

Book Review of *Kulturökologie und ökologische Kulturen in der Großregion* / *Écologie culturelle et cultures écologiques dans la Grande Région*, edited by Sébastien Thiltges and Christiane Solte-Gresser.

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Linking the notions of “cultural ecology” and “ecological cultures” in the blooming field of the Environmental Humanities, Thiltges and Solte-Gresser’s volume—which emerged from the eponymous 2017 colloquium—explores the relationship between nature and culture in Europe from an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective. While its theoretical framework mainly borrows from Zapf’s approach to “cultural ecology” (2016) and from Iovino and Oppermann’s “material ecocriticism” (2014), this edited volume adds to current debates particularly through its focus on corpora of what Glesener calls “small literature” (2012) as well as on other art forms and types of discourses from the Greater Region. What is more, the essays envision the Greater Region (which comprises Luxembourg as well as parts of Belgium, Germany and France) as an ecological, geographical and socio-political framework for analysis. Such a transnational approach can serve as a case study for investigating regional cultural representations of global concerns—ranging from nuclear accidents to water pollution and the loss of biodiversity.

To that end, the editors identify three dimensions for the term “culture”: the anthropological, which relates to the human as an individual and collective subject, the sociological, which associates human groups with specific societies, and the aesthetic, which is common in studies of, for example, cultural heritages. These three dimensions, their relation to the physical environment, and the above-mentioned challenges are

discussed in three chapters, whose titles are based on the types of media they analyse: “Discourses”, “Texts”, and “Literature and Arts”.

The first chapter proposes the analysis of various socio-cultural discourses as an entryway into cultural ecology. Olaf Kühne presents research on the socio-cultural construction of landscape in Saarland, West Germany. His surveys, run between 2004 and 2016, suggest that what is individually perceived as “authentic” Saarland landscape changes over time and throughout different demographics—which in turn can, for example, significantly influence opinion on wind turbines. Céline Schall’s essay analyses the troubled relationship between the museum, a space perceived as thoroughly artificial, and nature. Schall argues that by searching for a balance between entertainment, cultural heritage and criticism, museums tend to shy away from representing controversial issues such as climate change. They could gain through adopting a more critical stance and offering a more participative experience. In their contribution on sepulchral culture and ecology, Sonja Kmec and Thomas Kolnberger shine a light on the environmental costs of human burial rites. Their central case study, a forest cemetery in Betzdorf, Luxembourg, can be interpreted as an expression of two societal developments: first, a movement towards burial in a spiritually loaded “natural” space and, secondly, a growing awareness of the ecological costs of burials. Overall, the three contributions subtly suggest that notions of authenticity, artificiality and naturalness are continuously culturally negotiated—and that addressing cultural concerns might help us move towards a more environmentally conscious future.

The authors of the second chapter considers fictional and nonfiction texts around (perceived) environmental crises. Achim Küpper examines the ageing nuclear reactors of the Greater Region as transnational and transtemporal risk scenarios. He proposes the youth novel *Die Wolke* by Gudrun Pausewang and a TV advertisement by energy

company RWE as didactic media for teaching the complex debates revolving around risk, nuclear power and energy transition. Peter Fischer-Stabel and Christiane Solte-Gresser's contribution on the return of the wolf to the Greater Region starts from a historical perspective. Taking local political debates as well as larger cultural-historical developments around this "flagship animal" (179) into account, they consider the socio-cultural (fear vs. idealized nature) as well as geographical conditions (shrinking habitats, human infrastructure) which accompany the wolves' return. Myriam Sunnen's essay comments on the emergence of "proto-ecological" thought and conservation efforts in Luxembourg in the early 20th century. Sunnen argues that while the natural world acquired "cultural value" through these debates, nature protection often served questionable moral and utilitarian purposes, especially when it was stained by nationalist ideas. This chapter presents the Greater Region as producing a multiplicity of texts and narratives which further highlight the political dimension of cultural ecology.

The last set of articles deals with works of literature and the visual arts. Sébastien Thiltges closely examines liquid in novels as a pervasive element with ecological, political and cultural ramifications. More precisely, Thiltges shows that water and navigation can serve as "symbols of global culture" (226). Tonia Raus builds on material ecocriticism and Schoentjes's "ecopoetics" (2015) to explore the emotional and material tensions between migration and exile, or belonging and detachment, in the work of Luxembourg writer Jean Portante. Such tensions lead her, in an analysis of Portante's poetic language, to consider cultural identity and the role that the industrial transformation of landscape plays in its formation. Lastly, artist Justine Blau discusses her own collages and installations and their concern with a "mediated vision of nature" (253). Blau proposes that, beyond mediation, art can evoke dynamics of reenchancement or "de-extinction" (266) and can help us develop innovative ways of interacting with

living beings. Embedded in materialist frameworks, this final chapter sheds light on poetic language and artistic forms as vectors of meaning in eco-cultural contexts.

Through a theoretically and thematically rich approach to a wide range of topics, the present volume provides a compelling overview of ecological cultures in the Greater Region. The collection could at times have profited from more distinct references to the Greater Region as an ecological, political and social space, as well as from trimming often extensive historical overviews in favour of the fascinating case studies it develops. Still, its project of transposing what first appear as regional representations, issues and concerns to a more global context is a success, and it will certainly encourage similar initiatives, be they culturally ecological or ecologically cultural.

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