Soroud (10) (2026) : 409 - 412

Bonnie Kime Scott, *Taking Place: Environmental Change in Literature and Art* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), c. 250 pp.

Bonnie Kime Scott's *Taking Place: Environmental Change in Literature and Art* is an extensive book that examines how individuals "take place," claiming and narrating the ecosystems in which we live. The book, defined by the Anthropocene and based on decades of ecocritical and feminist studies, asks what literature and the arts may still do, in practical terms in the face of severe climate change, deep-rooted histories of colonial expropriation, and ongoing social injustice. The introduction, titled "Cultural Palimpsests of Place," mirrors the book's central image. A "palimpsest" is a surface that has been written on repeatedly without completely erasing prior inscriptions. Scott sees landscapes as natural history, indigenous habitation, imperial conquest, migration, and contemporary urban life. Each chapter seeks to read these layers together, demonstrating how rivers, oceans, cities, and continents retain the marks of many different events, from ancient societies of hunters and gatherers to a society of high finance.

Scott believes "place" is more than just an icon on a map. Physical, yes, but also historical, cultural, and emotional in nature. For each region, she starts by tracing geological and ecological development, plate movements, river systems, climatic shifts, the presence or absence of rich resources, and then moves on to plants, animals, and human settlement. This structure enables her to show how disasters, resource extraction, and climate change affected the world long before colonial conquest. The result is a story in which the environment is never an empty background, but an active player in human history.

Scott's work contributes to debates in ecocriticism, feminist and postcolonial theory, Africana and queer studies, posthumanism, and geocriticism. She uses these frameworks as tools to critique deep hierarchies in both land use and literary traditions, culture over nature, masculine over feminine, settler over indigenous, white over non-white, human over other-than-human. In an intended homage to Virginia Woolf's "common reader," she writes for both general readers and professionals, adding brief footnotes and tale summaries as needed. Scott's case studies are inspired by her own intellectual and emotional journeys. She is open in her descriptions of her early fascinations with museum

displays, dissertation research that followed James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus through Dublin, family ties and sabbatical time in Australia, and a visit to South Africa during Nelson Mandela's final days. These experiences influence the places she knows best and feels qualified to write about. Additionally, she selects locations "affected by colonialism" rather than imperial centers, and in each, she consciously prioritizes women's and indigenous perspectives alongside canonical authors.

India appears first in the book, centered around sacred rivers and forests, with spiritual tales, imperial infrastructures, and environmental destruction. Southern Africa is interpreted through conflicting land claims, hunter-gatherer, farmer, and settler, and its lengthy afterlife. Ireland's well-known "story of place" traditions (dindsenchas) are set against colonial mapping and Anglo-Irish big house fantasy. Australia is depicted as "a continent apart," with Aboriginal songlines and Dreamtime art serving as counter-maps to penal settlements and agricultural growth. Finally, New York City combines centuries of displacement, immigration, financial capitalism, and cultural creation into a singular urban palimpsest.

The final section, "Arts of Persuasion," returns to this geography with an uncomfortable thought experiment. Scott, drawing on journalist Alan Weisman, imagines New York City after humans vanish, flooded subway tunnels collapse streets, buried streams re-emerge, sidewalks crack under cycles of freezing and melting, tall buildings are destroyed by water and battered by storms, and Central Park's flowering exotic plants give way to native species. A landscape similar to Mannahatta, the island discovered by the Dutch, reappears. Scott applies what Weisman projects as a near-future situation for New York to the book's other low-lying, riverine towns.

Scott argues that this worldview implicitly assumes that human cultures will not shift path. Against that ideology, Scott sees literature and the arts as persuasive powers that can help us reconsider pollution, climate change, sea-level rise, species extinction, pandemics, and unequal land use. Her chosen works, myths, novels, memoirs, rock art, public monuments, museum dioramas, and even Broadway musicals, do more than simply offer testimony. They demonstrate both destructive and healthy ways of living "in place," and hence might point readers in new directions.

A significant part of the conclusion examines the costs of colonialism. Scott builds on examples from all five regions to demonstrate how conquest and settlement resulted in monocultures — potatoes in Ireland, cash crops in India, and export agriculture in Africa— eliminated indigenous land practices, and also led to deeply race-based urban geographies of great houses, palaces, settlements, shanty towns, and townships. She emphasizes how illnesses, violence, and forced removals destroyed first Peoples, erasing ecological knowledge and languages essential for a sustainable living. She also underlines the persuasive power of works written by women, indigenous authors, and multicultural groups in communities like Harlem and Johannesburg in response to pain and relocation, as well as how they question current stories of modernity and development.

The conclusion is both diagnostic and prescriptive. Scott suggests concrete practices that reflect hunter-gatherer and small-scale agricultural lifestyles, such as growing more of our own food, purchasing locally, eating less meat, composting, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, planting trees, rewilding damaged landscapes, and designing more accessible, green cities. She fails to present these as a coherent policy program, instead presenting them as ethical attitudes influenced by the literary and creative works she has read. According to her, the arts serve as both a warning and an inspiration, they preserve memories of ethical interactions with land the while also sketching out potential patterns of shared, reparative inhabitation.

The book as a whole reveals *Taking Place* to be both a synthesis and a personal reflection. On the one hand, Scott weaves together a remarkable collection of materials, epic poetry, modernist fiction, postcolonial novels, oral traditions, rock art, monuments, quilts, museum displays, and climate fiction, to tell a cohesive story about environmental change under colonialism and capitalism. On the other hand, she never denies her own position as a white, Anglophone researcher influenced by specific travels, archives, and family histories.

The book's contributions to geocriticism and environmental humanities are obvious. It provides a comparative framework, it insists on reading ecological disaster alongside racism, gender, class, and empire, and it exemplifies a lucid ,but not simplistic writing style. Students who are new to ecocriticism or postcolonial environmental studies will find a clear about why literature and art matter today, as well as how stories of rivers, groves, veld, moors, deserts, and lands are linked to questions of justice and survival.

There are also limitations, because Scott focuses on locations she is familiar with, Latin America, East Asia, and the Arctic, among others. The book relies primarily on Anglophone literature and translations; academics of local languages and cultures may prefer more persistent contact with non-English archives. While Scott consciously "favors exploration over argument," some readers may want a sharper theoretical edge or a more explicit set of methodological statements regarding geocriticism in general.

Yet, *Taking Place* is a significant and often affecting contribution. It demonstrates how reading across tangible landscapes, India's sacred rivers, South Africa's contested farms townships, Ireland's mythic and urban terrains, Australia's songlines and suburbs, and New York's museums and high-rises, can sharpen our understanding of the fragile, unjust, and yet transformable world we live in. Scott's conclusion that literature and art are "arts of persuasion" is neither naive nor idealistic. It serves as a reminder that the way we conceive place is inextricably linked to how we will remake it.

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