



Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect

Heather Houser

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This work of literary criticism argues for the importance of “ecosickness fiction” to contemporary literature. Ecosickness fiction imaginatively rethinks the link between ecological and bodily endangerment and uses affect and the sick body to bring readers to environmental consciousness. The book traces the development of this narrative mode through a compelling archive of recent U.S. novels and memoirs by David Foster Wallace, Richard Powers, Leslie Marmon Silko, Marge Piercy, Jan Zita Grover, and David Wojnarowicz.

Heather Houser shows how these authors unite experiences of environmental and bodily injury through narrative affects that draw attention to ecological phenomena, organize perception, and convert knowledge into ethics. Traversing contemporary cultural studies, ecocriticism, affect studies, and literature and medicine, the book juxtaposes ecosickness fiction against new forms of environmentalism and technological innovation. *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction* recasts recent narrative as a laboratory in which affective and perceptual changes both support and challenge political projects.

Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect Details

Date : Published June 3rd 2014 by Columbia University Press

ISBN : 9780231165143

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Format : Hardcover 309 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Nonfiction



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sdw says

"The most basic point that *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction* makes is that contemporary novels and memoirs deploy affect in narratives of sick bodies to bring readers to environmental consciousness."

Houser is interested in contemporary literary texts that depict ecosickness without turning to a causal model. Houser sees 1970s ecofiction as breaking from previous works. This is because of the "heightened technologization and medicalization of the bodies." She asks, "how do interventions into the very stuff of life make us *feel*? And how do those feelings reconfigure environmental and biomedical ethics and politics? What interests me are authors who approach these questions without using causality as motivating logic." She suggests that emotion as much if not more than empiricism brings us to awareness and consciousness.

Chapters look at rural memoirs of HIV/AIDS, *Infinite Jest*, and the writings of Leslie Marmon Silko and Marge Piercy.

Gretchen Lida says

Heather Houser does her homework and takes on a challenge. What is Ecosickness? It is aids, it is cancer, it is disillusionment, it is the fact that some of us are removed from a dialogue about nature. This book is a great critical resource for those looking to write about ecology and its place in the literary world.
