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## Anthropocentric Ecologies and the »Ecological Native« in Native American, New Zealand Māori, and Aboriginal Taiwanese Literatures

One of the oddities of people's interactions with their surroundings is that individuals and societies with presumably the closest ties with the natural world often contribute, deliberately or inadvertently, to damaging or destroying it. To give one example, Native American spiritual guides have claimed that »digging up the earth to retrieve resources like coal and uranium ... is tantamount to cutting skin and represents a betrayal of a duty to protect the land.« Anthony Lee Sr., president of the Diné Hataalii Association, a group of about one hundred Navajo healers, has put it more bluntly: »As medicine people, we don't extract resources« (Navarro 2010, A12). And yet coal and uranium mining, the latter banned on their lands only in 2005, has for decades sustained the Navajo economy. The consequences have long been apparent—mining and power plant emissions have dirtied the waters and dulled the skies of their reservations—but only recently has the Navajo Nation issued sustained calls to heal environments.

Less obviously but no less fundamentally contradictory are comments by the indigenous Inupiaq writer Herbert O. Anungazuk in the essay »An Unwritten Law of the Sea«: »The hunter has a profound alliance with the mammals of the sea, an alliance that involves the spiritual beliefs of many, many hunters ... many hunters continue to respect animals in spirit ... Our ancient relationship with the sea is a relationship that you will not see among other groups of people. The relationship extends to all creatures that the sea and ice harbor, and it is this relationship that has made us into a class of hunters unmatched among other societies« (Anungazuk 2007, 195). The native hunter has a »profound alliance« with the mammals of the sea; the hunter »continues to respect animals in spirit«. But what does this special relationship facilitate? Among other things, it allows these individuals to become a »class of hunters unmatched among other societies«. In other words, as the Japanese writer Oguma Hideo (小熊秀雄, 1901–40) similarly describes in »Tobu sori« (飛ぶ橇; Flying Sled, 1935), a poem on the native Ainu people of Japan, close ties with the nonhuman in certain cases allow native peoples to kill more animals than do outsiders.

The present article analyzes a prominent yet relatively understudied contact space among Native American, New Zealand Māori, and aboriginal Taiwanese literatures: the struggle of indigenous peoples to negotiate optimal relationships between themselves and the natural world, particularly in light of capitalist modernity and globalization. Many indigenous narratives draw sharp distinctions between native peoples and outsiders, predictably portraying the former as protectors and the latter as destroyers of both nature and indigenous local cultures. The Native American Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan's (1947–) novel *People of the Whale* (2008), the Māori writer Patricia Grace's (1937–) novel *Potiki* (1986), and the aboriginal Taiwanese writer Topas Tamapima's (塔瑪匹瑪; Tian Yage [田雅各], 1960–) short story »Zuihou de lieren« (最後的獵人; The Last Hunter, 1987) are no exception. But these texts also problematize

notions of the so-called »ecological native.« They do so most conspicuously by revealing the ambiguous relationships those peoples believed closest to nature have with the nonhuman world, that is to say their environmental ambiguity (*ecoambiguity*) (Thorner 2012).

The term *ecoambiguity* refers to the complex, contradictory relationships between people and the natural world. Simon C. Estok has characterized anthropogenic transformations of environments as stemming largely from ecophobia, understood as »an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism« (Estok 2011, 4; Estok 2009, 207–8). Ecophobia, Estok writes, regularly »wins out« over its alleged opposites: biophilia, understood as »the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms«, and more generally, ecophilia, or love of nature (Estok 2009, 219; Estok 2011, 129). To be sure, ecophobia can explain much of human desire throughout history to control (parts of) the natural environment and engage in such massive destruction of nature as large-scale deforestation, strip mining, and species eradication. Likewise, ecophilia seems to propel people's embrace of nature, as well as promote environmental remediation and conservation, and, in fact, inspire the field of ecocriticism itself. But as the cliché »love nature to death« suggests, environmental changes need not be symptoms of absolute ecophobia or ecophilia. The uncertainties suffusing relationships and interpretations of relationships between people and their environments suggest that *ecoambiguity* is often more prominent than ecophobia or ecophilia alone.

