GREEN POLITICS FOR A DIVIDED PLANET:

Toward a Postcolonial Environmentalism

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A paper for the Workshop on Environmental Movements: North and South, European Consortium for Political Research, Granada, Spain, April 14-20, 2005.

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1. The Conquest of the Earth

"The conquest of the earth ... is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much." So says Marlowe, the main narrator in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1971, 7), speaking to the Accountant, the Lawyer, and--above all--their host, the Director of Companies (3). This conquest, Marlowe explains, "mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves..." (7). The main agent of the conquest in the story is Kurtz, the remarkable ivory trader who--his soul gone mad in the African wilderness (68)--commits extraordinary atrocities, even as "his intelligence" remains "perfectly clear" (67). A composite of European civilization--"All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (50)--he is exceptionally talented in music, painting, and oratory as well being intellectually brilliant: he is "a universal genius" (73). His plans are "immense," (67) so "vast" that they know no limit. "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my--' everything belonged to him..." says Marlowe (49). Kurtz’s lack of restraint, however, exposes him to a terrible fate, for he is "hollow at the core" (59), and he thus pronounces "a judgment upon the adventures of his soul on this earth": "The horror" (71).

What we encounter in *Heart of Darkness* is not only an obvious criticism of certain practices--or what might be thought simply aberrations--of colonialism, but more significantly a critique of the central ideals of modern European civilization, as these had earlier been shaped and polished in the Enlightenment. With Kurtz portrayed as an archetype of Enlightenment, his "horror" penetrates to the core of Enlightenment ideals--luminous abstractions that, serving as guides and alibis for the civilizing project of European modernity, are dark and hollow within. Colonialism, as it merges with industrialism, establishes the hallmark aspiration of nineteenth century Europe: the conquest of the earth. Marlowe allows that there can be a redemption for this conquest, but it is precisely this possibility that ironically exposes the celebration of Enlightenment ideals as itself a form of idolatry: "What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea--something you can set up, and bow down to, and offer a sacrifice to..." (7).

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* here converges thematically with Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The excessive claims that Enlightenment makes for the purity and power of its rationality betray its paradoxical irrationality: "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (3). Enlightenment embarks on a quest for universal mastery that--hearkening back to Francis Bacon's assertion of "the authority of mind" and René Descartes' project of making human beings the "lords and masters" of nature--depends upon a simplifying reduction of nature and human nature in disregard of their qualities and complexities: "To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers ... becomes illusion..." (7).

The conquest of the earth appears, at this juncture, as a key feature of a project that is even larger: the domination of nature (see Leiss 1972, Merchant 1983), in which nature--to be comprehended and controlled--has to be conceptualized in a reductionist manner. "Enlightenment behaves toward things," say Horkheimer and Adorno, "as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them" (9). The grand project of mastering nature knows no intrinsic principle of limitation, but is to bring all--human beings included--under its control.

Although the civilizing project of European modernity was typically seen as a collective goal, even a universal goal of humanity, the prime motive force was portrayed as arising from the
level of the individual. Descartes traced to the individual subject the sole source of certainty in a world that was otherwise doubtful while Hobbes sketched the form of the "possessive individual" (Macpherson, 1964) as being both the essence of humanity and the source of industriousness. Rejecting Hobbes's identification of this individual with the human being as such, Rousseau nonetheless took the central image in Hobbes as one of the human being shaped--corrupted--by civilization, thereby clearly anticipating Conrad's Kurtz: "after having swallowed up many treasures and ruined many men, my hero will end by butchering everything until he is the sole master of the universe. So in brief is the moral portrait, if not of human life, then at least of the secret pretensions of every civilized man" (Rousseau 1987, 91n).

This essay is an attempt to come to terms with the significance that the legacy of conquest--over nature and the earth--has for green politics. What is obvious from the outset is that green politics not only has the potential of challenging this legacy, but also is guided by a discourse--evident in an emerging green public sphere--that tends both to entertain and encourage challenges to the colonialist as well as industrialist presuppositions of the conquest. This tendency in practice raises the prospect of a development in theory that could, in turn, inform practice: the conceptualization, however problematic, of a postcolonial political ecology. Emerging challenges to the presuppositions of the conquest certainly do not hold undisputed sway in public discourse, but these challenges do enter a context of debate in which those presuppositions are at least questioned. With the emergence of environmental activism on a planet divided in accord with the legacy of colonialism, the green public sphere may become important to civil society globally, as well as in particular localities, as an arena for the expression of a postcolonial environmentalism.

2. Environmentalism and the Green Public Sphere

The legacy of the combined projects of dominating nature and conquering the earth set the cultural and historical context for the emergence of environmentalism in the mid-twentieth century. With its initial impetus arising in advanced industrial societies--mainly those of North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand--environmentalism (through the diverse voices of many environmentalists) threw sharply into question the two leading presuppositions of industrialism--namely, (1) that human beings have the ability to dominate nature and (2) that they have the right, even responsibility, to do so. Inspired by insights drawn from the science of ecology, environmentalism stressed the limits of reductionism: ecology was "subversive" inasmuch as it conveyed an understanding of nature as being intricately complex, continuously surprising, liable to respond to human interventions in ways that no model could predict or control. Pointing to past failures of control and to the prospect of catastrophic losses of control if the project of industrialism was to go unchecked, environmentalism announced the advent of an environmental crisis. At the same time, influenced by a diverse range of cultural sources--including images of nature drawn from ecology--environmentalism advanced ethical and aesthetic themes questioning the paramount status of the human and proposing a revaluation of the human/nature relationship that would disrupt the project of dominating nature.

Environmentalism rose to prominence at a time when industrialism had taken on the form of promoting development in both the so-called developed and developing countries. Here development was another word for economic expansion on the terms set by industrialism. Throwing
into question the human capacity to dominate nature, environmentalism encouraged limits to such expansion and the creation of alternatives, particularly in what were deemed the overdeveloped countries. Environmentalism at this stage paid little attention to the colonialist project of conquering the earth or to connections of that project to the industrialist project of dominating nature.

The green politics that arose from environmentalism has taken numerous forms--at times at odds with one another--but there is at least one constant. Green politics is primarily based in civil society. The environmentalism that came onto the public scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s was, indeed, part of an outburst of social activism that was followed by the emergence of a range of new social movements. As the spread of these movements has displaced the image of a single movement able to bring about progressive social change, the very notion of movement has begun to alter. The previous notion, which suggested simple forward motion or linear movement, now competes with an image of multiple connections through networks of social activism.

An even starker contrast with the older notion of movement comes with the conception of civil society as including a multiplicity of publics or public spheres. Public spheres, conceived in a manner departing from Habermas's early formulation, are not unitary and do not strive for unity. A social movement--inasmuch as it seeks a unity of theory and practice in the pursuit of its goals--exhibits a tendency toward silencing all but one opinion. Yet, public spheres are oriented to debate--an open exchange of differing opinions--and are sustained, at least in part, by the value that participants place on the process of debate itself. Although the publics of civil society are multiple, none can--by virtue of being public--remain entirely insular (Fraser 1992). The multiple publics are, rather, open to one another. They take account of one another, challenge one another, engage one another (with more or less conflict and cooperation) to such an extent that boundaries and identities become ambivalent, rather than fixed, and that the entire pattern of publics in civil society gains a fluid, dynamic quality.

