

Postcolonial-Ecocritical Veins in Drew Taylor's *The Berlin Blues*

سماح من نظرية النقد البيئي ونقد ما بعد الاستعمار في مسرحية

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Abstract

Drawing on the insights of postcolonial ecocriticism, this paper attempts an interdisciplinary reading of Drew Taylor's play, *The Berlin Blues* (2008), written by a playwright of native Canadian descent. The choice of this particular play arises from the fact that it contains a good number of the elements needed to display issues such as settlers' colonialism, return of neo-colonial interventionism in the contemporary age after the demise of the traditional colonialism, new invasive developmental projects with destructive effects on the environment. It displays interest in the environment as a whole ecosystem (including humans, non-human animals, rivers, land, etc.) in a manner that foregrounds interdependence and harmony. Despite the clear advocacy of political, social, and humanistic causes—defending the environment against impending ecological disaster, social justice, racial equality, among others—the play is still a well-formed work of art in its own right according to classical and modern literary theories. The play's advocacy verges on activism without detrimental effect to its intrinsic aesthetic value as a work of art.

Keywords: postcolonialism, ecocriticism, settler colonialism, ecology, drama, comedy, aesthetic value, activism.

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مستخلص:

تعتمد هذه الدراسة على ما توصلت إليها نظريتي النقد البيئي ونقد ما بعد الاستعمار من حقائق ضمن منظور الدراسات البيئية، من أجل قراءة نقدية لمسرحية "برلين بلوز" (شجن برلين) التي كتبها درو تايلور عام ٢٠٠٨، وهو كاتب مسرحي كندي تنتمي بعض أصوله العرقية إلى السكان الأصليين في كندا. ويأتي اختيار هذه المسرحية، لقراءتها قراءة نقدية، من حقيقة أنها تحتوي على عدد لا بأس به من العناصر اللازمة لتحليل قضايا مثل تأثير الاستعمار الاستيطاني، وعودة الاستعمار مجددا بصورة جديدة عن طريق مشاريع التنمية الجائرة، وذلك بعد إعلان وفاة الاستعمار التقليدي. وينتج عن بعض المشاريع التنموية، التي تقوم بها قوى غربية في البلدان التي كانت ضحية سابقة للاستعمار القديم، آثار بيئية مدمرة. كما تظهر المسرحية اهتماما بقضايا البيئة باعتبارها نظاما متكاملًا (يضم البشر والحيوانات والأشجار والأرض، إلخ) بطريقة تُعلي من شأن الاعتماد المتبادل بين هذه العناصر في كلٍ منها. وهي في نفس الوقت عمل فني (كوميديا) محكم البناء وفق النظريات الأدبية الكلاسيكية والحديثة. علاوة على هذا، تنطوي المسرحية على تبني قضايا مهمة في وقتنا الراهن مثل الدفاع عن البيئة ضد كارثة بيئية وشيكة، وعن العدالة الاجتماعية، والمساواة بين الأجناس البشرية، ضمن قضايا أخرى، أملا في زيادة الوعي بتلك القضايا. ويكاد تبني المسرحيتين لهذه القضايا أن يصبح نشاطا سياسيا فاعلا دون أن يأتي هذا بأثرٍ يضر بالقيمة الفنية الأصيلة للعمل الفني.

كلمات أساسية: نقد ما بعد الاستعمار، النقد البيئي، الاستعمار الاستيطاني، النظام البيئي، الدراما، الكوميديا، القيمة الفنية، نشاط تبني القضايا.

Introduction

Through the perspective of ecocriticism, the hilarious comedy, *The Berlin Blues* (2008), stands out as a consciousness raiser plea to confront capitalist development projects that ignore environment factors to the detriment of native locales. *The Berlin Blues* is written by Drew Hayden Taylor, a native Canadian playwright, author and journalist. Part Ojibway and part Caucasian, Taylor is a keen observant of contemporary Native life, writing about it from the aboriginal perspective. Through his humorous style, he uses theatre as a way of making the Native voice heard while the serious cause infiltrates consciousness without any preaching, slogans or direct activism.

The Berlin Blues deals with aboriginal land undergoing the devastating effects of a postcolonial project of flashy profit-driven development. The term “development” can be seen from two perspectives; that of the local ecological system and welfare of the natives, and that of the intruder driven by profit at the expense of all other considerations. In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, Huggan and Tiffin point out: “Development is generally recognised to be a strategically ambiguous term, adapted to the different needs of those who use it” (29).

