

# ISLE

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# ISLE

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## Against Authenticity: Global Knowledges and Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Three years before the inception of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, Ramachandra Guha published "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," an essay that warned of the dangers in adopting a global or universal ecological stance such as those promoted by deep ecologists. Guha argued that by foregrounding a biocentric view, "deep ecology [indicates] a lack of concern with inequalities *within* human society" and how they are socially and historically produced (72n1).<sup>1</sup> He explains that the distinction erected between anthropocentrism and biocentrism produces an ahistorical rendering of nonhuman nature. This division is bolstered by the rhetorical conflation of Eastern and indigenous religious traditions, particularly in their perceived biocentrism, which is positioned as the spiritual and emotional counter to the destructive secular rationality of the west. Thus, deep ecologists, Guha contends, rely on orientalist methodologies to argue for the universality of their position (74). As a result, the nonwestern subject and landscape become the *tabula rasa* upon which to inscribe the agency of the western ecologist (77). He concludes his essay with the directive that western ecologists start thinking more critically about the role of imperialism in fashioning an understanding of the environment, and a call to engage the ways in which capitalist consumption in the so-called "First" and "Third Worlds" might be critiqued and reconfigured for human and environmental sustainability. In many ways, Guha's work reflected an approach to environmentalism that was already in existence in ecofeminist, indigenous, and postcolonial communities,

who have been at the forefront in connecting the mutual threats to human and nonhuman ecologies.<sup>2</sup>

While it's important not to reduce the diversity of environmentalist discourse to one spokesperson, issue, or viewpoint, Guha's essay focused on Arne Naess's work, a logical move given the latter's founding position in the deep ecology movement. Naess responded to these charges in "The Third World, Wilderness, and Deep Ecology," published six years later. In this essay, Naess concedes the importance in critiquing the structures of capitalism and joins Guha in considering the larger implications of, for instance, segregating wilderness areas without minimizing the larger culture of consumption that produces their necessity. Yet Naess nonetheless contends that "[c]lose cooperation between supporters of the Deep Ecology movement and ecologically concerned people in the poor countries requires that the latter trust the former's concern for the economic progress of the poor" (399). This paternalistic call to "trust us" rings hollow not only because it replicates the power structures of colonial history (and modernization theory) but because it also ignores the ongoing environmental exploitation of postcolonial regions such as the British, French and American nuclearization of the Pacific Islands, the political and environmental abuses of transnational oil corporations in Nigeria, South America and the Middle East, and the excessive pollution of the Caribbean Sea by cruise ship tourism. Even attempts to mitigate environmental disaster in the Global South, such as Project Tiger, have damaged and displaced countless human communities (see Mallick). World systems theory cannot help us fully understand these interregional relationships because it cannot account for the common interests often established between the First and Third World elite. Naess requests that the Global South "trust" the good intentions of deep ecologists, but we may rightly ask how many environmental groups have "trusted" postcolonial nations to protect and manage their own resources on their own terms. To do so would be to foreground a level of postcolonial agency that deep ecology seems to resist, preferring instead to depict the former as hapless victims of an industrial north which is simultaneously their source of exploitation and, through the intervention of deep ecologists, their salvation.

Although Guha and Naess's exchange reflects much greater nuance than we have included here, we want to highlight the prescience of their debate in the context of this special cluster's focus on postcolonial ecocriticism. Guha's work foregrounds questions of agency, the limitations of deep ecology, the reinscription of a center-periphery binary, and the unmarked pervasiveness of American exceptionalist discourse. More recently, western ecocritics have pressed against the national frameworks of literary studies to demonstrate a greater engagement with

world environmental and social issues, despite the influence of deep ecology's limitations.<sup>3</sup> Postcolonial critics, on the other hand, have been somewhat suspicious of ecocriticism for the reasons outlined above and due to the assumption that its literatures and methodologies are apolitical. Perhaps the worst charge postcolonialists can make against ecocritical models is that its proponents are blind to its *naturalization* of a western white male subject in his claims to a new environmental and epistemological territory. Ecocritical discourse of the U.S. frontier, for instance, has been known to sidestep the violent history that produced white settler culture. The ecocritical turn to originary nature can naturalize diasporic Europeans in the landscape, often resulting in a powerful ontological claim that erases white complicity in the expansion of empire, not to mention ongoing indigenous presence. Although they are not without critique, this is a tension that is particularly visible in the colonial settler contexts of the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

