

“constant alert animal activity” (198). She demonstrates how poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas Hardy and Ted Hughes are aware of such forms of creativity and turn it into poetic language, and of how creativity arises from ongoing relational encounters in which choice, chance and error make fruitful innovations.

Finally, Chapter 6 asks how humans can seize chance creatively, what it means to become human, and how to become technological. Wheeler’s multi-faceted arguments, many of them relying on Gilbert Simondon, point to the title of the book, *Expecting the Earth*. Implied is the notion that humans are made of and in the Earth, that the world acts upon us as we act upon it and that we are made in an expectant relation to things. We are what we are because of our experiences, because of all the possibilities that surround us and that we learn to grow with. Human minds and institutions “spring from the Earth in a series of bio- and culturo-semiotic moves and levels” (241). She sees this move as the origin of animism and opts, finally, for an animistic semiotic naturalism, which “suggests the possibility of the development of a comprehensive ontological cosmology of relations which crosses aesthetics and science” (243).

Wheeler’s ideas are bold and explorative, but at the same time carefully developed. Her learned reading of semiotic, proto-biosemiotic and biosemiotic scholars and philosophers support her argument that life is organic, that we cannot separate from the earth, and that our creativity is deeply rooted in natural processes which themselves are aesthetic. She thus contributes, with a wide range of perspectives, to the ecocritical debate about human relationships to our natural environment. *Expecting the Earth* is highly recommended for everyone interested in ecocritical theory.

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**Claudia Deetjen.** *Re-Imagining Nature’s Nation: Native American and Native Hawaiian Literature, Environment, and Empire.* American Studies – A Monograph Series 267. Heidelberg: Winter, 2016, 236 pp., € 45.00.

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Since the 1990s, literary studies of the environment for which the nonhuman environment does not merely provide the frame and setting, but is made a central

thematic concern have expanded widely; today, they belong to the most innovative areas in literary and cultural studies. As part of this new research interest, one field in particular has emerged; it is located at the intersection of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism. Deetjen situates her book in this specific context. As her contribution to the already existing scholarship, she offers a postcolonial-ecocritical examination of historical environmental issues entangled with empire building. In her study, Deetjen chooses contemporary indigenous authors and investigates in particular how Native American and Native Hawaiian writers engage with environmental concerns in their literature. Recognizing that ecocritical studies before her have pointed to colonialism and empire as important historical forces for Native American and Native Hawaiian literary productions, she nevertheless sees the lack of making the entanglement their key concern when analyzing these particular literary texts. It is a research gap she hopes to fill with her book.

For her analysis, she singles out Native American and Native Hawaiian novels that have been published since the 1960s. Since the notion of empire is the guiding principle of her critical investigation, she maintains that, while these indigenous writers criticize historical imperialism that brought violent environmental and cultural transformations to their lands and peoples, their main concern lies with the contemporary legacies of these historical processes. She observes that these writers locate legacies in environmental injustice and racism caused by neocolonialism. With her thesis, Deetjen offers to reexamine Anglo-American intellectual claims of having initiated the political discourse on environmental issues of modern times as well as to challenge the United States' self-perception of being nature's nation. Instead, as she suggests, scholarship should begin to look through the lenses of these indigenous writers and see how they understand the role Anglo-American empire building has played in regard to environmental issues.

Deetjen's study consists of an introduction (chapter 1) and five subsequent parts (chapters 2–6). In her chapter 2, she provides a solid and well-researched overview of the three scholarly fields she will address: colonialism and environmental consequences, postcolonial ecocriticism, and so-called 'naturalcultural' (a term she borrows from Donna Haraway) contact zones. As part of this overview, she illustrates the initially rather awkward dialogue between ecocriticism, a field considered to be more of a predominantly white movement, and postcolonial studies. Sketching first the existing difficulties between these two fields, she continues by providing the reader with the details of the growing critical dialogue by scholars of both fields during the last decade. In addition, she offers a short introduction into Anglo-American historical as well as contemporary discourses that have conceptualized the North American and Hawaiian natural environments as celebrated wildernesses, as empty lands just waiting for human use, and

as pastoral places – all concepts that have led to the belief in the superiority of Anglo-American forms of land use. This chapter with its various overviews presents not only an important source for any beginning scholar interested in postcolonial ecocriticism, but is also a pleasure to read. In fact, just for this chapter alone, one can already call Deetjen's book a valuable contribution to the growing field of postcolonial ecocriticism.

