

Foreword

LUIS I. PRÁDANOS

During the last few years, Maryanne L. Leone and Shanna Lino have organized a number of vibrant conference panels related to Spanish ecocriticism. By doing so, they have facilitated and promoted the development of this rapidly emerging field while establishing a solid network of innovative Spanish literary and cultural scholars interested in learning from and contributing to ongoing global environmental humanities debates. The fruit of this collaborative multi-year effort is this delightful edited volume.

Beyond Human starts with a thorough, incisive, overarching, and theoretically sophisticated introduction that stands alone as a useful overview of both the current state of Spanish ecocriticism and its future directions. Leone and Lino's introduction explicitly points to the many temporal, theoretical, conceptual, and spatial connections among chapters that make the volume a coherent contribution, which is an unusual achievement for a multi-authored academic volume. One of the threads that weaves most chapters together entails an uncompromised critique of the anthropocentric cultural paradigm that – during the last few hundred years – has been transforming differences into hierarchies and inequalities, as well as its recent neoliberal toxic narratives and imaginaries that exacerbate ongoing processes of exploitation and extinction. As Leone and Lino elegantly put it, “If every act is political, so too is it ecological.” This claim – and the volume in general – aligns with the political ecology reminder that socioecological problems should always be considered issues of power.

This volume provides ecocritical readings from different historical periods. Historicizing the ecocrisis may be the main contribution of this book as it is filling a significant gap within this emerging field. Most Spanish ecocritical collective interventions to date – such as *Ethics of Life: Contemporary Iberian Debates* (edited by Kata Beilin and William

Viestenz, 2016), *Environmental Cultural Studies through Time: The Luso-Hispanic World* (special issue of *Hispanic Issues On Line*, vol. 24, 2019, edited by Kata Beilin, Kathleen Conolly, and Micah McKay), or “Ecología y estudios culturales ibéricos contemporáneos” (special section in *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, vol. 23, 2019, edited by myself) – have focused on contemporary literary and cultural manifestations. For this reason, the chapters that explicitly explore non-contemporary periods are especially welcome, as they provide ecocritical approaches, for example, to Baroque comedies and treatises, pastoral romance, and Enlightenment essays. This cultural historical angle permeates most essays within the volume, such as the post-humanist approach to Regenerationism in Óscar Iván Useche’s chapter or the brilliant ecocritical approach to naturalism in Michael L. Martínez’s contribution.

Beyond Human is well balanced as it features both junior and senior literary and cultural scholars. Similarly, the book includes established environmental cultural researchers as well as a number of scholars who have only recently embraced ecocriticism and the environmental humanities. Although literary studies dominate the book, its scope is diverse, including ecocritical analysis of novels, poems, dramas, and essays. The volume also features a few examples of visual cultural manifestations, ranging from graphic novels to TV shows. As a whole, the book covers a wide variety of topics relevant to the environmental humanities debate (water, waste, non-human agency and multispecies collaborations, humour and horror, critiques of the Anthropocene, eco-feminism, etc.), showing the theoretical sophistication, thematic heterogeneity, and philosophical nuance surrounding Spanish ecocriticism.

This is a much-needed volume that contributes to expanding and enriching the already vibrant debate within Spanish ecocriticism. At this point, and adding this excellent book to the significant number of essays and books dealing with Spanish environmental cultural studies that have proliferated during the last few years, we can affirm without hesitation that Spanish ecocriticism is a highly visible, relevant, and energizing force within Spanish literary and cultural studies. From now on, scholars in our field have no excuse for ignoring the biophysical context in which cultures are always embedded.