



The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry

J. Scott Bryson

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In contrast to nature poets of the past who tended more toward the bucolic and pastoral, many contemporary nature poets are taking up radical environmental and ecological themes. In the last few years, interesting and evocative work that examines this poetry has begun to lay the foundation for studies in eco-poetics.

Informed in general by current thinking in environmental theory and specifically by the work of cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, *The West Side of Any Mountain* participates in and furthers this scholarly attention by offering an overarching theoretical framework with which to approach the field.

One area that contemporary theorists have found problematic is the dualistic civilization/wilderness binary that focuses on the divisions between culture and nature, thereby increasing the modern sense of alienation. Tuan's place-space framework offers a succinct vocabulary for describing the attitudes of ecological poets and other nature writers in a way that avoids setting up an adversarial relationship between place and space. Scott Bryson describes the Tuanian framework and employs it to offer fresh readings of the work of four major eco-poets: Wendell Berry, Joy Harjo, Mary Oliver, and W. S. Merwin.

The West Side of Any Mountain will be of great interest to scholars and teachers working in the field of contemporary nature poetry. It is recommended for nature-writing courses as well as classes dealing with 20th-century poetry, contemporary literary criticism, and environmental theory.

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