Driven by exploitative economic concepts, the globalist investors simply ignore the environmental impact of their invasive methods and the particular needs of their location of interest. The intruders turn the old tribal land and the lake into a capitalistic space of touristic exploitation and consumption, ignoring the real welfare of the Natives and the environment. There emerges a new relation between globalist entrepreneurs and the environment of the natives, aptly described by Hernández and León as:

a predator-prey relationship arising from the negative influence of the development of physical infrastructure, and increasing tourism services [which] increase the potential of environmental degradation. Development should take into account the particular interrelationships between natural and physical capital, the production of tourist services and environmental degradation. (5)

Global capitalist and economic factors necessarily produce uneven development which has given rise for expansion and at the same time attempts to pacify the peoples of the colonies in order to create favourable conditions for international trade. The colonizers had presented their projects under the disguise of developmental projects to improve the local economy. This conforms with the colonial development policies of the British Prime Minister Joseph Chamberlain from 1937 to 1940. In *Colonialism and Development*, Havinden and Meredith pointed out that the “Chamberlain’s policies, while designed primarily to serve Britain’s interests, had the potential merit of also being beneficial to the colonies, if they could be achieved” (87). This can be found in the play when Birgit and Reinhart try to convince the natives of when introducing the touristic project.

In a scientific study titled “Environmental impact of tourism” (2003), Ugur Sunlu warns of the detrimental effects and the non-sustainability of such development projects, stating:

The relationship of tourism with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. The negative impacts of tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources on which it depends. (263)

A group of German developers descend on an aboriginal Reserve area, fictional Otter Lake reserve, with a superficially irresistible offer for the improvement of the local economy, the “OjibwayWorld,” a Native theme park which is a tempting project aiming at attracting European tourists to visit the theme park. The postcolonial ecocritical approach sees such touristic development projects, with their mapping the theme park, in a way that echoes the postcolonial cartography where the world is charted according to imposed conceptions devised by colonial interests. Postcolonial cartography is the political and administrative actions that enables the colonizers to chart the world where the non-yet-colonized

areas are considered empty spaces, void of human life or culture, so intruders could lay claim to them, and map them according to the imperial project as if these pre-colonial spaces were waiting to be discovered by European colonizers, even though they had existed before them for thousands of years with their own sophisticated cultures and civilizations.

Edward Said has challenged the supposed neutrality of cartography and geography, saying, "Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to have more territory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents" (1993: 7). It is ironic that the German developers came up with the idea of designing the park according to their own imagined cartography inspired by indigenous elements but turned modern and frivolous in the new design of the "Ojibway World" park with games such as a "medicine Ferris wheel," "bumper canoes," "daily caribou migrations", a hotel called the "Haida-way", added to an entertainment of a musical called "Dances with Wolves" and a "buffalo stampede".

Even the native beliefs are stereotyped and rendered modern and mechanised as is the case with the myth of the "dreamcatcher" which is turned into a huge 44-metre web structure with laser beams which the German designer Reinhart explains as:

The legend of the dreamcatcher states that it is to be given to a mother of a new-born or a newly married couple, to hang in the window so all the bad dreams will stick to the webbing and be burnt away by the morning sun. The good dreams pass through. Well Ojibway World is our baby, our collective child. Not only will it be good for the park, but it will also pay homage to your people and their beliefs". (Blues 54)

Ironically, the dreamcatcher fires its very first laser beams as celebration and a beautiful touristic entertainment, only to cause an ecological disaster, seagulls get scorched and keep

falling dead from the sky (58). Playing with both Native and German stereotypes, Taylor examines the meaning of cultural identity with funny results.

The Berlin Blues deals with themes of cultural appropriation from a minority group and racial stereotyping displaying the continued impact of colonialism and racism. The Western developers with their globalized neo-colonial dominant culture have a misguided idea of what they are doing with other cultures, believing they are respecting them. However, from a different perspective (the post-colonial critique) incorporation of subjugated cultural elements can be offensive. The Indigenous-based theme park stereotypes elements of the aboriginal culture, innocently thinking they are respecting the natives while their greed for material profit pushes them ahead as caricatures of real people.

The German developers, Reinhart and Birgit, introduce their expensive and alluring plan of building a theme park called "OjibwayWorld" on the Native Reserve to local official Donalda, the economic development officer, who initially tends to accept the project. Other two locals discuss the idea of "OjibwayWorld", policeman Andrew who is inclined to like the project and Angie who is against it.

