

**Loving Nature. Towards an ecology of emotion.** Kay Milton, London and New York: Routledge. 2002. x + 182pp. 14.99 (paperback); ISBN 0-415-25354-3 (paperback).

Why isn't everyone an environmentalist? Why given the environmental destruction we are inflicting, and given the joy, beauty and majesty of Nature, why do we not all weep at its passing, or interrupt our journeys to seize opportunities to marvel at it and celebrate it? Why is there nor more collective and individual passion for nature?

Kay Milton's book is a rich answer to these questions which is clearly born out of a long and continuing frustration to understand why Nature is not valued more highly, and protected more lovingly by Western society. Seeking the answer takes us deep into the realms of the nature of rationality, emotion and educational psychology, into how we learn to love anything at all. Milton argues that passion for nature is excluded in 'rational' society by our profound misunderstanding of what reason is. She also shows how that exclusion is being challenged.

The book's argument comes in two parts. In the first 6 chapters Milton examines how we come to learn about, know and love nature. She argues that we come to understand our personhood through our interactions with our total environment, not just other people. Despite this however the hegemonic forces in our society, science and capitalism, deny any personhood in Nature. This 'removes the sense of moral responsibility towards it. . . science serves capitalism very well by making the exploitation of nature morally acceptable' (page 53). In answer to the question which starts the book (and this review) Milton suggests that people who love nature are survivors of the process by which people who enjoy nature get diverted from appreciating it by other interests (page 72).

But the consequences of denying personhood in Nature, of learning not to care for it, are profound. Milton argues that there is a tension, which underlies many western moral debates, between deeply embedded ways of experiencing everyday life and nature and the impersonal modernist ways of knowing produced by science and economics. She argues that 'the emotional and constitutive role of nature and natural things has been underplayed in western environmental debates, which have been dominated by a rationalist scientific discourse in which emotion is suppressed and emotionalism denigrated' (page 91). This is built on a false dichotomy: the popular dominant opposition between emotion and reason is unreasonable (pages 5, 150). Rationality is itself an emotion, and 'it is the direction provided by emotion that makes thought rational' (page 150).

The second part of the book (chapters 7 and 8) explores how this tension is worked out in diverse environmentalist battles. Appeals to reason are used to silence opponents who can be dismissed as irrational, or emotional. But this is being challenged in two ways. First some more aggressive environmentalists are creating more space for passionate argument in public discourse by deliberately playing on the assumed opposition between rationality and emotion. By simply denying the rightness of rational scientific or economic arguments they 'create cultural spaces in which the more officially respected (because more rational and apparently less emotional) nature protectionists can negotiate change' (page 133).

The second challenge is to the way we talk about Nature. Milton tells a particularly fascinating story of two parallel quarries proposed on either side of the Atlantic. In Nova Scotia the Kelly Mountain quarry was in part blocked by indigenous activists for whom the mountain was sacred. In Harris a public enquiry into the Roineabhal super-quarry site heard arguments from a Christian Minister (as well as an activist from Kelly Mountain) about the spiritual importance of stewardship and caring for the Earth in a debate otherwise dominated by scientific analyses of GIS patterns. Clearly the theological arguments were hard to incorporate into the 'findings of fact' the public enquiry had to

report. For, in the west ‘the defence of natural beauty, and the defence of the market interests that threaten it, have to be presented in an idiom that enables decision makers to appear independent. In western cultures, that idiom is scientific’ (page 139). But simply by taking this religious stance, Milton argues that the debate about how we should look after nature was deepened.

This is a poignant and thoughtful book, reflecting years of engagement and battling with environmental causes in a world which clearly does not want to, or does not know how to listen. It is complex, and not one to attempt quickly. But it is an important book. I write this review yards from a half built laboratory whose construction was stopped by animal protesters, and while trying to engage with the rational establishment of protected areas (10% of the land surface of the planet) whose social impacts are currently unknown. We need to understand how and why this apparent opposition between reason and emotion plays out in conservation thinking. The conclusion is sanguine, Milton cannot be sure that nature will actually benefit from admitting non-market based interests in public discourses. She is convinced that we have to know how and why we love nature if we are to reduce the threats we pose to other beings. This book is a substantial contribution to that cause.

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