While there are tensions between postcolonial and ecocritical approaches, they also share a commitment to social and environmental justice. In fact, the postmodern decentering of the human subject that informs ecocriticism might be seen, as Dominic Head has argued, to be sympathetic with the postcolonial tendency to deprivilege the universal (read: European) subject of empire (Head 28). This also suggests an ethical prerogative that makes a clear but often unacknowledged connection between this field and ecofeminism, with its vital history of calling attention to the gendering of the relationship to nature and the hierarchy attributed to the white masculine subject. So we'd like to build upon the debate between Guha and Naess by suggesting that ecofeminist work has already laid the groundwork for a critique of the anthropocentric bias of deep ecology. Moreover, we'd also like to suggest that postcolonial topics should not be viewed as entirely *new directions* in the field of ecocriticism as much as they represent *increased visibility* to a western-based audience who is rethinking the limitations of U.S. national frameworks that had occluded other perspectives. To suggest that *postcolonial* ecocriticism is *new* is to give a normative status to ecocriticism's institutional origins without questioning the limitations of its foundational methodologies and focus. Thus we agree with Graham Huggan who observes that "postcolonial criticism has effectively renewed, rather than belatedly discovered, its commitment to the environment" (702).

Postcolonial and ecocritical studies both share a commitment to interdisciplinarity and have often drawn broadly from the social and environmental sciences. While an interdisciplinary engagement might help us develop a broad understanding of the wide variety of episte-

mologies available to articulate the human relationship to its nonhuman others, this has not always been the case. The use of scientific discourse (from biology to quantum physics) can lead to innovative ways of conceptualizing our physical (and immaterial) surroundings, but it can also produce a hierarchy of knowledge. In Karl Kroeber's *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of the Mind*, for instance, the turn to science allows Kroeber to dismantle the subject-object barrier between humans and nature, while opening a space for change powered by a humanist imagination. As Kroeber puts it, the power of such an imagination would allow humanists to "contribute much to the practical quality of life on this earth in the next century" (140). Like Naess, Kroeber seeks to improve material living conditions on the planet, though one wonders what (and whose) standards would measure these improvements. But when he argues that "neither ancient Greeks nor Native Americans, nor anyone before the nineteenth century, had, or could have had, a systemically ecological understanding of nature" because the west had not yet invented "scientific ecology" (27), we must wonder how worldly Kroeber's self-proclaimed "globalized imaginings" are. Ignoring the ways in which the colonization of global territories, peoples, knowledges, fauna, and flora were constitutive of the European (and American) natural sciences, Kroeber depoliticizes the construction of western knowledge of the globe. As many authors have shown, the rise of the natural sciences is concurrent with European colonialism and the adoption and appropriation of indigenous knowledges of the environment. Although Kroeber makes universalist claims he does so in opposition to:

the constructive reductionism of politically correct critics who substitute for one dogmatic system its mirror opposite—for instance, substituting for imperialism anti-imperialism, or replacing a canon excluding female artists of color with a canon excluding white male. (140)

Rather than seeing anti-imperialism and the reshaping of canons as correctives to historical misdeeds and ongoing power imbalances, Kroeber prefers to view such "political correctness" as "prolongations of a Cold War oppositionalist mentality" (140). Such "global imaginings" are clearly rooted in the power/knowledge nexus of the superpowers rather than the decolonizing nations whose own political identities were forged during precisely those same decades. A true relationship between postcolonial and ecocritical discourse would be globally engaged, not simply in terms of geographic breadth but in its commitment to an open dialogue about the diverse production of local and global knowledge(s).

