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## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

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Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, eds.: *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*. New York: Verso, 1999.

This anthology corrects our collective blindnesses about how closely our modern industrial societies remain to animals, and how our lingering proximity to each other spawns conflicts. Its editors (and co-contributors), geographers Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, bring together 13 essays to revive our social relations with domestic and wild animals and to revise social and geographical theory in the process. The essays ably lay out the range of issues animals pose: as touchstones of human identities, as cultural and religious symbols, as predator and prey in wildlife-urban suburban conflicts, and as prisoners of an industrial food production system forcing them to lead filthy and barbaric lives before dying systematically horrible deaths.

The book's intended audience seems unfortunately restricted to academic readers steeped in the jargon of post-modern thought, which will put off many lay readers, but its mission is still inspired by Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have merely interpreted the world; the point is to change it" and Wolch strives to dislodge our Cartesian dualisms and modernist pretensions with an anecdote about the sociology of dogs from 1928. Sociologist Read Bain observed that while visiting some white friends in Texas, he noted their terrier acting friendly to white children passing by, but barking and snarling at African American children.

Observing the approbation (stroking, patting) with which the dog's white mistress responded to this aggressive behavior [Bain] raised the possibility of "sectional" canine culture, and noted... "I wondered if this might be a case of canine 'race prejudice.' Upon inquiry, I discovered several people who had observed similar white [sic] canine responses to Negroes. If this is true, it would seem to be a clear case of canine race prejudice, a culture trait acquired by all dogs

socially responsive to that particular culture trait of their white masters.” (p. 1)

Bain saw social theory perpetuating a naive and unscientific anthropocentrism by ignoring such phenomena as racist dogs. Emel and Wolch set about to fix that in *Animal Geographies*.

Global trade in wild animals arose with the spread of 19th century imperialism and taxonomic science, writes Kay Anderson, rendering exotic wildlife safe for the Victorian Era public’s consumption in now-familiar zoos and museums. Yet at the start of the 19th century, English town and village centers were veritable riots of domestic animal species and their human consumers mingling in the marketplace, Chris Philo reminds us. Then class politics, urban growth, and public health concerns led to spatial separation and segregation of domestic animals into stockyards and slaughterhouses. This separation, of course, served to enforce a cultural separation of human consumers from normal and necessary processes of slaying animals before preparing and consuming them in our diets, a separation integral to Victorian/bourgeois sensibilities, which continues today.<sup>1</sup>

With geographer Glen Elder, Emel and Wolch then examine the geographic dimensions of inter-racial and cross-cultural conflicts involving animals in cultural practices, and the multiple meanings of humane treatment of animals. While striving to avoid “cultural imperialism” in assessing animal cultural practices, they recommend three difficult shifts in human thought and practice: first, that dominant human groups “accept rather than deny” the vulnerability of animals to various cultural uses; that “all humans need to abandon the drive for overarching control and instead choose a position of humility...that balances the needs for safety and security with consideration for the needs of other life-forms;” and finally that “people must actively engage in a radically inclusive politics which considers the interests and positionality of diverse peoples.”

Here, Elder, Emel and Wolch fail to deepen their own analysis of social and cultural change: to do so, they must confront perhaps mutually exclusive propositions of avoiding cultural imperialism while striving for a radically inclusive politics that seeks a surrender of human power. Huge issues abound here: for instance, power enjoys a vacuum

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<sup>1</sup>A farmer commenting on National Public Radio related a story of a city girl visiting her farm in rural New York. Upon learning that the lamb she had consumed was the one she’d seen cavorting in the farm yard earlier that week, the girl was horrified. But the commentator asked her, isn’t it better that it be someone you know?

vulnerable to corruption. If power is to be somehow surrendered in this political process, a new power would have to arise. Would it be desirable? To ignore such questions for long would be naive and irresponsible, and would serve neither animals nor humans well — and for now goes unaddressed by *Animal Geographies*.