One prominent manifestation of environmental ambiguity is the seemingly inevitable anthropocentrism of the supposedly ecological native. By juxtaposing texts from Taiwan, the United States, and New Zealand, without holding any particular culture as »universal« or »dominant« and instead focusing on how various creative works negotiate similar phenomena, we open ourselves to new understandings, insights, and interpretations of cultural processes writ large. This is especially true if we engage in juxtapositional comparison that, without decontextualizing, focuses on forms of dynamic in/commensurability, that is to say modes of comparison that »work with the contradictions inherent in comparison, that expand the voices put in play, that creatively open up dialogue and new frameworks for reading and acting in the world« (Friedman 2011, 760).

Published in 1987, Topas Tamapima's short story »The Last Hunter« was written in the wake of decades of intensifying environmental exploitation in Taiwan. Rapid industrialization and economic development under a Nationalist military dictatorship that smothered opposition and harshly punished dissenters led to unchecked abuse of Taiwan's ecosystems and unprecedented damage to its land, water, and skies. Taiwan's antipollution protests and nature conservation movement date to the early 1980s, but damage to Taiwan's landscapes was earnestly addressed only after martial law ended in July 1987. Significantly, the protagonist of »The Last Hunter« – Biyari (比雅日), a Bunun hunter from the indigenous Renlun settlement – is far from relieved that government authorities are now trying to remediate the ecodegradation for which they are at least partly responsible. Topas Tamapima's protagonist expresses deep attachment to particular landscapes, but he also believes it his prerogative to use these spaces for his own benefit, regardless of the ecological consequences – or of new conservation policies.

Topas Tamapima's short story describes Biyari as having deeper emotional and physical connections with environments than do Taiwanese government officials. But these connections paradoxically do not result in significantly different perceptions of ideal relationships with the nonhuman, much less in heightened perceptions of the changes, potential or actual, human behaviors inflict on natural environments; Biyari believes he should be allowed to use landscapes to fulfill his personal desires, even when this means killing the forest's most endangered animals.

Feeling confined at home, his relationship with his wife Pasula tense because of her recent miscarriage and their continuing infertility, he takes off one morning for several days of sport hunting in the mountains. Target animals are difficult to find in the depleted highland forests, circumstances Biyari attributes to the insensitivity of Taiwan's government toward the marvels of the wilderness. Biyari eventually bags a fox that he finds in a trap and then kills and retrieves a muntjac (a type of deer). While exiting the forest he is stopped by a policeman who chastises him and his fellow tribespeople for breaking longstanding laws banning guns and hunting. The officer confiscates the freshly killed muntjac and sends Biyari on his way, encouraging him to abandon hunting and find a new career. The chances of Biyari heeding this advice are slim, so reluctant is he to change his lifestyle despite the numerous physical and economic hardships it entails, not to mention its potentially harmful effects on already compromised surroundings. Unlike many members of his tribe, he refuses to work in the flatlands, even though so doing would allow him a more comfortable life.<sup>1</sup>

The narrator of »The Last Hunter« leaves little question as to the damage Taiwanese bureaucrats have inflicted on Taiwan's indigenous cultures, a result of the Nationalist government's assimilation policy, launched in the early 1950s, that eroded native cultures and effectively designated indigenous peoples second-class citizens (Balcom xvii, 2005). Topas Tamapima's story exposes the contempt of Taiwanese authorities for indigenous Taiwanese and, to a lesser extent, the disdain of indigenous Taiwanese for the individuals who have taken over their land.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, differences between the relationships of both groups with Taiwan's ecosystems are not as clear. Indigenous peoples and government employees both believe themselves better stewards of the island's environmental health. Yet Topas Tamapima's story reveals the fallacies of such self-flattering assertions.

»The Last Hunter« depicts tribespeople, and Biyari in particular, as experiencing much deeper emotional and physical connections with natural environments than do Taiwanese officials. Biyari, for instance, argues that the latter should be induced to:

Listen by themselves to the sounds of birds, wind, wild animals, and falling leaves in the woods; then walk into the valleys and look at the magnificent cliffs; take off their shoes and wet their feet in the pure spring water; admire fish that are gracefully swimming,

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1 Other recent Taiwanese writing on the importance of hunting in aboriginal cultures and the impacts of its prohibition on indigenous peoples includes Yaronglong Sakinu's (1972-) essay »Shan yu fuqin« (The Mountains and My Father, 1997) and Wu Junxian's (1954-) poem »Yuanzhumin« (The Aborigines, 2002). See also Chi 2006.

