

---

de hoy. La violencia aquí contra las mujeres es tanto física como psicológica y social. La autora acude a conceptos teóricos de Michele Mattelart en *La cultura de opresión femenina* y de Teresa de Lauretis en *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* para apoyar sus observaciones sobre esta cinta. En dos apartados la autora se enfoca en la violencia contra mujeres en la frontera y contra las mujeres indígenas.

El sexto y último capítulo de este libro trata el tema del narcotráfico, el tipo de violencia más conocida en el México actual. Titulado “*El infierno: De la narcoviencia en México*”, la autora analiza dicha película del año 2010 dirigida por Luis Estrada. En *El infierno* Benny, el protagonista, es deportado de los Estados Unidos a México donde se involucra en el narcotráfico. A pesar de su rápida ascensión en este mundo mafioso y los beneficios tentadores de la riqueza – casas, coches, mujeres, etc. – Benny también se peca del lado oscuro y violento de este negocio. La autora nota la ironía de que aunque esta cinta fue financiada en parte por el gobierno federal y se estrenó durante el año del bicentenario mexicano, es una crítica del mismo sistema político corrupto. Por una parte, la autora asevera que es una sátira del México de hoy en que reina la corrupción en todos los niveles de la sociedad, pero por otra parte las muchas escenas cruentas de violencia constante no son motivos de risa, ni siquiera del humor negro, pues se ha vuelto en “lo normal” en México del siglo XXI. Según la autora también hay que relacionar la narco-violencia con las políticas económicas del neoliberalismo y la globalización que han servido sólo para ensanchar la brecha entre los pobres y los ricos en México. También, cabe notar, según la autora, la simbología religiosa en esta película, como los íconos, los espacios, y los nombres bíblicos.

En todo momento en este estudio se vale de un lenguaje claro y directo para explicar conceptos y observaciones innovadoras. Al mismo tiempo la documentación detallada de toda la información sobre la historia, la cultura mexicana, conceptos teóricos, etc. fundamenta este estudio sin dejar lugar a dudas sobre las conclusiones de la autora. Así, con este libro llamativo la profesora Guadalupe Pérez-Anzaldo ha hecho un aporte substancial al campo de los estudios sobre el cine mexicano contemporáneo.

---

Cecile Pineda. *Apology to a Whale: Words to Mend a World*. San Antonio: Wings, 2015. 207 p.

LOUISE E. STOEHR

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

Cecile Pineda's most recent work of non-fiction, *Apology to a Whale: Words to Mend a World*, opens with the sounds of two destructive forces let loose on the Earth by humans. First are the cracking sounds of gunshots fired in one senseless military battle after another that then give way to the deep rumble of ice crashing into the Arctic sea as glaciers melt and calve, each time raising sea level just that much more, each time destroying a bit more of the ice sheet that helps maintain the equilibrium in the Earth's climate. How, Pineda ponders, does one member of our species apologize to another species, to all others, for the ongoing violence that has been directed toward them? How does a human being explain the wonton destruction, by our own species, of our only home to the other inhabitants who share the same home? What is it about human beings that give us a sense of entitlement to treat the Earth and other crea-

---

tures with disrespect as we have done for a long time? She seeks to understand the origins of what has become the dominant human culture on the planet that has lead Earth and all her inhabitants to the brink of destruction—earlier in our human history by means of warfare and genocide, more recently with nuclear power and the uncontrolled pollution of air, water, and soil. She attempts to understand the mindset that supports capitalist-driven growth at all costs, with flagrant disregard to non-monetary considerations—destruction of habitat, destabilization of the fragile balances in nature that work in symbiosis with each other to maintain a secure, livable climate for the species currently inhabiting our planet.

*Dictionary.com* defines “apology” as: “1. a written or spoken expression of one’s regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another. 2. a defense, excuse, or justification in speech or writing, as for a cause or doctrine.” *Apology to a Whale* certainly conforms to the first definition; it is an expression of regret and sorrow on the part of one human being whose species has “insulted, failed, injured, [and] wronged another,” in this case, all other species on the planet as well as other members of the human race. The narrative in this volume does not, however, in any way constitute “a defense, excuse, or justification.”

