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"Editorial: This, that and the other," for *Environment and History* 2, no. 3 (Oct., 1996)

Grove, Richard

Grove, Richard. "Editorial." *Environment and History* 2, no. 3 (Oct., 1996): 253–54. doi:10.3197/096734096779522310 . John Mackenzie's recent and spectacular critique of Edward Said's *Orientalism* is becoming deservedly well known and much quoted. Said, Mackenzie tells us, is simply not rigorous enough for the historian, attractive as he may have been to the literary critics and the more populist academic pundits. Despite Mackenzie's interventions, which are all the more telling coming as they do from the pen of an avowedly left-wing historian, There seems little doubt that many environmental historians, this editor included, have tended to fall into a veritable elephant trap of simplistic polarities when they deal, as they increasingly are doing, with the unwieldy but vital subject of the colonial impact on the tropical environment and its people. We counterpoise Europe and the colonised other, black and white, man and woman, colonial science versus indigenous knowledge, Third World versus First World. But the terminology of opposites and of 'orientalism' can come very badly unstuck when it comes to the realities of historical explanation in environmental history. We need more sophisticated paradigms to understand the complexities of power relations in the subject. Nigel Leask has proposed that instead of simply thinking about 'this,' and the 'Other,' we should rather start thinking about 'this', 'that,' and the 'Other.' All rights reserved. © 1996 The White Horse Press

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