2 For instance, the policeman who stops Biyari calls him a savage (*fanzi*), critiques his Chinese language skills, and will only accept his Chinese name (*guoyu mingzi*), not his birth name. Here »The Last Hunter« draws attention to the linguistic displacement of indigenous Taiwanese, who have had little choice but to become proficient in *guoyu* (lit. the language of the country) and even adopt *guoyu mingzi* (lit. names in the language of the country).

not yet »enjoying« human waste and simply having no fear of people. The government employees would be awakened to the enigmatic forest, and just like criminals in jail about to be sentenced they would regret their initial lack of insight ... Biyari tried hard to open his eyes, but the tranquility of the forest, the warm sunshine, and the soporific shade joined together and steadily engulfed him. In the end he was hypnotized by the magic of the forest (26).

First these outsiders are simply to listen, to absorb the (ordinary) sounds of plants, animals, and wind. Then, slowly succumbing to the forest's allure, they are to look at the »magnificent« (*xiongwēi*) cliffs and »graceful« (*youmei*) fish and feel the »pure« (*chunjing*) spring water. Modifiers, absent in the first part of the passage cited above, gradually become stronger. Having experienced the wonders of the landscape, government employees will awaken to the »enigmatic« (*miban*) forest and recognize the errors of their ways. But what rouses outsiders hypnotizes Biyari; what impresses them engulfs him; what is enigmatic to them is magic (*mofa*) to him. Here and elsewhere »The Last Hunter« portrays Biyari and other tribespeople as more profoundly integrated with the nonhuman than are their Chinese counterparts.

But in the minds of Biyari and the few remaining tribal hunters, appropriate interactions with environments involve not just soaking up their splendor, as Biyari wishes government officials would take the time to do, and enduring its unpredictability, as most people living in the tribal village must do as a matter of course. Accepted interactions also include killing scarce animals for reasons other than survival. Biyari hopes government officials will open themselves to the sights and sounds of the forests. Ironically, however, these same officials are the ones enforcing hunting bans in areas of diminished animal populations, demonstrating at least superficial concern for the future of the woodlands. Biyari's own attitudes differ greatly from those of the officials, but not solely in the ways the reader might expect. Believing it his right to hunt even in areas that have explicitly been decreed off limits, and more important, in areas where fauna clearly have been thinned, Biyari flouts restrictions.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the passages surrounding Biyari's paean to the forest reveal a man intent on finding great joy in displacing animals, not to sustain tribal ways of life but instead to repair his relationship with his spouse. Biyari is genuinely concerned that when the forests become a park the »sounds of people« and »sounds of cars« will fill the forests, displacing both animals and hunters. And tribal peoples rightly blame the state for having destroyed landscapes in the past. »The Last Hunter« makes clear that despite present efforts to protect mountain areas from human intervention, the bureau has itself played a significant role in the region's degradation. But the story portrays Taiwan's current government officials as selective guardians of the forests. The story concludes with the policeman encouraging Biyari to »Turn over a new leaf. Don't call yourself a hunter anymore«, but Biyari silently vows to return, even without a rifle (33).

The narrator of »The Last Hunter« describes perceptions about environmental degradation as easily distorted not just within Biyari's thinking but among tribal members more generally. Verbalizing the sounds and sights of the indigenous village

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3 Taiwan's apex predator, the clouded leopard, appears to have gone extinct at around the time this story was published; indigenous hunting played a significant role in its demise (Chiang 2007).

shortly before sunrise, he contrasts the behaviors of animals with those of people: roosters crow and dogs bark, while men chop wood and houses belch gases: »A small number of households had already ignited their firewood, and their chimneys disgorged black smoke. In this place there had never been anyone who thought that the black smoke would create air pollution. This was because the tribal people believed that the black smoke would rise to the heavens with the clouds« (10).<sup>4</sup> The villagers have no idea that something so ingrained in their daily lives as their heating and cooking fires could be poisoning the surrounding air. This perception opens the possibility that other beliefs they hold concerning their relationships with their environments are also misguided. »Zuihou de lieren« confirms that some of the deepest conflicts concerning the nonhuman exist not between Taiwanese tribespeople and the island's government employees, as Biyari believes, but rather, albeit unacknowledged, within individual tribespeople themselves.

