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Assessing Foucault's Legacy in Environmental Anthropology.

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Anyone who cares deeply about canonical work, such as that of Michel Foucault, will have difficulty sleeping. Scholars pillage these texts--exploiting their possibilities, pushing them to their limits, and repurposing them to solve sometimes ill-fitting problems. Encountered through citation more often than in the original, canonical works can become shorthand for a particular school rather than tools for doing intellectual work. The sharpness of their concepts gets dulled through repetition, the context and nuance of their interventions ignored.

Carol Carpenter clearly cares about the contributions of Michel Foucault, and in this book, she has taken it upon herself to set the record straight. Rightfully so, given the centrality of Foucault's oeuvre to the critique of nature conservation, among so many other topics--the stakes of misunderstanding him are high. Such a fixture in our field, Foucault threatens to become mere scholarly furniture. Carpenter draws Foucault's work back into the foreground, urging scholars and practitioners to reassess his writing and to refine the precision with which we use it, while arguing for its continued relevance to understanding the environment, environmental problems, and nature conservation. This kind of reassessment is long overdue, and it is surprising that such a book has not yet been written (to my knowledge). But this is not simply a handbook for 'Foucault users,' although Carpenter at times frames it in this way (more below). In scrutinising Foucault's thought and its legacy, Carpenter makes an appeal for a revitalised environmental anthropology. Though Foucault is at its center, and my feeling is that his name belongs in the title, the book also considers the contributions of Karl Marx, Bruno Latour, and other prominent theorists.

Power in Conservation comprises 18 short chapters that outline Foucault's primary interventions and concepts, with attention to the overarching structure and evolution of his program. The book's layout is challenging to describe, though it unfolds sensibly as one moves through the text. An introductory first chapter describes the book's rationale. Chapters 2, 5, 9, and 11 summarise and explain key concepts and concerns from Foucault's body of work. The chapters that interdigitate and follow these explanatory chapters feature in-depth discussions of 2-4 ethnographic articles or books in which those key concepts are applied. Chapter 2 focusses on 'discourse,' followed by a chapter that presents 'seminal works' on the subject--including James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine*, Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development*, and James Fairhead and Melissa Leach's *Misreading the African Landscape*. In each, Carpenter describes the substance of these authors' arguments and contrasts their specific approach to thinking with Foucaultian discourse. Chapter 4 then situates this conversation about discourse in the broader context of debates about scientific objectivity and interpretive social science that emanated from (feminist) science and technology studies, Marxist cultural studies, hermeneutic anthropology, and environmental history. She does so by highlighting two edited volumes that crystallise these debates: William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground*, and Roy Ellen and Katsuyoshi Fukui's *Redefining Nature*.

Chapter 5 is one of the book's finest and most illuminating. It presents what Carpenter refers to as a 'triangle' in Foucault's thought: sovereignty, discipline, and governmentality. She argues that these concepts are interlinked, but that authors often mistakenly use them independently--particularly 'governmentality.' Chapter 6 again critically assesses how this triangle is deployed in ethnographic works from anthropology, development studies, and political ecology.

Chapters 7 and 8 move away from Foucault's work while staying focused on a topic germane to Foucault's triangle, namely the production of knowledge by states, conservation scientists, and development workers. In Chapter 7, for example, Carpenter presents James Scott's *Seeing Like a State*, Bruno Latour's *Science in Action*, and Anna Tsing's essay 'Cultivating the Wild' as examples of texts that work outside of Foucaultian frameworks, but which also shed light on the relationship between knowledge production and power. Chapter 8 critically examines the category 'indigenous knowledge,' including both its possibilities and pitfalls.

