

what they call the “common, unshifting ideological ground that appears to underlie anti-obeah enactments from different territories and at different periods of time” (p. 102) as well as on the “attempts to use the law to suppress and control ill-defined and often misunderstood expressions of a subaltern worldview.” The conclusion also inveighs against the anti-obeah legislation as “not only the product of oppressive power but also a major factor contributing to the construction and maintenance of cultural hierarchies through which beliefs, practices, and expressions identified as “African” and “black” have continued to be stigmatized and devalued throughout much of the West Indies” (sic). I would also add that this is part of a larger issue, namely the naming of the New World (sic) and the creation of semantic maps which express and reinforce negative valuations of the cultural products of the people of the Caribbean. “Obeah” is one glaring example. The continued use of terms such as “creole,” “patois,” “pidgin,” “nation language,” rather than simply “language” or the adjective of nationality (e.g. Bajan) expressing the equal and legitimate membership of Caribbean popular vernaculars in the rich diversity of the languages of the world is also a similar glaring case which needs to be dealt with urgently.

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Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds. 2011. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. New York: Oxford University Press. 360 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-539442-9

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For any individual living in the 21st century, ecology—the physical environment and the state of natural resources—is an ever present concern. Within the academic arena many cite the American University as the responsive leader on how people think and engage with ecology via literature. This misleading idea is precisely what Elizabeth

DeLoughrey and George Handley address in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. While eco-criticism is still relatively nascent in offering diversity amongst college courses, within literary theory that is focused on eco-criticism much work has already been done within postcolonial theory and criticism. This structural oversight is central to the thesis of *Postcolonial Ecologies* and one that all students across disciplines of study should be engaged in learning.

The introduction to this collection of essays engages various aspects of eco-critical theory. It is as poignant to the evolution of the field of study as are the individual essays. For any new student to this area of discourse as well as to those well-versed, the introduction serves as a historical review and survey of how eco-criticism and postcolonial theory have been entwined over centuries and continue to be presently. In addition to this comprehensive review of history and eco-critical discourse the editors provide constant markers of how postcolonial eco-criticism fills a vacant position within thinking of theoretical concepts at large.

A postcolonial eco-criticism then must be more than a simple extension of postcolonial methodologies into the realm of the human material world; it must reckon with the ways in which ecology does not always work within the frames of human time and political interest. As such, our definition of postcolonial ecology reflects a complex epistemology that recuperates the alterity of both history and nature, without reducing either to the other (4).

This very emphasis on the dialogue is central to what people outside of the Westernized world partaking in power continue to strive for—the dialogue that affects prosperity within their local environment. DeLoughrey and Handley further the ethos that forms postcolonial theory by drawing from Fanon, Said, and Brathwaite to illustrate how the physical land and its living condition has been central to building empire as well as altering individual lives within all corners of empires.

A significant driving force within the editor's position as well as within each essay is the question of equality and how it is considered within the local community as well as in the greater global context. As stated in their introduction,

Our intention here is not to replace one singular founding figure or methodology with another, but rather to broaden the historical, theoretical, and geographic scope of contributions to eco-critical thought. We wish to foreground the ways in which, to borrow from Said, eco-critical discourses are 'traveling theories' rather than national products, and are irreducible to one geographical, national, or methodological origin (16).

Central to this idea are the varying perspectives within an eco-critical

aesthetics. For example the vast difference between a largely American based or Western view of conservation of wilderness as primary focus of an ecological/eco-critical field versus an emphasis on arable land, potable water, public health and so forth, what DeLoughrey and Handley refer to as “the economics of human ecology” (18). And, while this debate exists within the eco-critical discourse of the Universities of the West it is largely based on conditions of privilege amongst the global community.

Within postcolonial and eco-critical fields of study there are not many other comprehensive texts that address these two symbiotic fields of study through essays that represent a dialect “between city and country, culture and nature, metropolis and colony” (24). Therefore this text greatly serves as an instructional tool within a University course that introduces students to how these two fields have engaged for some time. The first two themes within the collection elucidate this very connection. The collection of essays is broken into four thematic sections: history, human acculturation of forest, the relationship between human and nonhuman animals, and militourism—an examination of the relations between the tourist and military industries. Within the four sections each essay presents literary texts that offer opportunity for the “self-conscious disruption” (28) of global issues that are grounded in local context.

