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CSSH NOTES

Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
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A conceit shared by some anthropologists, and assorted students of late modernity, is that the idea of "indigenous knowledge" is a byproduct of post-colonialism and the new politics of alterity. This gem of a book offers an alternative perspective and shows how, as post-Renaissance science dwelled increasingly on the "strange and unusual" through European global expansion, so its scribes and scholars systematized the neglected "local knowledge" of their own backyard. Culpepper and other herbalists, for example, rejected "out-landish herbs" in preference to "such things only as grow in England" (p. 21), for not only were they better, but their documentation remedied ignorance and restored "balance and harmony." Elsewhere, European nature was being 'thickly-described' through the production of "floras," a new genre of writing in which Latin identified nomenclature and vernacular language described environments. While this eliminated the mythology of the herbals, it rendered "entire landscapes" as "lists" of species, though Cooper is well aware through her reading of Jack Goody that "the list is never self-evident" (74).

For Cooper, the relationship between the local and exotic was always ambiguous, the natural history of one framed in terms of the other, and the worlds of nature and people linked through notions of health and morality. In this context contagion between opposites becomes Douglasian matter-out-of place, no different today, one surmises, than in the seventeenth century. We are told also how naturalists drew explicitly on European folk knowledge, and in particular of the adventures of Linnaeus in Lapland. Cooper does not, however—as she might well have—emphasize the irony of a scientific career that began by relying upon "indigenous" Lappish knowledge, but later suppressed it as there emerged, at Linnaeus' own bidding, a "universalization of botanical knowledge" (170) where folklore neither featured nor was legitimating.

Comparative social science makes its appearance here through the insights of Goody and Lévi-Strauss (the latter with respect to how Europeans found natural objects "good to think with"), though the main reference—perhaps inevitably—is Geertz (1983) on "local knowledge." Cooper seems to miss the point that contemporary work on indigenous knowledge systems arose independently of Geertzian reflexivity, owing more to pioneer cognitivist "eth-noscience" approaches combined with the late-twentieth-century critical

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development discourse. True, by exploring the meanings of the "indigenous" and related concepts in early modern Europe, light is shed on what we now mean by "indigenous," while the argument (174) that contemporary usage is more likely a reaction against British imperial use of the term "native" is perfectly plausible. But the assertion that the ubiquity of the "local" is relatively modern is more difficult to justify. Indeed, the author effectively concedes the point. In its various manifestations, and with degrees of emphasis, it rather evokes a universal pattern of human thought, evident in diverse world-views ethnographically reported.

———Roy Ellen, University of Kent at Canterbury

Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

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Like globalization, neoliberalism tends to evoke images of declining states and governments, powerless before the onslaught of the global market. In this new book, however, Aihwa Ong combines insights from Foucault and Agamben to argue that East/Southeast Asian as well as other governments are using a neoliberal form of the sovereign exception to articulate themselves with the market-centered logic of the contemporary world. The neoliberal order described by Ong is one suffused at all levels by the logic of the exception, and one in which conflicting neoliberalisms clash and merge. She develops these insights through a series of ten case studies on topics ranging from Chinese state policies, to U.S. outsourcing of high-tech jobs, to Singapore's privileging of high-skill foreigners over native-born citizens.

Ong finds her best example in the Chinese state's repeated acts, since the 1970s, of sovereign exception to the state socialist norm—its creation of special economic zones (SEZs) where the market determines wages and the labor and citizenship protections of the rest of China do not apply. Hong Kong and Macao, on the other hand, are more "positive" political zones of exception to the repressive norm of the rest of the country. Both are part of a strategy for greater national power and regional integration under Chinese leadership.

Ong sees a neoliberal biopolitics at play across the world, forming new kinds of subjects who are different from previous capitalist subjectivities such as Weber's Protestant ethic and Singapore's once-celebrated "Asian values." It is no longer enough to be rational and disciplined; one must also be flexible, knowledge-rich, creative, and cosmopolitan. Those who do not fit this model increasingly form the underside of the system, as rights that once came with formal citizenship are de-linked from it and attached to skills that are valued in the global market. Flexible entrepreneurs and professionals move capital

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