



HOME PLACE

Stan Rowe. *Home Place: Essays on Ecology*. Revised Edition. Edmonton: Newest Press, 2002, 245 pp.

Reviewed by Megan Salhus



RESIST!

Jen Chang et al. *Resist!: A Grassroots Collection of Stories, Poetry, Photos and Analyses from the Quebec City FTAA Protests and Beyond*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001, 192 pp.

Reviewed by Susannah Bunce

What on Earth are we doing? And who are we on Earth? These are the types of questions that Stan Rowe engages with in his book *Home Place: Essays on Ecology* (2002). He takes us on a journey from the Prairies of western Canada, through to the dry grasslands of China in the early to mid 1980s. On the way, through a combination of humour and deadly seriousness, Rowe imparts to the reader a sense of urgency and also of deep misgiving about the state of the West today, in Canada and elsewhere.

Rowe offers anecdotal evidence from his childhood to frame questions of humanity's maturity in relation to the non-human world, or 'Home Place'. Rowe urges us to rethink our relation with the Home Place, and like Aldo Leopold in the timeless *Sand County Almanac*, realise that we are one among many, all co-existing in the fragile Ecosphere surrounding the Earth.

Rowe considers the role which universities play in Western conceptions of the Earth, and pinpoints how an 'objective', 'scientific' use-value approach to the Earth, which largely excludes the possibility of attributing intrinsic value to non-'useful' aspects of the Ecosphere, has been fostered by the very institutions that should be providing the vanguard of progressive thinking. Similarly, he indicts political systems which privilege trade and economic growth over care for the Earth and its inhabitants, human and otherwise. Part of the insanity of the system, Rowe notes, is the devaluation of rural existence in favour of cities and the economic preoccupations of city inhabitants. Through elevating economic productivity and international trade at the expense of intra-national sustainability, Rowe argues that we pre-empt the possibility of reforming our relations to the Earth in a fashion more in keeping with our actual (as opposed to perceived) planetary stature.

Somewhat problematically, Rowe adopts the language of a Mother Earth, nurturing and caring for her offspring, of which we humans are of no greater import than any others. Rowe briefly explores the Enlightenment legacy of brutality towards the Earth and its attendant disenchantment; however, he does not examine sufficiently how the language of a female Earth has framed and disadvantaged actual human women. Nor does he deal adequately with the consequences of this framing and how arguably, it has fostered the type of uncaring attitude towards the Earth and its various inhabitants which is prevalent today.

This notwithstanding, Rowe offers a compelling read. Providing specific details of the wonders of the Ecosphere, Rowe eloquently argues for human commitment to the intrinsic value of the non-human systems which surround us. He examines various utilitarian arguments for more 'pragmatic' approaches to the Earth, and concludes that only a species completely convinced of its own innate superiority and invincibility would ever condone the unsustainable uses to which we have historically put a fragile, inter- and co-dependent Earth, on which we depend for food, water and life itself. In this light, the question of "Who are we on Earth?" offers the opportunity to radically rethink our actions and our attitudes towards the Home Place, and ideally, realign ourselves with principles which foster a healthy Ecosphere.

Resist!: A Grassroots Collection of Stories, Poetry, Photos and Analyses from the Quebec City FTAA Protests and Beyond (2001) is an amalgam of narratives, poems, maps, facts, sketches and photos from April 2001's FTAA protests in Quebec City. It does not set out to be anything more than a collection of narratives and art work from protestors, and thus, apart from some smaller parts that lay out facts on the FTAA and neo-liberalisation/globalisation, there is a paucity of theoretical interpretation. This is the most refreshing part of the book yet, paradoxically, also the most frustrating. Where the book does well is in the outpouring of grief, anger, frustration, and shock - the myriad of emotions that being tear-gassed, chased, arrested and terrorized arouses in people. *Resist!* reads like a collection of journal entries, complete with serious introspection, wily analysis, self-doubt and projected anger. Despite their depth of emotion and descriptive analysis, these entries become both exhausting and repetitive after a while.

Resist! is organized into five thematic sections. The first is a collection of political statements from activist organizations. A particularly interesting entry is from the book's editorial collective critiquing the privatisation of water and endorsing the Bolivian Cochabamba declaration, an attempt to stop the multinational Bechtel Enterprises from buying Bolivia's water system. While a more general overarching piece on globalization and the role of the FTAA would have been a more strategic introduction to the book, this piece is one of the few that discusses the connection between economic globalization and the local realm.

The second and third sections include thoughtful, emotional testimonials and general senses of on-the-street movement through Quebec City. Jennifer Bennett's entry, 'Anishinaabe Girl in Quebec,' describes the isolation that she felt being one of a few non-white student protestors juxtaposed with the collective experience of being tear-gassed. Several entries highlight the dubious role of the local police and federal authorities in the handling of protestors, and their overall view towards the protests. A few of the selections hit harder at the institutional corruption which was clearly observable. In '(Un)Reasonable Search and Seizure in Quebec City: Lessons from an Emerging Filmmaker,' Malcolm Rogge exposes the smugness of police entitlement that was evident when the RCMP stopped him for mistakenly taking a wrong turn in his car.

Attention is given in the fourth section to the role of the media in their interpretation of the protests, specifically of the mainstream media in representing the protestors as 'extremists'. This is an important debate for understanding how images of protest can be used to criminalize dissent. The final section focuses more on self-reflexive analysis, which will be important to readers of this journal interested in the issues of activist hierarchy, racialization and gender inequality within the anti-globalisation movement itself.

Overall, *Resist!* is a thoughtful amalgamation of work on the FTAA Protest and an important journal by which to remember the event. However, a stronger theoretical focus with an overarching analysis of economic globalisation would have augmented the pragmatic details and provided a stronger sense of the larger political context.