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David Lombard, *Techno-Thoreau: Aesthetics, Ecology and the Capitalocene* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), 91 pp.

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David Lombard's *Techno-Thoreau: Aesthetics, Ecology and the Capitalocene* provides a contemporary outline of how the Thoreauvian foundations of environmentalism still remain relevant in the age of capitalism and the Anthropocene. The central idea that Lombard's book orbits is the interconnectedness of nature and culture. The author's return to the basis of environmental thought in his discussions feeds the very root from which ecocritical studies have emerged. The book, therefore, strongly calls to mind the intricate relations between the past and the present, not only in literary and philosophical terms in the broadest sense, but in ecocritical, technological, and political terms as well.

The initial chapter, "Thoreau and the Techno-natural Landscape," presents the author's view of Thoreau's ecophilosophy as a means of reconciliation between the idealistic and the empirical within "natural and technological landscapes, objects and situations" (7). Lombard argues that "there is a connection between the self, human senses, and the environment" (10). Drawing links between toxicity and Thoreau's emphasis on the sublime, he problematizes the ecocritical negligence of the concept of the eco-sublime, questions the idealization of nature as a self-contained entity that is perceived as separate from the human realm, and underlines the inextricability of the aesthetic and the toxic.

The following chapters deepen Lombard's arguments. In "Deconstructing the Natural Sublime," the author starts by opening to discussion the various known definitions of "wilderness" by referring to its "sublime" qualities. He presents a critique of how the concept has come to be associated with "otherness." Pointing out that Edmund Burke's approach to sublime still segregates the divine natural landscape from humankind, Lombard critically questions David Abram's views on the concept of the "more-than-human." Then, he ties these critiques with his analysis of 19th-century transcendentalism, viewing the sublime as an aesthetic concept, in Emersonian and Whitmanesque terms. The author concludes this chapter by noting that Ralph Waldo Emerson's and Walt Whitman's understanding of "wholeness" is more progressive than primitive or romanticized and that they have embraced a notion of interconnectedness that revalues the aesthetic in what we currently come to think of as toxic and detrimental. Those links woven in this chapter form a metaphorical bridge between the origins of environmental thought and its current premises.

In the third chapter, “Thoreau, Capitalism and the Technological Sublime,” Lombard scrutinizes Thoreauvian texts “alluding to the technological sublime and the metaphorical toxicity of landscapes and situations” (35). For Lombard, Thoreau follows a poetic language model that is similar to what was proposed by Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, which shows the playfulness between the empirical perception and the subjective imagination of the writer (42-43). It is also important here to note that Lombard is well aware of the necessity to make a distinction between the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene in reading Thoreau, but he does so in a footnote in order not to disrupt the flow of his discussion, which mainly focuses on reading the imagery in Thoreau’s juxtaposition of the techno-scientific with the pristine. In other words, the chapter’s analytical concerns mainly revolve around the depictions of technological images in comparison to the idealized concept of nature. Retaining this juxtaposition in the background, Lombard builds associations between the recent critiques of the Anthropocene and Thoreau’s *Walden*. For Lombard, the former’s emphatic criticism on the unnecessary reinstatement of a Cartesian dualism between nature and culture resembles the latter’s stress on a “capitalist conception of technology” which “alienates humans from an ecological perspective on the physical world they inhabit” (49). Broadly speaking, through this chapter one can understand the reason why Lombard prefers the term ‘Capitalocene’ over ‘Anthropocene.’ He hints at the idea that the ‘Capitalocene’ views the environmental crisis as more of a systematic problem, rather than simply attributing the problem to the greedy practices of a uniform ‘human’ figure.

The fourth and the fifth chapters, “Toxic Mechanization: Senses and Environment” and “Toxic Waste: Self and Environment,” are more firmly knotted to one another than any other chapter in the book. They strengthen the web-like structure that Lombard constructs throughout. In the fourth chapter, Lombard reads extracts from Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* and turns his attention to how Leopold reverses the human/nonhuman quandary that presumes human superiority over the nonhuman due to reasoning and thinking faculties. By referring to Daniel Berthold’s views on Leopold’s style, he concurs that what Leopold employs is ‘poetic science,’ thus breaking the boundaries between the language of science and that of poetry. This chapter mainly deals with how Leopold regards technology and mechanization as “poison,” deteriorating the sensorial perception of natural facts and breaking the humans’ bonds with their ecological sense of place (60).

The fifth chapter moves back and forth in its references to Thoreau and Leopold, while at the same time turning the reader’s attention to how Rachel Carson and Don DeLillo assessed toxicity. Lombard shows his awareness of both the conventional and the contemporary modes of reading in environmental thought when he reads Carson’s *A Fable for Tomorrow* using Timothy Morton’s theory of hyperobjects and the concept of the mesh. He discusses the toxic sublime through *Silent Spring*, which he marks, borrowing from Greg Garrard, as the beginning of modern environmentalism. He applies Morton’s “the mesh” into the analysis of DeLillo’s *White Noise* as well, especially when he blends the analysis of the toxic sublime into the aesthetic aspects evoked by the empirical perceptions of audio-olfactory senses mentioned in DeLillo’s text. The

emphasis here is again on the devastating impacts of technology and capitalist consumerism, which reduce humans to a state of “organic consuming machines” (74).

The final chapter, “Post-Thoreauvianism and Ecocriticism,” argues that the legacy of Thoreau is likely to continue as it enriches “the debate on the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene” and challenges “the accepted notions of the relationships between aesthetics and ecocriticism” (75). This claim finds its supporting evidence in the analysis of Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* and Carine McCandless’s *The Wild Truth*. Before his closing remarks, Lombard also touches upon Ken Ilgunas’s *Walden on Wheels*. Although the inspiration that Lombard draws from Ilgunas’s work implicitly spreads throughout the entire book, it is in this chapter that such impact becomes clearer. Lombard brings his book to a conclusion by underlining that the extension of the toxic sublime into a set of methods can be beneficial as a tool to overcome the Cartesian dualisms of human/nonhuman and nature/culture, which will likely help us fight the Capitalocene. Overall, one can argue that Lombard’s book brings a fresher outlook to American nature writing by explicating the relations between nature, power, and capital, and by employing a deconstructive methodology that highlights the boundary breakdowns between the natural and the technological landscape.