

HUBERT ZAPF, ed., *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 715 pp.

Gathering together many of the most inspiring international ecocritics all in one volume, Zapf's *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology* amps up the volume for environmental humanities; indeed, this is easily one of the very best ecocritical collections to appear in the past ten years. Readers gain not only a general overview of ecocritical theories and practices relating to literary and cultural traditions all over the world, but also encounter significant and often new theoretical possibilities including biosemiotics, animal studies, material ecocriticism, eco-cosmopolitanism, the ecologies of literary communication, and genre and media ecologies. Particularly noteworthy are the opening section on recent ecocritical theories, which could stand alone as a scintillating guide to the entire field, and the third section including essays on area studies from around the world—with the two Italian scholars Serenella Iovino and Elena Past brilliantly presenting how land and sea and textuality in “Mediterranean Ecocriticism” shape our world and our thinking in ways meaningful across our blue planet. And the essays on Latin American, Global South, African, and Chinese traditions as well as the outstanding contributions on French eco- and geo-approaches by Rachel Bouvet and Stephanie Posthumus, were some of the most intriguing and significant works on ecocriticism that this reader has encountered. As we navigate the global problems of climate change, large-scale pollution (planetary scale), mass species extinction, etc., looking to voices from across our world becomes ever more important and these essays, especially Elmar Schmidt's discussion of “authentic” native identities in Latin America, Swarnalatha Rangarajan's chapter on “New Forest Texts from Fractured Indian Forests,” and Ogaga Ikuyade's discussion of ecocultures and the African Literary Tradition,” are must reads.

To highlight just one of many absolute delights in the volume—delightful in its ground-shaking insistence on re-thinking every aspect of our contemporary culture—I mention Kate Soper's essay in which she provides a provocative and inspiring analysis of the “politics of prosperity” by arguing that seeking the “good life” of environmental health should not rely solely on repression of desire in opposition to

consumption. Instead, she argues, ecological thinking must rethink notions of “progress and development” (164) and “represent the forms of sensual enhancement and complex fulfilments that people might be able to enjoy were they to opt for an alternative economic order” (165). Through readings of Shakespeare and Michel Houellebecq, she pushes us towards a needed cultural revolution “in our thinking about consumption” (171).

Overall, the volume's structure relates to Zapf's ground-breaking idea of cultural ecology, or how literature plays a connective role in culture that links our ideas and texts to our material realities as well as other potential ways of being. Thus “ecology” understood culturally relates to the ecocritical quest for environmental study of textual ideas but also to a more fundamental role of how language, texts, and especially literature function in cultures as the activating site of interconnectivity. The volume brilliantly embodies this theory. There are five main sections: Part I, “Ecocritical Theories of Culture and Literature” includes contributions from the major biosemioticians, Wendy Wheeler and Kate Rigby, as well as from Louise Westling on Merleau-Ponty; Hanjo Beressem on “Ecology and Immanence,” Hannes Berghaller on systems theory, Gernot Böhme on aesthetics and nature; and Hubert Zapf's crucial chapter in which he delineates his theory of the cultural ecology of literature underlying the book.

Part II, “Issues and Directions of Contemporary Ecocriticism,” provides an ideal wish-list of major thinkers and ecocritical practices substantial enough to be a volume all unto itself. This astonishing array includes Kate Soper's essay, Catrin Gersdorf on political ecology and American literature; Mita Bannerjee on green Postcolonial studies; Christa Grewe-Volpp's marvelous essay on ecofeminism and the toxic body, Nancy Easterlin on place studies, the always masterful Axel Goodbody on animal studies and Kafka, Serpil Oppermann's essential ideas on material ecocriticism, and Greg Garrard's brilliant assessment of Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* as climate-change fiction that assesses more broadly the question of climate skepticism as part of the inevitable anthropocentrism that is “a definite bias of human nature” (310). Yet Garrard, with unexpected and enchanting optimism, also notes that, literary fiction, despite the “encultured expectations of plot and character” that “are inherently anthropomorphic,”

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“exhibits a distinctive orientation towards ‘alterity’ or otherness, which ensures it is always exposing its readers to what they cannot easily or comfortably think” (310).

Part III, “Between the Local and the Global: Cultural Diversity versus Eco-Cosmopolitanism,” highlighted above, opens the spectrum to a much broader array of international voices than most other volumes published in English. Also noteworthy is the first essay in the section written by one of the founders of ecocriticism, Scott Slovic, on narrative scholarship. In Part IV, “Ecologies of Literary Communication,” Zapf presents major environmental scholars interested in green pedagogy, narrative and af-

fect theories, place studies, trauma literature, memory studies, and translations. Finally, Part V moves into “Genre and Media Ecologies” and includes essays on Panoramas in theater, Ecomusicology, and environmental art. In short, this volume is essential reading for anyone interested in ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, both students and experts alike. It is a transformative volume that fulfills Soper’s credo of expanding our knowledge and seeking change in our practices, and thereby also achieving not restriction and renunciation but rather ecological pleasure.

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