

Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007) *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*, Honolulu HI, University of Hawaii Press, Hardback, xv+324pp+index, 4 maps, ISBN: 978-0-8248-3122-6, US\$49.00.

I start with a word of warning. This book is not a casual read: each carefully worded sentence needs to be studied. However, this is not to detract from the fact that this book is a very fine exemplar of comparative island scholar/ship.

In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century* (1997), James Clifford noted that “Practices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension”. Island literatures are often gripped by islanders’ intimate connection with a tradition of movement and exchange: one that goes far beyond the current academic fascination with diaspora studies. Hence, the need to celebrate a “genealogy of place”: a historiography that positions islanders as vessels of embedded layers and strands of heritage, movement and consciousness that defy categorization, whether by time, space, ethnicity, nation or jurisdiction. Such is the declared objective of *Routes and Roots*.

DeLoughrey is brave in attempting a review of Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures. This is no easy task, since it expects a sound appreciation of regional material, as well as a sensibility to seek and tease out valid comparisons and contrasts. Nevertheless, DeLoughrey rises handsomely to this challenge: she has a solid understanding of the implications of the impact of colonialism on both island regions, as witnessed by her itinerant education and as reflected in her previous scholarship. This included the innovative *Islands of Globalization* Project, run out of the East-West Center in Hawaii, and which explored historical and contemporary linkages between the two regions, while developing a shared curriculum.

The connecting thread in this book’s elaborate and systematic critique is the notion of the “tidalectics” of roots and routes, *after* Barbadian poet and culturalist Edward Kamau Brathwaite, who defines this feature as a drawing upon “the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic motion, rather than linear”. While acknowledging the differences between islanders of different regions and countries, there is an affinity with the tracing of long lineages of movement, bound together by three core elements which both envelop, and are in turn contained by, their human subjects: blood, sperm and (sea)water. As with such authors as Anthony Appiah, Margaret Jolly or Joël Bonnemaison, the co-presence of the values of roots/trees and routes/boats is stressed. But DeLoughrey goes further, elaborating the complex articulation of the two in a manner that captures a powerful cultural identity: a liquidity uncannily shared, in their distinct ways, by Caribbean and Pacific islanders.

To get us thinking “tidalectically” is the book’s key missive. Structural/arborescent representations of history, race and lineage are challenged by a rhizomorphic layering, an intricate spiral of dynamic connectivities that defy Western and Newtonian absolutes of space, time and legal coda. DeLoughrey’s is an epistemological journey, one in search of basic indigenous methodologies, an “alter/native” understanding that replaces linear,

colonial and materialist models for tracing development, history, ethnicity or proprietary rights.

The book contains an elaborate scene-setting introduction, plus five core chapters, and a rather truncated epilogue. The key chapters contain powerful theoretical prologues, and then go on to contextualize their arguments through a deep reading of specific, English language, island texts from the two regions. These texts include: *The Sure Salvation* by John Hearne (1981); *Our Sea of Islands* by Epeli Hau'ofa (1993); *Vaka: Saga of a Polynesian Canoe* by Pa Tuterangi Ariki Tom Davis (1992); *Amokura* by June Mitchell (1978); *the bone people* by Keri Hulme (1983); *Black Rainbow* by Albert Wendt (1992); *No Telephone to Heaven* by Michelle Cliff (1987); and *The Colour of Forgetting* by Merle Collins (1995). The characters in these books are involved in epiphanies, sagas of transformations in self-perception, a fresh reconnection of stubbornly resurgent pasts with ever-moving presents, a rehabilitation of flux and movement into identity, family and history. These islanders invoke a *whakapapa* (a Maori word which means genealogies along with the many spiritual, mythological and human stories that flesh them out) that acts as counter-memory to the colonial order. They do not simply demystify the *terra nullius* scenario wished for by Western explorers, but go further and debunk the notion of *aqua nullius* as well. The ocean is the great connector; a tribal memory vault of history (after Derek Walcott); the depository of bodies escaped from bondage and which have since become *incorporated* into communal memory. The unity of island peoples is thus, like the (moving) islands on which they are camped, sub/marine (after Brathwaite). One epitomic actor/author is Donald Kalpokas, eventual premier of Vanuatu, whose "polemic" 1974 poem - titled *Who am I?* - is reviewed in the book's introduction. His assessment of globalization, decolonization and militarization from the vantage point of the "ocean of confusion" (p. 20) – named, so ironically, the *Pacific* - is as ontological as it can get.