The green public sphere (Torgerson 1999b, 2000) as it arose from environmentalism, features a discourse that--notwithstanding its internal conflicts--poses a challenge to the presuppositions of industrialism. By now, however, it is clear that there is no one environmentalism, but many environmentalisms (Torgerson 2003b). The earlier environmentalist critique of industrialism is currently accompanied and, at times, questioned by green critiques of racism, patriarchy, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia and class exploitation. These critiques have drawn detailed attention to the various and complex ways in which the project of dominating nature is also a project of dominating human beings.

The terms of debate in the green public sphere have thereby been altered. At the same time, these critiques intersect with two other important tendencies. One is a growing recognition that resistance to development in the formerly colonized world can be conceived as possessing an environmental dimension. The other tendency is the emergence of postcolonial theory as a form of critique that seeks to expose and undermine presuppositions of colonialism that continue to operate in a postcolonial world. A combination of these tendencies would expand the scope of the green public sphere to involve an explicit questioning of colonialism as well as industrialism through what we might call a postcolonial environmentalism.
3. Divided Planet?

The earth has been described as a "divided planet," but how is it divided; or, more precisely, how are we to conceptualize its divisions? In his book *Divided Planet*, Tom Athanasiou distinguishes--not implausibly--between the "ecology of rich and poor" (Athanasiou 1996). However, as he is clearly aware, dividing the earth in terms of rich and poor countries belies both enormous concentrations of wealth in poor countries and the scope of poverty in rich ones. The proclamation of a divided planet nonetheless stands in stark contrast to the leading image of an earlier book, Barbara Ward and René Dubos' *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (1972), which--commissioned as a rather official "unofficial report" in preparation for the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment--was published with a dust jacket adorned by a photograph of the earth taken from space. During the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s--which has been called the first of "two waves" of environmentalism (Paehlke 1992, Torgerson 2003b)--images were also projected of "spaceship earth" (Boulding 1966) and of a global model indicating the "limits to growth" (Meadows et al. 1972). It was during the second wave of environmentalism--of the late 1980s and the early 1990s--that the image of a divided planet clearly emerged.

Under the banner of "sustainable development," the Bruntland Commission report spoke of "our common future" (World Commission 1987) as one that required environmental sensitivity, but also "progress"--conceptualized in rather conventional terms--in order to lift vast regions of the globe out of impoverishment. This emphasis was reasserted at the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, at which attention focused on the division between North and South. Such a geographical division of the earth is not altogether implausible, though it seems even less precise than the division between rich and poor.

Still another way of dividing the earth dates back to the period following World War II when the earth was divided in terms--still largely current--of developed and developing countries or of the developed and the underdeveloped. These criteria, mixed with the distinction between capitalism and communism, issued in the formula of the First World, the Second World, and the Third World. Now that the communist Second World has largely collapsed, the key distinction provides a stark contrast between the First World and the Third World or--to mix in geography once again, though in terms of longitude rather than latitude--the West and the rest.

All the variations and complications involved in conceptualizing divisions of the earth suggest that the task is no simple matter and that, in any case, no conceptualization is innocent of questions of power. What is clearly implicit in the different ways of conceptually carving up the earth is the legacy of Western colonialism. That this legacy is not to be encountered only in locations named the South or the Third World is evident from the major role that indigenous peoples have played in the environmental politics of countries founded by European settlers. In Canada, for example, the mention in this context of place names like James Bay, the Mackenzie Valley, and Clayoquot Sound is sufficient to recall the involvement of aboriginal peoples in environmental struggles spanning the period from the early 1970s to today. What is evident, in any case, is that environmental struggles have been arising in regions formerly--and currently--subject to European colonialism, whatever their particular location on the planet.
The colonial legacy remains a key feature of globalization, a process which--now a centerpiece of contemporary discourse--was accelerated by the growing global dominance of European civilization in the nineteenth century. The divided planet is indeed a Eurocentric planet, and division in these terms has become apparent precisely because Eurocentrism has come under increasing challenge since the mid-twentieth century. A postcolonial environmentalism is clearly relevant to this context, and it becomes possible to consider the possibility of a postcolonial political ecology as a new orientation in green political theory.

4. Across the Divide: A Postcolonial Political Ecology?

Theory

Postcolonial theory, taking colonialist discourse as its prime focus, provides a way of exposing and unsettling colonialist presuppositions that have defined divisions for a Eurocentric planet. The procedures of postcolonial discourse analysis are principally derived from the poststructuralist deconstruction of logocentrism (see, e.g., Leitch 1983), a type of reading that unsettles the coherence of fixed terms by demonstrating that a stable identity in discourse depends upon the constitution of an Other. Coherent identity thus depends on a binary opposition that poses an unbridgeable divide, a difference too extreme to be overcome. The logic of such coherence is to clear a space for the self-same through the identification, marginalization, expulsion, and exclusion of otherness. However, this fixing of coherence turns out to be inherently unstable, paradoxically both possible and impossible. For what has been effectively identified, marginalized, expelled, and excluded, unavoidably gains a place at the center of the self-same.

In the opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, for example, the coherent and commanding identity of the colonizer cannot exist apart from the stereotypical representation of a colonized Other stigmatized as an irrational, subjugated inferior. Yet this representation of the colonized-as-Other occupies a site internal to the coherent representation of the colonizer as pure, self-controlled, rational--as the self-same, commanding ego. That self is constituted through the image of the Other.

Yet it might well be asked whether a postcolonial political ecology is not a contradiction in terms. Postcolonial theory takes culture as its point of reference, concentrating on discourse and often tending to envelop itself in the presuppositions of textuality. In contrast, political ecology presupposes nature--understood in a manner consistent with the science of ecology--as the focus of inquiry. Postcolonial political ecology would surely be a contradiction in terms if this contrast were a matter metaphysical antinomies--i.e., if what are at stake are two mutually exclusive mappings of being: one in terms of "spirit" or culture or text as in idealism, constructivism or textualism; the other in terms of "nature" or matter or object as in naturalism, materialism, or objectivism. The situation is otherwise, however, if the contrast is conceived as a methodological one, a contrast between two distinct modes of investigation that--even if they are incommensurable--nonetheless both offer valuable, even necessary, perspectives. Then a key task of a postcolonial political ecology would be to negotiate the differences in perspective in a manner that would, as a first step, unsettle their abstract, binary opposition.
If we look to the Marxian tradition, we can see that it has generated important methodological efforts to grapple with the relationships between nature and culture (regardless of how we regard the apparent materialist inversion of idealist metaphysics). Marx proceeds from the premise that human beings are natural beings. Human life—and hence all culture—depends upon maintaining a continuous interchange—indeed, a "metabolism"—with nature that, although it takes the form of "struggle," is a process in which the human being is opposed to nature as one of its own forces. (Marx 1976, 283; 1981, 958). For Marx, each form of the interchange with nature constitutes a particular mode of production, which in turn provides the basis for the cultural forms connected to it.6

Given an understanding of nature in ecological terms, Marxian political economy could thus be viewed as anticipating—however reluctantly—a form of political ecology. In advocating a move from political economy to political ecology, Guha and Martinez-Alier (1997) point to early resistance in Marxian political economy to analysis in terms of (what is now called) ecological economics. Such resistance rendered Marxian political economy incapable of seriously analyzing "ecological distribution conflicts" (22). This resistance is evident, though not without a certain ambivalence, in Hans Magnus Enzensberger's early "A Critique of Political Ecology" (1974). Here, in what may be counted as a durable contribution to green political theory, Enzensberger ably exposes the politically naive tendencies characteristic of much of the environmentalism of the time. Yet, the title as well as the substance of the essay—echoing Marx's critique of bourgeois political economy—clearly anticipates a potential reversal whereby, in taking environmental problems seriously, Marxism could itself advance a political-ecological critique of industrial capitalism. Indeed, as we shall see, ecological Marxism is now advancing such a critique, primarily under the influence of the work of James O'Connor (e.g., 1988).

