Of Rats and Bats and the Conundrum of Indigeneity

Helen Tiffin

Conservation of flora and fauna in what Alfred Crosby terms the "Neo Europes" has increasingly focussed on the protection, and where possible, the restoration, of indigenous ecosystems and species. In Australia, the determination of what exactly is " indigenous" in terms of the extra- human biota, is made by (artificially) accepting only those which were present at the time of arrival of the human settler- invader population, that is, in 1788. Species introduced after that date may sometimes be accorded the status of " native", but , particularly on offshore islands, where attempts are being made to restore 1788 conditions, both the somewhat arbitrary date, (in terms of species and ecosystem evolution), and the continuing human element is often glossed, ignored, or can be used to countermand even the most fundamentalist of indigeniety precepts. This paper will consider the ways in which two species, indigenous bats and non indigenous rats are depicted and described to maintain, downgrade or change their status as indigenous or invasive. Although responsibility for "parks and wildlife" is generally under the aegis of state governments in Australia, public comment as well as official and scientific language will be considered.

Bio

Helen Tiffin, FAHA, is the author, (with Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths), of *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), now in its third edition, and translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic and French. With Graham Huggan she has written *Post Colonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010, 2015). Her latest book, (with Robert Cribb and Helen Gilbert), is *Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan* (2014), which was shortlisted for the New South Wales Premier's History Award. She has edited collections of essays including one entitled *Five Emus to the King of Siam: Empire and Environment* (2007), and published over eighty articles on post-colonial, animal, and environmental subjects.