well deliver on the promise that Smith alludes to when he describes the pervasive textuality of his current students’ multimodal compositions “so that we can move beyond our greatest strength and weakness—a reliance upon print media to make meaning” (191).

St. Petersburg, FL

Work Cited


Reviewed by Alexis E. Ramsey, Eckerd College

Ecosee: Image, Rhetoric, Nature, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin and Sean Morey, acts as a continuation of the rhetorical analysis of environmental and ecological issues initiated by Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America, edited by M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jaqueline S. Palmer. Whereas Ecospeak looked at the interplay among language, thought, and environmental action, Ecosee explores the role of the image in environmental discourses. Specifically, Ecosee “considers the role of visual rhetoric, picture theory, semiotics, and other image-based studies in understanding the construction and contestation of space, place, nature, environment, and ecology” (2). The aim of Ecosee is three-fold: to teach people how to read environmentally-based images; second, to help them consider the production process for these images; and third, to inspire readers to begin making images of their own. As Sean Moyer writes in chapter one “A Rhetorical Look at Ecosee,” “theories of ecosee should help individuals recognize the conventional rhetorical devices and their intended effects, who can therefore accept or reject those meanings, or, once recognized, construct their own images of nature” (43). Indeed, the difficulty with theories of ecosee, according to Moyer, is getting “people to perceive, to pay attention to the billboards along the highway” (45) and then moving from perception to practice. Thus, the book is concerned with both the theory and praxis of visual environmental rhetoric.

Ecosee is divided into four parts: “How we See”; “Seeing Animals”; “Seeing Landscapes and Seascapes”; and “Seeing in Space and Time.” Yet, as the editors make clear and as the volume mimics, ecosee, as a theory and as a text, is very much about interplay—the interplay of images and text, of images and
environments, of images with each other, and of environmental rhetoric with other disciplinary approaches. Indeed, the first section considers the varying ways that we read and respond to environmental images. Following Moyer’s chapter detailing ecosee as a rhetorical theory, the second chapter looks at ecopornography and the parallels between human-based pornography and nature-based photography. The third chapter focuses on art historians and calls for them to approach images from a rhetorical perspective. The final two chapters in the section examine two visual constructions of nature: field guides to birds and the art of Eduardo Kac.

The interplay inherent in the book continues into section two as contributors question the ethics of representing animals or non-human subjects and the role of production in these images. For example, Steve Baker’s “They’re There, and That’s How We’re Seeing It: Olly and Suzi in the Antarctic” traces the exploratory working methods of artists Olly and Suzi whose artistic process emphasizes “being there” or an attentiveness to their subject matter. While Olly and Suzi do not think it is their place to theorize their practice, Baker does explore the embodiedness underlying their work, particularly because they literally travel to the animals, drawing their subjects in the moment of observation. In doing so, Baker contends, Olly and Suzi help to disrupt the way humans tend to look at animals. The animals, alongside the artists, become part of a chain of ecological interdependence. The two other chapters in the section, Cary Wolfe’s chapter comparing the work of artists Sue Coe and Eduardo Kac and Eleanor Morgan’s chapter on visiting aquariums, question the role of the observer. As Morgan asks, “how do we look at nature?” And, by extension, how does that looking transform nature?

The third section of the book examines the politics of representation when applied to diverse environments and with diverse media, including film, with Pat Brereton’s chapter offering an ecological reading of farming as represented in Irish cinema and Teresa E.P. Delfin’s chapter on third world landscape photography. In “That’s Not a Reef. Now That’s a Reef: A Century of (Re)Placing the Great Barrier Reef,” Kathryn Ferguson argues that photographic depictions of the Great Barrier Reef are creating skewed perceptions about the Reef by creating what she calls a “virtual reef” because the Reef is “in the process of being entirely replaced by its own image . . .What we are seeing . . . is all too often not the reef at all [but] a molded and marketed commodity” (226). In other words, images of the Great Barrier Reef are eclipsing the actual reef, which leads to unrealistic expectations about the reef and, in turn, causes a conundrum for reef conservation efforts. At issue is the fact that much of the reef no longer looks like its pictures, filled instead with bleached coral, anchor damage, and dead fish. Yet the efforts to save the reef are based on images that always refer to something earlier, to an origin that no longer exists. The question is thus two-fold: do we save the reef because of its “beauty,” or do we save the reef because so much of it is in peril? In an interesting twist, Ferguson
ends her chapter by debating the use of pictures in her chapter, asking her readers: Did you expect images? Did you look for them first before reading? What if the pictures showed the “non-pretty” sides of the reef? This direct address to the reader emphasizes the role of images in environmental rhetoric, because, to be honest, yes, I was expecting pictures of the reef.