The first act focuses on Birgit and Reinhart who are infatuated by the aboriginal culture, superficially knowing more about Ojibway ritual and folklore than the locals themselves. Birgit initially manages to gain the acceptance of the natives, impressing them with the German/Western/postcolonial surveying systems, efficiency, technology and in-depth research: "Our Company has spent the last four years exploring the possibility and viability of such an endeavor. Otter Lake is perfect. It has accessibility" (Blues 19). Attempting to convince Donalda, she also maps the theme park enthusiastically, adding the "bumper canoes":

And over here we have the Medicine Ferris wheel. Here's the Four Directions shuttle service to get everybody around. Turtle Island Aquarium. Whiskeyjack Pub and Bar. The hotel will be called Haida-Way. Get it? Haida-Way? We've researched this quite extensively.

(Blues 19)

Putting a slim cover of native culture on top of the Westernized trivial but serious economic endeavour is elegantly ironic on the level of each item mentioned. It creates a satirical rendering of the whole situation—a subtle style followed all through the play.

Additionally, the division of the lake into this precise detailed way ironically reflects the colonial cartography that divided the land described as *terra nullius* (territories belonging to “nobody”) for its own benefit. The fancy entrepreneurs' project is set against the culture of the Natives, partially and humorously, represented by Trailer who loves to lead a simple life close to nature in his “trailer” (hence the name). The first act, thus, is an exposition of lines that are going to clash with the development of the plot.

The second act (a year later, the week before the inauguration of Ojibway World Theme Park) opens with commentary on this new advent of neo-colonizers and their appropriating of land and culture. The commentary is voiced by performers (the chorus):

They came from the East, looking for something.
Even they did know not what
Strangers from afar with even stranger ways
They soon changed things a lot.
Now they're here to stay, forever it seems

....

To them we're nothing but meat. (Blues 51)

This is the reversal of the action, the rise of conflict, rejection and beginning of awareness where Donalda realises her mistake, changes attitude and joins Angie in launching resistance

to the whole project. Talking about the theme park, Angie is still against it objecting violently to what she sees as cultural appropriation and environmental hazard. Donalda has changed her mind realising the project will change the natural ancestral area and trivialise the local culture. They start to plan their resistance and to raise awareness of the dangers of the project.

Angie leads the resistance with her one-woman blockade, defending the native culture and pointing out that the “Ojibway culture shouldn’t be marketed, merchandised, dressed up and auctioned off,” (34). She angrily addresses Andrew complaining that this capitalist project “prostitutes our culture. And we’re the pimps” (34). Earlier she warned Andrew that such touristic projects ignore the damage they inflict on the environment, “You cannot make a beautiful totem pole without chopping down a tree” (20); hence, the damage to both culture and ecosystem.

The artistic Trailer, who relinquishes his primitive way of living in the heart of nature to get a job with the project, becomes responsible for the artistic part of the inauguration. He was preparing a musical performance called “Runs with Wolves” (another sarcastic remark on trivialising the Native culture) and a buffalo’s stampede (again stereotypical attempt to glorify the native culture while actually making it ridiculous).

Andrew suffers internal conflict as his fiancée, Angie, declares a blockade and a picket line against the project while his new job forces him to arrest her as Birgit and Reinhart urge him to do. He arrests her shortly, then realizes the whole project is a farce and releases her and resigns. Donalda also submits her resignation telling the Germans that there is a burial ground under the theme park. Trailer runs into the office and tells the Germans to run away to save their lives. The buffalos (bisons) are free, and the stampede puts an end to fancy project. The conflict rises and is then resolved with a ridiculous buffalo stampede which gives the last blow to the collapsing scheme.

The play maps a series of Westerners' concerns with the transformation of the reserve lake into a theme park, expressing environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions. The rage of the bison and the Natives' uncontrollable behaviour reveal much about the dramatist's ecological perspective. By creating cartographic divisions for dramatic purposes, *The Berlin Blues* demonstrates that tourism is only a cover used by the Whites to dominate Native territories.

Throughout the play, Taylor expresses the need for the Natives to return to their roots to preserve tradition and to satisfy their current needs. Although Otter Lake is an imagined site, he merges the lives of the humans and natural elements as being victimized, rendering them almost as joint victims; i.e., the destruction of one leads inevitably to that of the other.

Thus, a resistance front of the locals, Angie, Donalda, Andrew and Trailer, comes naturally into existence (it rises gradually and reaches a climax) while the bison stampede puts the finishing touches on the collapse of the whole project.