Most significant and reading as an extension of the historical scope, that is so significant in the introduction, are the first two sections: Cultivating Place and Forest Fictions. The author of each essay provides a location and close-up view of what is theorized in the introduction. The essays are specific examples illustrating the goals to which both editors cite Graham Huggan (2004), for describing as “valuable corrective [s]” to what largely has been discussed on a global level (22). The list of contributors has an extensive shared experience of study in postcolonial literature that ranges from the Caribbean to the Pacific as well as study in environmental issues. Perhaps because of the editors’ tenure, both specializing in Caribbean literature, what reads most concretely, especially for the newly arrived to the field of postcolonial ecologies are the essays positioned in the Caribbean.

The breadth of historical colonialism and its relationship to ecology is clearly crystallized in the first of the four thematic sections, Cultivating Place. Jill Didur examines the use of ‘picturesque’ painting in England society and its’ influence on the English colonizing India through the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai. Le Grace Benson, director of the Arts of Haiti Research Project, also examines landscaping and its role in presenting both Christian and Vodou religions in Haiti. Elaine Savory, who bears an extensive body of work as theorist and artist closely, examines Derek Walcott’s poem, “The Bounty” and his use of environmental imagination to shape his aesthetic strategies so that his

metaphors become eco-poetics.

Beginning the second thematic section, *Forest Fictions*, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert extends the historical canvas of the introduction with her analysis of the forest and its role within the Caribbean region. George Handley in his discussion of Alejo Carpentier's novel, *Los Pasos Perdidos* (1985) addresses the use of primitivism by the West, within a review of the history of postcolonial thinking, by extending postcolonial's historical timeline to evolve into a syncretic view of all cultures therefore leading to a space of change that exist both in a postcolonial setting as well as an ecological one. Handley's discussion of the novel illustrates the merging of these two settings and questions the ability to dialogue between the two amidst a Latin-American backdrop since "colonialism degrades cultures and ecosystems alike" (133). Likewise Jennifer Wenzel explores how a postcolonial eco-criticism can dialogue with objectifying through her study of the exchange of trees and women's bodies for capital.

In the third thematic section, *The Lives of (Nonhuman) Animals*, Rob Nixon addresses the lives of animals in the eco village that can be read as parallel to the tourism industry of the Caribbean beach. While Nixon's article appears at first glance as an analysis of the lives of non-human animals, what stands out most is his examination of how space is used. This reminds me of how writers like Wilson Harris and Merle Hodge depict the natural plant life in their novels. There also exists a direct tie to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1994) and the cosmopolitan other amongst modernity in Nixon's use of James Baldwin. Nixon cites Baldwin's experience living in the small Swiss Alps village to illustrate the fiction writer and essayist, Njabulo Ndebele's acknowledgement of a historically grounded refusal to incorporate a temporal and geographical "blackness into modernity." This also causes for a return to an American eco-perspective that treats the Black-American engaging with nature as subaltern. Questions of how many Black Americans, in an American sense of conservationists and outdoor pleasures, engage in nature is not new and continues to bear influence. While Nixon's case for animals has merit his examination of how ecological space/land is experienced or used is significant to the postcolonial search for what Ndebele describes as "the process for becoming" (Ndebele 1998:14 cited in Nixon 2011:177). The historical map of how land has been manipulated by a few confirms the continuance of examining the land as witness to civilization.

The final four essays speak to the use of the land and consequences to the ecology through examples of modern technology used by private industry as well as government military power. The last of the essay in the third theme, *The Lives of (Nonhuman) Animals* presents the novel *Animal's People* (2007). At the core of this essay is the consequence of the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984 by the private multinational company,

Union Carbide. The final theme, Militourism also highlights the effects of toxic abuse that is committed by the public institutions of governments' military sector via military radiation. DeLoughrey examines the heliotrope as she reviews the way government military bodies have used solar nomenclature and metaphor to naturalize nuclearization. As with the introduction to the collection she contextualizes the evolution of a postcolonial ecology within Western society's use of the atom. Radiation is at the epicenter of how she unpacks the use of the "heliocentric metaphors" (237). The ecological discourse has been elevated with this wide encompassing collection of essays that contextualize ecology and history all the while questioning "how to define and attain environmental sovereignty at local, regional, national, and planetary scales" (20). Answers do not come easily but with *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* the dialogue is initiated.

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