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Transatlantic Landscapes. Environmental Awareness, Literature and the Arts. Ed. J. M. Marrero Henríquez. Universidad de Alcalá/Instituto Franklin, 2016.



Transatlantic Landscapes. Environmental Awareness, Literature and the Arts is the fifth volume in the CLYMA [Cultura, Literatura y Medio Ambiente] series published by the Benjamin Franklin Research Institute of the Universidad de Alcalá (Spain). The diverse essays in this volume will be of interest to scholars in the fields of Latin American, Anglophone, Transatlantic, and Caribbean ecocriticism and environmental cultural studies and, more broadly, the environmental humanities. The editor of this volume, José Manuel Marrero (one of the leading ecocritics based in Spain and a seminal figure in Spanish ecocriticism), led a worthy effort to put together multiple perspectives on the relations between cultural production and environmental experience on both sides of the Atlantic. These perspectives are mostly academic, but also from the art world, represented in Fernando Casas's insightful essay on his artistic relationship with the Amazon. The volume shows a great diversity in the multiple theoretical approaches and influences deployed by its contributors.

The volume is also diverse in the type of cultural production the different chapters focus on. We find analyses of literature in the broadest sense, from eighteenth-century scientific travelogues to contemporary philosophical and legal texts (in the excellent essay of Thomas Heyd), canonical Afro-Caribbean poetry (in Beatriz Rivera-Barnes's chapter), and contemporary fiction from the United States (in Marrero Henríquez's and Isabel Pérez Ramos's chapters). Many of the chapters focus on literary and cultural expression that has been situated at the very margins of the cultural and academic world for different historical reasons. Some examples of historically marginalized literary and cultural production studied in the volume are animal fiction for children in English (in Lorraine Kerslake Young's essay); film in indigenous languages from the Andes (in Roberto Fornis Broggi's essay); poetry about the Chilean rural world in Spanish and "Mapuche language" or Mapuzugun (in Andrea Casals and Pablo Chiuminatto's essay); and activist eco-art from Spain and Latin America (in Luis I. Prádanos's chapter). One of the most valuable aspects of the volume as a whole is the fact that it brings these important and marginalized cultural expressions to public and academic attention and, in different ways, sheds a new light on them by putting the focus on the culture-environment interface and/or in current socio-environmental crises.

My main criticism of the volume has the purpose of reflecting on the possibilities of the environmental humanities as a transdisciplinary field. Like many other edited books that bring together scholars from diverse disciplines, *Transatlantic Landscapes*

reads more as a collection of individual essays from diverse fields than as a collective and concerted effort aimed to bring different perspectives into dialogue on pressing questions at the culture-environment interface. I believe that the role of the environmental humanities should be to enable a transdisciplinary space for thought and action in which historiographical, pedagogical, philosophical, anthropological, indigenous, activist-based, literature-based, arts-based and scientific knowledges enter into a genuine and honest dialogue to figure out practical and reliable ways to bring about the epistemic and civilizational revolution needed to respond to the Anthropocene. In order to do that, we should consider the possibility of stepping outside our particular disciplinary concerns and habits, at least at some moments, in order to unite around common socio-environmental concerns and struggles in a transdisciplinary way.

Since academic work in Latin American and Iberian ecocriticism and environmental cultural studies is much less known than their counterparts in the English-speaking world, I would like to point out what I consider two important and innovative contributions to those fields in the volume. The first is Luis I. Prádanos's "Decolonizing the North, Decolonizing the South: De-Growth, Post-Development, and Their Cultural Representations in Spain and Latin America." In this article, Prádanos places into a comparative frame two of the most intellectually-solid and politically-compelling movements dedicated to bringing about an epistemic and civilizational revolution in response to our current socio-environmental crisis. The first is the "De-growth" movement that emerged and consolidated during the last decades in Mediterranean Europe (but that can be traced back to ideas about the "limits of growth" formulated in the early 1970s). The second are the "Post-development" critiques (based on decolonial traditions of thought and practice) that emerged in Latin America in the same period in response to the failed "developmentalist" strategies imposed on the region by governments and neoliberal institutions of global reach. As an example of possible synergies between both movements, Prádanos compares the articulation of the notion of *slowness* in the "slow movement" of Southern Europe and in Andean epistemologies based on the idea of *Buen Vivir*.

The second important contribution to Latin American ecocriticism I would like to point out is Mark D. Anderson's "Amazonian Flows, Ecological Cosmopolitanism, and the Question of Material Subjectivities". In this ambitious text, Anderson (in dialogue with the work of anthropologist Viveiros de Castro and philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatari) brings into play the concepts of "material flow", "material subjectivity", ontological "perspectivism", and "radical cosmopolitanism" to provide an interpretation of contemporary Amazonian culture and thought, which Anderson analyses through his readings of texts by contemporary Amazonian poets. In Anderson's words, his "essay analyzes the roles that different kinds of flows play in the construction of material subjectivities in Amazonia." That is, identities that must be thought of as "behavioral patterns that emerge through bodily interactions with the Amazonian environment" and its multiple geophysical flows and processes. Anderson's thesis is that "in Amazonian thought, identities are conceived of as relational and mutable, since by shifting their position within flows, they may become 'other' bodies". I am not sure if Anderson's brief

analyses of poems by Amazonian poets illustrate convincingly the audacious arguments in the essay about Amazonian naturecultures. In fact, beyond classifying them as “Amazonian”, the article hardly situates the poems and poets in more specific cultural, social, ethnic and environmental contexts. However, I do believe Anderson’s article brings something extremely valuable to the field of Latin American ecocriticism, environmental cultural studies and the environmental humanities: a neo-materialist approach to the study of cultural production that recognizes the material-semiotic entanglements between human bodies, nonhuman lives and material flows and fluxes within the particular cultural-environmental milieus of Latin America.

To conclude, *Transatlantic Landscapes*, in spite of its critical and theoretical lack of focus, is a valuable addition to current research in the fields of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. Some chapters may serve as a valuable introduction to literary corpora that were either not approached yet from ecocritical perspectives or that belong to marginalized languages/cultures and deserve much more attention. At the same time, some chapters contribute to outline promising developments in Latin American (and Transatlantic) ecocriticism and environmental cultural studies.