Within postcolonial theory itself, there are tendencies that press against a textualist orientation. It is thus that Homi Bhabha practices a mode of deconstruction that responds explicitly against the procedure he associates with Derrida. The "logocentric discourse" of colonialism, Bhabha maintains, is unsettled not only by the incoherence of the self-same—i.e., an inadequacy of its own self-constitution—but also by the concrete confrontation with an Other so radically different that the self-same, entirely unable to comprehend it, is left "disturbed and dispersed by ... a foreign tongue" (1990, 73).

Even more starkly, Frantz Fanon's work provides a key impetus for postcolonial theory, but by no means proceeds in terms of textual deconstruction. Ato Sekyi-Otu (1996) has insisted on this point through an interpretation that stresses a unique "formal structure" (5) in Fanon's thought (decisively influenced by his encounters with phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalysis, and Hegel and Marx, as well as the colonial experience). Fanon's work—particularly *The Wretched of the Earth* as well as *Black Skin, White Masks*—takes as its point of departure not discourse, but experience so that, intertwined with his subtle depiction of the projection and interchange of images between colonizer and colonized, there is an unambiguous insistence on the immediate experience of violence and oppression that he portrays as a merciless imprisonment (Fanon 1967, 112; Sekyi-Otu 1996, 72-87).7

Conceived in terms of Sekyi-Otu's Fanon, postcolonial theory could, in principle, turn its focus to how colonial identities are constituted, maintained, disturbed, disrupted, and changed through experiences of domination and resistance. With this concern taken as a point of reference, a
postcolonial political ecology could take a theoretical cue from one of the earliest--and still one of
the most sophisticated--contributions to green political theory, William Leiss's *The Domination of
Nature*. This work, although grounded by the immanent critique of rationality advanced by
Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially invokes Horkheimer's elaboration
of that critique in such works as *Eclipse of Reason* and *Critique of Instrumental Reason*.

Under the direction of Max Horkheimer, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School proceeded as a development and extension of the Marxian critique of political economy in a manner that—taking historical materialism, in some sense, as a starting point—would encompass cultural
critique. Although critical theory would come to focus mainly on the level of culture, the
interconnection with political economy remained a key point of reference (Held 1980). In analysing
the domination of nature, Leiss's book focuses on Horkheimer's treatment of the peculiar identity
operating as the agency of domination. From Leiss's book, indeed, it becomes clear that any
adequate inquiry into the project of conquering nature—and into the ways in which this conquest
necessarily involves the domination of human by human—requires attention to Horkheimer.

In advancing a critique of the logic of identity, Horkheimer draws attention to the
perplexities that attend any attempt to define and conceptualize a particular identity in unrelenting
contradistinction to otherness. The notion that "concepts must be pinned down, identified, and used
only when they exactly follow the dictates of the logic of identity is," according to Horkheimer, "a
symptom of the quest for certainty, the all-too-human impulse to trim intellectual needs down to
pocket size" (1974b, 167). Such a formalistic mode of conceptualization offers only fixed identities
that, closed to otherness, are to be maintained in their uncontaminated purity. This move renders the
concept incapable of grasping flux, movement, and change in a process where identities are
challenged by otherness. The formalistic logic of identity "proves particularly inadequate when
applied to the concept of nature" (168). Conceptual "abstractions such as 'nature' and 'spirit'" imply
"a misrepresentation of concrete existence" for the "concepts become inadequate, empty, false, when
they are abstracted from the process through which they have been obtained" (171). The logic of
identity leads either to dualism (to two fixed identities separated by an unbridgeable divide) or a
unity in which one identity conquers all—"nothing is supposed to remain outside the all-embracing
concept" (169): "The real difficulty in the problem of the relation between spirit and nature,"
according to Horkheimer, "is that hypostatizing the polarity of these two entities is as impermissible
as reducing one of them to the other" (171).

Horkheimer is clear as to the identity of the agent dominating nature: "The ego dominates
nature" (107). If we look to the history of human efforts "to subjugate nature," we find that this is
also a history of humans subjugating humans. The ego, conceptualized as coherent self-identity, is
marked by this history of subjugation both in its role as the agent of domination and as an entity that
itself is produced through self-control. It is thus that the "development of the concept of ego"
reveals a "twofold history" of dominating and being dominated (105):

As the principle of the self endeavoring to win in the fight against nature in general, against
other people in particular, and against its own impulses, the ego is felt to be related to the
functions of domination, command, and organization.... Historically, it belongs pre-
eminently to an age ... marked by a cleavage ... between conquerors and conquered.
"Domination of nature," according to Horkheimer, thus "involves domination of man," (93) such that civilization produces "the alienation" of human beings "from extrahuman and human nature" (169). Horkheimer presents this image as the culmination of the process:

... we have on the one hand the self, the abstract ego emptied of all substance except its attempt to transform everything in heaven and on earth into means for its preservation, and on the other hand an empty nature degraded into mere material, mere stuff to be dominated, without any other purpose than this domination. (97)

With his portrayal of the identity of abstract ego as empty and all-conquering, opposed to an empty, abstract nature that is subject to control, Horkheimer evokes an image again reminiscent of Kurtz, the unrestrained agent of conquest, hollow at the core. Horkheimer’s is a cultural critique, however, concerned not simply with the idolization of the ego in individualistic terms, but also with the ego writ large as an “idol” of collective agency (1974a, 81): “Every finite being—and humanity is finite—which gives itself airs as the ultimate, the highest, the unique, becomes an idol with a demonic ability …” (80).

Horkheimer’s critique of identity thinking disavows all abstract oppositions as being inadequate to the processes by which identities are formed and transformed while remaining marked by indeterminacy. By disavowing, in particular, the abstract opposition between nature and spirit—the latter transformed in the modern period into the agency of the ego—Horkheimer draws attention to an enormously important peculiarity of European cultural history that Leiss pursues. The very ability to conceptually identify "nature" as a distinct object recalls the theological and philosophical opposition between spirit, as divine and transcendent, and nature as a mundane realm produced and ruled by spirit (Leiss, 1994, 29-35). The Christian version of this opposition, which overwhelmed animistic traditions, was to be a necessary step in the rationalistic "disenchantment of the world" that, according to Max Weber, culminates in the "iron cage" of the modern industrial order.

By disavowing abstract oppositions—and detecting domination within the abstractions themselves—critical theory reveals the conquering ego as the self-identical agent of domination who (albeit ultimately impossible) in principle levels all being, human and non-human, to a form that can be controlled. Such reduction is clearly a feature of colonial domination when the colonized are represented as inferior to the colonizers, as sub-human, reduced to the status of a similarly degraded nature. In a passage alluding to colonialism, Horkheimer speaks of the "dominion of the human race over the earth" as being unprecedented, particularly by virtue of its unlimited, unrestrained character (1974b, 108). Yet in speaking of a "revolt of nature"—by which he means nature both human and non-human—Horkheimer (ch. 3) posits a limit, an inescapable shortcoming in any project of domination.

