

Received: 29 September 2022 Accepted: 17 October 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/joe.v2i2.2821>

Parham, J. (Ed.) (2021). **The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene.** Cambridge University Press.

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The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene (Ed. Parham, 2021) offers a nimble theoretical introduction to the interrelation between literature and the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene, let us recall, is the proposal of “a new geological epoch marked by humanity’s indelible alteration of the Earth: its rock strata, ecosystems, atmosphere” (1). In other words, at the centre of its scholarly interest lays the interrelationship between writing heritage and humanity’s (destructive) impact on planet Earth. The crux of the book’s considerations is that through the imaginative experience that the literary medium offers, human beings can approach the reality of present and future scenarios, ideally modifying their “impacts, agencies and responsibilities” (17). The function of literature (and culture) thus appears reinvigorated in the light of the awareness that we live in the Anthropocene, given that the ontological questions that this era poses find a privileged space for reflection in literature. The most prominent questions in the Companion concern the very preservation of the human species: will there be a world without us? Will we seize the opportunity to change individual or cultural consciousness from the catastrophe? Will we take responsibility for our world and the species we share it with?

The book opens with a succinct chronology extending from the formation of the Earth from an accretion of dust and gases and the collision of large planetesimals around 4.5 billion years ago to 2020 with the declaration of a COVID-19 global pandemic by the World Health Organization. It touches on the main stages of deep history, the Cambrian period and the Holocene, before framing the alleged Anthropocene era with industrial development, human population growth and post-1945 atomic threats between Modernity and the Great Acceleration. In this unfolding, the historical timeline points to some of the literary works that can be read in a conceptual relationship with the Anthropocene discourse, ranging from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the works of Amitav Ghosh, Margaret Atwood and Robert Macfarlane.

The historical timeline is followed by an introduction by John Parham entitled *With or Without Us*, a prologue on Earth, Anthropocene and the literary form by Laura Dassow Walls and Sean Cubitt, and two macro-sections dealing on the one hand with the forms of Anthropocene literature or culture in a broader sense, including poetry, the novel, popular fiction, the essay, theatre and performance, interspecies design and digital games, and on the other hand on Anthropocenic themes and concepts, such as catastrophe, animals, humans, fossil fuel, warming, ethics, interspecies and the deep time visible.

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In the prologue, the object of Walls' reflection falls on the planet Earth and its nature at once "estranged from us and intimately intertwined with everything it means to be human" (45) especially in the light of Alexander von Humboldt's ideas; that of Cubitt falls instead on the division as well as the ontological and historical connection in the Anthropocene between "humans, data technologies and natural processes" (67).

The first macro-section on Anthropocene forms opens with an analysis of the evolution of "open-field poetics" (71) with its assimilation of the imagery of "energies, particles and fields" (75) into rhetoric from the poetry of Charles Olson to that of Evelyn Reilly, Ed Robertson and Stephen Collins (Mandy Bloomfield). It continues with an examination of flood fictions in the contemporary novel (Astrid Bracke), ecological and transhistorical crime fiction in South Asian anglophone literature with its perpetual search "for social (and interspecies) justice" (114) (Saba Pirzadeh), the pedagogical aspects of political non-fiction concerning Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* (Byron Caminero-Santangelo) and the staging of the Anthropocene both in Georg Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy with its "model of a return to pastoral conditions" (139) and Mudrooroo's aboriginal dramaturgy reviving Heiner Müller's political theatre (Sabine Wilke). It concludes with a theoretical outreach towards an interspecies design that will "engage with all life and encourage a productive rethinking of concepts such as culture, traditions, intelligence, sentience and language" (158) (Stanislav Roudavski) and towards the innate human tendency to generate worlds, beyond the literary form, also in more recent digital games (Alenda Y. Chang).

The second part includes articles which, as anticipated, examine Anthropocene themes and concepts within different areas of expertise. Thus, David Higgins and Tess Somervell deal with British Romanticism texts highlighting a disastrously destabilizing change in humanity's relationship with the more-than-human world. Eileen Crist approaches the subject of animals from a more sociological perspective, epitomizing the separation of agricultural humans from the wilderness and thus the onset of defaunation, while Hannes Bergthaller looks at humans with their "Anthropocene anagnorisis" (214) in Jeff Vandermeer's *Southern Reach* trilogy. Subsequent articles deal with petro-literature (Sam Solnick), the allegories of global warming in Palestinian literature (Andreas Malm), the ethics of activism in Green Malaysian Literature in English (Zainor Izat Zainal), "ecotopian" modes of human-animal-nature relationality (Heather Alberro) and temporal complexity in nature writing (Pippa Marland).

Overall, *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene*, which echoes the recent main bibliography on the link between the Anthropocene and humanities, is, despite its sampling structure, a helpful tool for the humanistic exploration of the Anthropocene and for familiarizing the reader with some of the subject's primary modes of formal and thematic expression. It is an agile and accessible volume for all scholars who want an overview of the Anthropocene under the banner of inter- and transdisciplinarity. The book comes out at a time when humanist introductory volumes to the Anthropocene are proliferating, e.g. *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities* (Ed. Horn & Bergthaller, 2020), *Literature and the Anthropocene* (Vermeulen, 2020) or *The Anthropocene: Approaches and Contexts for Literature and the Humanities* (Ed. Reno, 2022), setting up an additional resource.

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