When the whole projects collapses, the mastermind and major designer of the expropriating project, Birgit, (symbolising the power of colonialism resurrected in the postcolonial world) expresses her frustration saying:

The Mohawk Mini-golf and Marineworld. I'm sure they will be more receptive. I tried to bring "civilization" and "prosperity" to this community, but perhaps I was ahead of my time. You weren't ready for the OjibwayWorld. Fine. I shall leave you as I found you.

(Blues 91)

As expected, she is driven by false proud ideas of Western exceptionalism and the belief, or pretext, that the colonial effort is a civilizing one for the benefit of a lesser people. This has its echoes in Edward Said's sarcastic remark in the preface to his *Orientalism*:

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice* (xvi).

Though the Canadian play *The Berlin Blues* focuses on touristic development, it defends the rights of the indigenous peoples and calls for the protection of the balanced ecosystem, and attack the persistent will of the old and new colonialism. Additionally, it is women in the play who represent the greatest resistance to postcolonial powers and large projects which end up destroying the environment.

Large scale tourism with the invasive technologies introduced by the German entrepreneurs will definitely cause environmental degradation. Huggan and Tiffin point out that tourism could “wilfully ignore the damaging ecological consequences of touristic development or continue to treat the environment as if it were an endlessly replenishable resource,” (66) which means that tourism here is not sustainable just like other controversial development projects carried out overseas by foreign companies, so “justifiable fears remain that tourism is primarily a ‘neo-colonial extension of economic forms of under-development’” (66).

The ecologically damaging effect which the touristic project has inflicted on the native land created a feeling of alienation suffered by the native population; they began to feel as if they were strangers in their own homeland. A drastic unwelcome change to the native land deforms a part of the identity of the inhabitants since their identity is mingled with the environment. This degradation of the environment brings about a sense of “unhomeliness,” i.e., the place they used to live in changes and becomes a foreign place. They have become relocated in a way;

they did not move but the place has figuratively moved. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha, describes this state of feeling as an:

estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow. (13)

The extra modern touristic project has transformed Otter Lake Reserve relentlessly into a different and strange place. Moreover, the project has its destructive effect on the environment which the natives have always venerated, and consequently conserved it because of the intimate bond that binds people and land. This assault on the native land, and consequently on people’s identity and psychological make-up, pushes Angie, who is the most politically and environmentally conscious of these people, to start her one-woman blockade expressing revolt and suffering from this sense of unhomeliness. She tries as well to recruit Donalda to support their cause; in her own words:

why don’t you join me? QjibwayWorld is not the world of the Ojibways. It’s some genetically modified, bastardized, hybrid, freak show. As Native women, it’s our obligation, our right, to protect and preserve the culture. Why am I the only one who knows that?! This should be your fight! I’ve only been here five years, you’ve been here all your life. (Blues 61)

These two women, Angie and Donalda, initiate and lead a fierce resistance to the huge developmental project which represents both a colonial comeback and an ecological disaster. Donalda, the local economic official first surrenders to the promise of economic benefits to the natives, then promptly realises her mistake and joins forces with the main opponent, Angie. Angie has a profound instinctive and intellectual understanding of the danger of the project, which adds to her adamant resistance. She is the feminist consciousness that

instinctively stands on the side of nature preservation. However, the female character, Birgit, could be considered a refutation of the ecocritical or the feminist point of view as she is one of the two heads of the whole nature-damaging project. Nevertheless, studying the comic nature of the play and how Birgit is actually a caricature of a self-serving profit-monger reveals that she is not a representation of a real woman, but a farcical character representing an abstract idea of greed, deception and frivolity.

The ultra-modern, technology-intensive touristic projects is done in the spirit of postmodernism “which relegates nature to the junk heap of outmoded concepts” (Heartney 141). These concepts are adopted by the enthusiasts of technologically advanced development, driven by profit without regard to the safety of the ecosystem.

Taylor avoids all types of direct criticism and adopts a seemingly innocent portraiture of characters and ideas that display funny stereotypes and naïve enthusiasm on the part of the Germans to mimic the native culture. The whole project is a farce when seen through the eyes of an outsider, i.e., the audience who enjoy the fun while internalising a feeling of rejection of such an assault on the native land and culture.

