

LUIS I. PRÁDANOS. *Postgrowth Imaginaries: New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. x + 246 pp.

Over the last two decades, the Environmental Humanities have opened a space for scholars from many disciplines to contribute to urgent debates on anthropogenic climate change and the social and ecological crises that accompany it. The best examples of this kind of scholarship not only create dialogue between the sciences and humanities; they also put tools of humanistic disciplines, like literary studies, to work reframing the way we understand discourses on how environment and culture interact with each other. This is precisely what Luis I. Prádanos's book *Postgrowth Imaginaries: New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain* does by questioning the logic of economic growth as a baseline for progress and centering cultural products that imagine social and economic formations that benefit humans and nonhumans alike.

From the outset, Prádanos establishes several key concepts that undergird his critique of growth as a valid economic paradigm, with the introduction and first chapter serving to develop the theoretical framework in great detail. In the introduction, for example, he grounds his deployment of the term "imaginary" in the thought of philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, for whom social realities arise from pervasive, largely unquestioned ideas about social and material relationships that lead to dominant imaginaries that are fundamentally reductive and ignore other possibilities for constructing the social. For Prádanos, the dominant social imaginary of our time is growth. In other words, constant economic growth and development are assumed to be the non-negotiable foundation of progress and, subsequently, human happiness. The problem, however, is that unlimited growth is a biophysical impossibility, but the general commitment to a growth paradigm across the globe has intensified the exploitation of natural resources and rates of pollution that contribute to ecological crises that are no longer on the horizon, but rather constitute our present. Moreover, the fact that the growth paradigm remains unchallenged (at least in mainstream media outlets and cultural discourses) has led to a reduction in the field of possible political options, the most progressive of which seems to be one of green growth, a depoliticized version of environmentalism that not only fails to challenge the growth paradigm, but actually depends on its continued dominance.

Despite this bleak picture, Prádanos argues that, in the wake of crises like the one that rocked Spain beginning in 2008, a new social imaginary is emerging, one that uncouples the notion of progress from growth and rearticulates it in terms of the health and happiness of the biotic community

in which humans are enmeshed. In order to track this emerging postgrowth imaginary, Prádanos dedicates the first chapter to a clear, detailed explanation of ecological economics and the degrowth movement, two intellectual spaces from which new approaches to thinking through the crises of neoliberalism are being articulated. What comes to the fore is a stance that understands the economy as a subsystem of the biosphere and recognizes human frailty and interdependence not as weaknesses to be overcome, but rather qualities to be embraced as the starting point for rethinking economic and social structures. In this chapter, Prádanos emphasizes the Iberian and Mediterranean provenance of many of these ideas, and he convincingly links them to broader theoretical developments within ecocriticism, posthumanism, and decolonial thought.

Chapter two argues for the need to incorporate an ecocritical perspective into the field of Spanish urban cultural studies. Prádanos provides a useful summary of major contributions by scholars like Malcolm Compitello, Benjamin Fraser, Susan Larson, and Joan Ramon Resina (all of whom figure prominently as interlocutors in this chapter and others) before making the case that, due to the monumental environmental impact of urbanization in Spain, an emancipatory urban cultural studies must unavoidably open itself up to the environmental humanities. He underscores the urgency of this stance by explaining the notion of urban metabolism (the flow of materials and energies within cities) in the context of what Karl Marx called the “metabolic rift,” an imbalance of nutrients between zones of agricultural production and consumption. The present is dominated by an unsustainable linear urban metabolism, but Prádanos identifies a number of cultural texts that critique the contemporary state of affairs, as well as some that imagine new ways of configuring urban spaces that would be more sustainable and life-giving.

Prádanos’s analysis remains focused on the city in chapter three, where he addresses the problem of waste and the question of what a politically effective and ethical representation of waste might look like. By attending to both the capacity of waste to exert effects above and beyond human intentions and the tendency of the growth economy to discard and ignore both material and humans that could be considered waste, Prádanos develops a rhetorical strategy that he calls a “political ecology of waste” that foregrounds discards and frames them as visible, thinkable, and political. He couples the analysis of a number of cultural manifestations related to waste with a consideration of the environmental and biopolitical implications of the way that migrants and refugees are discursively framed as waste.

The book’s final chapter considers the pedagogical and political utility of disaster narratives by analyzing two popular examples: the Globomedia television show *El barco* and Juan Antonio Bayona’s film *The Impossible*,

which depicts the events of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Prádanos's critique brings to the fore the problematic racial and gender politics of these audiovisual texts, as well as their tendency to focus on individual struggles and triumphs while ignoring more systemic questions. More to the point, however, he effectively lays bare their pedagogical uselessness by showing the grave shortcomings in dominant modes of representing ecological catastrophe: they either completely ignore questions of socioecological import or they use them as mere window dressing.

*Postgrowth Imaginaries* manages the difficult feat of providing coherent, rigorous syntheses of theoretical arguments that come from political and economic philosophy, radical geography, and urban studies on the one hand, and lucid, engaging analyses of cultural texts on the other. While I have focused more on the theoretical arc that Prádanos traces, I should make it clear that the examples of postgrowth imaginaries he tracks in recent Spanish cultural production are ambitious (he analyzes novels, essays, feature films, documentaries, television programs, graphic novels, songs, web pages, manifestos, and more), and his readings, especially of visual media, are often brilliant. Furthermore, Prádanos deftly positions his book within both Peninsular cultural studies and the broader field of Environmental Humanities. In this sense, *Postgrowth Imaginaries* is essential reading for students and scholars of contemporary Spain as well as those who want to think through broader questions related to how we can imagine a more socially and ecologically just future.

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INMA RIDAO CARLINI. *Rich and Poor in Nineteenth-Century Spain. A Critique of Liberal Society in the Later Novels of Benito Pérez Galdós*. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2018. 214 pp.

In *Rich and Poor in Nineteenth-Century Spain*, Inma Ridao Carlini revisits seven of Benito Pérez Galdós's lesser-studied *novelas contemporáneas* to highlight the realist giant's ambivalent and often critical attitude toward liberal economic structures that emerged in Spain in the second half of the nineteenth century. As her title suggests, Ridao's study foregrounds the textual treatment of wealth, capital, credit, poverty, and charity in *Lo prohibido* (1884-85), the *Torquemada* tetralogy (1889-95), *Ángel Guerra* (1889-95) and *Misericordia* (1897). The author is particularly interested in uncovering "Galdós's historical approach to his portrayal of Restoration society" and convincingly demonstrates her thesis that Galdós viewed the