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Part Four

Transdisciplinary Contexts of a Cultural Ecology of Literature

As has been seen, cultural ecology, both as dimension of critical theory and feature of literary process, cannot be contained within existing categories of language and discourse. Instead, it always moves between and beyond them as a transformative textual-discursive principle which fluidifies fixed concepts and transgresses closed binaries of thought and imagination. As a dynamic-relational rather than systemic-logocentric principle of critical thought and imaginative production, cultural ecology has to do with clusters of relationships and differences, in which former exclusionary binaries are replaced by interactive domains of connectivity-in-diversity, whose poles are constantly influencing and mutually transforming each other.

This transformative dynamics of cultural ecology is related in the triadic model to individual texts and artifacts as complex self-reflexive models of those relationships. In the following, I am extending the scope of attention to a wider range of transdisciplinary domains, which are characteristic of the ecological potential and productivity of literature beyond single texts and across periods and cultures. Thereby, I will focus not on isolated concepts but on patterns of relational polarities, in which the in-between status and the mutually defining transition between the constitutive terms rather than any single semantic reference domains, are foregrounded. This will help to place the approach of a cultural ecology of literature within a number of widely discussed frameworks of ecocultural debates in order to demonstrate and further differentiate its transdisciplinary potential as a generative paradigm of literary and cultural studies.

These relational polarities do not follow a traditional binary logic but a transdisciplinary thinking in complexity, which is based on the “nonseparability” and fundamental “indeterminism” that characterize ecological processes from the physical microlevel to the organic and ecocultural macrolevels (Nicolescu 17–19). This thinking in complexity extends the binary logic of mutually exclusive contradictories toward a logic of the “included middle,” which associates opposite terms in nonlinear correlations interacting on always new emergent levels: “The tension between contradictories builds a unity that includes and goes beyond the sum of the two terms” (Nicolescu 29–30). Transdisciplinarity in this sense “concerns that which is at once between the disciplines, across different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines,” exploring in-between spaces of knowledge that are however not empty but on the contrary, are “full of all potentialities” (Nicolescu 44).