

tions for centuries. Although *Policing Black Lives* traces the realities of anti-Blackness in Canada, Maynard asserts that Black and Indigenous oppression are historically and currently connected and, where relevant, she draws parallels and distinctions between the forms of state violence that target these communities. We can look forward to Maynard's insights on the entangled legacy of Black and Indigenous histories and struggles in her 2022 publication, with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, titled *Rehearsals for Living*.

One of the many strengths of *Policing Black Lives* is its ability to demonstrate how the matrix of domination is structured on several levels. The chapter, "Law Enforcement Violence Against Black Women: Naming their Names, Telling their Stories," shares the individual stories of Black women who experienced abuse at the hands of law enforcement officials in recent years. Maynard retells the story of a 26-year-old Black transgender woman, Chevranna Abdi, who died in police custody in 2003. The media coverage of Abdi's highly suspicious death, while in the custody of Hamilton police, was framed by her HIV status, race, and gender identity. Specifically, news outlets referred to Abdi as an "HIV-positive transsexual"

and "either a prostitute or a drug dealer," and her death as a "drug-fueled melee." Through Abdi's story, Maynard demonstrates how "Black transgender women often live at the intersection of both the societal demonization of Black women and a societal hostility toward transgender persons." Here, she illustrates how the interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression are part of an overarching structure of domination within Canada. As Patricia Hill Collins reminds us, this structure penetrates many layers: personal biography; group or community context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions.

Likely owing to her experiences doing outreach, advocacy, and organizing within marginalized and criminalized communities, Maynard's bibliography brings together traditional academic monographs alongside reports from community organizations and social movements on the ground. Histories of resistance are threaded throughout the volume and are the focus of her final chapter, titled "From Woke to Free: Imagining Black Futures." Maynard explains that although stories of Black refusal, subversion, creativity, and resistance are not the focus of *Policing Black Lives*, she hopes that in recognizing the

structural conditions of Black suffering we will be better placed to challenge them.

By demonstrating in painstaking detail the ways the state—federal and provincial governments; government-funded programs such as schools, and social and child services; and the enforcement wings of state institutions—acts to defend and maintain inequitable social, racial, and economic divisions, *Policing Black Lives* is a significant contribution and important entry point for those interested in racial formation in Canada. Maynard's prose is accessible and her book provides vivid, unsettling historical context for nearly four hundred years of anti-Black racist practices.

RACHEL LOBO is a Ph.D. candidate in York University's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change. Her research examines how archival spaces can effectively serve communities and create historical agency. Specifically, she is interested in how photographic archives can sustain histories of political struggle and foster the exchange of intergenerational knowledge. In September 2022, Rachel will begin a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto.

The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World

By ANDREA WULF. *Alfred A. Knopf-Penguin Random House, 2015. \$35.00 USD*

REVIEWED BY SCOTT LILICO

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World takes the reader on a historical journey through the life of Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), an ecologist quite famous in his time and an influence on modern understandings of ecology and science. The author, Andrea Wulf—a historian in London—illustrates pockets of history, bringing meaning to Humboldt's experiences. *The Invention of Nature* fo-

cuses not only on Humboldt's life story, but also on well-known figures in history who he interacted with, including the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Charles Darwin, Queen Victoria, Napoleon Bonaparte, and other leaders, politicians, scientists, and explorers of Humboldt's age.

While Humboldt struggled through a politically contentious time amongst the European powers, we presently live

in an environmentally contentious time where anthropogenic climate change affects our ecological and political systems, and threatens society with uncertain futures. Between Canada's lack of proportional representation in government, the wake of the former reality television star United States President, and Britain exiting the European Union, democracy is being challenged and environments seem like a low priority.

When he was young, Humboldt displayed a strong wanderlust for adventure, studying Captain James Cook's expeditions. In London, after attending the University of Göttingen, Humboldt met Joseph Banks, the botanist who accompanied James Cook on his first journey around the world. Humboldt's mother insisted that he study to become a government official, an idea he detested, yet he abided by her wishes initially.

He eventually pursued his own scientific agenda through a several-year expedition across parts of South and Central America, the Caribbean, and continuing north to today's Mexico. One of his observations on this voyage was how human activity prompted environmental change in Lake Valencia, Venezuela. On the way home, Humboldt's group survived sailing through a hurricane and then stopped to discuss some of his findings with President Thomas Jefferson in the United States, who was interested in science and particularly enthusiastic about agriculture. By the time Humboldt returned to Europe, he had collected close to 60,000 plant specimens; about 2,000 of these species were new to botanists in Europe—a very significant number of specimens and new species for the time.

One of the issues that *The Invention of Nature* raises is how modern environmental exploitation still goes unchecked, when environmental impacts linked to colonialism were already being criticized in Humboldt's time. Do today's sustainable standards like Rainforest Alliance, Fair Trade, and Certified Organic meet the needs of both the Western world and the Global South, or is modern environmentalism repeating and reorganizing concerns that were criticized ages ago?

One of Humboldt's popular works, *Essay on the Geography of Plants* (1807), helped to describe the ecology of plants and their connected regions. In Wulf's words, "Humboldt now presented relationships between plants, climate and geography. Plants were grouped into zones and regions rather than taxonomic units," which was uncommon for the time. Another of Humboldt's works, *On the Isothermal Lines and the Distribution of Heat on the Earth* (1817), became a popular study of climate patterns.

Charles Darwin was strongly influenced by Humboldt during his time at the University of Cambridge. Young Darwin copied out passages of Humboldt's books and recited them during university botanical excursions. Fueled by Humboldt, Darwin's enthusiasm eventually resulted in his own voyages overseas.

The Invention of Nature is well-organized by breaking up Humboldt's life into different sections; illustrations, maps, architectural and design drawings, and pictures convey a detailed visual image of the times. Parts of the book read more slowly than others, perhaps because of the volume of historical information.

Towards the end of the book, Wulf emphasizes Humboldt's impact and sets a nice tone for his contributions, writ-

ing, "[i]n a world today where we tend to draw a sharp line between the sciences and the arts, between the subjective and the objective, Humboldt's insight that we can only truly understand nature by using our imagination makes him a visionary." For more information on the research and discoveries of Alexander von Humboldt, start with his publications: *Essay on the Geography of Plants*, *On the Isothermal Lines and the Distribution of Heat on the Earth*, and *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*. *The Invention of Nature* is inspired not only from Humboldt's adventures and discoveries, but also from the many people connected to him. Environmentalists, scientists, explorers, and academics can all benefit from this window into history and memories.

SCOTT LILLICO is a graduate of York University's Bachelor of Environmental Studies program. He is a photographer and explorer of nature and environments of all kinds. His research interests include ocean studies, organic agriculture, biodiversity, and animal geography.