

of reference. This is invaluable even if a positive account of a pragmatist alternative remains unfinished.

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The World in Which We Occur: John Dewey, Pragmatist Ecology, and American Ecological Writing in the Twentieth Century. Neil W. Browne. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007. 224 pages, \$38.50.

In *The World in Which We Occur*, Neil Browne connects Dewey's writings with a number of environmental authors in order to develop what he calls pragmatist ecology. For Browne, pragmatist ecology is the "informed process of understanding and imagining the 'actual' in light of the 'possible'" in a way that explores the "interrelationships between human culture and the physical world"(3). Pragmatist ecology will not only provide a better means of addressing the environmental problems around us, but it will also better enable us to work for the type of democracy Dewey argued for in "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," for such an approach will continually reinforce our connection to the various human and nonhuman communities to which we belong and call upon us to take these connections seriously in our daily lives.

Browne rightly points to the importance of community within Dewey's thought and argues for the need of expanding our conception of community to include the nonhuman. In doing so, he uses the ecotone, "a transitional zone between two or more ecosystems where evolutionary potential becomes most possible. It is a place of growth and contingency, a mediational space where change can happen. An ecotone exists between ecology and democracy" (18).

He then lists several "nodes" in which ecology and democracy exhibit this ecotonal quality:

the concept of interdependence; the notion of borders and barriers as permeable and transitional; the need for public access to knowledge;[that] acts of intelligence participate in nature and culture; experience is a cumulative process, with an emphasis on the input of everyday life; human culture is embedded in physical nature; and physical nature is embedded in human culture. (18)

Because of these connections, pragmatist ecology points to the need for the integration of science, ethics, and art for the purpose of "resuscitating" democracy with environmental awareness, which is necessary given our embedment within the larger environment. Doing so also means dissolving the strict barriers between "human and animal, animal and mineral, cultural and natural, subjects and objects" (145).

Browne takes his ecotonal model and enlarges it by including the concept of patch dynamics. A patch is an ecological term for an area that differs from the surrounding area--a burned spot within a forest, for example. For Browne, the larger system becomes "a mosaic of patches with myriad ecotonal spaces" all intertwining in such a way as to provide relative

stability (152). In this way "reader, writer, creature, ice, and landscape *are* patches that together constitute an ecology in which human expression is a key participant" (153).

Browne examines 20th century ecological writing through this pragmatist ecology. He begins with John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra*, and follows with John Steinbeck's *Sea of Cortez*, Rachel Carson's sea books (*Under the Sea Wind*, *The Sea Around Us*, and *The Edge of the Sea*), John Haines' *The Stars, the Snow, the Fire*, and Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams*. Terry Tempest Williams' *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* serves as the concluding piece and functions to pull together themes Browne teases out of the earlier texts.

For Browne, these authors "create art that is emplaced" (175) and they all "render porous the barriers that impede the art of knowing" (170). Further, for each of these writers, the setting is far more than where the action occurs; instead, the places are active participants and the authors themselves are transformed by the encounter and help us to understand "ourselves and our cultures as part of the ecological processes that sustain all life on earth" (170). With such understanding, we are better able to actively participate in those activities that sustain environmental and democratic viability.

Humans and human culture are participants within the environment and they have an ethical responsibility to recognize themselves as such. Imagination allows better insight into this connection. When we understand ourselves as *in* and *of* our environment, we take up the actual in light of the possible differently than we would if we take ourselves to be isolated. For Browne, this is the method of turning from despair to "hope, wonder, and activity" (185).

Browne's work succeeds in a number of ways. He has put together a book that is scholarly, readable, and ecotonal. By bringing together the philosophy of John Dewey and a number of environmental authors, he has created a text rich with possibilities for future development, one that invites inquiry into all elements that make us human, including those too often overlooked as belonging to a separate sphere.

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John Dewey Between Pragmatism and Constructivism. Hickman, Larry A., Stefan Neubert, and Kersten Reich, eds. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. 276 pages, \$55.00

A marriage of Pragmatism with social constructivism seems a promising pairing, with Dewey's former colleague, George Herbert Mead, an influential go-between or matchmaker. Larry Hickman has suggested that "Dewey developed his own form of constructivism," while Dewey's call for reconstruction in philosophy and his focus on knowledge as a transactional process melds well with aspects of social construction—all share a dynamic, contingent model of knowledge and action.

But the devil is in the details, and the effort to juxtapose Dewey's classical Pragmatism with Interactive Constructivism, the thrust of *John Dewey Between Pragmatism and Constructivism*, while at times displaying the hoped-for hybrid vigor, also struggles through familiar debates over post-modernism's linguistic turn, degrees of cognitive relativism, and constructivism's frequent privileging of discourse over experience and material context.