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Culture, Media, Art, Ethnicities**

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**Allessandra Boller, Angela Krewani, Martin Kuester (Hg.): Canadian Ecologies Beyond Environmentalism: Culture, Media, Art, Ethnicities**  
Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier 2020 (focal point, vol. 17),  
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*Canadian Ecologies Beyond Environmentalism* is a rich volume. Its objective, according to the title, is to disentangle ecological thinking from environmental activism, and this has been achieved impressively. The book contains nine essays that apply the concept of cultural ecology to the Canadian context and to distinct Canadian expressions in literature, film and other media. The division into three sections (I: "Literature and/as Cultural Ecology"; II: "Media Ecologies"; III: "First Nations Ecologies") suggests a critical focus in each part; however, this is not always clearly visible.

Four essays engage with Marshall McLuhan's media theory or use it as a

point of departure. Thus, in one of the most stimulating essays of the volume, David Williams challenges McLuhan's proclamation that, in the digital age, the ecological balance that was affected by the advent of print culture has been righted. Through his consistently ecocritical approach, and drawing on numerous examples, Williams demonstrates how digital forms of communication, rather than having a democratizing effect, lead to "a dangerous mutation in the cultural environment, where new monopolies of 'present-minded' knowledge" (p.30) actually threaten democratic values. Another interesting reading of McLuhan is offered by Paolo Granata, who discusses

McLuhan's understanding of 'forms' as applied aesthetics and as elements of "a functional process that shapes human experience" (p.92f.). René Schallegger moves from McLuhan to Postman and Nystrom in order to use media ecology as a heuristic framework for his investigation of Canadian video games. After an exhaustive listing of data on Canada's gaming industry, Schallegger investigates three distinct video games, arguing that Canadian games tend to be based on "interconnectedness and empathy", an "egalitarian vision of society" (p.133) and a form of agency that is collective rather than promoting an individual hero.

Another focus of the volume are Indigenous ecologies, which figure not only in Part III ("First Nations Ecologies") but also inform Heike Schwarz's discussion of environmental distress syndromes in Canadian Comics (Part I) and Angela Krewani's investigation of filmic ecologies (Part II). In her essay, Schwarz deals with a number of Canadian (eco-)comics and graphic novels (terms that she inconsistently uses synonymously at times, while referring to distinct genres at others), offering insight into how the hybrid form of graphic narratives is successfully used by Canadian authors for the imagination of futuristic, eco-friendly worlds. As Krewani shows in her essay, the different approaches in Canada and the US that Schwarz identifies in comics, are also discernible in film.

Martin Kuester offers an interesting insight into German infatuations with the 'ecological Indian'. His discussion of First Nations narratives from the per-

spective of cultural ecology provides a useful overview, yet might have engaged with some of the texts in more detail. The myth of the 'ecological Indian' is also at the centre of Maria Moss's well-researched and provokingly revisionist "From Within Fur and Feathers': Game Animals in First Nations Lives – Past and Present", where she questions the image of a genetic environmentalist predetermination of First Nations people. While Moss's problematization of Western conservationist policies and the "profanation of the hunt" (pS.163) within Native communities is eye-opening, her proposal of eco-tourism, with large ships cruising the Canadian Arctic as a solution, is nonetheless debatable. In the concluding chapter, Angela Weber engages extensively with Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore's creative work from the 1980s to the 2010s. Placing Belmore in Canadian art history, Weber concentrates on her participatory approach, her technique of invasive recycling and, above all, her 'inside the land' approach (cf. p.184) that significantly contrasts with European notions of landscape.

An essay that neither draws on McLuhan's media theory nor discusses indigenous ecologies is Alessandra Boller's innovative and insightful interpretation of Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2003-2013) trilogy along the lines of cultural ecology, post-humanism and Atwood's own concept of 'ustopian' fiction. Boller's essay is representative of most of the contributions in this volume by providing an innovative approach to a highly topical issue in Canadian culture and

inspirations for more sustainable ways of interpreting cultural processes. The book is a must-read for anyone interested not only in Canadian culture and its

diverse medial expressions, but also in ecological thinking.

*Maria Löschnigg (Graz)*