Topas Tamapima's short story addresses several common ambiguities of relationships among people and natural environments. Most important, it explores the anthropocentrism, often unconscious, of those who seem to have the strongest affective ties with nature. Much writing on indigenous populations, both creative and critical, highlights their deep reverence for the nonhuman and contrasts these attitudes with those of the populations that have commandeered indigenous territory (Buell 2011). »The Last Hunter« problematizes such assumptions, proposing that to some indigenous peoples being part of a landscape can mean killing animals that live in that space, even when their meat is not needed for survival.<sup>5</sup> It also can mean failing to acknowledge the harm daily activities one takes for granted can inflict on the environment. Genuine appreciation for the nonhuman is not an impediment and in fact can be an enabler to believing oneself justified in taking life from already seriously destabilized ecosystems. Without question, Topas Tamapima's story signals the many difficulties facing indigenous communities in Taiwan, whose lives have themselves been altered by government officials intent on weakening tribal identities. But the narrative also reveals that interactions on the island among peoples and environments are far more complex than the simplistic dichotomies through which tribal peoples and government officials attempt to make sense of each other's motives.

Patricia Grace's celebrated novel *Potiki* (1986) predates Topas Tamapima's short story by only a year, so it is unlikely that Topas Tamapima was aware of Grace's work. These two texts are linked not by transculturation in the sense of active reconfigurations of cultural predecessors, but instead by the more encompassing transcultural networks of creative works grappling with similar concepts, in this case the sometimes anthropocentric ecologies of ecological natives. *Potiki* describes the struggles of the Māori indigenous people to protect tribal lands and customs first from New Zealand's government and military and then from the »Dollarmen.« The latter are property speculators who hope to transform coastal ecosystems and neighboring hills by building high rises, shopping malls, and golf courses and offering »every type of water and boating activity« (88).

4 In fact, smoke and soot from relatively primitive cookstoves are emerging as major sources of global climate change (Rosenthal A1, A12).

5 In contrast, for instance, with the indigenous whalers the Japanese writer Nitta Jirō (1912–80) depicts in *Arasuka monogatari* (1974) who depend on a nearly extinct whale population for survival.

For the most part *Potiki* draws clear distinctions between indigenous peoples and outsiders, predictably portraying the former as protectors and the latter as destroyers of both native cultures and the natural world; *Potiki*'s structure accentuates both the Māori's determination to safeguard their land against outsiders (regardless of motive) and the gulf between the two groups.<sup>6</sup> Māori persistence pays off and construction eventually is brought to a halt, although not before lives are lost and ecosystems are severely damaged by floods and other disasters.<sup>7</sup>

But the relationship between the Māori and their environments is not quite so simple. Midway through the novel, the Māori Toko declares:

The hills and sea did not belong to us but we wished to see them kept clean and free ... [We] did not want the company to make zoos and circuses in the sea, or to put noise and pollution there, or to line the shore with palaces and castles, and souvenir shops, or to have restaurants rotating above the sea, lit up at night like star crafts landing their invaders on the shore. ... We wanted the fish to be in the sea like ordinary fish ... we wanted our eyes to know the place where they would meet the tide ... My father Hemi said that the land and sea were our whole life, the means by which we survived ... [He said] »Destroy the land and sea, we destroy ourselves« (98–99).

In contrast with earlier Māori, who had no choice but to sell off the hills, the current generation adamantly declares that they will never give up their remaining land, and, furthermore, that none of them see any advantage in the proposed changes to the region. Yet Toko's remarks are subtly anthropocentric. He admits that »we wanted our eyes to know the place where they would meet the tide«. In other words, it is not all about the nonhuman. As Toko's father Hemi bluntly had declared, »Destroy the land and sea, we destroy ourselves«. Protecting nature is not simply about protecting nature.<sup>8</sup>

Another more notable example involves the desire of some Māori to reclaim land that was cleared of both trees and homes for an airbase but is now used as a park. As one individual pleads: »When will this stop? The park must stop. Return the Te Ope people to their land« (77–78). The Māori's demand that their land be given back is readily understandable and completely justifiable, but it is nevertheless ironic that some individuals want to replace new greenery with built environment. More important is the refusal of some Māori to participate in protests against development occurring on land other than their own. As one of the Māori admits, »We worked for our own survival, and we tried not to look towards the hills, tried not to hear the sounds that came from there« (107). A group of Māori comes by Roimata's home and urges her family to protest further road construction by joining the group of Māori

6 This includes the narrative structure; the narrator describes but does not interrupt lively verbal exchanges between the Māori and the Dollarmen; the Māori and the developers, on the other hand, cut off each other repeatedly.

