



Zoos in Postmodernism: Signs & Stimulation

By Stephen H. SPOTTE.

Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison, 2006.

Hardback/Cloth. Book Condition: New. 1st Edition. 208pp . [In

stock in Australia, for immediate delivery] In his provocative new

book, Zoos in Postmodernism: Signs and Simulation, marine

biologist Stephen Spotte lumps together public aquariums and

zoological parks (which he collectively calls zoos) and treats

them as cultural derivatives assessable using semiotics (the

study of signs and their meanings) and Baudrillard's models of

simulation. He concludes that only modernist zoos can exist in

postmodern times, making captive animal displays

anachronistic. Today's zoos are thus reminiscent of an era

generally agreed to have ended with the 1950s. Unable to evolve

and compete with contemporary entertainments, they can only

be spectacles viewed passively. Zoos in Postmodernism offers a

startling new perspective in which animals are reduced to

secondary status by their own images. Spotte argues that zoos

can never be representative of Nature, partly because wildness,

or the Other', exists separately from humankind. The sign,

having been decoupled from Nature (its referent), transforms

zoo animals into semiotically real objects, their status as living

beings unable to impart to them a greater reality. Strangely,

nothing about zoo animals is real'. Consequently, whatever zoos

claim to be, they can teach us...



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