The current volume is written in the personal, poetic style familiar to readers of Pineda’s first work of non-fiction, *Devil’s Tango: How I Learned the Fukushima Step by Step*, and it shows the same level of intellectual rigor and thorough research upon which Pineda’s arguments are founded. However, where *Devil’s Tango* was rooted in chronology, *Apology to a Whale* is organized according to topics. Pineda takes her readers on a journey of discovery through history and the social sciences that crosses disciplinary boundaries as it considers research from linguistics, anthropology and archaeology, biology, and history in search of answers to her guiding questions, in an attempt to understand how in such a short period of time human beings have created a system so unsustainable and out of sync with nature that we have set our own planet on a direct trajectory to catastrophic collapse of the climate we need to sustain human life on Earth.

The reader joins Pineda in her studies of whales, elephants, and wolves—specifically the social structures of their respective societies, their empathic abilities, and the structure of their respective languages. Indeed, Pineda gives the poignant example of how Lawrence Anthony applied the skills he had learned in communicating with elephants, what Pineda terms “very deep listening,” to negotiate with the Lords Resistance Army the release of two million people and, at the same time help, to save the white rhino from extinction. Here Pineda questions whether human ancestors may have had elephant- and whale-like communicative abilities, suggesting that humans may well need to learn again to use these abilities if we wish to work toward lasting peace on our planet, making the case that “these same unnamed capabilities can extend themselves into the world of nearly intractable human conflict work, if not towards total resolution, at least to partial remediation ... [and] without that first step, there is not peace, there is not possibility of peace” (61).

Pineda gives considerable consideration to the cultures of indigenous peoples and to ancient civilizations, particularly to Marija Gimbutas’s studies of the Goddess culture of Old Europe of about four to five thousand years ago. These explorations of matriarchal societies provide examples of pre-literate human settlements where humans lived in concert with nature, often learning from and, indeed, at times cooperating with other species. Part of her discussion on the development of Western society with its emphasis on individuality, power, and acquisition of capital, considers the two connected linguistic influences of literacy and

---

relativity. Pineda describes these influences as critical in the development of patriarchy and the resulting shift from apparent peaceful and agrarian existence to our modern Western society; the latter is itself defined in large part by wars for territory and power, taking no notice of the human cost, and completely disregarding other species beyond how they might serve Western society's needs. First, Pineda suggests that the development of literacy not only favors left-brain activity to the detriment of intuitive, right-brain thinking but also dictates that thoughts and narratives be structured in linear fashion to reflect the order of words in a text. Second, relying on research in anthropological linguistics and linguistic relativity, and citing examples from several languages, Pineda argues that the language one speaks influences one's worldview.

Literacy and specific features of Western languages derived from Proto-Indo-European, Pineda suggests, has lead Western society to value the individual over the collective, to hold wealth and power in high esteem, and at best ignore and at worst exploit natural surroundings in efforts to increase monetary wealth of the few. Furthermore, Pineda argues that these developments in Western society have created a human being who no longer feels connected to the Earth. Here she points out that "landscape imprints all people" (89) and for most people who live in cities and towns, who work in factories or sterile offices, our landscape is not that of our ancestors, who—we assume—lived in tune with nature, taking only what they needed, but who did not attempt to subjugate nature to their will.

Throughout the narrative, Pineda pulls no punches in comparing how Western man's historical mistreatment of indigenous peoples, genocide, and forced resettlement of entire populations with how Western countries today treat the poor and underrepresented within their own countries and across the globe, including mass deportations of undocumented immigrants from the United States. Furthermore, she likens today's corporate influence in the political arena and treaties, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, both of which erode the rights of the individual and deliver up power to the already-powerful, to territorial power grabs by Western governments with total disregard to human or environmental cost.

Ultimately, *Apology to a Whale* is Pineda's plea to those of us who care to wake up and get to work outside the system. There is ample evidence that the non-governmental organizations with which we have been working and that government policies and international climate conferences have brought attention to the Western lifestyle with its thirst for energy and resources but have not yielded the changes that will be required to mitigate future damage to Earth caused by impending climate change. In this, it is crucial to value Cecile Pineda's specific poetic vision that is absolutely in sync with the efforts of other activists who are working, as Wen Stephenson calls it, "on the frontlines of climate justice," and of those who in other publications, such as Moore and Nelson's *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*, are calling us all, as Pineda is, into action. In *Apology to a Whale*, Cecile Pineda has made it abundantly clear that, as the title of Wen Stephenson's new book formulates it, *What We Are Fighting for Now is Each Other*. The time to act is now.