A continuing examination of ecocritical production throughout the 1990s reveals a growing awareness of the insularity of the field and its objects of literary study. Whereas being "green" often marks one as marginal and potentially subversive inside and outside of the academy, an environmental position, as Guha observed, may in fact support the very privileges it is purported to dismantle. Dominic Head also wonders whether ecocriticism's position within the larger field of literary studies—that "imprisoned manifestation of late capitalism"—makes the movement open to charges of complicity (27). In an important *PMLA* issue that published a *Forum on Literatures of the Environment*, Lawrence Buell interprets the location of ecocriticism's origins as "outside the main centers of Euro-American academia" as nonetheless contributing to the movement's limitations, which include an Anglo-American focus, a reactionary stance against poststructuralism, and a preference for conservationism over environmental justice movements (1091-2). Others launch sharper critiques of the movement's perceived exclusivity; Simon Estok views the field's Anglo-American bias as evidence of "xenophobia" (1095). Elizabeth Dodd and Andrea Parra advocate for the heightened attention to African American literature as an ecocritical object of study. Parra calls attention to how the racial exclusivity of ecocritical objects of inquiry perpetuate the "subsuming of people of color into nature in the popular imaginary [which] derives from Western conceptions of identity based on rigid dualistic thought that continues to prevail at the end of the twentieth century" (1100).

Several contributions to this important forum drew parallels between the interests of ecocriticism and postcolonialism, although work in this vein has often pointed out affinities without fully considering how each field might interrogate and learn from one another. Patrick D. Murphy, for example, holds that ecocriticism's concern for nonhuman nature mirrors postcolonial, feminist and multicultural studies in so far as the latter three are "focused on extending equitable moral consideration and social justice to excluded, exploited, and oppressed peoples" (*Forum* 1099). Although Murphy's scholarship has done much to open a dialogue between the two fields, we want to suggest that too heavy a reliance upon constructing parallels between postcolonialism and ecocriticism can lead to an unproblematized division between people (on the postcolonial side) and nature (on the ecocritical one). To some extent, this parallelism between "excluded, exploited, and oppressed" people and "excluded, exploited, and oppressed" nature renders the two equivalent, thus dehistoricizing through natural and universal metaphors. For understanding all postcolonial subjects as "excluded, exploited and oppressed" raises the vexed questions of agency and representation. Reflecting on this point, Karla Armbruster comments

on the bind ecocritics find themselves in when attempting to speak for nonhuman nature. She points out that, given those elements within ecocriticism that rely on the "Western cultural assumption that nature cannot speak for itself," "it has seemed unnecessary to examine how we speak for [nature]" (432). Yet, with a poststructural and a globalized sensitivity, Armbruster contends, "[I]t is precisely because nature cannot challenge the ways we represent it using human language that we must resist the temptation to objectify and construct nature in any way we choose" (432).

In this context of increased ecocritical awareness on the question of representation, Dominic Head presents what is at stake for ecocritics by looking through the lens of postcolonial literature. Wary of "a perceived drive towards fundamentalism in deep ecology," Head points out that both poststructuralism and postmodernism have made possible a "grass-roots micropolitics" (27, 28). For Head, "post-colonial literature and theory are exemplary in this connection," namely in the reclamation of a circumscribed human agency (28). Using the work of white South African writers Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, Head demonstrates a paradigm that may assist ecocritics in their attempts to negotiate the representational relationship between author and nonhuman nature (28).<sup>4</sup> This doubleness—the articulation of complicity and of the need for representation—encourages a self-reflective ambivalence over the ability to know the other, thereby introducing an element of provisionality into any ecocritical reading. Armbruster and Head consider the implications of attempting to speak for nature, paving an important dialogue between ecocritical paradigms and postcolonial theory.

Ironically, the national boundaries that a focus on nonhuman nature is supposed to deconstruct are often upheld in dominant forms of ecocritical study.<sup>5</sup> And like national discourse, ecocriticism has privileged an idealized racial subject. Cheryll Glotfelty has famously commented on ecocriticism's association with whiteness, as have the contributors in the special edition of *PMLA*.<sup>6</sup> Several scholars have devoted concerted attention to expanding the ecocritical literary canon to encompass multicultural and international works. Texts such as Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, Terrell Dixon contends, "emphasize the truly transnational aspects of the growing environmental crisis" (1094).<sup>7</sup> And, perhaps more pertinent to the discussion at hand, an emphasis on transnationalism moves ecocriticism beyond (American) "national narratives" (1094).

