Book Review of *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British-Atlantic World, 1770-1850*. Kevin Hutchings. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.

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If it is true that interest in the English Romantics has grown since the rise of ecocriticism as a scholarly endeavor, it is also the case that postcolonial critics have situated the Romantic discourse and poetics in the context of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. In a study of Romantics of the British transatlantic world, inclusive of the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, Kevin Hutchings employs Edward Said's contrapuntal, materialist analytical lens "to open a dialogue between (post) colonial and ecocritical approaches to Romantic scholarship," which sheds light on both aspects of a "culture of mastery."¹ In *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British-Atlantic World, 1770-1850*, Hutchings, professor of English and Canada Research Chair in Romantic Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia, builds on, and extends the 1999 work of Alan Bewell's *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*, and Beth Fowkes Tobin's 2005 publication, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820*, by making explicit "the role of that African slaves and Native Americans played in the great economic and industrial scheme of empire."² Perhaps, the incorporation of chapters that place Eurocentric Romantic writings into dialogue with their contemporary African (Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho, Mary Prince, and Ottobah Cugoana) and Native American (William Apess, John Brant, and George Copway) writers is Hutchings's singular extension of the field of Romantic Studies.

In seven ambitious, but accessible chapters, Hutchings refuses to hide "behind the veil of a depoliticized ecocriticism," arguing against efforts to sever "human politics and ideology from the study of nature," and stated oppositions between ecopoetics and ecopolitics, as articulated by Jonathan Bate and other scholars of Romantic ecopoetics.³ Accordingly, in the first chapter, "Naturalizing Colonial Relations in the British Atlantic World: Slavery as Fact and Figure," and chapter two, "Race and Animality in the British Atlantic World," Hutchings establishes relationships among stadial theories of societal and cultural development, theories of environmental determinism, ideologies of improvement, and discourses of animality.

Frequently, close readings of poetry, prose, and plays suffer in the rush to embrace or develop new theoretical turns in literary studies. Scholars, graduate students, and upper-level undergraduate students of ecocriticism, postcolonial studies, romanticism, as well as poetry studies will delight in Hutchings's superb close readings of Blake's 1793 poem, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Coleridge's 1794 allegorical poem, "To a Young Ass, Its Mother Being Tethered Near It," and Thomas Campbell's 1809 poem, *Gertrude of Wyoming*, in chapters three, four, and six, respectively. Although Hutchings pays less attention to the formal properties of William Richardson's play, *The Indians, A Tragedy*, in chapter five, his reading of environmental determinism as an ideology central to English and Scottish Romantic depictions of Native Americans forms the core of his reading of

Campbell's poetics, and of Sir Francis Bond Head's literary romanticism in chapter seven. Canadianists will find illuminating Hutchings's reading of Head's romanticism in relation to his colonial politics of segregation and removal as Upper Canada's lieutenant governor. But *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British-Atlantic World* would not be the groundbreaking study it is without Hutchings's attention to the complexity of Ojibwa writer George Copway's inconsistent strategy of counter-discourse to those doctrines of segregation and removal. With *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures*, Hutchings gestures towards questions about the politics of patronage and publication, particularly with respect to the writings of Native American and African writers of literary romanticism.

Notes

¹ Kevin Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British-Atlantic World, 1770-1850* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009): 14.

² Ibid., 17.

³ Ibid., 185, 17.

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