The critical theory of the Frankfurt School—as here primarily represented by Horkheimer—does not by itself, of course, offer an adequate critique of colonialism, any more than does poststructuralist deconstruction (cf. Said, 1994, 278). What critical theory does is to offer a notion of domination that may be appropriate to the theoretical constitution of a postcolonial political ecology. An obvious shortcoming of this account arises from the fact that that, being primarily immersed in a European standpoint, critical theory does not and, of course, cannot proceed from the standpoint of the colonized, as does—by way of contrast—the work of Fanon. Nonetheless, the
Frankfurt critique of domination, which traces it both to historical practices and to the logic of identity that troubles the very formation of concepts, could serve to unsettle the fixed identities of colonialism.8

**Practice**

The prospect of a postcolonial political ecology is not simply a theoretical matter. More precisely, the theoretical task of conceptualizing a postcolonial political ecology is primarily posed not by the interesting puzzles involved in such a notion, but by concrete tendencies in practice. Prominent recognition of these tendencies was signalled in 2004 with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Matthai, who in the 1970s founded the Nigerian "green belt movement." Indeed, the last quarter of the twentieth century saw the emergence of "tens of thousands of environmental groups" (Haynes 1999, 233) in regions once subject to Western colonialism. Most of these groups have arisen in Asia and Latin America, with some in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, though nearly none in the Middle East.

Despite the great diversity of these groups--and the fact that they do not by any means necessarily regard themselves explicitly as "environmental"--some salient features can be identified (Haynes, 1999, 223). The groups, generally located in rural areas and primarily constituted by women, are oriented toward defending local environments against what are seen as outside forces, typically those of big business interests and the state. At the same time, the concern of these "environmental" groups is not "the environment" as a special issue, but is focused on larger socio-economic and political matters.

The groups generally arise from contexts that Jeff Haynes characterizes as exhibiting patterns of "elite domination," whereby the politically powerful and the wealthy confront people who are "relatively powerless" (224). These people are sometimes threatened by large losses, including displacement from their homes, communities, sources of livelihood, and ways of life. By joining in groups, the people resist an oligarchical power structure that--with state guidance--typically promotes a project of development seeking "growth and consumption at virtually any cost ..." (227). Concern about protecting the environment seems, in terms of this project, to be something luxurious that only wealthy countries can afford. Even a concern about environmental matters can be taken as being against development, a stance liable to be condemned as one that is also against both people and the nation.

If we were to leave the description at that, we would have a picture resembling what Ranjit Dwivedi (2001, 230) has criticized as the prevailing "lifestyle" account, which portrays "the marginalized poor" as acting "to protect their means of livelihood and sustenance." "The main sites of conflicts and movements," he maintains (231), "... are energy- and resource-intensive activities and projects such as big dams, commercial forestry, mining, energy-intensive agriculture and mechanized fisheries"; and he allows that these are "projects and activities that threaten and erode the resource base of peasants and other artisanal groups." Yet Dwivedi observes that, when the ecological basis of life is threatened, what is jeopardized is not so much lifestyle as "life chances" (232). His key concern with the lifestyle focus, however, is that it neglects the "multidimensionality" of environmental groups (233). Although lifestyle is clearly important, to focus on groups simply as local agents of resistance that defend their lands and traditions against
invasion and victimization is to leave too much out of the picture. The main consequence is to ignore how these groups engage with outside influences not only to resist them, but also to adapt them to their own purposes and even work with them. It is a mistake, according to Dwivedi, to view these groups as staunchly preserving tradition while altogether dismissing modern science and the expertise grounded in it. It is an even more serious mistake, he suggests, to ignore how these groups connect with a plurality of other groups and cultures in a "local-global nexus" (239).

The terms of political engagement for any environmental group are largely set by the opportunity structures offered by its context. The "relatively powerless," Haynes suggests, occupy a subordinate position that typically offers few opportunities for successful action, so that "development projects are often simply imposed" (239). The success of environmental groups is less common than failure, he maintains (233), and success becomes even more uncommon when they act in isolation (227). Like Dwivedi, then, Haynes draws attention to the larger context of political engagement. He maintains that the actions of environmental groups typically reflect not only a concern with "ecosystem decline" but also a "more general discontent with the status quo" (223). This larger concern, which goes beyond a focus on local issues, itself fosters an opportunity for connections and alliances. Through his analysis of the conditions of successful action, Haynes suggests that the agenda of environmental groups as a matter of course addresses the problem of improving opportunities for action. He stresses the importance of developing a "wide-ranging coalition" together with a civil society that is "robust" and "powerful." Effective action in these respects depends, however, on another condition for successful action, "democratic and legal avenues to pursue environmental goals" (239). Where these are lacking, where any call for democracy is stifled by a coercive oligarchy, successful action seems to face overwhelming obstacles (even though resistance, however dangerous, remains possible).

Where there are opportunities for open democratic action—perhaps even where there are not—the global context also presents a significant opportunity for expanding alliances and networks with "transnational" environmental groups based in Europe and in countries created in the course of European colonization (225, cf. 223). In stressing the importance of the local-global nexus and "connection across issues and actors" (240), Dwivedi does not dismiss the importance of "local specific" analyses (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997, 5), but maintains that the local characteristically already contains the global. By way of illustration, he portrays the case of Narmada in India as at once "a local response to displacement, a broader struggle over environmental and economic impact, a national struggle of resettlement policies and part of a global struggle against 'mega-dam' projects" (240). Cases of this kind clearly suggest the potential for analysis in terms of a postcolonial political ecology.

5. The Postcolonial Critique of Development Discourse

The postcolonial period follows the Second World War in the sense that this time was marked by a proliferation of successful efforts in colonized areas to gain national independence. To speak of the period as being postcolonial, however, is not to suggest that it signals a simple discontinuity with the past. The postcolonial period is also one of continuity with the colonial past, as is clear from the obvious fact that the new nations gaining independence were themselves characteristically shaped by the previous imposition of colonial power. At the same time, the newly
independent nations remained entwined in economic relationships set by colonialism, and the
governing elites--typically Western educated--either embraced this economic order or found it
necessary to come to terms with it.

The point of departure for postcolonial theory is a focus on the continuities between the
discourse of colonialism and the ensuing pattern. "The objective of colonial discourse," according to
Bhabha, "is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial
origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (1990,
75). Following Bhabha, Arturo Escobar argues that the order of colonial discourse is replicated in
the pattern of development discourse that emerged after the Second World War to set the prevailing
form of theory and practice: "the development discourse is governed by the same principles; it has
created an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power
over, the Third World" (9). It is Escobar's point, indeed, that the "development discourses and
practices" of the postcolonial period "produced" the Third World (4). The salience of very term, that
is, constituted the central reference point in conceptualizing, investigating, and controlling the global
range of impoverished countries that had gained, or were gaining, independence.