Emel next reconstructs a history of wolf eradication in the United States, locating the drive to wipe out the wolf in the “interrelatedness of sexism, racism, animal abuse, and economic practices.” In the end, she finds that, “like the Native American, the wolf was killed to secure land and investment. No less importantly it was killed to sustain big game animals so that human hunters could kill them. It was killed for pelts, for data, for science, and for trophies.” And for a specious American masculinity, which variously admires and vilifies the wolf as a cultural icon of cunning and wisdom.

As suburbs encroach ever further into wildlands of California, the habitat of the California cougar (mountain lion) shrinks. Andrea Gullo, Unna Lassiter, and Wolch tell a “cougar’s tale” of efforts to keep the peace and safety of cougars, humans, and the latter’s domestic pets at the wildland border. Similar tales, with varying degrees of danger or hysteria can be told of black bears at Lake Tahoe or Yosemite, raccoons and mule deer in Berkeley or Big Sur. A photograph of two California state parks rangers holding air rifles moments after killing a cougar reveals the anguish wildlife managers experience as a result of conflicts at wildland borders.

Wildlife rehabilitation — a woefully underappreciated, often ragtag, but essential human enterprise — comes to the fore all too briefly in Suzanne Michel’s chapter on golden eagles and the environmental politics of care. In addition to the wildland conflicts, there are the injured wildlife — hit by cars, abused by psychopaths, poisoned by pesticides, orphaned by domestic cats — resulting from too close proximity to humans, our machines, and our oft-screwball ways. The politics of care, argues Michel, educates the public about the medical care of injured wildlife, inspiring empathy — especially in young people — for the animal’s plight and the challenges rehabilitators face in negotiating recovery of the injured animal’s physical and behavioral powers. This personal approach to politics contrasts with interest-group “combative land use politics,” but Michel believes the politics of care can help inform people about the issues at stake in land use politics. Michel’s piece left me wanting more about such challenges in *Animal Geographies*.

Chapters by James Proctor, Paul Robbins, and Frances Upkes examine the political economy and cultural “narratives” of animals in forest management politics (the northern spotted owl), Hindu/Moslem conflicts over a slaughterhouse in India, and restructuring of the US meat industry toward leaner meats and more horrible production processes, over the last generation.

The final section of *Animal Geographies* addresses “animals and the moral landscape.” By then, the influence of Emel and Wolch’s passion wanes some, but is buoyed by Colorado law professor James Wescoat’s even-handed examination of the “right of thirst” for animals in Islamic law in comparison with US legal traditions. “Under Islamic law,” writes Wescoat, “animals have a right to drinking water similar to that of human beings,” which is only implied in the public trust doctrine, and ignored in US water law. Wescoat finds that under modern political structures in post-colonial Pakistan, the Islamic right of thirst for animals goes unrecognized, except in individual religious practice. Wescoat locates this lack in the clash of religions in Pakistani politics, but could it also be something about the political institutions left behind by British imperialism? The question goes unasked by Wescoat, whose essay is otherwise compelling.

There is much to admire, sympathize with, and act on in *Animal Geographies*. Its breadth and depth in covering the geographic boundaries, conflicts, and domination under which animals suffer at human hands is at best sobering. As history and geographical survey, *Animal Geographies* is highly instructive. As a guide to action, Wolch and Emel help their readers avoid falling into a facile green consumerism that perpetuates animal enclosure and conquest, and should spur animal rights activism to a more common dialect. — **Tim Strohane**

Sing C. Chew: *World Ecological Degradation: Accumulation, Urbanization, and Deforestation 3000 BC – AD 2000*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2001.

In this brief but biting analysis of world environmental history from the appearance of the first cities to the present, Sing Chew states his thesis and follows it with admirable directness. The account is devolutionary: urbanized societies have exploited and depleted the environment, everywhere and throughout history. Chew presents the process as an interaction between two entities, “Culture” and “Nature”

(these nouns are capitalized throughout the book), but his argument is by no means as simplistic as that dichotomy might suggest. The most powerful engines of destruction, he maintains, are three: accumulation, urbanization, and population growth. By accumulation, he designates the acquisition of wealth not simply in the form of financial capital, but all the material aspects of civilization, which are produced from the physical resources of the natural environment and inevitably exhaust them in the process. Urbanization drives a resource-intensive utilization of resources that transforms the landscape. Population growth exacerbates the first two phenomena and generates increasing stress on the environment.