The consortium of the German developers and their representatives actually represent the White Western colonizers in a postcolonial world. They are depicted in the play in the easy flowing good-humoured style of puns, irony and caricature, but the satire is obvious, and the playwright’s critiques is cheerfully understood. The criticism does not have to be direct or serious in tone. Comedians and clowns have enjoyed a certain freedom to speak frankly even under hegemonic regimes. Thus, comedians have sometimes used their covert but scathing criticism against the powers that be, “and have managed to play an important role in interrogating and mediating the processes of politics in contemporary society” (MacKenzie 21). Comedy and farce can be used to champion very serious causes, which is the case here in *The Berlin Blues*.

The background of the German developers' curious interest in turning the aboriginal reserve land and culture into a trivial game of adventure goes back to the incredibly successful adventure novels of the German author Karl May. May is famous for his 19th century novels of fictitious travels and adventures, set in the Old West of the American prairies. They drew inspiration from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's image of "the noble savage" based on indigenous peoples. The tremendous success of these novels resulted in building numerous Karl May theme parks throughout central Europe, where adult tourists could relieve their childhood fantasies and play "Cowboys and Indians" with ridiculous gravity.

The play is told from the Native perspective, with the four characters all being of indigenous origins: Andrew, a policeman on the reserve; his fiancée Angie, who works at the reserve's gift shop; and their friends Donald, area council's economic development officer, and the primitive loafer who lives in a trailer and called Trailer. Each of these four characters finds themselves caught between the desire to improve their lives, and the motive to protect their ancestral land and culture.

The humour that runs through the play can be understood as arising from the contradiction between what the Germans are representing" a pleasant picture of progress, efficiency, improving the material state of the natives, fascination with the culture of the First Nations aborigines; and the actually reality of the collapsing project: flashy games and misguided imaginings of the native culture. This understanding fits the notion of the incongruity theory of humour or comedy. In *An Anatomy of Humour* (1993) Arthur Asa Berger describes the incongruity theory as:

theory that is probably the most important and most widely accepted of the explanations of humor. This is the incongruity theory of humor which argues that all humor involves some kind of a difference between what one expects and what one gets. The term "incongruity" has many different meanings—inconsistent, not harmonious, lacking propriety and not conforming, so there are a number of possibilities hidden in the term. Incongruity theories involve the intellect, though they may not seem to at first sight, for we have to recognize an incongruity before we can laugh at one (though this recognition process takes place very quickly and is probably done subconsciously). (3)

Laughter is used here as a subversive weapon which corrects stereotypical received ideas, discloses the silliness of such beliefs, and brings about a catharsis just as in tragedy. Canadian novelist, poet, literary critic, and environmental activist, Margaret Atwood sees Native humour as “a subversive weapon” as it gets:

the knife in, not by whacking you over the head with their own moral righteousness, but by being funny. Humour can be aggressive and oppressive, as in keep-'em-in-their-place sexist and racist jokes. But it can also be a subversive weapon, as it has often been for people who find themselves in a fairly tight spot without other, more physical, weapons. (244)

This is how Taylor uses irony, satire, caricature to create a concrete picture of the frivolity and hidden intentions of the Western neo-colonial touristic schemes. No commentary or preaching is necessary: the concrete farce on the stage tells all, and cures deceived onlookers, native or Western, with the objective of raising consciousness of environmental issues and the right of the indigenous people.

The 'subversive' element here is a call for change; it is what William Rueckert, who first coined the term “ecocriticism”, has also advocated when he referred to the most serious and thoughtful ecologists who:

have tried to develop ecological visions which can be translated into social, economic, political, and individual programs of action. Ecology has been called, accurately, a subversive science because all these ecological visions are radical ones and attempt to subvert the continued-growth economy which dominates all emerging and most developed industrial states. A steady or sustainable state economy, with an entirely new concept of growth, is central to all ecological visions. (107-108)

Comedy is a serious aesthetic and ethical art. In his book, *Only a Joke Can Save Us: A Theory of Comedy* (2017), Todd McGowan laments our “failure to take comedy seriously [which] is the most damaging attitude to take toward it, and yet this

attitude is almost ubiquitous” (179). He further adds that comedy has an effect of catharsis just like tragedy as Aristotle understands it. The audience/readers experience comedy as “an existential act that forces us to confront the basic structure of our subjectivity” (179). As subjects who have agency, that is the capability of doing something, we deepen our consciousness and understanding of important issues since comedy, in McGowan's words, “is not just a pleasant interruption that provides relief from the seriousness of existence. Comedy is an encounter with the fundamental contradiction of our subjectivity” (181).