She continues with four chapters that offer close readings of her chosen novels. While her selection of the different writers and her chapter arrangements sometimes seem to be a bit too arbitrary or at least logically not comprehensible, this arbitrariness does not distract from her otherwise carefully thought-through deliberations on every chosen text. In chapter 3, she focuses on two genre traditions of Native American literature, the homing-plot novel, also known as the 'Red Power' novel, and the postmodern trickster novel. She reasons that, since their emergence in the 1960s and 1970s, these have become the two most formative genres of the Native American Renaissance, thus being the most influential in shaping contemporary Native American fiction. For these specific authors of her choice, she shows that while they have adapted established literary aspects of those Anglo-American writers who indeed do point to the connection between colonialism and environmental concerns, they have a different cultural and political purpose in mind.

Her subsequent chapters 4, 5, and 6 are devoted to writers that have emerged since the 1990s. She argues that by utilizing the postmodern trickster and Red Power tradition, these writers situate their critique with the Anglo-American pastoral understanding of nature. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999), for example, addresses this pastoral tradition of the nineteenth century, but, as Deetjen maintains, Silko uses pastoral conventions rather as counterpastoral tools in order to critically reflect on Anglo-American agency in transforming the American environment during the process of colonialization.

In chapter 5, she critically engages with two contemporary, postmodern trickster novels, Gerald Vizenor's *Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World* (1992) and Diane Glancy's *The Man Who Heard the Land* (2001). For her thesis, she groups the two novels together because she observes that many contemporary Native American writers choose the trickster novel in order to be able to address the concept of home and belonging, symbolically as well as literally. While Glancy's idea of home and belonging deals with the experience of being of mixed Native and Anglo-American ancestry, Vizenor turns to the urban environment, asking about Native Americans' new ways of making the city their home. In this context, according to Deetjen, these writers also criticize the stereotype of the Ecological Indian, the 'noble savage' who was and still is very close to nature

because of his or her simple and authentic 'Native' life style – a stereotype that is still omnipresent in America's general popular and literary culture. In her concluding chapter 6, she turns to Blake Hausman's *Riding the Trail of Tears* (2011), a postmodern narrative that addresses a historical event, the so-called Trail of Tears of the 1830s, but moves this historical tragedy into virtual reality.

While Deetjen presents a solid analysis for all her texts, her discussion of Native Hawaiian Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1994) in chapter 4 should be mentioned separately. Like the Native American writers in her focus, Native Hawaiian writers, too, as she observes, offer indigenous intellectual resistance to the colonial discourse in their texts. Yet, Deetjen herself sees the danger of grouping 'Natives' into a unifying critical approach, simply based on the notion of 'indigeneity'; she points this out already in her introduction by citing scholar Jodi A. Byrd who criticizes attempts to contextualize U.S. colonization of Hawaii through American Indian histories "as yet another form of U.S. hegemonic imperialism" (11). With this cautionary note in mind, Deetjen, however, is able to position Davenport's novel in the overall conclusion she draws for all her chosen texts – to show that a postcolonial-ecocritical approach will reveal complex forms of 'anti-colonial imagination' when addressing the legacies of colonization entangled with environmental effects.

Concluding her study, she illustrates the scholarly difficulties in regarding Native American and Native Hawaiian aspects not only in the context of postcolonial ecocriticism, but also in the comparative approach she has chosen for her analysis. Being very well aware of the arbitrariness of assigning labels such as 'post' to the still colonial status of both groups, she, however, argues that it might very well be appropriate to use "the label 'postcolonial,' since they suffer from the cultural and environmental *effects* of colonization" (25). With its solid and convincing discussions, Deetjen's book presents a fine contribution to the growing field of postcolonial ecocriticism.