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## Book Review: Race, nature, and the politics of difference

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in the scientific legacy. Whether intentional or not, such narratives often resonate with popular conceptions of the scientist-as-recluse or with the drama associated with novel experimentation and high-profile public debate. Geography has not been anywhere near as prominent in critical explorations of science. As David Livingstone illustrates in his wonderfully written *Putting science in its place*, geography challenges scientific culture by concentrating on the particularities of what turns out to be a highly localized and regionally distinctive social practice. Livingstone deftly uses three simple spatial concepts – site, region and circulation – to deconstruct science’s claims to universality and thereby reveal an intriguing set of relationships that begin to characterize the social geography of scientific endeavor.

Livingstone’s account is ambitious in scope, ranging from the spatial politics of laboratory investigation and medical examination to the ways museums and gardens interacted with popular perceptions of far-flung regions and peoples. By design, he rejects a chronological ordering of events and opts instead to juxtapose temporally disparate episodes in an effort to discover science’s site-specific and regional qualities. The relative lack of historical analysis, however, ends up concealing what might be some insightful connections between science and society. This deficiency is perhaps most evident in the third chapter, which concerns the regional cultures of science. Livingstone demonstrates how the political-economic pressures of various regional contexts (for instance, Victorian Manchester) shaped the type of science that was accepted and supported there (utilitarianism, in this case). Yet, beyond the point of identifying a basic interaction between regional culture and scientific practice, broader socioeconomic connections and trends remain undeveloped and unexplored. It would be fascinating, for instance, to undertake a systematic investigation of the relationships between science’s spatiality and the political economies and cultural formations evolving in different parts of Europe. Such an analysis is most certainly beyond the scope of Livingstone’s current book, which serves as a highly accessible and introductory typology of science’s social geography. But the point remains that space and time have factored equally in the production of science as an intellectual division of labour, and that both have been manipulated and erased to create the unfortunate illusion of a placeless social project.

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SOREN C. LARSEN

**Race, nature, and the politics of difference.** Edited by Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek and Anand Pandian. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2003. 475 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 0 82233 076 2.

The essays collected here explore the connections between blood, genes, selves, community, soil and geography. The underlying themes of race and nature – as they are socially produced and experiential – structure the text and advance innovative ways of reconceptualizing, and respatializing, uneven socio-spatial patterns. That is, race, nature and difference in the text are simultaneously evident in the built and natural

environment and within and among skin–blood histories; together, race, nature and difference chart locations of decay and possibility on and beyond the racial body. Environmental pollution, land claim struggles, skulls, disease/health, nationalism, intimacy, tourism, genetics and violences demonstrate the consequences of skin–blood essentialisms and the limitations of their attendant geographies which include nationalist projects, outer-national ‘crusades’ for Western democracy, territorialization, border security, racial-sexual segregations. For example: ideologies of blood – nation-community-purity naturalize social and spatial hierarchies, thus reinforcing expendable geographies and subjects; the scale of the racial body is inscribed with natural blood-histories – risky bodies ‘carry’ risky genes; biotechnologies simultaneously – destabilize and stabilize nature-places and racialization.

While the political and theoretical positions of the essays vary, it is the twofold *spatialization* of new humanism and racial genealogies (alternative conceptualizations and historicizations of humanness) that demonstrate the ways in which nature, and the natural, are infused with all sorts of geographical politics. This is the uniqueness of the text: it does not simply replicate or describe analyses of race and place, anti-racism or racial injustice; rather it seeks to undo blood-essentialisms by exploring the seeming naturalness, or transparency, of geography and its inhabitants. What I mean by this is that the authors take seriously the role played by nature in determining spatial allegiances, desires and rifts, and the ways in which ideological ‘naturalisms’ are invoked in situated contexts. By refusing to complement one side of racial essence debates (as resistant or emancipatory), each essay imagines the possibilities advanced by ongoing struggles which are never resolved: what kind of politics, articulations and geographies, then, are forged *through* social struggle?

The arguments do not only seek to ‘denature’ race and nature and their commonsensical truths. They also hinge on recognizing how essences are lived and constructed through alterity and the work and the workings of subaltern political subjects. It is the work and workings of political subjects – taken up differently in each chapter and ranging from environmental activism to dog breeding and native geographies, spanning the USA, Guatemala, South Africa, Germany, Indonesia – that create innovative theoretical and everyday sites of opposition. The text offers not simply maps of difference, but locations where difference, and struggle are wrought with the demands of natural, commonsensical, sometimes violent truths.

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**South Asian women in the diaspora.** Edited by Nirmal Puwar and Parvati Raghuram. Oxford: Berg. 2003. 252pp. £15.99 paper. ISBN: 1 85973 602 5.

In the last decade, there has been an expansion of research and publications in the US and UK on South Asian women in the diaspora, within the contexts of identity, visual culture, transnationalism, material culture and literature. This edited collection is a rich and extensive set of interventions into the disabling paradigms within which South