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Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt, eds., *Postcolonial Green. Environmental Politics and World Narratives*. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010), xi+301pp.

This ambitious volume focuses on a new form of “environmental justice ecocriticism”, privileging the voices of “the writers whose work and ideas have historically been silenced” (10). The collection spans a wide spectrum of cultural material from across four continents, with contributions grouped geographically—“Asia & The South Pacific”, “Africa”, “North America”, as well as “South America & The Carribean”—and provides an overdue attempt to overcome the impasse between postcolonial theory and ecocritical discourse. The volume is ambitious not only for taking on the conflict between the theoretical camps, but also because its ultimate goal is to encourage political action: “Scholars must be able to draw comparisons in order to further a theoretical, postcolonial, green project—in order to learn methods of resisting injustice in its various forms” (7). To that end the editors wisely assembled a highly diverse set of contributors who represent a broad spectrum of national backgrounds and disciplinary fields, which enables them to cover a wide scope of genres and thematic directions with authenticity, lending further credibility to the project. The book also comes with an excellent review article built in—in the form of Ursula K. Heise’s insightful “Afterword.”

Conscious of the ongoing debates between ecocritical and postcolonial discourses, editors Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt carefully lay out the case for the need to theorize the “postcolonial green” in their introduction. There are four main reasons, they suggest, why the conflict between ecocriticism and postcolonialism may seem insurmountable to some: While the one is focused on *hybridity*, the other champions *purity*; while one highlights *displacement*, the other is focused on *place*; while one espouses *cosmopolitanism*, the other tends to be linked to *nationalism*, and while one is interested in *recovering history*, the other aims to *sublimate or transcend history*. For the two to coexist, ecocriticism must be critical of the racist or classist policies that environmentalism may inadvertently support, while postcolonial theory can no longer ignore colonialism’s impact on environmental degradation. Astonishing synergies emerge between the seemingly disparate parts of the volume, given the proximity of ecocritical concerns to social justice issues, and the disturbing parallels of injustice in various parts of the world. The goal to present “an exploration of various facets of our global community” (2) necessitates large gaps between the various studies as the volume covers texts from around the globe in just thirteen chapters and “what it means to be ‘postcolonial’ or ‘green’ varies radically in different geographies” (7). The book is therefore well-served by employing “a hybrid approach to postcolonial green” based on Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity.

Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee's assessment of the importance of environmentalism in Arundhati Roy's work starts off the volume. Mukherjee's insistence that Roy's literary work owes just as much to her activist interests as her essays, is born out in his careful reading of Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Using Leon Trotsky's study of "uneven modernity" (21) as a lens, Mukherjee shows how Roy's amalgam of archaic and contemporary forms and her reflection of the trauma that separates the people living in the "global South" from the minority of us who live in the "developed" world highlights this unevenness.

Sharae Deckard presents a critical (re-)assessment of Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), John Still's *The Jungle Tide* (1930) and Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef* (1992) to show the development of Sri Lankan Literature over the period of one hundred years of modernity. Deckard interprets Woolf's ambivalence about the rainforest as on the one hand a "projection of suppressed colonial guilt onto the landscape" (36) but also an attempt to highlight how colonialism "overwhelms traditional, sustainable ways of existing in the natural world" (37). She detects a similar ambivalence in Still's essays. It is the Sri Lankan Gunsekera, however, whose writing represents a radical shift toward a more conscious engagement with the profound ecological dimension of the problems. Deckard uses Lawrence Buell's concept of "toxic discourse" and Vandana Shiva's critique of neocolonialism to highlight Gunsekera's criticism of the Mahaweli Dam scheme as a prime example of a postcolonial green crisis, and his novel as an example of "a new ecocentric aesthetic" (48).

Gang Yue's critical evaluation of the notion of Tibet as a green Shangri-La, too, tackles many ambiguities. Yue begins with an explanation of whether or not the dispute about Tibet should be viewed as a problem of colonialism (the Chinese say it is, the Tibetans don't) which complicates the understanding of a "post"-colonial moment in the Tibetan context. The same is true for "green", Yue says, as he presents an overview of environmental writing and discourse in China, and the effects of more recent environmental disasters to prove it. He examines Tang Shije's book of travel writing as an example of the import of Western thought about Tibet into the Chinese discourse, as a "post-socialist green"(58).

In the last chapter on "Asia & The South Pacific", Laura Wright undertakes a careful ecofeminist reading of New Zealand author Keri Hulme's only novel *The Bone People* (1985). Similar to Arundhati Roy, Hulme's novel employs non-traditional form in what Wright calls the text's "layered spiral nature" (65) that corresponds to traditional Maori genealogy, *whakapapa*, complicating and challenging the binary distinctions that mark New Zealand's postcolonial present. Wright focuses on the main character's bisexuality and the three phases of destruction New Zealand experienced: invasion, destruction of traditional Maori culture, and finally environmental exploitation. While "caring for the land" is indeed a part of Maori tradition, Wright warns that the notion of the "ecoconscious Maori" is a myth with little basis in truth (75). Wright sees a new form of ecofeminism emerge in postcolonial writing that asserts women's contributions as "writer/speaker and environmental caretaker" (78).

Sheng-Yen Yu's discussion of J.M.Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the first of three articles devoted to Africa. Rather than a detailed close reading Yu presents his analysis as an essay on the challenges of ecocriticism. He agrees with Scott Slovic that ecocriticism has the potential to function as "society's conscience" (84) that warns society of what is to come, for example by foregrounding environmental issues even in texts that are primarily about something else, Coetzee's novel being his case in point. For Yu, Coetzee's text serves as an example for what a "transanthropocentric vision" (91) could look like.

