In *Strange Beauty*, Alfred Siewers contributes to a growing continuum of environmental readings of British literature. Though medievalists are increasingly offering ecocritical frameworks for reading Middle English romances, Chaucerian and other late medieval texts, the literatures of early medieval Britain have not yet received such environmentally oriented attention. Siewers demonstrates the applicability of environmental analysis to the early literature of Ireland and Wales, extending the relevance of green studies further back in time and space than they have previously been tried.

In exploring the Celtic “Otherworld,” Siewers produces innovative and captivating readings of this landscape trope, offering a theoretical foundation based upon the surprisingly complementary philosophies of ninth-century John Scottus Eriugena and twentieth-century Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Siewers explains the cultural, political, economic, spiritual, and cosmic significances of the geographic archipelago in Irish Sea culture and literature; as points of intersection between land, sky, and sea (geography shared with the Celtic Otherworld), the coastal settings of Irish monastic sites create a “geography of desire.” This conception of desire emphasizes presence in and empathy with the environment, putting an “ultimately beyond-human face on nature in relationship with the human through bodily, inter-subjective language” (144). Siewers next “maps” the narratives of the Irish *Tochmarc Étain* and the Welsh *Mabinogion*, investigating the ethical implications of living in Celtic landscapes; he then theorizes processes of creation in the Irish *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and juxtaposes these with processes of comprehending the *Book of Kells* and religious icons.

Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, with its four-fold method of exegesis, provides a model for explicating landscape in a manner that does not simply regard the physical world as an iconographic revealing of the divine, but as a place infused with divine energies. Using Eriugena’s concept of divine energies, Siewers explicates the Irish devotional concept of the “colors of the winds.” These “colors,” associated in literature with geographic/cosmic directions and in exegesis with scriptural events, “evokes a mysterious reality of immanent divine energy infusing the world and entwining with our experience” (109). His final chapter returns to the concept of archipelago, moving geographically outward to compare landscapes in Celtic texts with nature in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Siewers argues that these texts allow nature to “talk back,” complicating the notion that language and narrative automatically subvert or objectify landscapes.

As Siewers also draws theoretical underpinnings from Irigaray, Kristeva, and Heidegger, and finds cultural referents as far afield as Dostoyevsky’s fiction, Native American spirituality, the Wachowski brothers’ films, and Chinese Daoism, at times his text is a dense tangle of extra-textual references. Yet this complex folding of theory upon theory and text upon text mirrors the enfolding of cultural, spiritual, and regional meaning that Siewers observes in the construction of Celtic landscapes. Moreover, the range of Celtic material treated by the author expands far beyond the well-known Irish and Welsh texts noted here. Impressive in the depth of his research and reading, Siewers sets a high standard for future ecocritical studies of medieval literature.

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