

**Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. Pp. 342. \$55. ISBN 9781421405179.**

**John Rignall and H. Gustav Klaus, with Valentine Cunningham, eds., *Ecology and the Literature of the British Left: The Red and the Green*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. 267. £60. ISBN 9781409418221.**

Given the current debates about climate change, two recently published books are especially timely – Theresa Kelley’s *Clandestine Marriage* and John Rignall, Gustav Klaus, and Valentine Cunningham’s *Ecology and the Literature of the British Left*. These books explore human interaction with the environment as a key site for the production of literary meaning in Romantic-era and later literature.

Kelley’s *Clandestine Marriage* takes botany as its focus and engages in the ambitious project of examining the material culture of plants for Romantic-era writers. Kelley is especially interested in the practice of exchanging plant specimens and in the creation of plant illustrations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She starts her discussion with nothing less than the definition of life, pondering early definitions of plant life as ‘neither fully mineral nor fully animal but disturbingly in between’ (4). She questions the efficacy of plant taxonomy schemes and notes significant flaws even in the accepted taxonomical model advocated by Carl von Linnaeus. As Kelley asserts, ‘botany is the cultural imaginary of romantic nature’, and the classification of plants reflects the collision of ‘the interests of individuals and collective identities’ (11). Kelley’s book ranges broadly, discussing contributions by the likes of Erasmus Darwin, John Clare, and Shani Mootoo. In Kelley’s terms, botany became a site of cultural conflict in which women could participate and in which Britain’s colonial aspirations found expression through botanical illustration and classification. By the end of her discussion, Kelley has taken up Goethe and Hegel in what essentially becomes a philosophical examination of the nature of meaning. While the first chapter is perhaps unnecessarily dense, the book succeeds in illustrating the complexity of botanical inquiry for Romantic-era writers and artists. The book is meticulously researched and is exceptionally well illustrated, with three ample gatherings of botanical art that help to inform Kelley’s discussion. *Clandestine Marriage* is an intellectually rigorous and well-conceived scholarly contribution both to the study of botanical history and to the study of Romantic-era literature. Readers interested in the confluence of these areas of study will find Kelley’s book especially intriguing.

The essay collection edited by Rignall and Klaus (assisted by Cunningham) also takes plant life as one of its major themes. In a series of sixteen essays whose early versions appeared originally as papers at a conference held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 2007, the contributors study the relationship between ecological awareness and leftist politics. In the introduction, the editors assert that both intellectual viewpoints share origins in the Romantic period, when many of those who espoused one view also espoused the other (1). The editors acknowledge that ‘poets like Clare and Wordsworth were no more aware of being Green than they were of being Romantic’, and they further point out that the definitions of ‘Green’ and ‘Leftist’ have varied over time (2-3). Even so, Klaus and Rignall state that ‘the editors and most of the contributors to the present collection share the conviction that a social and an ecological agenda are not separable or irreconcilable concerns but require to be brought together and

thought through together' (9). The collection is competently edited and provides well-researched essays that offer unique insights into important philosophical fields.

The sixteen essays that constitute this volume cover a wide range of authors, from William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge to such late-twentieth-century authors as George Mackay Brown and Alasdair Gray. In so doing, the book offers more than two centuries' worth of evidence that the Red and the Green—the leftist and the ecocritical viewpoints—are intertwined. In 'Contemporary Ecocriticism between Red and Green', Richard Kerridge surveys 'the troubled relationship between environmentalism and the Left' to illustrate the fluid nature of the connection between the two (10). With 'Was Coleridge Green?', Seamus Perry suggests that Samuel Coleridge retained a complicated relationship with green thought—as evidenced in poems like 'Kubla Khan'—that would not allow definitive characterization. In "'Wastes of corn": Changes in Rural Land Use in Wordsworth's Early Poetry', Helena Kelly highlights William Wordsworth's responses to land enclosure and argues that Wordsworth developed a Godwinian distrust of the practice because of its damaging effects. This distrust may have been one catalyst for the mature Wordsworth's conservatism. 'John Clare's Weeds', by Mina Gorji, explores the significance of weeds in Clare's writing and explains how Clare celebrated the weed's tenacity and beauty in the face of the same enclosure system that tended toward its destruction. Simon Kövesi also discusses Clare's work in 'John Clare &... &... &... Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome'. Kövesi points out that Clare's politically radical desire to reduce the differences surrounding social hierarchies dovetails with his poetic efforts to depict humanity as little more than a link in a nonhierarchical botanical and animal network of the natural world.

Stephen Harrison's essay moves the book into the Victorian era with an examination of works by Arthur Clough and Thomas Hardy. 'Graeco-Roman Pastoral and Social Class in Arthur Hugh Clough's *Bothie* and Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*' suggests that the two authors in question merged ecology and politics by using the classical pastoral as the basis for novels that examine contemporary socio-political debates. With 'Landscape, Labour and History in Later 19th-Century Writing', John Rignall examines the significance of workers who appear in literary landscapes to argue that the political implications of their status as labourers is intricately intertwined with the ecology of their milieu. Dinah Birch examines works by John Ruskin in 'Fallen Nature: Ruskin's Political Apocalypse'. Birch maintains that Ruskin's early idealism gave way to cynicism about the relationship between humanity and nature and suggests that Ruskin believed humanity needed to atone for the damage to the environment. Anna Vaninskaya then moves the discussion to William Morris as a conjoiner of both Red and Green in a way that was even more radical than the philosophies espoused by the Garden City movement in 'William Morris and the Garden City'. John Sloan suggests in 'H.G. Wells, Fabianism and the "Shape of Things to Come"' that Wells was less cynical than most scholars would argue because he believed in the 'human powers of initiative and invention' (13) that would allow humanity to take responsibility for the natural world. Sloan argues, however, that Wells found socialism and ecology incompatible. With 'Guardianship and Fellowship: Radicalism and the Ecological Imagination, 1880-1940', William Greenslade examines new-life socialism of the late nineteenth century as a source for environmental thinking.

The final essays move the discussion more solidly into the twentieth century. In 'Felled Trees—Fallen Soldiers', H. Gustav Klaus connects environmental and human disaster as two interconnected results of World War I. In Klaus's terms, 'the destruction of the green world is seen from a red perspective, and the meeting of environmental concern and socialist commitment springs directly out of lived experience' (14). In Valentine Cunningham's 'Marxist Cricket?

Some Versions of Pastoral in the Poetry of the 30s', the author connects classically inspired environmental awareness with leftist ideals. James Radcliffe focuses on works by Theodore Roszak in 'Eco-anarchism, the New Left and Romanticism' to show how Roszak's views coincided with the New-Left ideas during the 1960s that 'man's destructive domination of nature is rooted in the domination of man by man' (14). In 'A Huge Lacuna vis-à-vis the Peasants: Red and Green in John Berger's Trilogy *Into Their Labours*', Christian Schmitt-Kilb argues that Berger's trilogy contradicts the Marxist view that the peasantry must be eliminated and thus merges social and environmental issues. Finally, 'Green Links: Ecosocialism and Contemporary Scottish Writing' offers Graeme Macdonald's discussion of recent Scottish literature that hints at the necessity of combining social and environmental problems.

The two books reviewed here offer compelling arguments about the relationships between nature, literature, and philosophy. Both are worthwhile reading and undoubtedly will stimulate additional debate.

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