

von Mügeln under Jahr. I find it regrettable that Buschinger has not created a thematic index, which would have made this study a really valuable inspiration for future research on this genre.

However, since the table of contents is detailed enough, we can easily find the relevant passages for specific topics overall, and there is no doubt that Buschinger has made a solid contribution to the study of late medieval German didactic poetry (*Sangspruchdichtung*), at least for advanced students of medieval German literature in francophone countries. The publisher also deserves our acknowledgment for this bold move, and we can only hope that Buschinger's study and text edition in French will trigger a new interest in this genre among French students.

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*Ground-Work: English Renaissance Literature and Soil Science.*

Hillary Eklund, ed.

Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2017. viii + 296 pp. \$70.

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Gerard Manley Hopkins notes in "The Windhover" that "shéer plód makes plough down sillion / Shine," but *Ground-Work* makes sillion shine without being remotely plodding. The ground covered by this collection, edited by Hillary Eklund, reveals the wonders summoned by early modern soil studies, turning earth—which her introduction notes is usually received as the element least likely to provoke excitement—into a richly layered humus of literary-critical possibility, with the power to reform and expand our accounts of materiality, of place, and of temporality in the literature of the period. This first collection of essays to center on literary representations of soil makes contributions to both our sense of the historical context of early modern texts, and to our ecocritical theoretical repertoire, offering nine chapters that turn, exhume, overturn, and delve sixteenth- and seventeenth-century materials in sharply insightful, often lyrical ways.

Writing about the brown world, Eklund's introduction notes the sheer variety of soil experience: "The dense concentration of meanings within soil endows it with the signal feature of the literary—interpretability" (4). Soil—always already alive and dead, always already a product and a process, always already a mixture of animal, vegetable, and mineral—appears in these essays as a way of knowing (literally, a *scientia*) undergirding and governing the disposition of texts across genres. And the genres covered by this book—from almanac to composting manual, from Shakespearean play to Spenserian epic, from radical prose to drainage debate pamphlets—prove the centrality of this often overlooked ecological vector.

Several of the essays in *Ground-Work* make methodological or ecocritical theoretical cases for rethinking the status of soil in literary representation. Frances Dolan's "Compost/Composition," for example, points to composting as a model for knowledge making, citing the multitemporality of soil and its inclusive mixedness, to demonstrate its viability as a figure for conceptualizing the work of composing language. Rob Wakeman's account of the Chester and Towneley shepherds' plays in the context of shifting agricultural and land-improvement practices redefines relationships among ecological actors as being a kind of networked interspecies communion, made materially imminent by the soil mediating so many of these transactions. Likewise, David B. Goldstein's exploration of postlapsarian manure in *Paradise Lost* raises questions not just about the recuperative properties of a monist materiality, but about the way filth and waste might be converted to something fertile—a mirror perhaps for the renovative project of literature itself.

Other essays in the collection probe the ways digging into soil and its often vexed representation reveals the tension between the material and the figurative, especially in the national and nationalist context of early modern Britain. Tamsin Badcoe's chapter on Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* explores the ways soil discourses within husbandry and nationalist myth combine to create a subtle sense of environmental vulnerability. Bonnie Lander Johnson's treatment of Shakespeare's *Richard II* meditates on both the historical and political availability of soil for interpretation (a duality suggested by almanackic accounts of soil), and on the strategic mobilization of soil for both programs. In a similar vein, Randall Martin looks at *Henry IV* to consider the early modern instrumentalization of soil as national agrarian resource and—via the production of saltpeter for military application—as a component in the "ecologically unsustainable conquest of the earth" (147).

Meanwhile, other essays attend to the implications of soil for parsing the relationship between metaphor and materiality. Lindsay Ann Reid's innovative reading of book 3 of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* reimagines the famously uneasy enmeshment of body and vegetation, made all the more uneasy by its refusal to map neatly onto a sanitizing allegory. Keith Botelho's reading of Gerrard Winstanley takes up the challenge posed by the Reformer to collapse the distinction between material and spiritual endeavor as pertains to the ground and (contested) ownership. And Eklund's own chapter on seventeenth-century wetlands reclamation and Richard Brome's *The Sparagus Garden* points to the irreducible losses, both ecological and cultural, created by the war on wetlands.

At the end of her introduction, Eklund remarks the preliminary quality of this groundbreaking work and invites future investigations of soil; I hope many accept the exciting invitation issued by this generous and generative collection.

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