Chrystopher J. Spicer, *Cyclone Country: The Language of Place and Disaster in Australian Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020). 201pp. Paperback. \$49.95. ISBN: 978-1-4766-8156-6.

This book was written under the auspices of a Ph.D. at James Cook University in North Queensland. On its face, and indeed in its substance, it is a study of the way that tropical storms, known as cyclones in Australia, have been represented in Australian literature – most particularly, the literature of Queensland. Cyclones affect Western Australia and the Northern Territory but the Pacific cyclones that strike the population centres of Queensland's eastern coast are the main focus of this book. The book falls into two main portions. The first two chapters—'The Cyclone Written into the Language of Place' and 'The Naming of the Disaster'—present a fascinating cultural history of cyclones in Queensland and Spicer shows an impressive erudition on the subject, darting from Aristotle to *Moby Dick*, and from Yi-Fu Tuan to contemporary trauma studies, with alacrity and assuredness. This was for me the strongest part of this book, and worth the price of admission. I enjoyed the style of writing, which was relaxed and precise and replete with cultural curiosity. These two chapters deserve to be read and re-read, for they are teeming with asides and thick description that is a boon to a variety of researchers. The sections tracing how the practice of naming tropical storms came about was especially captivating.

The second portion of the book consisted of readings of individual literary authors; namely, Vance Palmer, Thea Astley, Patrick White (*The Eye of the Storm*), Susan Hawthorne and Alexis Wright (*Carpentaria*). As a literary critic, I found this part of the book less compelling. The texts were mainly approached through a combination of biographical and archetypal criticism (the latter popularised in the 1960s and 1970s by Northrop Frye). This mode of critique was able, in Spicer's hands, to expose the way in which the cyclones that these texts depicted functioned as moments of subjective epiphany, and mobilised the mythic assonance of the leviathan (the monster from the sea). Certainly this is true, and there can be no argument that the cyclones function textually in this way. But there was also a degree of flattening out that took place through this way of reading. The significant differences in modality, history and culture that separate the authors seemed to somehow disappear in the singularity of their storms. To be fair, this was acknowledged at the outset, where Spicer states his aims in universalist terms: 'I hope to convey a sense of the connectivity and commonality of people's search for meaning amid the meaningless (sic) of chaos and catastrophe.' (7)

I should add that this may not be a problem for many readers, but it did render the readings of the novels a little divorced from both the last thirty years of Australian literary criticism and the global emergence of ecocriticism. Nevertheless, the book is a significant achievement and a welcome contribution to the cultural understanding of tropical storms. Queensland is a significant case-study in this experience, and Spicer's book provides an important foundation for understanding it. It is a book I will be recommending to colleagues and students whose interests intersect with weather events and how these are processed culturally.

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