Reaching outside of American multiculturalism, Lawrence Buell has adopted an expansive vision in his most recent book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*,

engaging the work of Caribbean writers Derek Walcott and Jamaica Kincaid, as well as the translated work of Bengali author Mahasweta Devi. Buell positions Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a potential model for ecocriticism itself. In his estimation, Said's work opens a field rather than codifies it, and Buell hopes that early ecocritical texts do the same (*Future* 131-32). Patrick D. Murphy's *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* expands the ecocritical canon by calling for a shift in theoretical assumptions so that the field may become more sensitive to cultural difference and more critical of the implications of national boundaries.<sup>8</sup> Murphy lists an "appreciat[ion of] cultural diversity as a physical manifestation of biological diversity" and "re-defines [...] ecocriticism and nature-oriented literature so that they are world inclusive in their perspectives and considerations" (*Farther* 74). The inclusive and comparative impulse of this framework seeks to materially and discursively ground readers and critics. As Murphy suggests, a refined ecocriticism is all about location, location, location: geographic, historical, and "geopsychic" (*Farther* 74).

While it's laudable to expand the boundaries of western ecocriticism to engage seriously with postcolonial and global literatures, Susie O'Brien warns that we must do so without replicating the consumptive drive of empire. Remarking on the representation of "environmentalist expertise emanating from the United States outward," O'Brien notices an "implicit imperialism in this globalizing move" (168) in which the world's texts are rendered open to the Anglo-American critic's piercing ecocritical view. One way to avoid this is to emphasize the limitations of representation and translation, and to highlight the local and often inassimilable aspects of culture and history. O'Brien goes beyond the question of critical mediation to state:<sup>9</sup>

[E]cocriticism needs paradoxically to move not closer to nature but back through culture in order to examine the tensions and contradictions that structure our engagements with the physical world—including (and especially) the tensions and contradictions of ecocriticism itself. ("Garden" 181-82)

This statement calls for a heightened self-awareness to situating the frames by which we apprehend the world that we attempt to represent.

There has been a remarkable growth in journal issues and collections dedicated precisely to this relationship between postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Most initiatives seem to come from the postcolonialists, suggesting an unevenness in translation between the fields and perhaps a more immediate facility with discourses of alterity in postcolonial study. For instance, the journal of the South Pacific As-

sociation for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, *SPAN*, dedicated an issue to "Gardening in the Colonies" (1998). Edited by Anne Collett, it examined the role of ecology in postcolonial literatures from Australia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. Amongst the plethora of books exploring "ecological imperialism," to borrow a term from Alfred Crosby, Glenn Hooper's edited volume *Ecology and Empire: 1770-2000* (2005) is especially notable for its incorporation of colonial and postcolonial writers of the anglophone world. A forthcoming special issue of the journal *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, is also dedicated to the topic of "green postcolonialism" (spring 2007).

Many of these particular volumes draw from the Caribbean context because, as Richard Grove has shown, ecological change happens swiftly and is registered plainly in bounded spaces such as islands. The visible history of the plantation economy in the Caribbean generally tempers any tendency to romanticize the natural landscape. Because the monoculture plantocracy violently altered the natural and social environment of the Caribbean, the region has provided an especially important space for theorizing the vexed relationship between nature and culture. In a volume dedicated to exploring a sustained dialogue between Caribbean literature and the environment, Jana Braziel builds upon the important work of Martinican philosopher Edouard Glissant to advocate for increased critical distance from the naturalizing metaphors of nature to resist discourses of rootedness. Worried that the valorization of "eco- over ego-centrism [suggests that] all human beings [are] equally situated in relation to power, history, and domination" (111), Braziel invokes Glissant's view of the connection between territory and territorialization, as articulated in his works *Caribbean Discourse* and *Poetics of Relation*. Glissant "refuses a Caribbean 'territory,' which is the 'basis for conquest' and which 'requires that filiation be planted and legitimated'" (qtd. in Braziel 118). To counter the affiliating and legitimating discourses that root colonial claims in conquered lands, "Glissant detours through the distances of diaspora, intimating that 'distances are necessary to Relation'" (qtd. in Braziel 118). Here we can see how claims of belonging to the land itself can reify the patriarchal lineage of colonial conquest; although one's sense of attachment or affinity with a given place may feel "natural," one's very occupation of that physical landscape depends upon historical contingencies. For Braziel, Glissant and Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid "sugges[t] that distance is required in order to break with destructive patterns of human domination over nature" (119).

