

## Women on Nature

**Katharine Norbury, Editor**

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Covering the natural world in the eastern Atlantic archipelago that includes Britain, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and their outlying islands, Katharine Norbury's extensive anthology, *Women on Nature*, brings a feminine perspective to the genre, long dominated by white, privileged, able-bodied men.

Norbury's collection of essays, poems, journal entries, letters, excerpts from larger works, and even recipes reflects the multifaceted experiences of over one hundred women, ranging in age from seven to ninety-four, who lived and wrote during the last four centuries. Their writings eschew dominance and competition in favor of a more open, heart-centered approach that celebrates nature as entwined with the human heart, its elements seen not as commodities, but as living beings, each essential to the life of the whole.

The book includes what is probably the first autobiographical account in English of a storm at sea, written by Margery Kempe in 1463. Margaret Cavendish, in her 1653 poem "A Dialogue Between an Oak and a Man Cutting Him Down," wrote from the perspective of the tree; Josie George, in an excerpt from "Forest" in 2021, described exploring an accessible forest in Denmark from her wheelchair, the sound of its wheels ka-thumping over the boards on the path contrasting with the time when, able-bodied and on her own, she could touch and feel everything in the woods in silence.

But for all of nature's beauty and gentleness, these writers don't turn from its darkness: the owl's flesh-ripping beak; the loss of a beloved friend to swirling rapids; or the shouts of rage of townspeople facing police, heavy-handed security agents, and arrests as they tried to save their small, memory-filled urban forest from destruction.

Refreshing and evocative, *Women on Nature* reveals the need to mend the frayed places between nature and humankind, and rather than record the natural world's dying, act together on behalf of its thriving.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November / December 2021)

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