It would have been impossible for the author to discuss all the processes of ecological degradation in detail. There are too many for a short book: loss of biodiversity, erosion and decline of soil fertility, pollution, depletion of minerals, etc. He mentions all of these, but treats only one in anything approaching completeness, and that one is deforestation. It is an excellent choice as an example, since it has been happening from the discovery of the use of fire to the present, and can be documented and measured. It can stand as a representative for other forms of degradation that accompany it, such as floods and erosion. It is a form of habitat loss and the destruction of important ecosystems. Chew does an excellent job of tracing and assessing deforestation in many parts of the world through many centuries.

Seven of the nine chapters cover civilization in chronological periods and culturally defined areas. Of these, surprisingly, four are subjects from ancient history: Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley considered jointly, Minoan Crete with Mycenaean Greece, Classical Greece, and the Roman Empire. As an ancient historian, I can hardly object to this concentration on the early past as an essential part of environmental history. It does, however, begin to look like a traditional "Western Civilization" approach rather than "World History." But Chew next extends his view to the globe by providing two chapters on the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period (AD 500-1800), one on Asia and the near Pacific and the other on European expansion. A single chapter covers the Modern Period (1800-2000), and is entitled "Europe at the Helm." The story is one of unremitting impacts by growing, flourishing, and declining civilizations on the natural world. If economics is the "dismal science," Chew thus far has made environmental history yet more dismal; but his portrayal is accurate. One of the most original elements in his analysis is the idea that "dark ages" are the result of expanding cultures exhausting the resources available to them. Though disasters for civilizations, these periods

offered a measure of recovery to nature. But hasn't humanity noticed what has been happening and tried to avoid dark ages and degradation?

The answer is contained in Chew's last chapter, "Ecological Consciousness and Social Movements among *les anciens et les modernes* 2700 BC – AD 2000." There have been individuals and groups that have objected to the trashing of the environment by societal elites from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the Rain Forest Action Network, both of which receive attention in this brief *tour de force* along with ancient and eastern religions and the philosophies of Locke and Spinoza. Why have these movements, whether religious or rational, not had a greater effect in teaching humankind to avoid the "degradative encounters" that "other human communities" experienced? Chew believes this is due in part to the domination of society by leading groups committed to "maximal utilization of resources for the most gains" (p. 172), and in part from human irrationality. I fear he is right.

Chew has provided an excellent bibliography that clearly indicates the breadth of his research and which will be of value to environmental historians. A few maps are included, but are limited to the earlier part of the book (there are none in chapters six through nine), and often do not include important locations discussed in the text. Charts and tables sometimes lack any explanation (e.g., p. 94). Often one statistic will be given in the text in metric, and another in English measurements, even when they are both on the same page and demand comparison; how many students carry in their heads, for example, the ratio between acres and hectares? Most figures cited seem reliable; there are very few bloopers. (On p. 65, though, the fourth century BC comes before the fifth).

I think this book will prove stimulating for teachers of courses in World History; there are issues raised by Chew that most texts avoid. The book might well be used as supplementary reading. Lower division students who take such courses, however, may find the rich texture of the book daunting, since many new names and places emerge on every page, and the exposition tends to brevity. Upper division students and graduate students will find Chew's theses challenging and worth investigation. The appearance of this study along with a number of others worldwide in scale and spanning long time periods, such as John R. McNeill's *Something New Under the Sun* (W.W. Norton, 2000) and Robert B. Marks's *The Origins of the Modern World* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), clearly indicates that the discipline of environmental history is coming of age. — **J. Donald Hughes**

