

Book Reviews

THE ART AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE GARDEN. By David Fenner and Ethan Fenner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. 392 pp.

David Fenner and Ethan Fenner's *The Art and Philosophy of the Garden* offers a comprehensive and thoughtful exploration of the garden as a cultural artifact and an aesthetic phenomenon. The authors blend ecology, philosophy, and art theory to present gardens as both a cultivated space and an aesthetic "object" in its own right. Above all, the book is systematic.

Chapter One presents a survey of methodologies by which one might define the garden (e.g., etymologically, historically, linguistically). In his acknowledgments, David Fenner writes that Mara Miller's *The Garden as an Art* (a book which inspired this project and is extensively cited) "largely had to invent the discussions" (vii) regarding gardens in contemporary scholarship. The framework for considerations of the garden and questions about the garden as an artform presented by this book both continues this process of invention and perceptively addresses previous work, including that of Miller, David Cooper, John Dixon Hunt, Michael G. Lee, and Stephanie Ross; the considerations of Miller and Cooper in the first chapter (5-9) are particularly insightful. The book draws from a wide range of sources, including ancient philosophy, Enlightenment thought, and contemporary ecology; its discussion of gardens is highly cosmopolitan—the taxonomy in the first chapter is valuably thorough, with gardens throughout Japan, the Middle East, and the West being held as exemplary—and the principles by which it defines "the Garden" and argues for the aesthetic value thereof are carefully kept in line so as to avoid overgeneralization and remain applicable across cultural contexts. The book succeeds in establishing the garden as an aesthetic "object" with appropriate reference to a number of aesthetic theories. Indeed, the book surveys a great variety of perspectives regarding definitions and interpretations of the garden. The authors acknowledge the arguability of certain points, e.g., the applicability of mimetic or expressivist theories of aesthetics to gardens (122), the evaluation of particular gardens as works of art (209), and the garden in relation to other artforms (74-75; 322), but such points are rare. The book is at its strongest when distilling and clarifying previous conversations, e.g., the elaboration on Miller's comments regarding potential forgery of the garden and the conclusion that such a process could create a "twin" (54-55), on discussions of cognitive engagement in Cooper and Miller (95-96), and the synthesis of Angela Kallhoff and Maria Schörgenhuber with Isis Brook and Damon Young in a section on the ethics of the garden (325-326). Such moments are well-argued, leading into highly original conclusions and useful terminological distinctions which will undoubtedly influence scholarship on the aesthetics of gardens. Throughout the book, the authors' conclusions are neatly charted (e.g., 199-201; 339-341). These charts are wonderfully readable additions, and their summarization of the book's conclusions will be a boon to future scholars.

The authors argue that gardens function not only as expressions of cultural identity but also as active participants in the creation and reinforcement of that identity. They assert that "garden styles not only express the cultures of which they are part; they reinforce and reestablish their cultures, providing a means of cultural identification that spans the life of the garden both as a physical garden and as part of a cultural history" (xiv). This view aligns with the larger thesis that gardens are not static objects but rather dynamic expressions of the values, traditions, and historical processes from which they emerge; we are told, aphoristically, that "It is likely better to say of gardens that they are

four-dimensional places” (44). Simultaneously, the spatial haecceity of the garden is emphasized: “A garden is not merely sited on a place; a garden is a place” (39). This latter argument strengthens the overall thesis that a garden is an aesthetic “object” while acknowledging the uncontrollability and intrinsic change of the garden as a point of differentiation from other media. Gardens reflect the aesthetic, social, and environmental forces of their time in a fashion which is distinct from other artforms. The book emphasizes how gardens operate as powerful symbols and practices of cultural engagement. It must be noted that while the Fenners effectively map gardens as tools of cultural identification, inquiry into how gardens might *reshape* culture or contest existing cultural norms falls outside the purview of this book. Certain points, such as a subsection on “Public Access,” (186–7) or the acknowledgment that “massive English landscapes . . . require enormous wealth to maintain” (97) lend themselves to possible elaboration, perhaps with recourse to (for example) Frederick Law Olmsted’s writings on greenspace accessibility or John Berger’s remarks on the connections between landscape painting—a point of comparison in the authors’ analysis (74–75)—and property. The fact that such connections are not drawn speaks, above all, to the book’s systematicity and focus. Such moments are another promising indication that *The Art and Philosophy of the Garden* will enrich future scholarship in the growing field of garden studies. The book is ambitious, richly layered, and offers fresh insights into the intersection of culture, ecology, and aesthetics. It is a thought-provoking work that will be valuable to scholars and readers interested in the significance of gardens as aesthetic objects.

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BEYOND HOSTILE ISLANDS: THE PACIFIC WAR IN AMERICAN AND NEW ZEALAND FICTION WRITING. By Daniel McKay. New York: Fordham University Press, 2024. 240 pp.

Daniel McKay’s *Beyond Hostile Islands* examines American and New Zealand fiction writings from the early 1960s to the present day. His book offers an insightful and perceptive analysis of a wide range of literary texts about the Second World War and its aftermath, especially focusing on the Pacific theater by invoking the memory of both well-known histories and suppressed histories of the war. Through an engaging comparative analysis of mainstream American and marginalized New Zealand war literature and their narrative forms and valences, McKay foregrounds varied topics such as combat, internment, propaganda, and nuclear weapons, as well as asymmetrical power relations between nations and their effects on representations of racial, ethnic, cultural, and national identities. His incisive analysis of Pacific War literature throws into sharp relief not only the less examined areas of literary history such as racialized stereotypes of the Japanese and the fear in America, or the West, created by Japan’s meteoric economic rise in the 1980s, but also American literary works’ deliberate evasion of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their devastating effects in those two cities and the country.

In the immediate aftermath of a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government, which had previously favored isolationist policies, launched propaganda campaigns against the Japanese and used racial stereotypes to portray them as nonhumans, comparing them to animals, insects, rodents, and reptiles. More strikingly, however, these literary or cultural representations of Japanese people stood “in marked contrast to the more conventional objectification of the German enemy in wartime propaganda, which clearly distinguished between the Nazi leadership and ‘good Germans,’ a model that tended to hold true throughout the British Dominions as well” (2). Here Edward Said’s notion of the Orient or the Other is both salient and yet limited, for the propaganda posters of the Second World War depicted the Japanese not just as others in the Saidian sense but as nonhumans –