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Abstract

Review of Luis I. Prádanos. *Postgrowth Imaginaries: New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain*. Liverpool UP, 2018. 246 pp.

Keywords

postgrowth, ecocriticism, environmental humanities, Spain

Luis I. Prádanos. *Postgrowth Imaginaries: New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain*. Liverpool UP, 2018. 246 pp.

The environmental humanities are experiencing an important and rapid growth. As ecological concerns increasingly require urgent responses from a global citizenry, as well as from our insufficiently regulated industries and international policymakers, it has become evident that literary and cultural studies can and must play an explicit role in imagining alternatives to the climate-changing, soil-eroding, air- and water-polluting, and extinction-inducing human behaviors that have spurred the present-day crisis. Luis I. Prádanos's *Postgrowth Imaginaries: New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain* is an unapologetically radical book that any ecocritically inquisitive scholar—within or without Hispanism—should consider as required reading if seeking an analytical and conceptual framework with which to study texts for their representation of the causes, realities, and solutions to the planet's current ecological devastation.

Prádanos convincingly theorizes that our current ecological crisis is due to a global acceptance and ubiquitous perpetuation of the growth paradigm, whose only purpose is the continued accumulation of capital and not the well-being of the vast majority of human or non-human entities. The only way to address the crisis, he argues, is to acknowledge that the growth paradigm has become apoliticized, dehistoricized, and normalized, and to make visible its capitalist, neoliberal, and neocolonial root causes, rather than to merely treat the symptoms. Following French philosopher Jacques Rancière's concept of collective repoliticization, Prádanos postulates that we must "persistently disrupt and disturb the dominant imaginary with postgrowth stories, narratives, and practices that redefine what can be said and seen" (238). Extrapolating from Rancière's affirmation that "the real must be fictionalized in order to be thought" (38), Prádanos contends with assertive prowess that it is imperative to imagine new ecologies if we want to transition toward them.

In terms of scope, *Postgrowth Imaginaries* addresses problems and relies on ideas beyond disciplinary Hispanism, drawing on structural Marxism, postcolonial ecology, feminist ecocriticism (Alicia Puleo) and economics (Amaia Pérez Orozco), new materialisms and transcorporeality (Stacy Alaimo), vital materialism (Jane Bennett), and Rob Nixon's slow violence. While primary literary or filmic texts selected for analysis are Iberian insofar as their authors or directors are Spanish, in many cases, the examples cited by Prádanos are neither written nor produced in an Iberian language, nor set in the Iberian Peninsula or its isles. However, non-textual examples of the counterhegemonic cooperatives, movements, and mobilizing resources that are contributing to the development of postgrowth imaginaries are predominantly Spanish and speak to the futility of

addressing the aftermath of Spain's 2008 so-called economic crisis without considering its enmeshment with local and global ecological dynamics.

Readers approaching the book from within Hispanic cultural studies may find that the concentration on theoretical and socioecological examples outweighs close readings of specific literary or filmic texts. The book's greatest strength lies in its function as a manifesto calling for a radical change in focus by cultural studies critics. As Prádanos argues, we must participate in calling the bluff of both right-wing ecodestruction deniers, promoters, and manipulators (for self-gain) and also that of progressive green-washing techno-optimists who do not address the source of the problem, ultimately continuing to feed the machine that nourishes the privileged while starving the underprivileged and the Earth. *Postgrowth Imaginaries* exemplifies how to go about this by bringing forth analyses of Iberian texts that either successfully critique the growth paradigm or, more importantly, offer postgrowth alternatives.

Structurally, the book's theoretically dense introduction and first chapter establish the framework for the close readings that flow logically and convincingly in the remaining three chapters. The corpus of works considered by Prádanos includes comics, songs, documentaries, films, advertisements, TV series, art installations, three novels (by Rosa Montero, Lara Moreno, and Julio Llamazares), a testimonial narrative, and collective/open-access tool-books. Through reference to these cultural manifestations, Prádanos evinces the role that the environmental humanities can play in radically and collectively replacing the growth paradigm through political and cultural action.

Through its excoriation of growth capitalism, *Postgrowth Imaginaries* explicitly promotes an ideology of ecological justice, conviviality, collective political participation, and voluntary limitation. The book naturalizes new vocabulary for examining and imagining alternatives to the growth paradigm, including ecocritical terms such as naturecultural, nowtopia, social metabolism, metabolic rift, techno-optimism, green-washing, petro-food, agro-industry, and ethics of care. In this way, Prádanos provides cultural critics with analytical frameworks with which to evaluate texts from any region or in any language in terms of how they reinforce or subvert the growth paradigm. Through a reading of this book, the burgeoning ecocritic will feel equipped to ask whether cultural studies manifestations sustain or promote the status quo or, alternatively, whether they offer postgrowth, postcolonial-ecocritical, and/or posthumanist alternatives.

In part or in whole, *Postgrowth Imaginaries* is a book that should be incorporated into the syllabi of advanced undergraduate as well as graduate courses in the humanities that aim to advance the study of counterhegemonic projects that inspire ecosocial responses to today's planetary devastation. Likewise, readers in the general public will find Prádanos's text empowering as they seek viable avenues to address the current ecocrisis. As the book's conclusion points out, postgrowth

will happen regardless because the Earth's resources are limited. The question is, will collective cultural and political action frame a transition in which postgrowth will more justly benefit humans and non-humans by espousing social metabolisms that truly contribute to well-being, or, alternatively, will business continue as usual, leading to eco-totalitarianism? Despite the Earth's dire situation, the book's tone is hopeful in its proposal to foster and study new epistemologies that envision an ecojust postgrowth period.

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