**Al Gedicks: Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations.** Boston: South End, 2001.

One part of the now extensive discussion about environment and conflict that is getting increasing attention is the matter of the resistance of local peoples to the destruction and appropriation of lives and landscapes around the world. Understanding environmental conflicts as part of the global economy rather than in neo-Malthusian terms of environmental degradation causing social dislocation and hence conflict is now an established part of the discussion. Supported with a comprehensive index and detailed bibliography of the relevant literature, this volume makes a readable and useful contribution to the documentary case concerning the destruction wrought in many places by the resource extractions that feed the global economy. It very usefully follows on from Al Gedick's earlier volume, *The New Resource Wars* (1993), updating and extending the earlier analysis.

Gedicks starts his new volume with the small scale and with local conflicts. He documents the struggles of native peoples in many places fighting against international mining corporations and the damage to peoples, places and cultures involved in their activities. Beginning with the case of the U'wa people in Columbia and their struggle to prevent the extraction of petroleum from their ancestral lands by Occidental petroleum, he goes on to discuss similar cases in many places. He links the traditional wisdom of many native peoples and their concern with maintaining balance in ecological matters with the contemporary global science of climate change and the crucial role of fossil fuels in upsetting the relatively stable atmosphere, making the point about their closely parallel concerns.

But there is a violence in these struggles that the global science literature is not paying much attention to. Native activists who have resisted corporate and state development projects have frequently suffered violence for their efforts; this is an important part of resource politics and one that needs to be clearly incorporated into both social science discussions of insecurity and environmental change as well as into discussions of the survival and transformation of native cultures in their various encounters with the disruptions of modernity. These are clearly evident in this volume in discussions of the Zapatista revolt in Mexico, violence in Ogoniland in Nigeria, the Kayapo resistance to dam building in Brazil, the devastating consequences of tailings dam failures in various countries across the South, or the actions of Rio Tinto Zinc and its affiliates in many places.

Such a framework suggests that violence is already a routine part of the extraction of resources to feed the global economy. It starts, not with the geopolitical perspective on the world as a whole made up of territorial states, but with an ecological view of the world as an integrated whole with interconnections across those borders. The violence on the periphery of the world's economy is then understood as a result of the disruptions of development, not as a matter of a shortage of resources. Political opposition to the activities of transnational corporations and friendly developmentalist governments have also spread around the world as coalitions of indigenous activists increasingly take on corporations in courts in the United States and elsewhere. Conventional international politics has connected with these struggles in cases where governments are criticized for the infringement of people's human rights. The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others in Ogoniland and the assassination of Chico Mendez, leader of the Brazil rubber tappers, are only the most high profile examples. Reading this well written book makes this overall pattern clear.

Gedicks closes his indictment of the politics of destruction by focussing on the military, its indirect environmental role in keeping resources flowing through the global economy, and its direct environmental impact as a voracious user of those resources. Here the international politics of environmental destruction is directly related to the persistence of the institutions of violence, their direct role as users of resources, and their indirect role as protectors of these modes of economy, is demonstrated in a way that ties environment and violence together clearly. It raises the issues of the distant consequences of consumption as well as the politics of resistance and the dangers that arise for activists when they challenge the violent practices of corporations as well as states.

In reviewing a volume such as this one could, alas, always think of other case studies, other peoples that are suffering the violent disruptions of "modernization" and query the choice of cases as a result. But this would be unjustifiable pickiness with this book. The overall logic of the volume is sadly accurate, the fate of peoples in many far-flung places is clear in these pages. The volume is concise rather than exhaustive, and makes its point directly. As such this is a most valuable addition to the activist literature that links native studies and international and environmental politics together. More generally it is a damning indictment of the contemporary global political economy, a work that deserves a wide readership. — **Simon Dalby**

Frank Ackerman, Neva R. Goodwin, Laurie Dougherty, and Kevin Gallagher, eds.: **The Political Economy of Inequality**. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000.