By focusing on Caribbean literature and (post)colonial environments, both Helen Tiffin and George Handley have provided methods

and examples by which we might represent the complex alterity of human and nonhuman others. Like Susie O'Brien and Paul Sharrad, Tiffin has employed the larger context of plantation culture to examine the Caribbean garden as a site of cultivated nature, a space that constitutes a "'battleground' of representation" in Caribbean literature (201). Caribbean depictions of gardens, Tiffin argues, enact a "re-entry through English or European perceptions to effect the reexamination and revaluation of the local" (201). Thus the refusal of foundational colonial narratives means a refusal of the "natural" environment, which is then revealed as a colonial fantasy of the garden of Eden, or a myth of the hyperfecundity of the tropics. Notably, these idyllic discourses of the Caribbean environment sought to mystify the brutal realities of enslaved labor in monocrop plantations. According to Handley, these narrative trajectories evidence a "nostalgia for terrestrial paradises," which provide imperialist projects with "[l]andscapes that are imagined to be ahistorical [and that] are attractive precisely because they present an opportunity for human beings to unburden themselves of their own histories" ("Walcott" 202). This nostalgia for prehuman (or prelapsarian) landscapes positions the environment outside of history. Thus a vital aspect of postcolonial ecocriticism refuses the nostalgia of pure landscape even while it grapples with the best ways of addressing the representation of the nonhuman environment.

All of these postcolonial critiques emphasize the role of mediation in representing the environment. Significantly, they also recognize that processes of mediation are not fixed and can be recuperated for anticolonial critique. In opening up the possibility of many representations of nature, these critics proffer more workable options by which diverse peoples can come to a shared (if only provisional) understanding of how to combat environmental degradation. As Handley states, "an environmental ethics requires all people, all particulars of culture, to be invited to the table; the ecological crisis cannot be solved by one singular vision of human personality or politics" ("Walcott" 206). This is a specific move against purity and towards a diverse view of human and nonhuman environments that does not homogenize through a conservationist teleology. As Rob Nixon points out, postcolonialists feel "discomfort" in the face of discourses of purity given "the role [they] have played historically in the racially unequal distribution of post-Enlightenment human rights" (235). In effect, it is not enough for ecocriticism to "simply affir[m] its openness to different voices" (O'Brien, "Garden" 181).

Rob Nixon has helpfully outlined four major differences between postcolonial and ecocritical approaches that have contributed to their mutual unintelligibility. First, postcolonialism foregrounds the cross-

cultural, hybrid and creole consequences of the historical process whereas ecocriticism tends to emphasize the recuperation of a prehuman natural purity. Second, postcolonial scholars emphasize diaspora and displacement rather than a sense of belonging and natural rootedness. Third, postcolonialists have tended to highlight cosmopolitan and transnational migration unlike the American and national focus of most ecocriticism. Finally, postcolonialism turns to the past to reclaim subaltern history whereas ecocriticism often locates nature outside of human narratives of time (235). Like Glissant and Braziel, Nixon calls for a transnational ethics of place that does not demonize biotic migration and resettlement as antithetical to a valorized purity (239). Nixon turns to the work of assassinated author-activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and his struggles against Nigerian political corruption fueled by Shell's "ecological genocide" in Ogoniland. Nixon writes poignantly of Saro-Wiwa's influence by environmental justice activists in the United States but his total neglect by ecocritical scholars. The divisions between these fields meant that Saro-Wiwa was well recognized in African/postcolonial academic circles but in ways that focused on his quest for human rather than environmental justice and sustainability. That quest cost him his life; after imprisonment and torture, and despite international condemnation of the Nigerian government and Shell Oil, Saro-Wiwa was hanged in 1995. His nonviolent resistance against what he termed an "ecological war" against the Ogoni people is a piece in a larger, disturbing transnational imbrication that remains invisible to those who benefit the most from mineral resource consumption.

