

Robert Bell, Robert Ficociello (Hg.): Eco Culture: Disaster, Narrative, Discourse

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The relationship between culture and ecology is one of the key questions for the scholars in the fields of Cultural Studies and Environmental Studies. Numerous interpretations have been made, yet Robert Bell and Robert Ficociello's edited collection *Eco Culture: Disaster, Narrative, Discourse* offers a fresh view on the complex relationship between the two, studying it through the prism of the disaster discourse. Examining disaster through various eco-narratives, the editors divide their collection into two sections: "Mediation" and "Remediation."

The first section argues that "no ecological or disaster event occurs outside of mediated discourse" (p.xxii). Thus, in the six essays that constitute this section, the contributors attempt to examine such issues as "the reception, response, and rhetoric of historical eco-cultural events" (ibid.). From the "consumer culture of disaster" (p.xxiii) to the problems of colonialism and invasion to the differences between current disaster events and the ones from the remote past, the essays seek to interpret the tight relationship between ecology and culture through the questions of

responsibility and resistance. At the same time, the abundantly produced eco-cultural texts, as the essays in this section claim, frequently manipulate their audiences for the sake of political, economic, social, and other profits. The essays invite their readers to consider disasters both from the past, like the Chicago Fire of 1871, as well as from more recent times, including the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan, the 2013 Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, and even the Boston Marathon bombing in the US in 2013. The authors draw on these events in order to see how they have reshaped our reality, creating a new ideology regarding identity, geography, and politics.

The second section of *Eco Culture*, "Remediation," examines how "methodologies for remediating disaster and ecological discourse are incumbent upon [us], as consumers of mediated discourse and keepers of global and local eco-cultures" (p.xxii). To put it differently, the section provides "analyses of and strategies for overtly mediated cultural events" (ibid.). The essays in this section employ a global approach to the study of disaster and its influences on our lives. Through the issues of progress, westernization, colonization and capitalism, the contributors explore the ways ideologies change because of and through disaster events only to foreground how tightly culture and ecology are interwoven into each other. While all essays in this section make valuable contributions to the study of eco culture through their meticulous analyses of various TV shows, the representations of the zombie apocalypse, and generally the role of popular culture in shaping

certain images of disaster, ecology, and culture, Minna Niemi's article deserves special attention. In "Representing the Niger Delta Crisis and Challenging Developmentalist Discourse in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*" Niemi focuses on one of the largely neglected parts of the world, despite the fact that this is where "some of the world's worst catastrophes" (p.155) have taken place – the southern hemisphere. The scholar reminds the reader about the tragic colonial history of the region that resulted in "the environmental and cultural exploitation of colonized lands, a process which has left a persistent legacy of environmental degradation in various formerly colonized areas" (p.155). The essay once again demonstrates how wrong it is to make certain environmental disasters more important than others, based on political and economic conditions of various regions. The analyses that the contributors of *Eco Culture: Disaster, Narrative, Discourse* provide help the reader understand the complex relationship between culture and ecology. Also the mutual dependence between the human and the nonhuman is highlighted, as well as questions of power when it comes to the confrontation between nature and humanity.

The book makes a valuable contribution to the study of disaster culture. It will doubtlessly raise interest among scholars and students whose work is related to Environmental Studies, Ecocriticism, and popular culture. Moreover, it is a good source for general readers who are interested in the cultural interpretation of the disaster world that we now live in.

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