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Review: Recomposing Eco poetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene
by Lynn Keller

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Keller, L. *Recomposing Eco poetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene*. Charlottesville, VA, USA: University of Virginia Press, 2017. 304pp, ISBN: 9780813940625 paperback, US \$29.50; also available in hardback and as an ebook.

First enacted as a series of lectures while a visiting professor at Stockholm University, Lynn Keller's extraordinary volume *Recomposing Eco poetics* is a well-grounded work of literary criticism that can easily function as the primary textbook for a first course in environmental humanities, as it does a very strong job of introducing key concepts in the field through looking deeply at a few works of contemporary North American poetry. It is at its finest in exposing the importance of six specific concepts that inform a coherent philosophy that lives at the intersection of aesthetics and environmentalism and that aims to influence policy and culture, and does so with reference both to current trends in literary criticism and past traditions in the humanities.

These are done with such care and reverence for the intellectual discourse that is building in the nascent area of environmental awareness that the category of environmental philosophy is not a misnomer. It is easy enough to add representative works of art, drama and other humanities to this rich framework and call it a primary textbook for the general field. Keller starts with a look at scale and tackles the very difficult concept of scale variance, that what is true at one scale may not be true at larger or smaller scales, as the first of her six points of focus. As with the other sections, this is accomplished by looking at the work of two or three poets in order to illustrate the importance and relevant engagement with the concept. In her role as critic, she provides enough analysis to make the reader eager to see the works in full form and inspired to formulate creative projects for one's own work or that of students based on the perspective she describes. Such a well-conceived volume creates an unbridled enthusiasm.

Recomposing Eco poetics is well positioned within a more general context. Eco poetry is clearly distinguished from the pastoralism of nature poetry in a way that the reader has no trouble in following the rationale for distinguishing an artificial vision of beauty from the stark realities of ecology and technology. This distinction provides an interesting impetus to appreciate further the experimental poetics that are the focus of the work and

to situate them within the larger discourse of creative expression. Thus one sees the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth and more recently Wendell Berry and Mary Oliver contrasted with new experimental forms of Jorie Graham, Evelyn Reilly, Ed Roberson and a dozen others that are made accessible through strong writing and rich recourse to contemporary references. The reader is not left wondering why terms like *ecocriticism*, *ecopoetry*, and *recomposing* play such a central role, as the author has taken great lengths to clarify the ground from which these have grown and how they are different from or interact with *environmental theory*, *nature poetry*, and *poststructuralism*.

The offering itself is academic in tone and form without being overlong. The notes include several short discussions of important concepts that add to the general strength of the book without interrupting the pace of the reading. It is a serious and strong volume.

Recomposing Ecopoetics is well-suited to several academic contexts: as the primary textbook for an undergraduate or graduate course in environmental poetry (for example, within an English department), or for a general course in environmental humanities or environmental philosophy. It is also suitable for those who have a general interest in contemporary trends in environmental poetry wherein the reader would like a clear background of current developments in the field and where those trends are pointing, whether for the purpose of creating some new works or of appreciating what is available. It makes a very good primer for both what is important in the field and how to conceive of new works.

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