"Development," Escobar maintains, "had achieved the status of certainty in the social
imaginary" (5). In working to undermine this status of certainty, Escobar's postcolonial critique of
development offers a point of departure for a postcolonial political ecology. Indeed, the explicit
purpose of his critique is to free the "discursive field" from its current fixations in order to facilitate
work on "the task of imagining alternatives" (14). If we follow Escobar in reading development
discourse as a replication of the order of colonial discourse, two points of continuity between the
forms are especially notable. One is the notion that the Third World is backward not simply because
it is impoverished, but because it has not advanced along the path of development to the proper,
universal goal of humanity: a civilization that is orderly, prosperous, and in control of nature. The
other is the related notion that this backwardness is due to the immaturity--economically and
culturally--of the Third World.

The West thus appears as the solution, not the problem. In a development discourse clearly
bearing the imprint of nineteenth colonial discourse, the effect of these notions is to picture an
inferior Third World as dependent on a superior West. The only solution to the problems of the
Third World thus appears to be development in the sense of a pattern of economic and cultural
change modelled after the Western project of dominating nature.

Development discourse follows upon the pattern of nineteenth century colonialism and its
presupposition that the enlightened and progressive agency of European civilization confronts
backward people who, mired in superstition, are incapable of their own improvement. What is
unmistakable in colonial discourse is the starkly inferior status attributed to the colonized. The
predominance of this presupposition can be grasped if we look to a seemingly unlikely source, John
Stuart Mill's _On Liberty_ of 1859: "Despotism," he bluntly says, "is a legitimate mode of government
in dealing with barbarians, provided that the end be their improvement, and the means justified by
actually effecting that end" (Mill 1961, 198). The reason, he explains, is that in "backward states of
society" humankind remains immature--in its "nonage"--and hence incapable of improvement
through free thought and discussion. Hence a ruler bent on improvement may legitimately use "any
expedients" capable of advancing human progress (197). Such a ruthless allowance for any means
necessary may seem more in keeping with the texts of Machiavelli and the annals of Renaissance statecraft than with the paramount classic of nineteenth century British liberalism.

The practice of colonialism—as Mill was well positioned to know in his capacity of an official with the East India Company—was ruthless indeed and was by no means necessarily dedicated to the attainment of his lofty ideal. Mill's paternalism here only mildly alludes to the greed involved in colonial adventures. The "sly civility" (Bhabha 1994, ch. 5) of his prose is unmarred by the kind of outrage later expressed in Conrad's description of the Congo ivory trade as "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience" (118). Nor does Mill begin to suspect the empty darkness at the heart of his own Enlightenment idols. Kurtz composes an "eloquent" report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs (50), but as his "nerves go wrong" (51), he scrawls a shocking addendum that openly proclaims the subtext of his report: Exterminate all the brutes! (51).

What Mill presupposes, moreover, is something that remains central to development discourse: the notion that the political-economic structures of Europe are consistent with the universal "improvement" of humankind. What is left out of account is the possibility that modern colonialism is primarily a product not of good or bad motives, but of those very political-economic structures. The development of modern states and industrial capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not, indeed, merely create ideological and technological preconditions for the expansion of European colonialism. This political-economic complex found in colonialism, rather, an answer to a host of systemic needs, involving military position as well as natural resources, inexpensive labor power, and new markets. The discourse of development glosses over these systemic issues and thus is able to avoid confronting an otherwise obvious problem: that the formal end of colonialism does not by itself alter power relationships in a way that is sufficient to break the chains of economic and cultural domination and dependency. A way of understanding this point in its broadest sense is to recall the relationships, discussed above, between the domination of nature and the domination of human by human.

The discourse of development does, nonetheless, mark a certain departure from colonial discourse to the extent that the cause of development is itself endorsed by powerful forces within the "developing" countries themselves. In the case of India, Guha and Martinez-Alier thus draw attention to the "epicenter" of environmental conflict as being situated in the opposition between "the subsistence and largely rural sector and the vastly more powerful commercial-industrial sector" (100). These authors thus portray environmental conflict as including "opposition to large dams by displaced peasants, the conflict between small-scale-artisan fishing and large-scale trawler fishing for export, the countrywide movements against commercial forest operations, and opposition to industrial pollution among downstream agricultural and fishing communities" (101). This account suggests the power of Third World elites as well as resistance to them. These elites are, moreover, typically linked in a local-global nexus with the economic-political forces of advanced industrial countries, bound up in a project of development on the Western model.

The image we encounter here might be viewed in terms of a global apparatus of largely oligarchical forces, including both states and great capitalist corporations, that—however dispersed and at times conflicted—retains a common orientation to the promotion of development. This image no doubt captures salient features of environmental conflicts in the Third World as well as the West. Such an image is, indeed, supported by Athanasiou's account of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit as a
"dark comedy" (Athanasiou 1996, 202). The centerpiece was the official conference, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, but Athanasiou stresses the diverse activities at Rio:

Miles away, along a freeway newly built to protect the international masses from the danger and squalid realities of Rio de Janeiro's slums, were the sweltering green-and-white tents of the Global Forum, which hosted dozens of nongovernmental conclaves of all varieties. Farther away still was the Earth Parliament, the global summit of indigenous peoples (1996, 9).

Wangari Maathai even gave an address to the plenary of the official conference, advancing an agenda of fostering "environmentally sound and socially equitable societies." (Quoted in Athanasiou 1996, 10) Despite these promising features of social movement activism at Rio, Athanasiou concludes that, especially in backroom negotiations, government leaders from both North and South presupposed the basic task of promoting development, even if this was to be done under the discursive rubric of "sustainable development." These negotiations systematically excluded the concerns of social activists, according to Athanasiou, who especially focuses attention on the "sordid" role of governments from the South. The picture he paints is one in which these governments publicly drew attention to the "hypocritical initiatives" of the North (203) while deflecting attention from the "ecological damage" wrought by their own development programs (204) and seeking ways to finance them (212). Even if a postcolonial political ecology should take the image of a global oligarchical apparatus as a point of departure, though, a key task of analysis would be to also complicate this image in order to identify more subtle, perhaps ambivalent, relationships.

The possibility of analysis along these lines is suggested by ecological Marxism, particularly by O'Connor's treatment of crisis tendencies in industrial capitalism. A key challenge faced by this mode of production, according to O'Connor, is that of sustaining conditions of the natural environment necessary for maintaining a system of profitable capitalist enterprise. As these conditions are threatened by "the crisis of nature," the system--understood to include greens and others even if they are deliberately opposed to capitalism--responds with reform measures that ameliorate the difficulties without solving the basic problem. By this analysis, green reforms become integral to industrial capitalism by helping to sustain it, at least temporarily.