It is clear that the best ecocritical and postcolonial scholarship is interdisciplinary, transnational, and comparative (see Nixon 245).<sup>10</sup> In Nixon's view, the expansion of the ecocritical canon to include ethnic American writers cannot be construed as a substantive diversification (244) because "American texts" continue to be "universalized in ways that postcolonial texts are not" (245). One way to provincialize American ecocriticism is to acknowledge how its focus on the anglophone world marks, as Ursula Heise has it, one of the movement's "most serious intellectual limitations" ("Hitchhiker's" 513). American ecocritical discourse has an important role to play—and we believe an obligation—to critique local exploitation of the environment and the global abuses done in the name of U.S. national and corporate interests. There is substantive work to be done in the ongoing dialogue between ecocritical and postcolonial discourse and while we make no claims that this cluster of essays, *ISLE's* first special issue on the topic, can cover all of this ground, we are delighted to be a part of this necessary conversation. Our position as anglophone postcolonialists, located in the United States, suggests the limited scope of our own

linguistic engagements as well as the importance for those located in the centers of power to commit our ample resources towards initiating these discussions.<sup>11</sup>

Choosing the selections for this special cluster—reducing the vast geographies of the globe to the purview of four essays—was a particularly challenging task. We received many excellent contributions that focused on the major postcolonial regions, from Africa and South America to Australia, South Asia, and the Caribbean. Many submissions considered how canonical European and American literary texts were implicated in the colonial construction of exotic landscapes. We received contributions that were interdisciplinary and considered literatures written in English, French, Sanskrit, Spanish, and Tamil. This speaks to the exciting growth and flexibility of postcolonial and ecocritical study and how their methodologies can be reformulated, adopted, and challenged across diverse landscapes and historical contexts. Rather than determining that each of the four essays must represent an entire region of the globe—a myth that literary scholars too often leave unscrutinized—we opted to eschew human-imposed boundaries and borders by including essays that engage thematically with the land and the sea. While the land has been the major focus of environmental preservation, we are witnessing an unprecedented crisis in the pollution, mismanagement, and warming temperatures of the world's one and only ocean. As our contributors demonstrate, postcolonial literature has been concerned with areas recognizable to ecocritical discourse such as the space of the garden, the mangrove, and the role of ecofeminism in indigenous contexts. These essays also detail concerns that are largely new to ecocritical frames such as the relation between indigenous and scientific narratives of deep time, the literature of transnational diaspora and tourism, and the imaginative reconfiguring of the ocean cruise liner.

The first two essays of the cluster focus on land; their thematic purview may be familiar to the lens of ecocriticism even while their geographies, contexts and methodologies will not. Lisa Perfetti's "The Postcolonial Land that Needs to Be Loved: Caribbean Nature and the Garden in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et Vent sur Têlumeé Miracle*" presses against the anglophone bias of much ecocriticism (and postcolonial study) by turning to a Guadeloupean text that inscribes the relationship to the natural landscape in the wake of plantation slavery. Culturally and politically torn between the European metropole of France and the Africanized island "Department" in which she lives, the author's protagonist explores the tensions of *creolité* in a rural space that must be reclaimed through language, love, and labor from the colonial abuses of the past. Thus the garden becomes an important alternative

space of knowledge and belonging outside of the colonial hierarchies maintained in the sugar cane plantations. Through creole language, the legacies of African knowledge, and by inscribing what Edouard Glissant has termed an "aesthetics of the earth" (*Poetics* 149), Schwarz-Bart positions the local agricultural space of the garden as the most immediate and material resistance to colonialism and its neocolonial successors, rendering an alternative repository of knowledge through feminized labor on the land and the woman writer who inscribes it.

