

Esther Sánchez-Pardo & María Porras Sánchez (eds.). 2024. *Myth and environmentalism: Arts of resilience for a damaged planet*. Routledge. ISBN 9781032391342. \$52.99.

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In their introduction to this comprehensive edited volume, Sánchez-Pardo and Porras Sánchez address several critical considerations for academics, activists, and eco-artists alike. First, they note the tendency for social scientists, as much as or sometimes more than the broader public, to struggle to reconcile oppositions between myth versus truth. By transcending the "fiction-fact binary," they argue, "myth can be used to grant visibility and voice to those silenced by colonial impositions and extractive capitalism" (p. 16-17). Art and myth afford the possibility of a turn toward an anthropological theory of value wherein the economy comes to terms with the limits of the earth system, decentering the imaginative dominance of finance and production in favor of an ecological economics which acknowledges energetic flow and waste production. According to Sánchez-Pardo and Porras Sánchez, this turn toward the "real-real economy" encourages a recognition of futures-debt, or the reality of intergenerational inequality in light of the fact that "we live off the planet that belongs to future generations" (p. 18-19). Critically, Sánchez-Pardo and Porras Sánchez then also emphasize the need for an intersectional, post-colonial framework of sustainability to address extant, intragenerational inequities. Here, the roles of art and myth become clear, and this volume finds its success: "Art has been used to raise awareness of environmental damage," and the diversity of authors, disciplines, and mediums featured in this book work to diversify not only its approach but its prospective audience as well (p. 23).

In the first chapter, "The afterlife of Chernobyl: Apocalyptic mythology and environmentalism in the exclusion zone," Haley Laurila reorients the conception of the infamous nuclear disaster from one of divine punishment, popular among many Ukrainians and reminiscent of eschatological throughlines from various Western eco-cultural mythologies, to one of redemption. To do so, she argues, requires a temporal shift from *chronos*, linear and final, toward *kairos*: cyclical, redemptive, and transformative. However, she also warns of the dangers of fetishizing collapse or making claims for sweeping blueprints for revival, instead identifying the critical functions of situated knowledge, localized context, and ecological literacy to prepare for postapocalyptic futures. It is ultimately this "apocalyptic thinking" which Laurila claims "ushers in a new environmentalism for the Anthropocene," thus liberating the notion of progress from technological linearity (p. 58).

Themes of postapocalyptic imaginaries extend into the second chapter, "Myths of wilderness and motherhood in postapocalyptic narratives of the Anthropocene," by Hope Jennings and Christine Junker. In this comparative literary critique of Claire Vaye's *Gold fame citrus* (2015) and Diane Cook's *The new wilderness* (2020), Jennings and Junker contextualize 'Mother Earth' within patriarchal legacies of colonialism and provide a critical ecological framing of motherhood more broadly. Vaye (2015) and Cook (2020) are contrasted against traditionally masculine survivalist fantasies which "promote the nation's settler colonialist past as a foundation of American exceptionalism" through which the apocalypse births an "ecofascist utopia" (p. 67). Jennings and Junker identify the redemptive ecologies of *Gold fame citrus* and *The new wilderness*, offering well-reasoned critique of pervasive anthropocentric white supremacy found throughout the survivalist genre, deep ecology, and other forms of New Age Environmentalism. However, in doing so, they employ the same linear temporalities critiqued by Laurila in arguing that "the survivalist postapocalyptic settings of the novels implicate the Anthropocene as the inevitable endpoint of a settler colonial history" (p. 79). Despite this, Jennings and Junker conclude that both novels identify the demand for a new, liberatory, postapocalyptic mythology.

In developing this so-called "new" mythology, Part II centers "Indigenous and Afro-diasporic myths and ecological knowledge," and features essays from Sonja Ross, Leonor María Martínez Serrano, and Paul Humphrey, who remind readers that redemptive eco-mythologies are only new within the Western, colonialist canon. From chapter to chapter, the text moves from Inuit cosmologies and traditional ecological knowledge changed by melting Arctic permafrost (Ross, chapter three), to poetry from the Bear River First Nation in Nova Scotia (Martínez Serrano, chapter four), and finally to subaquatic sea ontologies illustrated on the pages of comic books independently published throughout the Afro-Caribbean diaspora (Humphrey, chapter five). At each stop, the authors criticize the colonial limitation of mythology as past-oriented and anecdotal, instead

supporting the reorientation of myth toward the future by identifying its potential for shifting both cultural as well as ecological adaptive capacities.

Both Martínez Serrano, in chapter four, as well as Esther Lezra and Sánchez-Pardo, in chapter six, emphasize language as the link between human and environmental justice. For Martínez Serrano, the loss of indigenous language, which is of the land, is equated to the loss of land itself. Lezra and Sánchez-Pardo describe "the language of flowers:" a complex, nonverbal semiotic tradition shared intergenerationally by colonial-era women in Brazil "to cultivate and circulate counter-colonial sentiment, strategy, and literacy" (p. 168-69). Both chapters demonstrate the roles of language and myth in deconstructing and countering colonial representation of the landscape as an arena for extraction, domination, and the exercise of power.

In chapter seven, by Porras Sánchez and Lhoussain Simour, and chapter eight, by Keijiro Suga, art and myth inspire a repurposing of waste and reorientation of death. Porras Sánchez and Simour take readers to Morocco, where they engage with the concept of *baraka*, or "divine blessing," and the work of artist Mohamed Larbi Rahhali, whose ongoing project, *Omri*, combines ephemera and found objects like matchboxes to explore "a poetics of the everyday" (p. 180-81). Similarly, Suga explicitly asks the question which underscores themes found throughout each preceding chapter: "What if we consider life as 'being there together'?" (p. 219). In answering this question, he offers a critique of consumer society which, Suga argues, replaces the circularity of the life-death cycle and places us along the very same linear temporality challenged by other authors in this volume.

Finally, in the ninth and last chapter, Jeanette Hart-Mann continues the volume's multispecies turn, introduced by Suga in the preceding essay, calling upon Derrida and Haraway to develop an environmental hauntology of corn. Corn, for Hart-Mann, extends the motif of motherhood in its capacity to feed and nurture millions, but also to carry a vast legacy of intergenerational trauma. She presents a call to action, encouraging readers to ask ourselves not only how we will respond to the limits of our knowledge but how we may confront the boundaries of our own imaginative power—"to incite multispecies worldmaking through story" (p. 248). By listening to the corn, Hart-Mann locates an opportunity to break from the vicious cycles of ecocide and instead turn toward a new ecological imaginary of mutual becoming.

Ultimately, *Myth and environmentalism* does well to demonstrate the liberatory potential of art and myth, and Sánchez-Pardo and Porras Sánchez have compiled a collection of essays whose authors, themes, and disciplinary perspectives are certainly representative of the intersectionality required to achieve it. While this volume does struggle to address the many structural challenges encountered by those who attempt to inspire a new ecological imaginary, the authors effectively position the environmental humanities to begin the shift. Academics, artists, activists, and anyone hoping to reimagine our environmental futures will find inspiration in this collection.

References

Sánchez-Pardo, E., & Porras Sánchez, M. (Eds.). (2024). *Myth and environmentalism: Arts of resilience for a damaged planet*. Routledge.

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