What is to be made of this conception? Does it simply show how devious capitalism can be, or does it suggest--what might be more in keeping with Marx (e.g., 1981, 502, 510-12)--that the transformation of capitalism to another system begins within the capitalist mode of production itself? The ambivalence suggested by the question is an ambivalence characteristic of proposals for environmental reform--whether, e.g., under the banner of ecological modernization, industrial ecology, or sustainable development: do these reform programs serve to circumscribe efforts in a way that inhibits more radical change, or do the programs lay the groundwork for more thoroughgoing change? By depicting environmental reforms as a more or less automatic response to threat, O'Connor suggests that reform tends to contain change (cf. Escobar 1995, 199-201); at the same time, however, he recognizes such a response as a socializing tendency--hence a notable change--within the capitalist mode of production.
What O'Connor does not reckon with, in any case, is an historically specific discursive constraint that tends to be loosened by environmental reform initiatives. Emerging under the banner of the domination of nature, industrial capitalism adopted a technological form that has been thrown into question by green insistence on fostering different technological forms that have been variously called alternative, appropriate, convivial, or soft-path (respectively, Dickson, Schumacher, Illich, Lovins). The shape of technological innovation encouraged by industrialism was reinforced by state promotion of, and provision of infrastructure for, paths of technological development that—albeit by no means in principle necessary to the capitalist mode of production—were favored by emerging concentrations of capital in particular industries (the upshot being the centrality to advanced industrial capitalism of, e.g., automobile and petroleum production). Under the influence of industrialist presuppositions and the interests of particular industrial sectors, policy processes still follow conventional modes of agenda-setting and problem-definition that—together with scientistic epistemology—collectively tend to resist green reform (Torgerson, 1999b, ch. 4). Part of the significance of efforts to achieve green reform thus involves not actual policy outcomes, but a challenge to presuppositions of industrialist discourse.

Let us take term "sustainable development" as a case in point. Someday a book should be written on the discursive significance of the phrase, but it is clear that in its rise to prominence—from Brundtland to Rio—sustainable development achieved an Orwellian reconciliation of what had been opposites (cf. Marcuse 1964). By force of language (albeit with other forms of force in the background), the phrase tended to shift the terms of discourse, helping to restore faith in what had been sharply thrown into question by environmentalism and was being rendered increasingly dubious by ecological economics (e.g. Daly 1973): the notion that development, in the rather conventional terms invoked by Bruntland, was at all sustainable. There is thus much to recommend this pointed criticism:

"Sustainable development" is only the latest in a long series of comforting incantations.... The names vary but their logic remains the same—all these models of new development are risen from the ranks of those who would have everything change, while changing not at all (Athanasiou 1996, 290).

Escobar presses this line of critique to the point of detecting in the discourse of sustainable development a "grammar" (202) that reinforces the homogenization of nature and culture under expanded regimes of capitalist production. What this critique neglects, however, is that there is no fixed grammar to the discourse of sustainable development. For as an attempt to reconcile opposites, the term transparently represents a compromise among competing interests and perspectives. Surely, sustainable development discourse has been promoted by forces generally sympathetic to development on terms established by industrial capitalism. However, Escobar himself notes resistances to the grammar of sustainable development that largely escape the attention of critical political economy. Indeed, the discourse of sustainable development remains mixed, the grammar identified by Escobar being countered by efforts to foster sustainable development in ways that accentuate community initiative, public participation, and fairer trade.

Conceived and practiced in these terms—all echoing passages in Brundtland's foundational text—sustainable development has no secure meaning, but vacillates in a space of contention. The
determination of meaning is not given by the term, but is an artifact of power relationships. As long as there is a contest of power, the term can accommodate the promotion of alternatives to prevailing patterns of development, ones that might, for example, connect specific "alternative" or "appropriate" technological innovations with the protection and enhancement of threatened forms of indigenous livelihood in the so-called Third World. Such connections might be either hampered or encouraged by the discourse of sustainable development, depending upon how different actors grasp and deploy its ambivalent rhetorical possibilities. Establishing connections of this sort may, of course, be helped by the deployment and invention of other discourses, including ones that express a frank opposition to the symbol of "development," with all its industrialist and colonialist trappings. An examination of this possibility is one task for a postcolonial political ecology.

6. Expanding the Green Public Sphere? Divisions and Connections

Public spheres, as institutions grounded in civil society, often tend to be conceptualized in terms of a relationship to particular states, rather than in international, transnational, or global contexts. However, as informally constituted spaces of open communication, public spheres are bounded indeterminately and certainly cannot be contained within the formal jurisdictional or territorial boundaries of a nation state. We can thus entertain an expansion of public spheres in terms of international, transnational, or global contexts. The notion of global civil society suggests this possibility and raises the prospect of an expansion of the green public sphere in a global context.

Lipschutz portrays global civil society as a diverse, informal institution "focused on the self-conscious constructions of networks of knowledge and action, by decentred, local actors, that cross the reified boundaries of space as though they were not there" (390). The range of actors is highly differentiated and "heteronomous" in terms of the specialization of their activities (391). Even with this diversity, though, global civil society is, for Lipschutz, both coherent and self-reflexively focused: its "growth ... represents an ongoing project of [global] civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, or re-map world politics" (391).

Such a notion of civil society in terms of self-conscious agency is largely displaced in John Dryzek's account of the politics of global civil society as he emphasizes the role of discourse, conceived as mainly being "about questioning, criticizing, and publicizing" (131). Also adopting a network image, Dryzek underscores the potential for actors in global civil society "to affect the terms of discourse and change the balance of competing discourses..." (131). He maintains that "environmental activism" in particular has been engaged in processes of discursive constitution and reconstitution such that its "main cumulative effect ... may be precisely such a reconstruction" (131). Indeed, Dryzek's account of global civil society helps to suggest a conceptualization of the green public sphere as a space--or network of spaces--for public communication in which the local and the global intersect.

Dwivedi's notion of the local-global nexus is relevant at this juncture. It is crucial, he maintains, for local environmental struggles arising in regions subject to European colonization to establish connections: "the local asserts itself when it is effectively linked with national, regional and global arenas" (240). Local environmental groups especially require a local-global connection when their struggles are related to larger "struggles over the politics of environmental and social causes in multilateral trade and investment bodies, such as the World Trade Organization or the Multilateral
Environmental Agreements (MEAs)" (241). With these environmental groups "increasingly globalizing their protest in social movement and NGO networks," (241) they connect with "critical globalism" in a manner that strengthens "global civics to counter, tame or reverse the adverse impact of economic globalization" (241).

Critical globalism is often described as a "a movement of movements" (e.g., Klein 2004, 262) in which the particular identities of different movements are maintained while being connected in a manner that is complementary in terms of building a "better world." Given the trope of "movement," there is an obvious implication of the various movements having some overall, common direction and end. Indeed, the very conceptualization of movements tends to be in instrumental terms—even when there is a central stress on identity—so that the overarching question is one of strategy (e.g., Laclau and Mouffé 2001).

Global civil society, when conceived both in network terms and without the implication of some collective and deliberate agency, offers the potential for the distinct, yet interconnected discourses of public spheres, including the green public sphere. Strategy may certainly be a topic of discussion in the green public sphere, but—to the extent that the discussion is at all valued for its own sake by the participants—the institutionalization of the green public sphere cannot be reduced to a matter of strategic value. Indeed, any public sphere presupposes shared meaningfulness in a space of appearance, or in interconnected spaces of appearances. This does not mean that the necessary end, or telos, of a public sphere is consensus, as a Habermasian conception would suggest. Quite the opposite would be the case if we were to look to Hannah Arendt (see Torgerson 1999b, 2000). A certain consensus is rather the point of departure, the beginning point, from which opinions may be discursively shaped and shared in patterns of both divergence and convergence. That is to say, a public sphere involves a certain agreement to disagree. However, especially as we look to a cross-cultural, postcolonial context, even this agreement has to remain provisional and incomplete, subject to continuing contention and negotiation.