This conundrum of visual representation continues in the final section of the book with chapters exploring the digital, inclusive environment of the video game Civilization along with two chapters examining the role of photography in social action. Quinn R. Gorman’s “Evading Capture: The Productive Resistance of Photography in Environmental Representation” argues that photography may be the best medium for a “representational ethics that resists the very possibility of a complete capture of the natural” (242, italics in original). Photography, according to Gorman, and in particular environmental photography, can be both realistic and socially constructed; it need not be considered in an either/or light. Yet, says Gorman, even more important is that the photograph can offer a form of environmental motivation through either animation or a visceral response.

The power of photography is reiterated in “Seeing the Climate: The Problematic Status of Visual Evidence in Climate Change Campaigning” by Julie Doyle. She argues that the visual is so privileged in environmental communication that such communication can be stymied without images. Indeed, she points out that the argument for climate change did not gain widespread attention until it could be “witnessed” with and by images of melting glaciers. The problem, says Doyle, is that such dependence does not allow the projection of action into the future. We can document what has happened, but we cannot use visuals to forecast what will happen. There is a temporal value to the evidentiary force of a photograph.

In the Afterword, M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jaqueline S. Palmer (editors of Ecospeak) laud the scholarly attention the authors pay to images, while noting that the work represented in the volume is just the beginning of environmental visual studies. One point they make is that, as scholars, we need to reconsider rhetorical theory in light of insights offered by the study of the visual and ecological imagination. By moving beyond reductive readings of images, we can start to appreciate that the effect of images is not inherent but is dependent on the creators and readers of the images. Thus, more than “looking” or “watching,” we need “to attend”(302) to the image; we must be involved. This call to experience the photograph also emphasizes another tenet of ecosee—that it often functions best at the local level, attending to local concerns to communicate environmental messages and issues. Thus, the concept of ecosee as extended in the volume works to move beyond mass-mediated imagery. Understanding that much of our interaction with nature is inherently visual (6), the authors within Ecosee suggest that the more we understand this relationship, the more persuasively we can communicate
with these visuals and the more we can begin to critique that which we see, asking not only “what is there?” but “what is left out” and “how can I add to what is shown?” And it is with this last question where Ecossee struggles. While ostensibly one of the aims of this text, few authors offer much guidance in the rhetoric of production. Certainly the authors involved do an excellent job in communicating the importance of visuals in environmental conversations and working toward the formation of a visual rhetoric, but they focus more on critiques of what has been made, published, and discussed than they do the actual process of converting attitudes and ideas into visual mediums. That said, Ecossee is a timely and valuable book especially as we are daily confronted with the “greening” of our lives.

St. Petersburg, FL


NOTE: The book is completely free of charge and immediately available at http://ccdigitalpress.org/tes/

Reviewed by Leigh Herman, Georgia State University

The inaugural eBook from Computers and Composition Digital Press delivers an abundance of information about the challenges and the heuristics related to creating compositions in the technological age. Of course, digital compositions are not artifacts that can be assessed independently; without complex ecologies—consisting of physical spaces, humans, and computers—digital composition would not be possible. Technological Ecologies & Sustainability offers the polyphonic voices of thirty-two authors, in addition to editors Dánielle Nicole DeVoss, Heidi A. McKee, and Richard Selfe, who provide insightful narratives explicating the need to consider and reconsider the ways that technological ecologies are sustained at various academic institutions. Building upon editor Richard Selfe’s book, Sustainable Communication Practices: Creating a Culture of Support for Technology-rich Education (Hampton Press, 2005), Technological Ecologies & Sustainability is heavily grounded in theory, but also loaded with practical approaches to developing writing with new media in the classroom. The book contains seventeen chapters, divided into four sections, which survey the multivariate functions of technological ecologies within learning environments in order to create a mosaic of the issues currently facing colleges and schools across the United States. Each of the four sections addresses sustaining a