



Vakoch, Douglas A. *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology, and Discourse*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. Print.

Ecofeminism and Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology, and Discourse, a new collection of essays edited by Douglas A. Vakoch, counters the backlash against ecofeminism through an exploration of this reemerging field. One of the most promising subsets of feminism, ecofeminism reconsiders our ecological crisis as inextricably connected to the oppression of women. But ecofeminist theoretical readings can be problematic, too. Ecocritic and author of *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (2004) Onno Oerlemans claims that ecofeminism “seems caught between a desire to reveal and resist the double binding of women and nature, and a simultaneous but contradictory desire to celebrate exactly this connection” (7). He pinpoints a contradiction that exists within ecofeminism’s ideology and asks the question: are women intrinsically connected to nature, and if so, is this viewpoint an essentialist, regressive ideology that undermines the ecofeminist cause? Vakoch’s *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric* acknowledges this rhetorical paradox and takes a different approach to ecofeminism. In a pointed analysis of language or discourse, each essay investigates how different social structures ranging from capitalism to patriarchy are linked to the oppression of both women and nature. Through a variety of interdisciplinary ecocritical approaches to rhetoric, Vakoch’s new essay collection sheds new light on ecofeminism.

“Sex,” “technology,” and “discourse” do not necessarily predicate a transparent connection to ecofeminism. But Vakoch’s essay collection, although varied in subject matter, is successful because of its loose definition of both rhetoric and ecofeminism. In her foreword, Glynis Carr avoids pinpointing the title’s terms definitively, arguing for multiple meanings for both “rhetoric” and “ecofeminism.” But in forgoing similar methodology, subject, or rhetorical strategy, the concise 179-page work needs more room to contextualize each respective argument and discipline. Nonetheless, the collection presents unique and intelligent arguments that uncover new avenues to approaching different ecologies.

One of the most ambitious chapters in *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric* is Karla Armbruster’s “Into the Wild: An Ecofeminist Perspective on the Human Control of Canine Sexuality and Reproduction.” Careful not to advocate for the end of spaying and neutering household pets, Armbruster’s argument looks at the language surrounding our animal sterilization policies and human involvement with canine breeding. Through Armbruster’s critical investigation into the concept of “wildness” and humanity’s harmful control of our pets’ “natural beings,” we can begin to “take responsibility for the effects we have on other beings” and understand our own power-structured nonhuman relationships (59).

In her technologically focused essay titled “Ecofeminist Ethics and Digital Technology: A Case Study of Microsoft Word,” Julia E. Romberger looks at digital composition as its own ecology. Building on Marilyn Cooper and Margaret Syverson’s respective works, Romberger adds to the critical conversation by claiming writing technology consists of “an ecology of push and pull that both influences and is influenced by the user” (119). Microsoft Word provides a useful and familiar example for most of us—I sit here and type this review using the very same program—and Romberger’s investigation into Microsoft Word’s corporate, privileged, and community-specific discourse reveals how rhetoric influences current technological interfaces.

In many ways, *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric* continues the shift toward an interdisciplinary approach in academic publishing. Relevant to many academics, its clear prose, recognizable ecologies, and varied topics attract readers from English departments to the Biological sciences. Undoubtedly, the

versatility and applicability of Vakoch's essay collection should not be overlooked. The five thought provoking chapters invite the reader to make use of its varied ecofeminist approaches in his/her everyday life. Plagued by accusations of containing impractical, high theoretical subject matter, ecocritical theory needs more tangibly applicable strategies like those found within *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric* to enact environmental change.

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