehensive aims of the New Urban Atlantic series, with its focus on transmissions and connections which unsettle nation state boundaries and constitute a distinct Atlantic world. What she presents instead is a rich study of the Romantic inheritances which have informed the work of this understudied poet.

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