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Subhankar Banerjee, ed., *Arctic Voices. Resistance at the Tipping Point* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 550 pp.

While Arctic sea ice reached a historical low in August 2012, Shell was preparing to drill for oil in the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea. Global warming proceeds twice as fast in these northern regions and presents both ecosystems and people with immense problems. Oil and gas companies, on the other hand, regard the melting of the Arctic as an opportunity to exploit the enormous mineral resources expected to lie below the ice, and thereby cause additional environmental pressure.

These developments, and the resistance against them, form the background of the volume *Arctic Voices. Resistance at the Tipping Point*, edited by photographer, writer, and activist Subhankar Banerjee. For more than ten years, Banerjee has been raising awareness about the rapid ecological and cultural changes in the Arctic. In 2010, he founded ClimateStoryTellers.org as a gathering place for stories related to global warming. *Arctic Voices* now brings together a large variety of texts from and about the Arctic in printed form. The 31 chapters are written by 37 authors, among them conservation scientists, anthropologists, writers, and activists from both indigenous communities and NGOs. Most of the contributions were written specifically for *Arctic Voices*, while a considerable number of them are excerpts from other recent and older publications. All the texts are nonfiction, but their style varies greatly, from the completely factual to the vividly narrative. The volume is illustrated with dozens of photographs, many of them Banerjee's own.

Unsurprisingly, several of the texts focus on landscape and nature. A chapter from Karsten Heuer's *Being Caribou* (published 2006) recounts how he and his wife Leanne followed on foot a big caribou herd over a period of five months. A chapter from Barry Lopez' famous *Arctic Dreams* (1986) on the narwhal is included as well as one from Margaret Murie's *Two in the Far North* from 1962, a report on her and her husband Olaus' field trip in 1956 to Alaska's wilderness, which prepared the establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Range in 1960 – later to become the basis of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge.

Most contributions do, however, not limit themselves to the glorification of northern nature, but instead exemplify problematic developments in both past and present. Conservation scientists such as Steve Zack and Joe Liebezeit describe the changes that are already taking place in Arctic ecosystems now, such as a decline in the populations of migratory shorebirds and the arrival of new species from the south due to global warming. Pamela A. Miller documents the damage caused by oil development on the Alaska North Slope over the past decades. Both pollution and the construction of permanent infrastructure have increased instead of diminished, while the authorities softened environmental regulation. In his own contribution, "BPing the Arctic", Banerjee points out the parallels between the offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico which lead to the Deep Water Horizon oil spill in 2010 and Shell's current operations in the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea. According to him, "major oil spill from an offshore drilling operation in the harsh Arctic environment is not just a possibility, it's inevitable" (76). It would be

technically impossible to recover this oil, and in the cold waters of the Arctic, natural decomposition proceeds much slower than farther south, with the result that spilled oil still damages ecosystems after many decades.

As the title of the volume indicates, its main purpose is to represent voices of the people most affected by these developments, especially those from indigenous communities. Novelist Velma Wallis contributed a story on her experience of growing up in a Gwich'in community that, while undergoing radical economical and cultural changes, still managed to preserve some elements of its traditional way of life. Christine Shearer depicts the Native village Kivalina's struggle for survival as the island on which the village stands is increasingly eroded as a consequence of global warming. In 2008, the village sued 24 oil companies, arguing that their emissions were responsible for climate change and that they knowingly misinformed the public about this fact. According to Shearer, what is currently happening in the Arctic is essentially a question of environmental, and, more specifically, of climate justice. Iñupiat activists Robert Thompson, Rosemary Ahtuanguaruk, Caroline Cannon, and Earl Gingrik, cofounders of the organisation REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands) describe their culture's dependency on bowhead whales and caribous, and the harm that oil and gas development, as well as climate change, have already unleashed: „The environmental damage—like that being caused by global warming—is interfering with our rights to life and to cultural integrity“ (326). The village of Kaktovik now runs a wind energy project in order to demonstrate a clean and viable alternative to oil.

Most texts in *Arctic Voices* are exclusively concerned with Alaska, with some exceptions. Icelandic writer Andri Snær Magnason tells how Icelanders, despite the rapidly melting glaciers in their country, tend to look upon global warming above all as a business opportunity: There are plans to drill for oil at the fringe of Iceland's exclusive economic zone, without any public debate on the likely ecological consequences. With regard to the country's highly praised clean energy from hydro and geothermal power, by far the largest share of it is used to supply environmentally hazardous aluminium smelters. The situation is, according to Magnason, quite similar in Greenland. The final text in the volume is an excerpt from anthropologist Piers Vitebsky's book *The Reindeer People* (2005). It is about the Native reindeer herders in Siberia, who under Soviet Russia were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and to settle down. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of them moreover lost their former income, as the state withdrew from these regions. But Vitebsky also describes recent cooperation with the Sámi in Northern Scandinavia and among different communities in Siberia in order to revitalise traditional reindeer herding.

It is a pity that the volume does not include more contributions such as Magnason's and Vitebsky's, but instead limits its scope so much to Alaska and thus primarily addresses an US-American reading public. As both global warming and the ecological and cultural problems connected with oil and gas exploitation are not confined to national borders, the volume would have done well to include voices from the entire Arctic.

In their entirety, the diverse texts gathered in *Arctic Voices* nevertheless give a multifaceted insight into a region whose ecosystems have already during the past century undergone substantial change through pollution, resource exploitation and military use. With global warming, direct and indirect environmental risks are multiplied. The volume's most outstanding feature is that it shows the Arctic not as a sublime wilderness devoid of human beings, but as a region in which people have been living for a long time, and in which contemporary developments threaten not only

nature, but in a great measure also indigenous cultures. Many of the texts demonstrate, however, that this process of victimisation is not inevitable. There is a strong tradition of resistance in indigenous communities that, despite many throwbacks and overly powerful adversaries, has achieved several remarkable successes. Through making both victimisation and resistance visible, *Arctic Voices* is itself an important contribution to the struggle for environmental justice in the far North.