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## Book Review

**OLIVIA ANGÉ & DAVID BERLINER, editors, *Ecological Nostalgias: memory, affect and creativity in times of ecological upheavals*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. 2021, 197 pp.**

*Ecological Nostalgias: memory, affect and creativity in times of ecological upheavals* is an eight-chapter selection edited by Olivia Angé and David Berliner, whose main subject is the overlap between nostalgia and ecology. In particular, the book detects in the subject of nostalgia the centrality of environmental perception and the planetary ecological crisis, adapting nostalgia to the most pungent environmental issues of our time, including climate change, global warming, and systematic destruction of ecosystems. Going beyond the classic spatial and temporal meanings of nostalgia as 'longing for home' (p. 178) or yearning for a 'vanished time' (p. 4), the eight chapters of the book give an ecology-oriented approach to nostalgia. Whereas before, nostalgia was about times and places that did not exist or that people miss, now it is also about natures, ecologies, and environments that are on the verge of disappearing or are being radically transformed.

The research contexts of the book are quite varied, encompassing five different continents (Antarctica, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America); however, the chapters are not divided into sections according to common research themes or ethnographic contexts. Therefore, this review will follow the numerical sequence of the chapters as presented in the book.

In the introduction, Angé and Berliner present the concept of 'eco-nostalgias' or 'ecological nostalgias' considering three fundamental aspects: 1) 'eco-nostalgias' must considerer different 'natures-cultures' (as humans, forests, animals, ice caps, vegetables), 2) 'eco-nostalgias' are not only a representation of the past, but creative and social productive practices, and 3) 'eco-nostalgias' can be politically and economically instrumentalised by institutions, national states, and large capitalist enterprises. In this way, an ecology-oriented approach to nostalgia must consider the environmental relations with other beings, the social creativity of some practices, as well as its historical, political, and economic usefulness.

Roy Ellen opens the first chapter of the book with a critique of American environmental anthropology's neglect of the concept of memory. Roy Ellen analyses how the Dusun people (Malaysia) and the Nualu people (Indonesia) deal with memories of their recent ecological past 'in which what we call tropical rainforest is the predominant material and experiential reality' (p. 30). Kirsten Hastrup, in the second chapter, refers to the Thule people, inhabitants of Greenland's High Arctic, as 'definitely part of a larger world' (p. 46). In a geographic context quite different from the tropical forests where Roy Ellen conducted his research, Hastrup seeks to reverse the isolationist image of the Arctic, analysing the effects of global warming and climate change over the place, its inhabitants, and their 'ecology of mind'. In particular, she analyses the effects of polar ice caps melting on hunters' and scientists' perceptions of the environment in a rapidly disappearing world. The polar ice caps, according to the author, are memory repositories. So, as the ice caps melt faster and faster, the memories of scientists and hunters are also destroyed.

In certain cases, as shown by Roy Ellen and, above all, by Kirsten Hastrup, 'eco-nostalgias' suggests worlds that fall apart. In other cases, however, 'eco-nostalgias' reveal worlds that are being produced, and those which are in a context of global warming is what Madeleine Sallustio analyses in the third chapter. In her ethnography of the 'neo-peasant' initiatives to re-inhabit the mountainous region of Cévennes in south-central France, Sallustio presents how, based on the authenticity of national traditions, 'neo-peasants' turn to

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practices and customs of European rural communities 'with the aim of proposing an alternative way of life that is more respectful of the environment' (p. 62).

In a tone of criticism of Western formulations of history, heritage, and nature, Casey High's fourth chapter shows how the conflicts and ecological transformations among the Waorani people in Ecuadorian Amazonia reflect their daily struggles to belong to the land, a concern synthesised in the native concept of *wao ome*. High's objective is to analyse the Waorani's socio-natural relations with territory and memory without appealing to an image solely of loss and isolation of the Amazon. As also seen in the ethnographical analyses of Roy Ellen, Kirsten Hastrup, and Madeleine Sallustio, relationships with territory and memory involve a set of affections and feelings that identifies people and their places, and which is not geographically isolated on Earth, but in creative relationships with the land, forests, rivers, ice cap, animals, etc.

In the fifth chapter, for example, Olivia Angé presents an ethnography of the relationship between potato growers and the environment based on an analysis of *kusisqa* (happiness). In the highlands of Cuzco, Peru, *Kusisqa* is a fundamental element for the realisation of an 'affective agriculture' between humans and vegetables. For Olivia Angé, longing for a past of glory and abundance is part of the 'eco-nostalgias' of rural communities, which are creating new ways of inhabiting the world through numerous affections and sensibilities with the land and other beings.

For Perig Pitrou, life in the countryside and the usual ways of cultivation and production have lost strength in capitalist relations of production. In the sixth chapter, his ethnography seeks to understand how remaining peasants of Mexico, specifically in village communities in the state of Oaxaca, rehabilitate their traditional agricultural rituals, proposing a collective and affective memory shared with plants, waters, and land. Inhabiting the world with stories, ancestors, collectivities, temporalities, and environments is not human-exclusive. Plants, water, land, and other beings have their own sensibilities in the *milieux*, and these environmental sensibilities are an important element to make people remember things in order to construct shared and common realities.

In the seventh chapter, Richard Irvine invests in a description of how post-socialist Mongolia is experienced by people according to an essentialist view of the past. The 'eco-nostalgias' documented by Irvine in a school context, among children and artists – poets, specifically –, suggest an idealised 'peaceful countryside' occupied by a society originally identified as pastoral and nomadic. According to Irvine, when thinking based on Mongolia's national history, people are able to 'critically reflect upon the experience of rapid environmental change' (p. 147). By reflecting on their own history and the construction of the nation-state, the informants in Richard Irvine's research are also able to identify what is ecologically different and habitual in the world.

In the eighth and final chapter, Cymene Howe detects, as Kirsten Hastrup did among the Thule people, the following hypothesis: socio-ecological transformations in the ice are simultaneously environmental and mental. In her ethnographic research in several regions in Iceland, specifically in the cities of Sveitarfélagið Hornafjörður, Sauðárkrúkur, and Höfn, Cymene Howe suggests that the materiality of ice in the Arctic is a historical and geographical reference. In her words, ice must be seen 'as object, as resource, and as vessel of environmental and social history', but ice also is a source of reflections and perceptions on 'ecohuman futures' (p. 166). For Cymene Howe, as well as for all the authors of the book, nostalgia is an ethnographic concept that reflects a community notion of possible worlds. Remembering things is to establish with memories new connections with both the past and the present, as well as new ways of remodelling and inhabiting the planet. Remembering is not a passive attitude, but a transformative and creative one.

Crossing five continents (Antarctica, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America), relating beings of different 'natures-cultures' (humans, forests, ancestors, animals, ice caps, vegetables) and making plausible stories in which the environment is not a mere object or repository of human action and representation, the eight chapters of the book seek to define 'ecological nostalgias' as a concept open not only to experiences, sensitivities, and idealisations of the past, but to a multiplicity of practices in the present and the future; even though, at the limit of their existence, those practices struggle to perpetuate themselves against the voracity of time. As Dominic Boyer says in the afterword, *Ecological*

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*Nostalgias* is a book about 'the time before collapse' (p. 180). In this way, the main reflections and questions of the book concerning humans and non-humans, nature and society, past and present, and ecology and memory in a rapidly disappearing world suggest new paradigms for anthropology to rethink.

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