

KLAUS LÖSCH, HEIKE PAUL, and MEIKE ZWINGENBERGER, EDs., *Critical Regionalism* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2016), 378 pp.

Regionalism has recently seen a revival in the form of critical regionalism studies. Instead of viewing regions as separate entities or as opposing the nation, critical regionalism espouses a wide range of concepts to approach regions of different kinds and to show the interdependencies between the study of regions and other fields of studies, including, but not limited to, studies of gender, class, culture, race, media, or ecology. The essay collection *Critical Regionalism*, edited by Klaus Lösch, Heike Paul, and Meike Zwingenberger, partakes in this shift towards new understandings of the region and adds new insights into the field. *Critical Regionalism* comprises eleven essays, which are rooted in literary and cultural studies, but which also go beyond that by thinking about the current ecosystem, national borders, and anti-war movements, to name but a few. Katharina Gerund, for instance, examines women's activism during the second wave of feminism and argues that all regional movements are part of a wider global movement, in this case towards gender equality and human rights. Other articles that throw the relationship between the local and the global into relief—and also the relationship between space and time, different media, and cultural belonging—include Miles Orvell's essay on ruins as markers of time-space intersections, Rachel Price's examination of Larry McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show*, Tanja N. Aho's contribution on regionalism and reality TV, Birgit M. Bauridl's essay on a transnational American region in Bavaria, and Carmen Brosig's article on Chicano/a Vietnam solidarity.

To those who are (newly) interested in the field, Klaus Lösch and Heike Paul offer a valuable introduction to the topic, which marks the central place of the region as a critical concept in North American studies, but which equally shows the necessity for reevaluating this concept in the light of recent works in literary and cultural studies. One particular aim of the essay collection, the editors state, is “the work of revisioning those approaches [of regionalism] against the backdrop of globalization” (3). With this dual perspective—the local and the global—the editors seek to inquire into the manifold connections that exist between “the national, the subnational, and the transnational dimension in the study of re-

gions” (3). The essays in the collection achieve this aim. Taken together they point towards a development of North American studies that is no longer purely hemispheric, but that also takes transnational and global developments into account.

The essay by Amy Doherty Mohr on Willa Cather's work is a case in point for how the local and the global are brought together in this collection. Mohr discusses how Cather's *One of Ours* challenges not only gender roles in the early decades of the twentieth century but how her text also disturbs the boundaries of region and nation as—traditionally—opposing concepts. Mobility is a key word in Cather's fiction, as it allows the protagonist to simultaneously be rooted in a given space and to cross the boundaries of this space. In *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler goes from Nebraska to France during World War I. Whereas readers conventionally expect the domestic sphere to be one of peace and comfort and the war zone one of violence and distress, Mohr shows how *One of Ours* reverses this expectation and represents ‘home’ as something to escape from because of its aggression. Gender aspects play into this representation of the domestic as a violent space, and it is only in the war that Claude Wheeler is able to live out his homosexuality. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of the ‘unhomely,’ Mohr convincingly finds a sense of sexual cosmopolitanism in Cather's novel, which plays out across an ocean and across regional boundaries, but which at the same time reveals the connections that exist between the protagonist's situation during the war and his conflicted home in Nebraska.

Cheryl Temple Herr's essay challenges disciplinary boundaries by discussing the crisis of bees in the United States and by relating this to writing about bees in the past and present. Herr raises the question of which narratives of nature our present consumer society produces and in how far local geographies are part of a globally run consumer and tourist society. The essay convincingly illustrates that, while the problems bees face today are widely known, certain lobby groups suggest that contemporary ‘bee tourism practices’—i.e., shoving a certain number of hives to a given region in the United States in order to ensure, for instance, large-scale almond pollination in California—are not a problem, but rather might even be a solution to the problem of reduced wild bee populations across the Western world. Herr rightfully questions

the narratives presented by companies and lobby groups, in which the bees are as happy as could be. Her sharp literary analysis joins forces with insights into ecology and literary history, leaving readers thinking not only about the honey they eat, but also about the ways they plant their gardens, backyards or balconies, or how they view cherry blossom or almond blossom tourism around the world.

In terms of theoretical advancements, two exciting contributions discuss the intersections between critical regionalisms and North American border studies. Claudia Sadowski-Smith and Silvia Spitta both consider how border studies and regionalism have interacted in the past, with both going on to suggest that the two fields could benefit from being thought more closely together than they previously have. The most pressing example Sadowski-Smith offers for a new transnational perspective on regionalism and border studies is the case of First Nations reservations. There are several along the U.S.-Mexican and the U.S.-Canadian borders, which have been granted special legal status in terms of national and regional law, but which are increasingly under surveillance by U.S. national law (less by Mexican and Canadian, it seems). This is happening despite the special regional—and national—status

they were granted earlier. What rights do these transnational regions have, and how do ethnic, tribal, and minority rights play into the border-crossing practices that Sadowski-Smith cites in her examples of transnational regionalism? These are questions that need to be addressed, and critical regionalism might help to draw attention to these and other issues that Canada's Truth and Reconciliation movement is currently also examining from a wide range of angles.

As do all good publications, *Critical Regionalism* raises more questions than it answers. The present reader is left wondering, for instance, in how far contemporary theory is equipped to distinguish between regions and other identity-forming spaces, or how novel approaches might be needed to think regions together with cultural studies. Also, it would be interesting to examine the increasing split between regionalist or transnational perspectives in academic studies and the concomitant rise of different forms of nationalism across many parts of the Western world. Such questions were not the topic of *Critical Regionalism*, but the fact that a collection raises questions beyond its scope is a sure sign of the thought-provoking material it contains.

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