In our second contribution, Briar Wood's "Mana Wāhine and Ecocriticism in Some Post-80s Writing by Māori Women," the author explores the complex relationship between indigenous women and the land in Aotearoa New Zealand and how discourses of ecofeminism, particularly the rendering of gendered time and the sacred, have overlapped with the concerns of contemporary Māori women. Turning to writers such as Ngahuia Te Awakotuku and Patricia Grace, Wood examines the ways in which Māori whakapapa, or genealogy, inscribes a complex and dynamic history of place that mitigates charges of gendered essentialism. Ecofeminism has tended to embrace indigenous models of land stewardship but has not always been attentive to its historicism or the contemporary concerns of native women. Wood's essay, which weaves political and historical challenges to Māori sovereignty alongside the increasing literary and artistic representation of Papatūānuku, the foremother of all life on earth, examines the ecological challenges to the nation and their inscription in Grace's important novel *Potiki*. Using the diverse epistemologies and viewpoints of the text as a paradigm for resistance against neocolonial expansion (and tourist development), Wood offers a vital model of postcolonial ecocriticism that interweaves mythological, genealogical, and political knowledges of the environment.

Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* positions a community at the shoreline, a space of tremendous flux and change and of the ongoing struggle between land and sea. The December 2004 Tsunami was an exceedingly painful lesson in how fragile that relationship is. In "Home is Where the Oracella Are: Toward a New Paradigm of Transcultural Ecocritical Engagement in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*," Rajender Kaur explores that vulnerability through a model of deep geological time that offers an alternative to anthropocentric temporality. Ghosh's depiction of the Sundarbans, an enormous mangrove forest between Bangladesh and India, foregrounds this complex relationship between land and sea, a place where the ecological frame of the "hungry tide" is juxtaposed to other consuming appetites and desires in a complex and layered relationship between indigenous, local, and diasporic South Asians. As Kaur shows, one of the major concerns of Ghosh's work is

the discourse of western environmentalism and its impact, especially Project Tiger, on those communities that face daily threats from the very creatures that others want to protect. The essay determines that Ghosh presents us with a compelling narrative of the deadly costs of mistranslating the local human relationship to the environment with global transnational models, but it also provides a vision in which the shared goals of social and ecological justice might be reached through a dialogue that accommodates multiple epistemologies and experiences of nonhuman nature.

In our final essay of the special cluster, "Preening with Privilege, Bubbling Bilge: Representations of Cruise Tourism in Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* and Derek Walcott's *Omeros*," Anthony Carrigan turns to the discourse of tourism, examining the ways in which the built environments of the luxury cruise liner in the Caribbean are inscribed by writers who trace their roots to the region. As we've mentioned, scholars have been concerned with ecocriticism's general lack of engagement with black and diasporic writers and the neglect of urban spaces as worthy of environmental consideration and critique. As such, Carrigan's essay makes an important contribution to the field, helping us see how Caribbean and African American writers have refashioned and imaginatively reclaimed the most visible icon of the tourist industry. Like mobile hotels, tourist liners are designed to maintain the wealthy westerner's physical and material distance from the very landscapes (and poverty) that enable its profitability. But how are these obvious social and material binaries complicated when the tourist is a (displaced) Caribbean subject? As Carrigan explains, the inscription of roots tourism—in which the protagonist rediscovers her estranged cultural heritage at the same time that she comes to recognize the nostalgia for empire recreated by the ship, significantly named the *Bianca Pride*—provides a means of breaking down any facile First/Third World assumptions about economic and social status. Marshall uses the realist narrative, Carrigan contends, to critique the dominant capitalist culture that created it; the contradictions of her protagonist's status in the region of her heritage facilitate her ability to see the limitations of representation itself, particularly the erasure of models of ecological sustainability that the cruise liner industry threatens.

