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"Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities"

Bergthaller et al.

Bergthaller, Hannes, Rob Emmett, Adeline Johns-Putra, Agnes Kneitz, Susanna Lidström, Shane McCorristine, Isabel Pérez Ramos, Dana Phillips, Kate Rigby, and Libby Robin. "Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities." *Environmental Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2014): 261-76. doi:10.1215/22011919-3615505.

The emergence of the environmental humanities presents a unique opportunity for scholarship to tackle the human dimensions of the environmental crisis. It might finally allow such work to attain the critical mass it needs to break out of customary disciplinary confines and reach a wider public, at a time when natural scientists have begun to acknowledge that an understanding of the environmental crisis must include insights from the humanities and social sciences. In order to realize this potential, scholars in the environmental humanities need to map the common ground on which close interdisciplinary cooperation will be possible. This essay takes up this task with regard to two fields that have embraced the environmental humanities with particular fervour, namely ecocriticism and environmental history. After outlining an ideal of *slow scholarship* which cultivates thinking across different spatiotemporal scales and seeks to sustain meaningful public debate, the essay argues that both ecocriticism and environmental history are concerned with practices of *environing:* each studies the material and symbolic transformations by which "the environment" is configured as a space for human action. Three areas of research are singled out as offering promising models for cooperation between ecocriticism and environmental history: eco-historicism, environmental justice, and new materialism. Bringing the fruits of such efforts to a wider audience will require environmental humanities scholars to experiment with new ways of organizing and disseminating knowledge. (Text from authors' abstract)

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