The play is also a well-written sophisticated farce. It is then a serious farce as argued by Paula Citron who, in reviewing the play to *The Globe and Mail* website, says, “Taylor has created a farce, but like all good farces, there is a serious underbelly”. Taylor is a skilful craftsman of “nappy one-liners, and knows how to build on the farcical elements”. Citron demonstrates that “farce also means that the audience must surrender to a level of absurdity, and Taylor piles on enough craziness to draw us in”.

Reinhart, the major designer and architect of the project explains how he spent the better part of the year researching and designing “Rocky Mountain facsimile” (which is actually out of place) to accentuate the local terrain” A quick retort from the native Donalda is “Right over our garbage dump” (20). The caribou migration, artistically designed as well, gets the second quick retort “Right over our other garbage dump” (20), which means magnificent giant tourist attractions looking on garbage dumps. The play is rife with these lines which disclose the caricature characters and the stereotypical wrong conception on the part of the new invaders/developers.

However, it might be difficult for some people to see the farce and caricature characterisation in the play as a means (serious enough) to deflate the pretentious characters and projects that are going to do harm to both ecology and native people. David C. Nichols, reviewing one show of the play for *The Los*

Angeles Times website, missed the whole point of the play, and showed unawareness of the technicalities of the dramatic art. He says the play is good intentioned but pointless, stating:

However, even brazen satire needs a base of substance to land its points. Regrettably, that doesn't happen here. Caricatured attitudes replace characters, with the Germans particularly outsized, and larger comment remains untapped.

Unfortunately, this critic disregards the fact that caricature is intentional as a comic technique, and that round characterization suits other plays, not the method adopted here. Additionally, the absence of "comment" is how the playwright dramatizes ideas in an indirect way, to be subtly absorbed by the audience, avoiding preaching and political propaganda.

The play is an earnest call for action (taken up here by Drew Taylor, a dramatist writing a comedy) against exploitative economic greed that destabilizes the valued natural balance of the ecosystem. The artist and the critic are some sort of activists.

The two cultures are juxtaposed in sharp contrast and in a highly sarcastic tone that satirises globalization and the condescending German neo-colonizers with their flashy huge developmental project. A project that is a source of profit for them and a degradation for indigenous people and the environment. The two cultures collide creating numerous side-splitting funny moments arising from two levels of contradiction.

First there is the incongruity of the real intentions of the Western entrepreneurs (maximizing their profits and shameless exploitation) and their offer of a project that will improve the economic situation of the natives. Second, there is the contradiction between their extreme fascination with the aboriginal culture of the First Nations peoples and the trivialising of aspects of this culture to a point of farce. Added to this, there emerges the glaring contradiction that arises of the collision of the two totally different cultures.

The linguistic style used by the dramatist seems innocent enough as expressions of offhanded utterances of everyday dialogues. No affected expressions or slogans are used anywhere in the text, but still the funny effect is tremendous, doing its function of advocating an ecological postcolonial stance with elegance and conviction.

To conclude, the Canadian play *The Berlin Blues* conforms to Lawrence Buell criteria for evaluating a text as embodying an environmental consciousness. The ancestral land, the seagulls, the animals, the sacred burial land, the wilderness—all have a clear presence and are portrayed against the flashy technology of the developers. The human interest does not take precedence before the integrity of the ecology. Human outsiders are responsible for bringing about the degradation of the ecosystem.

The foreign White developers (neo-colonial power) in the postcolonial era are satirized in gentle humour and a semi-serious matter-of-fact tone. The audience realize the contractions instantly and burst out laughing. At the same time, their awareness grows. The grave environmental cause infiltrates consciousness without any preaching, slogans or direct activism.

The arrival of the industrial civilization devours the balance of the native environment. This destructive civilization is mentioned by Birgit when saying: “I tried to bring civilization and prosperity to this community,” (Blues 90), (referring to the Natives’ land). Then, expressing her frustration, she arrogantly declares: “You weren’t ready ... I shall leave you as I found you” (Blues 91).

The touristic development is not simply a problem facing the native culture; it is additionally an international dilemma imposed by the politics of globalization. Development is not an issue, but the type and purpose of the development is the real issue. “Rather, the battle is not so much against development itself as an intrinsically harmful activity or process as against the

flagrant social and environmental abuses that continue to be perpetrated in its name” (Huggan and Tiffin 19).

In a nutshell, *Berlin Blues* is a comedy, or could even be considered a farce, with a very serious message against both run-wild globalized capitalism and environment degradation. In addition to this, it celebrates the advocacy of the native peoples’ rights.

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