A green politics for a divided planet depends on an expansion of the green public sphere, but such a politics is necessarily a divided politics in the sense that it neither anticipates nor achieves an undifferentiated unity. The divisions, however, do not necessarily spell a lack of connections. A green politics for a divided planet, indeed, depends upon interconnected spaces distinguished by intimations of, as well as approximations to, commonalties capable—at a minimum—of making disagreements somehow meaningful.

These common spaces are hybrid spaces in the sense suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin. Discourses, according to Bakhtin, are meaningful, but their meaningfulness depends on there being no single, unified meaning; for discourse itself depends on plurality rather than unity, such that any meaning is constituted in a tension of dialogue: the coherence of monologue is ultimately impossible. Bakhtin's famous portrayal of a contrast between the official and carnivalesque languages of the medieval era shows that the serious authority of ecclesiastical and civil officialdom was constituted, simultaneously affirmed and denied, in connection with the inverted idiom—the language and logic—of carnivalesque frivolity. More generally, Bakhtin holds that univocal meaning is impossible because meaningfulness is constituted at a crossroads of intersecting discourses.

In his study of environmental justice activism in the United States, David Schlosberg offers striking, concrete example of a hybrid space that focuses upon a particular tension and interplay among different voices (150). With regard to the First National People of Color Environmental
Leadership Summit, Schlosberg recounts an encounter between African American and American aboriginal activists on the question of valuing nature. From the urban-based African American perspective, there was a long-standing lack of sympathy for what was viewed as a white environmentalist obsession with valuing nature over people, particularly racially oppressed people who were subject to environmental injustice. However, the interchange between the African American and American aboriginal leaders generated a certain agreement on the moral importance of "protecting animals and trees and land." The outcome was that a common statement on "Principles of Environmental Justice" extended a commitment to "ecological diversity and the interdependence of all species" while proclaiming a "spiritual interdependence on the sacredness of Mother Earth." Even though the statement voiced a common position, this does not of course necessarily mean commonality on the meaning of the terms employed. This indeterminacy is characteristic of hybrid space, or what Bhabha (1993) calls "culture's in between."

What the above example suggests, more broadly, is the possibility of multiple points of intersection--hybrid spaces of both commonality and tension--between and among different cultural and political standpoints in a local-global nexus. The example explicitly indicates this possibility in regard to divergent notions of the meaning and value of nature. The fact that most environmental activists in formerly colonized regions are women draws attention, moreover, to the potential for developing global ecofeminist networks with further linkages thereby between environmentalism and feminism (Salleh 1997, Sandilands 1999, Sturgeon 1997). Whatever the differences within and among them, these networks would surely pose a challenge to the image of nature as a deadened mechanism, to an image Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature* (1983) discloses as being marked by a patriarchal principle. The project of dominating of nature, as it has been celebrated since the early modern period, continuously repeats the domination of woman by man—the vital, active, conquering agency that dominates nature being understood as masculine whereas an inert and passive, supine nature is portrayed as feminine: subject to the violence of invasive investigation and comprehensive control. Furthermore, the problems of poverty, racism, and oppression that gave rise to the environmental justice movement in the United States are points of connections with struggles for human rights and environmental justice that are world-wide (Hartley 1995, Sachs 1996). Here there is much scope for cooperation and common projects, but nothing anticipates the unity of a movement with a single direction. Nonetheless, there are sites between and among which there are potential spaces for connection and contention, for debates issuing in agreement and disagreement, for expressions of common meanings and values that do not neglect or deny substantial differences.

Hybridity, as a key theme in postcolonial theory, has especially been adapted by Bhabha from Bakhtin. On Bhabha's account, it is important that hybridity not be understood as a mere mixing of cultures that produces a new, common culture. Bhabha, like Fanon, underscores the radical otherness of the colonized, so that the particular hybridity of an encounter between colonizer and colonized is one of contention and negotiation. An implication of Bhabha's point is that this encounter, with its inequality and radical differences, cannot be reduced to an interchange of power and resistance in a circumscribed field of forces: the colonized cannot be fully assimilated to this field.10 Cultural encounters generally are marked by hybridity, by contention and negotiation of differences. Although hybridization cannot, by definition, preserve the cultural integrity of the Other as a self-contained identity, the process is one in which the Other remains distinct (cf. Dirlik 1997, 508). This point is important in regard to conflicting images of nature in green politics.
When green politics becomes attuned to nature as place--to the cultural/natural meaningfulness of particular localities--we witness an implicit response to one of the founding gestures of modernity. The defense of place responds to an image of indifferent space that is especially evident in Descartes--to those infinite spaces, indeed, whose eternal silence terrified Pascal. The indifference of this space derives from Descartes' fabulous null hypothesis, the method of radical doubt that first clears the external world and then admits only what can be rationally constructed by the ego. Culturally grounded knowledge of the beings and relationships of the natural world lacks certainty and, therefore, loses its status as knowledge. That status was to become the preserve of modern science.

The emergence of ecology in the late nineteenth century in part continued the development of modern science, but also marked a point of departure. For, just as Descartes had anticipated industrialism and just as modern science had helped to guide it, ecology emerged in awareness of the increasing impact of industrialism. Although ecology itself has proceeded with its own simplifying assumptions and consists in specific practices rather than grand ideas, the emergence of ecology has had the cultural effect of throwing into question reductionist presuppositions that modern science had portrayed as indispensable. The null hypothesis of indifferent space now at least partially gives way to a presupposition of complexities involving intricate interconnections exceeding comprehension and control. The cultural influence of ecology contributes to an appreciation of human limits, to a sense that nature cannot be dominated--even to an ecocentric sense that nature should not be dominated. In the realm of public discourse, the qualities and complexities of the natural world reappear, along with culturally grounded understandings allowing an appreciation for place.

In a well-known Canadian case, the logging industry and the provincial government of British Columbia clearly proceeded with an image of old growth forests in Clayoquot Sound (located on the west coast of Vancouver Island) as being indifferent space (Torgerson 1999a). This image contrasted with the images of place advanced by Canadian environmentalists as well as the aboriginal people--the Nuu-chah-nulth--who claimed the area as their land by ancestral title dating from time immemorial. Faced by a dramatic outburst of public opposition to a land use decision for the area, the British Columbia government had recourse to the typical expedient, in such circumstances, of a scientific study. The mandate of the Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel was to recommend the best solution that science could provide.

In constituting the panel, however, the government found itself unable to simply choose members whose inclinations would predictably be in tune with the official line (Torgerson 2003b, 128-131). As its composition ultimately reflected demands for the representation of the Nuu-chah-nulth, environmentalist perspectives, and women, the panel came to enact a hybrid discourse. Two key figures were an hereditary Nuu-chah-nulth chief--possessing extensive traditional knowledge of place--and an ethno-botanist, a woman attuned both to ecological complexities and nuances of cultural understanding. The panel process involved explicit and painstaking negotiations of divergent perspectives--particularly those of modern science and traditional ecological knowledge--in order to achieve mutually respectful working relationships.

The recommendation of the panel reversed the priorities that had guided the earlier government decision. New forestry practices were to follow a comprehensive approach informed by the Nuu-chah-nulth term *hishuk ist ts'awalk* (approximated in the English phrase "everything is
one"). This outcome did not mean, however, that the process had culminated in a consensus whereby opposed standpoints merged as one. There was, rather, a statement of a shared position--on the practical need for an "integration of scientific and traditional knowledge" in the specification of forestry standards (Scientific Panel, 1995, 17)--along with an awareness of remaining differences and with agreements to disagree.

