

only perceive in parts and . . . should not turn away from” (100). Goul individually analyzes how Montaigne and François Rabelais approach Diogenes the Cynic in relation to proliferating appetites portending the end of civilization: “the Cynics . . . resemble those urban ecologists, who try to sustain themselves in the middle of civilization. The Cynics’ . . . begging in the middle of the city . . . is also a humanist cosmopolitanism” (125).

Renaissance climate theories come to the fore in Sara Miglietti’s evaluation of Loys Le Roy, Jean Bodin, and Nicolas Abraham de la Framboisière, whose “worldview in which . . . divisions between nature and culture . . . operated in different ways than they do nowadays . . . , ‘pseudo-scientific’ as [it] may seem today, . . . provide[s] us with an unexpected resource for rethinking the problems that haunt our own relationship to the so-called natural world” (138). Vis-à-vis Ronsard’s renowned rose sonnet, Usher’s solo chapter advocates for materially oriented “un-reading” in the sense that “behind the so-called *carpe diem* motif in Ronsard’s ode there is . . . a *carpe florem* sense of plant time” (175).

Victor Velázquez scrutinizes unexpected reemergences of nature in Joachim du Bellay’s ruin-filled verse, where “a meditation on . . . human-made artefacts and the culture in which they were created . . . lends itself to a reflection on the conservation of nonhuman nature” (182). Oumelbanine Nina Zhiri’s Latourian appraisal of Bodin’s accounts of subterranean treasure-seeking probes the nature-culture bifurcation at the root of modernity within the framework of sixteenth-century “networks . . . entail[ing] conceiving of things as something other or more than mere ‘things’” (220).

Oliver de Serres’s richly illustrated agronomic reference work is dissected by Tom Conley via a word-and-image approach revealing how “the economy that goes with the concept and practice of *mesnage* has the tenor of a practical ecology” (259). Lively botanical representations in the writings of Montaigne and Guy de la Brosse receive the attention of Antónia Szabari, who identifies a mode of “accord[ing] agency to plants rather than taking the route of the forming proto-empiricist botany that avails itself of plants as objects to observe, collect” (278). A thirteen-page index completes the inspiring volume.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.26

Digging the Past: How and Why to Imagine Seventeenth-Century Agriculture.

Frances E. Dolan.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. 238 pp. \$59.95.

Getting down in the dirt, this book uncovers the centrality in the early modern period of soil, tilled and ploughed, composted and planted. *Digging the Past* brings technical

writings about agriculture from the margins to the center of English culture in the seventeenth century. Ranging back and forth between England and the Jamestown colony, with a wide range of reference in literary and historical texts, Dolan demonstrates that ideas about agriculture represent an often overlooked but omnipresent substrate in early modern English culture, one whose influence can be seen in places that range from Shakespeare's plays to the substantial literature about agriculture, cooking, and householding, to twenty-first-century discourses around organic farming and wine production. Her book represents a major contribution to early modern ecostudies and also a model of how deep engagement with historical practices can inform our own lives and ways of thinking in the twenty-first century.

Dolan's study takes shape in dialogue with recent developments in early modern environmental scholarship, with particular attention to food studies and analyses of plant and animal husbandry. She engages with the foundational work of Gail Kern Pastor, Mary Floyd-Wilson, and Rebecca Bushnell, and builds on the ecocritical writings of Jean Feerick, David Goldstein, Urvashi Chakrabarty, Vin Nardizzi, Hillary Eklund, and Joan Thirsk, among many others. Building upon the dynamic ideas of the ecological scientist Daniel Botkin, who insists that "nature is neither stable nor orderly" (11), Dolan describes the physical and conceptual labor required to wring one's daily bread from the recalcitrant soils of England and colonial Virginia. Dolan's perceptive and insightful exposure of cultural habits and patterns that persist from the seventeenth into the twenty-first century reveals how influential and unpredictable the cultural work of agriculture has been and remains.

This book's chapters provide an overview of its contents. After a short introduction that defends "hold[ing] different time frames in tension" (2), her first chapter explores the practices of composting and soil amendment. The second chapter makes a series of brilliant connections between turnips, cannibalism, motherhood, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, and the Starving Time in Jamestown. The third chapter investigates the complex matter of early modern winemaking in England, France, and Virginia, with detours into modern vintners in California and elsewhere. The fourth chapter teases out ambiguities in the symbolic valences of hedges and hedgerows in the context of the history of enclosure, many versions of the story of Sleeping Beauty, and changing ideas of private and communal access. The conclusion returns to Jamestown to read closely how English ideas about agriculture came into contact with foreign soils and crops.

That orderly summary, however, does not do justice to Dolan's wide range of reference, her acute analytical prose, or her often witty transitions between early modern and twenty-first century ideas about humans and soil. Building on the "humus-human connection" (14), she draws together agricultural and cultural practices. Composting, in her persuasive reading, becomes a pungent metaphor for the process that it physically describes, a literal decomposition that also entails "systematically collecting, ripening, and using" (39) decayed matter. Books as well as crops emerge from

the practice of textual and physical “recycling” (38). As a model of “the dirty work of transformation” (43), composting becomes for Dolan a way to rethink cultural and agricultural production. Consuming food, in her analysis, draws out uncomfortable connections between eating, local environments, the darker side of Mother Earth, and early modern stories of child cannibalism in and beyond Shakespeare. Surprising insights about English wine, the double-faced nature of hedges and hedgerows, and Jamestown as agricultural frontier also populate this lively study.

As ecocriticism matures and expands in early modern studies, it will be especially valuable to rely upon a book that gracefully spans both sides of the historicism-presentism debate, that reads early modern agricultural manuals and twenty-first-century organic winemakers’ brochures as clearly as Shakespeare’s plays, and that demonstrates by example how to bring early modern texts into contemporary debates.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.27

Green Worlds in Early Modern Italy: Art and the Verdant Earth.

Karen Hope Goodchild, April Oettinger, and Leopoldine Prosperetti, eds.
Visual and Material Culture, 1300–1700 11. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 286 pp. €109.

With a few exceptions, art history has been slow to discover the green turn that has long occupied other disciplines, such as the ecocriticism of literary studies or the topics of environmental history. The theme of verdancy appears in art historical analyses, but primarily in the service of interpreting pastoral iconography or so-called pure landscape. *Green Worlds in Early Modern Italy* aims to refocus our view on the predominance of poetic viridescence in art. This book is not about villas, garden design, botanical illustration, or landscape history, though these invariably factor into each chapter. Instead, *Green Worlds* considers verdancy as an expressive, symbolic, spiritual, and creative leitmotif that informs and enlivens visual culture, revealing how deeply an ideology of green pervaded the early modern period.

Essays by ten scholars are divided into three thematic sections that present a compelling and cogent argument, succinctly outlined in the book’s introduction. The first, “Devotional Viridescence,” centers on the function of green as spiritual and mental respite and rejuvenation. Rebekah Compton, April Oettinger, and Paul Holberton investigate the *honesta voluptas* (honest pleasure) of enjoying nature as both sensual delight and as a meditation on the sacred through experiments with green pigments, the anthropomorphic depiction of trees, and a study of Erasmus’s colloquy, *Convivium religiosum*. Part 2, “Green Building,” examines visual and verbal descriptions of illusionistic green spaces and verdurous ornament. Jill Pederson and Natsumi