This question of genre is explored in the second section of Carrigan's essay in which he examines a small but important part of Walcott's epic poem *Omeros*. Tracing the shift from poetry in the age of wood and sail (of the text's founding narratives, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) to the advent of steel and steam, Carrigan demonstrates how the presence of the liner in *Omeros* is not simply rejected as a symptom of a polluting modernity but a constitutive aspect of the poet's imaginative



seascape, particularly when considered alongside the author's memory of the long line of St Lucian women who load the ship with coal. Like Marshall, Walcott thus cautions us from interpreting cruise ship tourism in terms of a simple model of white western privilege that is a mirror replication of colonial hierarchies. Both authors suggest this interpretation, which the tourism industry helps to perpetuate, ultimately misleads us because it detracts attention and agency from the people and environments that sustain and are also imbricated in this uneven globalization process. Thus imaginatively recuperating the constitutive and inspirational vitality of the labor of St Lucian women, like depicting a black subject's revelation of her own imbrication in the polluting and transnational industries of new global empires, are both important ways of foregrounding the critical tools necessary to establish an ethical relationship to place.

Importantly, this ethical relationship does not rely on a discourse of authentic belonging in the land. The sea, that space of migration, flux and change, becomes the means by which these characters—and their readership—come to an ethical understanding of globalized place which includes humans and nonhumans alike. This is a specific move against ideologies of purity, a transformation achieved through a process that recognizes the importance of multiple epistemologies in the pursuit of human and environmental justice. Marshall and Walcott, like all the other authors discussed in this special cluster on postcolonial ecocriticism, help us to think more creatively and dynamically about our complex relationships to the environment. This demands a dismantling of epistemological boundaries and hierarchies and a renewed vision of an aesthetics committed to politics.

#### NOTES

1. See also Curtin (5).
2. See the works of Noel Sturgeon, Vandana Shiva, Karen Warren, and the discussion of Rajender Kaur in this volume.
3. See Heise's "Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism" for the most recent overview of the ecocritical field, which covers the influence of deep ecology.
4. Head begins his analysis of Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* by asserting that this novel traces the parallels between ecocriticism and postcolonialism and "suggests a connection" between the two schools (34).
5. Any calling into question of the ecocritical literary canon in terms of its chosen authors bears as a corollary a calling into question of genre. We chose to focus on author rather than genre here because the question of genre is not always clearly aligned with a postcolonial sensibility. For discussions of ecocriticism and genre, see Buell (1995), Head, and Murphy (2000).

6. Of the fourteen contributors to the PMLA forum, eight make some point regarding the dearth of ecocritical attention paid to the works of non-white and/or non-American writers. These contributors are Terrell Dixon, Elizabeth Dodd, Simon C. Estok, Ursula K. Heise, Patrick D. Murphy, Andrea Parra, William Slaymaker, and Scott Slovic.

7. It is worth noting in this context that the sixth biennial ASLE conference in 2005 featured Ana Castillo as a keynote speaker.

8. Rather than repeat Rob Nixon's point about the contributions Murphy's ambitious project, *Literature of Nature: an International Sourcebook*, makes to the field, we direct readers to Nixon's essay.

9. Certainly, in the field of ecocriticism, William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* provides the most significant corrective on this point.

10. Within ecocritical studies, Ursula Heise has repeatedly called for a comparative perspective. See both her contribution to the 1999 PMLA forum and her more recent "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism."

11. This effort builds off of (at least) two essays published in these pages over the past years that have ventured into this new cross-disciplinary terrain. In "A Postcolonial Sense of Place and the Work of Derek Walcott," published in 2000, George Handley focuses on Caribbean poet Walcott in order to insist on the necessity of historicizing senses of place. One recognizes Handley's further development of the ideas in "A Postcolonial Sense of Place" in his essay "Derek Walcott's Poetics of the Environment in *The Bounty*," which we also discuss above. More recently, Laura Barbas Rhoden published "Greening Central American Literature" in *ISLE* in 2005. Rhoden's essay looks at novels by Anacristina Rossi and Gioconda Belli, from Costa Rica and Nicaragua, respectively. This pairing of texts allows Rhoden to look at environmental issues from both localized (Rossi's novel) and globalized (Belli's novel) perspectives.

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