



Book Review

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Leora Kava and Craig Santos Perez (Eds.) (2022) *Indigenous Pacific Islander Eco-Literatures*. University of Hawai‘i Press

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Our planet is facing a devastating triple planetary crisis of pollution (Fuller et. al., 2022), biodiversity loss (WWF, 2020), and climate change (IPCC, 2022). While this crisis is indeed a *global* threat, it is wreaking havoc in the Global South and amongst the metaphorical South in particular. The “metaphorical South” includes Indigenous Peoples and other-than-human Nature located also in the Global North. Although nowhere near ranking amongst the greatest contributors to the issues fuelling the triple planetary crisis, Indigenous Peoples and other-than-human Nature are impacted by the environmental degradation at an alarming and disproportionate level (Goyes, 2019; Goyes, 2023; Lindgren, 2018; Ngcamu, 2023).

This holds true for Pacific Islanders and the other-than-human Nature they live within and together with. Pacific Islanders continue to suffer from the colonial legacy that facilitates relentless exploitation of human beings as well as other-than-human Nature (Borelle et al., 2022; Maclellan, 2024; as for instance illustrated by Patricia Grace in *Potiki*; Grace, 1986/2022). Pacific Islanders often have tight bonds with the ocean, economically, socially, and culturally. However, they are forced to grapple with substantial environmental issues (Fuller, Ngata et al., 2022; Chisholm Hatfield, 2019) which place both their cultures and other-than-human Nature at risk, the two being inseparable.

Indigenous Pacific Islander Eco-Literatures edited by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Leora Kava, and Craig Santos Perez is introduced by quoting Epeli Hau‘ofa in *The Ocean in Us* (1998/2022), who reminds us of this important interconnection between culture and Nature. All within Nature is interrelated, an acknowledgement which permeates the entire anthology of contemporary eco-literature itself. Epeli Hau‘ofa further highlights that “for us in Oceania, the sea defines us, what we are and always have been” (p. 117). Teresia Teaiwa says “We sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood” (p. 59). Robert Sullivan ends his poem *Ocean Birth* with “we are skin of the ocean” (p. 62). The anthology positions the human being outside of any hierarchy and inside an interconnected network of relations (p. 227), all threatened by the triple planetary crisis and related injustices.

The eco-literatures are written across different genres by nearly one hundred contributors in a “beautiful reflection of the vibrant biodiversity of the Pacific itself” (p. xiv). The anthology starts at the beginning with *Creation Stories and Genealogies* setting



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the framework for shared stories holding invaluable ancestral wisdom, connecting the past with the present and the future. There is inspiration to be found here (p. 3), as well as in the remaining themes. Each theme is accompanied by a sharp introduction providing helpful context and guidance; *Ocean and Waterscapes, Land and Islands, Flowers, Plants, and Trees, Animals and More-than-Human Species, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice*.

In telling and defining how to do so, the anthology is not only an impassioned ode to Nature, but also an act of resistance reclaiming narratives (p. 3), a defiant response to climate change and ecological imperialism connected to colonisation, militarisation, and exploitation of the Pacific (and elsewhere). Bombings and nuclear testing; whaling and overfishing; mining, logging and plantations - the harms are many, scarring not only other-than-human Nature, but also the bodies and memories of Pacific Islanders, as the editors recount (pp. xiv-xv) and the works later express. Here, other-than-human Nature is a teacher, a connector, and a healer (e.g., pp. 59, 125, 175, 227).

Hopefully, *Indigenous Pacific Islander Eco-Literatures* can raise awareness, invoke empathy and function as a stepping stone towards collective healing, towards reconnection within Nature. Of course, to do so we must remember that “In this ‘together’ is not possible unless you make space,” as Katerina Teaiwa points out in one of the contributions (p. 362). *Indigenous Pacific Islander Eco-Literatures* are asking us to listen, sometimes very appropriately with different languages: “Ekungok – Listen – to kantan tãsi – the song of the sea” (Hattori, 2021/2022, p. 120). The Pacific voices, despite the rising seas, do not drown. They fight, and they invite us to join them (pp. xv-xvi). A good start is by reading, genuinely listening to, and recognising the importance of these powerful stories.

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