The editors of the series “Frontier Issues in Economic Thought” have produced a fifth volume, *The Political Economy of Inequality*. Each volume in the series examines a “frontier” area that will widen the focus of neoclassical economics to include “social institutional, cultural and political” issues. The new volume is an anthology of two or three page summaries of articles and book excerpts organized in ten chapters, each with an introduction by one of the editors. The editorial team reviewed thousands of books and articles, narrowing them down to a selection of 66. Their aim was to search outside the boundaries of neoclassical economics for theory and empirical research on the issue of inequality. Articles from major journals were excluded, with a focus instead on material the editors considered harder to find. The volume is an accessible digest of material on inequality featuring the work of some of the major researchers at the intersection of politics and economics.

The book addresses a wide range of topics surrounding inequality, focusing on issues from inequity in the household to the inequality of nations. One major theme underlying the volume is the striking increase in income inequality in the US and other countries in the past 25 years. Part I analyzes the shift away from the period of 25-30 years following World War II, an era characterized by a trend toward both real growth and increasing income equality. But by 1974, in what Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone call “The Great U-Turn,” the trend reversed itself and income inequity rose dramatically. Harrison and Bluestone attribute the change to a conscious shift in corporate strategy that dramatically impacted labor relations. Corporations developed the strategy in response to a decline in profits that began to emerge during the mid-1960s. As David M. Gordon elaborates, the reaction of employers to a squeeze in profits was to take the “low road” toward employees, a short-term approach to cutting costs, especially labor costs, rather than taking the “high road” which would have brought on increased productivity through investment in employee training and technology. Corporations cut wages, laid off workers, and increasingly used part-time and outsourced labor. As Jerome Himmelstein points out in Part IV, corporate America also reacted to the economic contraction of the 1970s politically, by beginning to back conservative causes and attack labor unions.

Income inequality is a significant part of inequity in the US, but it is not the entire picture. One of the important measurements of inequality is wealth, or accumulated assets. Part II points out that if the distribution of income is highly unequal in the US, the distribution of wealth is even more so. The Gini ratio, which has been used to measure inequality, is a range of values in which the left-hand side of the spectrum indicates perfect equality, with each individual owning the same amount. The far right of the spectrum represents one person owning all assets. According to Edward N. Wolff, in 1995 the US Gini coefficient for household income was slightly above .4, but the Gini coefficient for financial assets, (i.e. assets excluding owner-occupied homes) was .91. Thus the distribution of financial assets was over 90 percent toward the right of the spectrum. The chapter further underscores the unequal distribution of assets by challenging shibboleths such as the image of small business ownership by the middle class. Wolff demonstrates that two thirds of all equity in small business is held by the top one percent of the population. This ownership not only confers wealth, but also power in local economic and political affairs, a prime component of inequity, and one overlooked, of course, in neoclassical economic analyses.

As inequality has increased in recent decades, incomes at the top of the scale have skyrocketed. Runaway salaries for CEOs and celebrities are a feature of recent years, and as Robert Frank and Philip Cook note in Part III, this overcompensation creates a distortion in resource allocation, drawing labor skills away from tasks that receive more modest compensation. One cause of runaway compensation for CEOs, according to Derek Bok, is the amount of control CEOs have over their pay increases: it is not uncommon for CEOs themselves to determine what information is given to the board of directors concerning their requested raises. Thus it is not surprising that the average CEO's compensation increased 36 percent in 1998, while the average blue-collar salary increased 2.7 percent. This increase is far greater than any measure of the productivity of a CEO, and was 419 times the salary of the average blue-collar employee.

