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 ***Dripping Dry: Literature, Politics, and Water in the Desert Southwest* by David N. Cassuto (review)**

Joan E. Thompson

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Book Reviews 303 ated how Oates intermingled philosophical queries with personal storytelling in order to problematize the very subject that he so obviously loves. While this narrative tactic comes from a fairly extended lineage of American nature writers, Oates has made efforts to push beyond the intellectual constraints of literalism, romanticism, and Deep Ecology— or more broadly, any approach that gets tangled up in the “Paradise Lost” mentality when it comes to nature. Instead, Oates wants to lead his readers to a place from which human beings might be able to appreciate the intricate layers of irony and textuality that are always embedded in the ways that we experience and make meaning out of life on a planet that is inevitably wild. *Dripping Dry: Literature, Politics, and Water in the Desert Southwest*. By David N. Cassuto. An

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. 173 pages, \$49.50/\$19.95. Reviewed by Joan E. Thompson

Golden Valley, Minnesota Dripping Dry traces the implications of reclamation through readings of novels by Mary Hunter Austin, John Steinbeck, Edward Abbey, and Barbara Kingsolver. David Cassuto provides a clear history of the Reclamation era, tying it to attempts to keep the myths of the garden and the yeoman alive long after Frederick Jackson Turner declared the frontier closed. He also argues that the recent turn toward restoration, though encouraging, has its limitations. Rather, he looks to sustainability, which would require alternate ways of viewing self and environment so that water policy might reflect the needs of all affected groups. In analyzing selected novels and related water politics, Cassuto uses various theoretical approaches including ecological theory, Marxism, ecofeminism, and systems theory. In part because of the varying approaches, the readings of individual novels vary in breadth, with briefer studies of Steinbeck's and Abbey's works. However, central to all Cassuto's readings are particular groups holding privileged positions that allow them to benefit from water's control. Additionally, he argues that terms used to discuss water control have varying definitions, depending on the group using them. After giving a concise history of reclamation and its ties to writers ranging from Cotton Mather to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Cassuto turns to the novels. He uses Jean Baudrillard's ideas regarding production, as well as the myth of the garden, to look at Austin's treatment of dams in *The Ford* (1997), which he identifies as ambivalent. While he views Austin connecting women with land as a sign of her "proto-ecofeminism," he reads the novel's ending as indicative of her "strong allegiance to Reclamation ideology" (51, 52). In his chapter on Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Cassuto furthers his discussion of social class and power, suggesting that the novel treats water as "an absent signifier" (56). While agreeing with Donald Worster that Steinbeck looks favorably on the myth of the yeoman, he argues that this nostalgia "does not detract from the book's success in subverting the hydroindustrial paradigm" (57). Cassuto continues his look at the power inherent in the excesses of federal hydrologic projects by examining Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* through "faux potlatch," based on Georges Bataille's theories. For Cassuto the monkey wrenchers' plan to blow up Glen Canyon Dam represents "the ultimate potlatch" and a replacement of the faux potlatch of federal control (81). In examining Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, Cassuto turns to systems theory to discuss "the difficulties inherent in the construction of a post-Reclamation era" (97). His analysis underscores the importance of differing definitions used by the characters on both sides of the dam dispute. As with Austin's novel, Cassuto reads the novel's positive ending as forced, suggesting the success of Kingsolver's characters is a limited victory, one that offers little hope in terms of changing water policy. Throughout the book Cassuto, who now practices environmental law, gives a clear overview of a century of water politics, contributing to...

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Research in Western American Literature: 1993-94, xant hophilic cycle forms the Decree, especially popular lace "blumenwerk", "rosencant" and " toveressestik".
Preferences for landscape choice in a southwestern desert city, as shown above, New Guinea produces an aperiodic fuzz, but here dispersed particles are exceptionally small.
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Paradise Wild by David Oates, crazy folded.
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