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Marisa Solomon, *The Elsewhere Is Black: Ecological Violence & Improvised Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2025, 272 pages. ISBN: 9781478061304.

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Marisa Solomon's text, *The Elsewhere Is Black: Ecological Violence & Improvised Life*, contributes to global debates on ecology and how to theorize waste. Centered around two key themes, "blackness and survival," the book draws immensely on the author's life, which is treated as an ethnographical site of study. Marisa seems to ask a not-so-obvious question: if "blackness" has seemed to internalize its essence in a way that has been designed for it by racial capitalism, how is it able to survive, fully knowing that it exists at the periphery of racial marginality? It should be noted that for Solomon, blackness is a particular racial category, an essence, and not being.

The author locates the text in the ghetto, a place she considers as concealing rather than revealing (2). This allows her to draw a definite binary between the *ecological truisms of Black life* versus the *ecocide of white supremacy* (162). This binary is important as it gives life to her poignant key argument: in the United States, Blackness is essentially unecological, and black people are contaminated and are an existential threat to sanitized white life (3). The book's structure includes an introduction, four core chapters, and a conclusion. Its methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing on political economy, political studies, and cultural studies, and is anchored in feminist theory. Most critically, the book adopts *intersectionality* as a tool for analysis, an approach suitable for scholars or students who want to study race, gender, ghettos, waste, immigration, ecology, and queer studies.

The richness of this book is in the way Solomon conceptualizes blackness. For her, much as Blackness cannot just be a static category, it is also not being. Blackness is concealed in its shifting categorizations but revealed through the forms of its essence, which can be interchanged with the worst forms of existence. The racist modern state is in the middle of this formulation as it bears the power to determine what should be neglected and what should be avowed. At the same time, the nothingness of blackness allows it to be a critical starting point for racial capitalism to gain full life. Because blackness is dispossessed of its fundamental self and a space for being, it becomes "ungeographic" and can only be traced if it is outside of the environment.

The environment is what the white constitute and create for themselves, and outside the environment is waste, which is blackness. Marisa attributes her approach to blackness to the violence of white ownership of property constructed in colonial times through an ideological, epistemic, and ontological orientation of the settler colonial capitalist system. In the United States, this system categorizes and uses the black body as a tool to expropriate unceded native land, yet at the same time constructs it as a human and environmental hazard. Ultimately, blackness is a fiction, a contradiction that can barely be overcome. Since the black ecological struggle is itself a struggle with the terms of being, she argues, it is considered as nothingness (163).

When Solomon reflects on how blackness survives, she suggests that “sometimes” such survival only exists in the power of the ethnographer who creates stories of survival to create an impression of the survival of the black person; yet, in most cases, blackness never survives; it is condemned to waste and must be discarded (164). Here, I briefly intervene by asking a key question. Should the debate on blackness be framed in terms of essence or in terms of being? If blackness were to be treated as being, would it not offer us an entry point to diminish the epistemological and ideological orientation that divides black people from white people (these are the categories most prevalent in the text)? For example, Marx would argue that whiteness and the privileges it is accorded are also partly embroiled in class struggles. This means that, rather than approaching blackness or whiteness through race, it is best to approach it by questioning the very foundation of the modern state, which creates both white and black subjects. Such an approach would mean that blackness or whiteness is only a symptom of the larger problem.

Finally, if the ghetto, where Marisa begins her study, is a place of several identities that include queer identities, as she highlights, would it not be productive to not consider black people alone as victims of ecological displacement in a society still grappling with the lasting effects of capitalism? In its place, could this critique I foreground not contribute to disrupting the binary Marisa presents, where blackness is cast as surviving victimhood and whiteness as perpetrating black misery by arguing that we are neither victims nor perpetrators? But instead, whether white or black, we are all survivors of the modern state. Nevertheless, Marisa’s articulation of black experiences in her book remains a valuable contribution, and many scholars of race will find it relevant.

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