Jonathan Highfield provides a very critical look at what he calls the idealistic portrayal of the influx of modern agricultural practices in the work of the late South African author Bessie Head. Highfield praises the author for her activism on behalf of poor rural women in Botswana, but finds numerous blindspots in Head's writing about the "foodways" and agricultural injustices perpetrated on the very indigenous populations Head purported to defend.

Even more critical is Neel Ahuja's discussion of the ways in which the Kenyan Great Ape Survival Program (GRASP) should be viewed as a neocolonial attempt at essentializing and ultimately controlling indigenous peoples. Culture, not nature, Ahuja claims, has become "the key category of difference on the international scene" (122). Since indigenous populations are subsequently identified as "nature", and primates tend to be referred to as "our kin", a problematic equation of apes and indigenous populations arises in the environmentally-inspired legal frameworks. Such "rhetorics of endearment" masks the truth that indigenous populations end up being forcefully relocated to make room for what ultimately turn out to be ecotourism ventures, benefitting the major corporations that supply the charitable funding for the measures. Both Highfield's and Ahuja's articles point to the fact that there is no such thing as value-free postcolonial green—on the contrary: Only in cooperation with indigenous populations and after empowering them as true "stakeholders" can environmental practices avoid repeating colonial exploitation.

Pavel Cenkl opens the North American chapters with an article about climate change as reflected in the literature of the Alaskan arctic in general, and Inuit culture in particular—in Yves Thériault's *Agaguk* (1958) and Inuit author Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk's *Sanaaq* (1984). Cenkl's text also provides insights into the debate surrounding *Traditional Environmental Knowledge* (TEK) where narrative itself becomes a currency, and the problem of transmitting traditional knowledge to young generations that are thoroughly embedded in modern forms of communication yet unaware of their ancestors' intimate relationship to local weather and climate, such as in the example of Rachel Qitsualik's short story "Skraeling" (2004).

The uncomfortable fact that indigenous people's ideas about nature may not always be in harmony with environmentalist's notions gets picked up again in Caskey Russell's examination of the racism the Makah Indians in Washington State faced from environmentalists when in 1994 they attempted to claim their treaty rights to hunt whales. For Russell, the union of ecocriticism and postcolonial theory is happiest in its

attempts “to disrupt the master narratives” of the status quo (161). Criticizing the “vast historical ignorance” among environmentalists, Russell shows how the whaling incident revealed an unsettling “colonizing impulse to silence Indians” among the protestors (170).

The postcolonial is somewhat more hidden in Rachel Stein’s attempt to re-read Ruth Ozeki’s second novel about biodiversity, *All Over Creation*. Stein focuses on Ozeki’s critique of the linkage between corporate enforcement of agricultural monocultures and women’s reproductive rights. Big agribusiness has devastating effects not only on biodiversity, but also on women’s fertility. Stein shows how Ozeki’s novel reveals that the connections between the dangers of pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified foods, and racism are ignored by leftist activists, while right-wing fundamentalists clearly see both as “challenges to their social norms” (190).

The final set of chapters presents a look at South America and the Carribean, starting with Sabine Wilke’s reassessment of Alexander von Humboldt’s *Ansichten der Natur* (1808). Wilke is interested in Humboldt’s understanding of the “performativity of nature” (198), which she describes as an ambivalent counterdiscourse to the dominant colonial project. In contrast to his contemporaries, Wilke says, Humboldt understood that colonization is a two-way street when he urged his readers to “reconsider the impact of indigenous knowledges on European culture” (202). She shows how Humboldt’s texts perform “a sensuous spectacle” similar to that seen on the realist stage.

Patrick D. Murphy further demonstrates the diversity of ecocritical perspectives and the importance of bold literary visions for an aesthetic approach to the postcolonial green in his comparison of the two most famous long poems of the Americas—Chilean poet Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General* and Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal’s *Cosmic Canticle*. Both Neruda’s celebration of South American nature as “Edenic” and Cardenal’s liberation-theology-inspired activism for the people are joined in their rejection of neocolonial imperialism and their embrace of anti-capitalist solidarity (217). In his critique of the two, Murphy also acknowledges the limitations of any Marxist critique in view of the fact that 20th century “real” Marxism-Socialism eventually degraded the environment just as much as capitalism did.

Finally, Bonnie Roos discusses globalization and climate change in the Carribean Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott’s Homeric epic *Omeros*. Walcott’s text about the exploitation of the working class people of St.Lucia is represented in the slave Philoctete. Roos employs Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s explanation that in order to be heard “by those empowered to change his or her living conditions” (231), the “subaltern” must be rendered in translation. Walcott uses the confrontation between Hektor, who stands for Westernization and ecocide (247), and Achilles (“blind to the complicity in global capitalism”, 248) as an example of the urgent need to “see ourselves in the other” and “acknowledge each other” (249). In her Afterword Ursula K. Heise reminds the readers that despite the rationale for their proximity, ecocriticism and postcolonialism are also still fundamentally different. She supports a theory and critique of aesthetic practice in this context.

The nuanced analyses in this volume reveal the logic of the imbalance of power that underlies both neocolonial injustice and environmental destruction. Access to up-to-date information, equipment, and resources is as important in this logic as are traditional knowledge, protection of land, human relationships, and language. The volume could serve well as reading for courses in programs that aim to integrate environmental concerns into international and global studies, comparative literature and politics, or anthropology. The articles not only provide important new insights into the specific texts they discuss, but also always situate their analyses in a carefully structured theoretical argument that educates the reader about important developments, legal issues, theoretical concepts about narrative, and theoretical approaches from Lawrence Buell to Vandana Shiva, Bruno Latour and Paul Nadasdy. The chapters' extensive notes provide ample opportunity for further study. In addition, the book contains a very useful index and bibliography.