The green politics of a divided planet--if it is desirable to risk such a comprehensive phrase--is marked by differences and divisions. To say this is not to celebrate diversity for its own sake or to urge a carnivalesque proliferation of voices and genres, but is simply to state a fact. The fact is that the many environmentalisms contain conceptions and valuations of "nature" that diverge to such an extent that they press the very notion of nature to a point of instability and incoherence. Nonetheless, there are at times hybrid intersections of perspective--remarkable in the case of Clayoquot sound--that could inform practice.

Not a movement or even a movement of movements, the green public sphere is animated by exchanges of differing opinion. Central to the green public sphere, moreover, is ambivalence between common identity and radical difference. This ambivalence may necessarily be constitutive of a green politics for a divided planet. Indeed, photographs of the earth from space, such as the one on the cover of Ward and Dubois' Only One Earth, offer an image that is ambivalent in its significance. This image allows for an apparently comprehensive grasp of a single object in indifferent space. Although produced by scientific technology in an advanced form, the image of this blue planet may be viewed--as it has often been portrayed in environmentalist discourse--as one of place: a place of many connected places and many connected forms of green politics. Despite their differences and conflicts, what all these forms of green politics have in common is, in one sense or another, resistance to the conquest of the earth and the domination of nature.

Notes

1. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, xvii) have acknowledged the importance of "the public sphere" while insisting on basic differences between their "radical democracy" and the "deliberative democracy" associated with Habermas. See, however, the discussion of other approaches to deliberative democracy--particularly that of discursive democracy--in Dryzek (2001).

2. No perfect concepts are available for the purpose of grasping or conducting social and political activism. For a discussion of the metaphorical character of the terms "movement" and "public sphere"--and the different implications of employing them--see Torgerson (1999b, 2000). The general point is that each metaphor both reveals and conceals important relationships while encouraging or discouraging different types of conduct. What is to be done? Mixing metaphors, however awkward the practice, may be helpful in improving understanding of social and political activism. The term "civil society" is also not without its problems and is used here with some hesitation. Typically, the current usage poses a distinction between civil society and the state such that economic activity (at least that of the great capitalist corporations) is apparently excluded from both. This conceptualization generates an incoherence that becomes obvious as soon as one recalls that for both Hegel and Marx civil, or bourgeois, society (burgerliche Gesellschaft) included economic activity. A way of rendering coherent the current conceptualization of civil society
would—following suggestions of Max Weber—be to grasp the state and large-scale economic organizations (as well as other aligned organizations) as an administrative sphere (see Torgerson 1999b, 8-12). The administrative sphere can thus be conceived in contradistinction to civil society. This model, however, transforms the conventional picture of liberal democracy into one of liberal oligarchy. If one conceives a global administrative sphere—a move that would seem necessary to sustain a conception of global civil society—one encounters the image of global oligarchy (with both liberal and authoritarian tendencies) in a contest with forces of global democracy. Such an exaggerated image—which often seems to inform the current discourse of critical globalism—might be revealing in important respects, but not without problems. For a critique of the concept of global civil society, see Eschle (2001).

3. For a relevant reading of Derrida’s famous statement that there is nothing outside the text (1976, 158; cf.1973, 158), see Rorty (1982).

4. Such a position depends not only on a perspectivism à la Nietzsche, but also on judgment (more reflective than determinant), of the kind that Arendt develops from Kant (see Beiner 1982, 119).

5. Overcoming such an opposition would address a key criticism directed at postcolonial inquiries. See Dirlik (1997, 525).

6. In this regard, Engels's notion of "the last instance" can be viewed as but a reiteration of the premise that human beings are natural beings.

7. The apprehension of immediate experience is, in Sekyi-Otu's (1996) dialectical reading of Fanon, part of a mediated process that comes to disclose aspects of experience that immediacy cannot comprehend.

8. Horkheimer points to a recalcitrance in the “nature”—human or non-human—that is to be conceptually identified and controlled, to a feature of “nature” that resists reduction and remains a source of potential revolt. In the Frankfurt critique of the logic of identity, then, the concept (e.g., “nature”) needed to achieve comprehension and control comes to expose its limits not as a surreptitious extension of itself, but through encounters that are alien to the concept, incomprehensible on its terms. This is a token of the Frankfurt point of departure in historical materialism. In contrast, postcolonial theory faces a conundrum—inasmuch as it remains within a textualist framework—when turning to question a key presupposition: the coherence of the identity of colonial discourse itself, together with its Manichean opposition between colonizer and colonized (Yegenoglu 1998, ch. 1). Does a postcolonial theory ascribing identity to colonial discourse not buy into the very logic of “colonialism”—a term now also thrown into question—thereby ascribing coherent identity to diverse practices, across many times and places, that resist unification and instead call for pluralization? Yet if unified identities are disallowed, is the effect not to undercut the oppositions needed for resistance? Textualism is especially perplexed by these problems because identities and oppositions—their making and unmaking, their dynamic in a field of power and resistance—depend (methodologically speaking) on the terms of the
discourse that frame them. However a textualist approach might propose to resolve the question of unity versus plurality, it remains posed in such a way that the difference of the Other it posited as a variation within the text that the Other shares with the same (hence Bhabha’s insistence on radical otherness).

9. Cf. Homi Bhabha's (1990, 76-77) reworking of Said's distinction between the "manifest" and "latent" content of colonial discourse. The question of Conrad's alleged racism is a controversial one in postcolonial literary studies (Goonetilleke, 1995, 13-19), a field over which--as Bhabha (1994, 212) puts it--Heart of Darkness casts a "long shadow." The novella certainly abounds with stereotypes of race and gender, but these images could support different readings. Said (1994, 19-31, 67-69), for example, identifies two possible readings of Heart of Darkness, in effect as "more or less" colonialist. Yet the readings suggested by Said seem highly dependent on the invocation of authorial intention while leaving out another possibility, for it is surely possible to read the text as a critique of colonialism. In doing so, however, it becomes necessary to insist that the critique is strictly limited and that its principal focus is, indeed, not colonialism in a full sense. For it is a critique particularly of the colonizer and, as such, an immanent critique of post-Enlightenment Western civilization, an account that clearly does not comprehend or speak from any of the diverse standpoints of the colonized. It is thus that a European city reminds Marlowe (in a Biblical allusion) of "a whited sepulchre" (Conrad 1971, 9). In this regard, Heart of Darkness could be read as anticipating the Holocaust, a reading reinforced by the resonance of the work with Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment.

10. Escobar explicitly advances a poststructuralist deconstruction of colonial and development discourses in conjunction with postcolonial theory, drawing particularly on Bhabha's formulation. In addressing the question of power, Escobar invokes the work of Foucault and further associates postcolonial theory with Foucault's treatment of power (1995, 5). It should be noted that Bhabha's position, although certainly influenced by Foucault's treatment of power, seems ultimately to be inconsistent with it (as well as with, by Bhabha's own account, Derridian deconstruction). Foucault posits power/resistance as immanent to a field of force in a manner that does not provide an opening to the radical otherness upon which Bhabha (and even more so Fanon) would surely insist. A space for radical otherness accords more readily with the Frankfurt critique of domination, to which Foucault's analysis (esp., 1980) is an oblique (and inadequate) response.

11. On the concept of "fact" intended here, see Arendt (1968).

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