With Chapter 9, Carpenter returns us to Foucault and specifically his writing on 'subject formation,' mirroring the chronology of Foucault's turn to that concept late in life. Again, in the subsequent chapter, Carpenter examines how Foucault's work on subject

formation has been deployed in studies of conservation and development--this time by Bruce Braun, Tania Li, and Arun Agrawal. As in other chapters, the discussion takes the form of a deep literature review, detailing the authors' data and arguments, as well as assessing how they operationalise specific components of Foucault's thinking. Chapter 11 is the last to directly address Foucault's thought--in this case, to examine its relationship to capitalism. She anchors her discussion in his identification of the economy (specifically, the circulation of grain) as an important locus of governmentality emerging in eighteenth century France. Acting as a bridge to subsequent chapters that will draw in Marxian critiques of conservation, her goal is to show how often 'economic thinking underlies conservation' (pg. 125). Chapter 12 reviews work on neoliberalism, including topics such as microcredit financing, REDD+ carbon offsets, and supply chains. Chapter 13 carries this forward to consider what anthropologists have shown about the nature of the economy. Chapters 14-16 present insights from ethnographic literatures on various topics relevant to conservation, including policy implementation and global environmental activism.

Chapter 17 brings us 'up to date' by highlighting work on the Anthropocene and multispecies ethnography. She describes this work--including efforts by Andrew Mathews and Anna Tsing to incorporate natural history methods--as a renewed empirical project for the study of the environment that integrates ecological attention to material landscapes and anthropological understandings of power. A conclusion draws out the key points of the book, while reflecting on power in conservation as what Tsing (2003: 26) calls a 'blinding magic' that often prevents Western conservation scientists from seeing the diverse forms of knowledge and more-than-human sociality that make non-Western models of environmental conservation work. As Carpenter frames it in the final passage of the conclusion, this book is her contribution to improving that dialogue, helping scholars and conservation practitioners to see and value this diversity.

Carpenter's account of Foucault's scholarship is extremely sharp and useful. She is adept at presenting Foucault's work schematically, yet somehow also with depth and substance. Across the book, her engagement with the body of scholarship at hand is critical, fine-grained, and generous.

The book serves several purposes and audiences. One purpose is obviously to refine our understanding of Foucault's concepts by returning to his work and that of scholars who have used it. In this sense, it is a valuable text for anyone interested in that legacy. Educators who hope to clearly outline Foucault's concepts to their students--undergraduate and graduate alike--in courses on environmental conservation or anthropological theory will find it useful as an assigned reading or for their own lecture preparation, particularly when a refresher is in order. I would highly recommend it to graduate students preparing for qualifying exams, because in addition to recapitulating and clarifying Foucault's project, the text represents a deep dive into the 'greatest hits' of critical environmental anthropology, political ecology, and cultural geography.

Another stated purpose is as a guide for conservation practitioners and policy-makers. Appeals to that audience strain the narrative slightly in my reading. For example, the author presents the book's insights as a 'tool box,' but the tools feel mostly scholarly and the theory quite high. I suspect that practitioners and policy makers will be looking for more conservation successes, say from the gray literature, whereas the citations here are purely academic and critical. Of course, 'practitioners and policy-makers' are a heterogeneous bunch that includes many academics and former academics, and in this book, they would find a wonderful exposition of how to think about the role of power in shaping efforts to protect the natural world. I encourage them to use it.

I am warm to yet another reading of this text: as an erudite intellectual history of a period of scholarly ferment, written from the vantage of a scholar who lived it. This is a personal account, in which Carpenter works to make sense of where her field has been and where it is headed. As she explains in the acknowledgements, many of the texts she examines have been important to her own intellectual formation. In spite of all the learned exposition and literature review--reason enough to read the book--I found Carpenter's presence in this text refreshing, unafraid as she was to describe for the reader which texts she likes and does not like; which accounts deploy Foucault faithfully and which do not; and which of these point toward a just politics of conservation.

In sum, this book should be of interest to many readers of this journal, as it endeavours with studious nuance and sophistication to clarify the work of a sometimes challenging but profoundly influential theorist for scholars and practitioners who seek not only nature conservation but justice.[1]

References

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