As compensation has been booming at the top, for those at the bottom of the income distribution scale, things are increasingly grim. One dimension of the growing inequality of the past 25 years is the increase in poverty rates. In Part V the volume again critiques the neoclassical view of economics, specifically the neoclassical view that the "rising tide" of economic prosperity will "lift all boats." The evidence of recent decades shows that economic growth by itself will not solve poverty. Indeed, despite the economic expansion of the 1980s

and 1990s, poverty has climbed from the low of 11 percent in the 1970s to 13.3 percent in 1997, according to Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and John Schmitt. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward discuss how the change in labor relations that began in the 1970s hit the poor especially hard. They state that the poorest tenth of Americans saw a 20 percent decrease in their post-tax income between 1977 and 1992 as the top 1 percent saw an increase in their post-tax income by 136 percent. Surrounding this, the 1980s and 1990s was a time of change in the rhetoric concerning the solution for the problem of poverty, as well a period of more repressive approaches to stopping crime, tax cuts for the wealthy, and ultimately the dismantling of the welfare system. All of this had a devastating effect on the state of impoverished Americans.

Part VIII goes beyond the traditional measurements of inequality such as wealth and income to offer an important corrective to the inability of neoclassical economics to deal with the issue of categorical inequalities. Inequity of the basis of race, ethnicity and gender continue to persist. There is still a substantial, albeit decreasing, gap between the earnings of men and women. Female poverty continues to increase worldwide, and according to Mischel, Bernstein and Schmitt, the percentage of children in poverty has increased substantially in the United States since the 1970s. In 1979, 16.4 percent of children under 18 fell below the poverty line, while 19.9 percent did so in 1997. The figures were 37.2 and 36.8 percent for black and Hispanic children respectively. As William Julius Williams argues in Part VIII, the solutions to address categorical inequality, including affirmative action, do not always address the most severely disadvantaged. He notes that income inequality since the mid-1970s has risen even more among blacks than among whites. One approach he advocates is dismantling residential segregation by race to enable poor African-Americans to have access to better jobs and education.

Part IX addresses inequality in the development of nations, taking on the well-known Kuznets curve, a formula developed in 1955 by Simon Kuznets that asserts that in the early stages of an economy's growth, inequality first increases and then later decreases as growth continues. The Kuznets curve has informed development policy for decades, but contrary to its premise Irma Adelman and Nobuhiko Fowa found that, for 45 countries during the 1970s and 38 for the 1980s, the share of the poorest quintiles in each country showed little movement toward equality during the process of growth. In general income distribution worldwide has continued to demonstrate major inequalities since the 1980s despite the real growth of many nations. In 1989,

according to the United Nations Development Program, the richest 20 percent of the global population received approximately 85 percent of world trade, global income, domestic investment, and domestic savings.

Part X examines the different approaches to reducing poverty through welfare. During recent decades the welfare state has come under attack throughout the world. Again the volume critiques the neoclassical economic stance, which has provided support for the dismantling of welfare systems by maintaining that growth depends on efficient markets, and thus minimum interference in the labor market combined with a minimization of costs. Part X looks at the impact of different models of state welfare. The Anglo-Saxon route, as Gosta Esping-Anderson terms it, practiced in Britain US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, utilizes means-tested benefits and social insurance plans that are quite modest. This approach lowers the cost of unskilled labor by reducing the cost of social supports, resulting in lower unemployment but a large degree of inequality. The corporatist or Continental European model provides high job security and social insurance but little job training or family benefits. This approach has led to few new employment opportunities. The Scandinavian approach, or universal model, provides high income maintenance and wage equality. This leads to higher unemployment, but greater equality. While no approach completely solves the inequality issue, an analysis of various countries from the Luxembourg Income Study showed the United States' welfare programs brought about only 28 percent reduction in overall poverty, whereas countries such as Sweden and Belgium were able to reduce poverty by 80 percent.

The readings in this volume require some, though not extensive, familiarity with macroeconomic theory. More complex readings are made clearer by the chapter introductions, which also provide additional information to flesh out the readings. The work is suitable for upper-division undergraduates through professionals and would be a useful reader for courses in political economy, especially those courses dealing with the economics of inequality. Most of the articles are from the 1990s, although some content is as old as 1980. The most recent selections are from 1998, and it would be interesting to see how some of the authors' data and conclusions stand up in light of the economic contraction of the early 21st century. — **Dennis D. Loo**