7 Cf. the Native American writer Linda Hogan's novel *Solar Storms* (1995) and the Chinese American writer Wang Ping's (1957–) short story »Maverick« (2007), where floods triggered by people are also seen as nature's revenge. Also important in this context is the American novelist Frank Waters's (1902–95) novel *People of the Valley* (1941), where a judge attempts to convince the protagonist that »The dam cannot be stopped« (164). But the tenacity of the dam's challengers proves him wrong.

8 For more on the anthropocentrism of the Māori's ecological outlook in *Potiki* see Duppé 2010.

sitting across the new thoroughfare. Roimata claims that her family does not wish to demonstrate because »It did not seem right to us, to sit on land that no longer belonged to us« (107). Roimata's excuse points to her desperation. By not caving in to the developers' demands she believes she is choosing poverty over self-destruction, but by not protesting the developers' encroachment, she in some ways is contributing indirectly to self-destruction.

Regardless, those who protest are rapidly overwhelmed, and machines continue to clear large areas of land, slice away the hills, and push rock and rubble into the sea. Roimata continues, »We turned our eyes away from what was happening to the hills and looked to the soil and to the sea ... We tried not to look at the hills and we tried to ignore, just adjacent to us, the changing shoreline, and tried not to talk about the yellow mud colour of the sea« (107). But the Māori are not just passive bystanders who »try« to ignore what is happening around them, the repetition of the word »try« suggesting that they cannot help but notice and even talk about what is becoming of the surrounding landscape. Some in fact have joined the construction teams, believing that their new jobs would simply have been given to others and that the roads would have been built regardless. Even though what happens on distant hills directly affects their own well-being, not to mention the health of the natural world, the Māori prefer to ignore problems not simply beyond their immediate sphere but also ones that impact them directly. The deep ties between the Māori and the land are undeniable; outsiders are clearly the primary villains. But *Potiki*, like Topas Tamapima's »The Last Hunter«, highlights the extent to which even ecologically minded indigenous peoples regard the planet largely in terms of human experiences and values and do not always work in the best interests of the natural world.

The Native American writer Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* provides an important corollary to the narratives examined above. This text highlights more dramatically the anthropocentric ecologies of native peoples by depicting them as directly involved in ruthlessly slaughtering animals.<sup>9</sup> As with much writing on indigenous societies, Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* sets up a profound disparity between traditional and commercial whaling. One of the major subplots of this narrative on the traumas of a Native American veteran features a secret deal that several members of the imaginary Native American A'atsika tribe (based in Washington state) have made with a group of Japanese and Norwegians: the A'atsika will press American authorities to allow foreign whalers access to A'atsika waters, and they will work to convince tribal peoples that resuming commercial whale hunting, suspended in the 1920s, not only will bring them economic prosperity but also will restore their cultural identity by »bringing them back to themselves«. *People of the Whale* describes the whale slaughter that ensues, underlining its sheer brutality. The narrator also stresses the extent to which the hunters - indigenous peoples and outsiders alike - demean the whale they kill, featuring one man who pours beer into its blowhole and others who speak offensively of its genitalia. Crowds of outsiders come to witness the hunt, looking primarily for a cheap thrill by anthropocentric standards.

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<sup>9</sup> As discussed above, »The Last Hunter« features a member of an indigenous tribe killing an animal for reasons other than survival, but the muntjac's death at the hands of Biyari is death on a smaller scale and is also not as merciless as that of the whales in Hogan's text.

The narrator contrasts this modern slaughter with the traditional hunt, which involved extensive rituals to celebrate whale spirits. Most interesting are the many occasions when *People of the Whale* links »love« of whales and deep respect for these animals to their deaths at the hands of indigenous hunters. Ironically, »respect« and »love« of whales facilitate their destruction. While not critiquing indigenous peoples for hunting whales, one cannot ignore the paradoxical link between love of whales and their destruction. Whether killed by commercial whalers or by traditional hunters, either way, whales die. To be sure, in most cases commercial whalers destroy far more whales than native hunters – but significantly, this is not the case in Hogan’s novel. Although *People of the Whale* points out that early in the twentieth century »enormous whaling boats ... nearly brought the whales to extinction«, the late twentieth-century hunt it describes is relatively limited in scope (106). This narrative choice highlights the profound irony of »love« as facilitator of death.