DeLoughrey's splendid itinerary does not only guide us into an intimate encounter with authors and/or their prot/agonist heroic figures. She wisely charts their concerns back to the real world and at least five relevant political issues of this day and age. They are: the resource claims and scrambles triggered by the UN Law of the Sea; the essentialization of race and the search for the 'pure' or 'real' native (a bitter debate which surfaced in the lead up to, and during, the first voyage of the vessel *Hokule'a* from Hawai'i to Tahiti); a critique of the nuclearization of the Pacific by the USA and France; the implications of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi and indigenous rights in Aotearoa/New Zealand; and the threat of global warming and sea level rise (especially real and immediate for low lying islands and their inhabitants). In each and every case, the ocean and its legacy emerge as powerfully vital. Her analysis steers away from the sea as unknown, empty or just a silent resource cache; it suggests instead that we should be crafting an appreciation that we ultimately inhabit a Planet *Ocean* (not a Planet *Earth*). Meanwhile, she reminds us, the ocean *inhabits us*: living things are made up essentially of water; all living things emerged evolutionarily from the sea; and what today is blood in our veins might have, eons ago, been seawater. This may prove to be one ultimate grand cycle of liquid consummation: the sea which gives life, takes it away, and connects us all. (This is an observation that is equally well at home in the work of other contemporary island authors beyond the Pacific and Caribbean, like Tasmanian Richard Flanagan and his 'amphibious' characters).

Something else quite remarkable about DeLoughrey's *tour de force* is her penchant for botanical parallelisms. This is no run-of-the-mill postcolonial feminist. As she does elegantly in an earlier journal article, we are reminded that humans are not the only species to be re/placed and translated. The colonial project involved a deliberate engineering of the geography of fauna and flora of island environments: the Caribbean, in particular, being dramatically altered. And so, the search for indigeneity and evidence of familial or tribal embedding may involve a reclaiming of, and identification with, local natural products - such as flax, or breadfruit - which however may themselves have originally been invasive species. The obsession for purity - in human blood and stock as much as in biota - is confronted by the immanence of fluid exchanges and transfers. This discussion, in itself, makes a powerful argument against claims for ethnic nationalism.

I have just one qualm with this book: it is a rendition of Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures as may be possible for "an American, residing in the belly of the beast, so to speak" (p. 29). This apology is appropriate: I know that the author struggles with the ethics of her trade (shouldn't we all?), and she *does* outline her own genealogy in the book's preface, thus declaring her bias while remaining faithful to her own methodology. Yet, I wonder whether she should have spent some more time/space discussing *how* (and not just *why*) this 'positioning as loss' impacts on her subject matter.

To wrap up, *Routes and Roots* navigates confidently through history and anthropology, as well as through feminist, postcolonial, literary and cultural studies. It also vindicates the assertion by that ambassador of the oceans, Elizabeth Mann Borgese, of the vital importance of marine studies, possibly in ways that she would not even have imagined.

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~~Rebecca Weaver Hightower (2007) *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals and Fantasies of Conquest*, Minneapolis MN and London, University of Minnesota Press, xxix + 277pp, illustrations, softcover, ISBN 13: 978-0-8166-4863-4, Can\$66.45.~~

~~I half remember a short story I read years ago in which Shakespeare had come back to life in the modern world to discover himself the focus of substantial literary study. Intrigued, he signed up for a course on Shakespeare studies, only to flunk it because he failed to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the complexities of the metaphors and allegorical devices Shakespeare had employed. That Rebecca Weaver Hightower's book brought this old story to mind testifies to a slight hesitation I have regarding literary analysis of the sort displayed here. Maybe the island stories she deconstructs, which include *The Tempest*, are not just as deep and as metaphorical as is supposed. She sees the genre of what are usually called Robinsonades, which she has rather as 'castaway narratives', as colonialist metaphors, from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century fantasies through the realism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century into the jingoism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The white man (always they are white; mostly they~~