From the beginning of the novel, Hogan’s indigenous narrator emphasizes the A’atsika love of whales. The prologue notes, »The whales looked joyful and happily clumsy ... They were sights to behold, and were watched with awe and laughter. The whales have always been loved and watched, their spumes of breath blowing above water, their bodies turning, rising« (10). But almost immediately, love is linked with slaughter. The narrator says of Thomas’s grandfather: »He had a great deal of knowledge about the ocean and all sea life. He was the last of a line of traditional men who loved and visited the whales to ensure a good whale hunt« (18–19). Thomas’s grandfather loved whales not because of their magnificence but rather in order to ensure a good hunt. Similarly, as the narrator describes several pages later, one of the tribal women sings to the whales, »loving them enough that one of them might listen and offer itself to her people ... It was said that the whale listened mostly to the woman because who could ignore her pleading, singing, beautiful voice« (21). The indigenous people love the whale, but they use this love to lure an animal to its death, the voice of love being irresistible. And notably, tribal peoples believe that these animals happily approach, as long as the proper rituals are observed: »Everyone had to be pure in heart and mind. By then the whale would be coming gladly toward the village« (22). Even more important, they entreat the whales with promises: »We will let your soul become a child again ... You will be part human. We’ll be part whale ... We will treat you well« (22–23). The anthropocentrism of the A’atsika could not be more apparent. To be sure, the ceremony surrounding the whale hunt and the death of the animal itself could be interpreted as a performance of native people’s respect for nature and its significance in human lives. But the A’atsika also could be perceived as in fact indulging in an anthropocentric self-rationalization of brutality.

Some native peoples appear to agree with this appraisal. Toward the end of the novel, as the protagonist Thomas is returning home from Washington, D.C., he remembers the whales he used to observe: »He would watch one ... It was loved by his people. It was a planet. When they killed it, he thinks perhaps they killed a planet in its universe of water« (267). Here there is no attempt to sugarcoat what happens when the animal dies. The whale is loved, but it is also a planet, a massive celestial body that is killed in its own milieu. Shortly thereafter, the narrator describes Thomas emerging from the water after encountering a whale and telling the people waiting for him that »We are going to be better people. That is our job now. We are going to be good people« (283). Thomas continues: »The ocean says we are not going to kill



the whales until some year when it may be right. They are our mothers. They are our grandmothers. It is our job to care for them« (283). The tribe will still hunt whales, but they will wait until doing so is »right«. In the meantime, they will protect the animals. Anthropocentrism is not eradicated, but there is now a greater focus on the actual rather than the imagined well-being of these animals. Having survived a brutal war himself, watching many of his comrades die excruciating deaths, Thomas perhaps feels more empathy for the whales to which his people continue to feel close.

Like humans everywhere, none of the people depicted in the creative works examined in this article – whether wealthy or impoverished, whether relative newcomers or individuals harboring longstanding emotional and physical attachments to an ecosystem – could survive, much less enjoy a level of comfort and personal fulfillment, without making a mark on their environments. For this reason, labeling groups and individuals as »lovers« or »haters«, as »respectful« or »disrespectful«, of nature obscures the very real contradictions that pervade human attitudes, and ultimately behaviors. Focusing on ambiguities grants new perspectives on how people conceptually configure the human shaping of environments. While not critiquing the outlooks or lifestyles of indigenous/local peoples whose ecosystems are damaged by outsiders, the aim is to develop more sophisticated understandings of how creative texts grapple with the anthropocentrism of even the most ecologically oriented individuals.

Narratives concerned with ecodegradation and displacement of indigenous/local peoples frequently villainize industry and governments for damaging and condoning damage to environments, pitting corporate and national interests against the well-being of relatively defenseless indigenous/local peoples. These narratives highlight the emotional attachments of these societies to the natural world. But they also reveal these groups' frequent assumptions of entitlement, or at least prioritizing their own livelihood, or simply customs, over the well-being of the nonhuman. Such assumptions need not entail conscious intent or readiness to inflict harm, nor do they necessarily lead to significant damage of the nonhuman. But as the texts examined in this article make apparent, they are not necessarily divorced from the willingness or ability to do so. The absolute dependence of people on the nonhuman world for survival makes it virtually inevitable that we believe we have the right to manipulate ecosystems, regardless of the condition of the landscapes we inhabit.

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