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Two decades into Anthropocene studies and the proliferation of both commercial and academic publications that engage with the term coined by Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen in 1995, the editor of *The Anthropocene: Approaches and Contexts for Literature and the Humanities* compiled a volume specifically meant to serve as an introduction to college students and teachers, as well as non-specialists into “how literature and the humanities are central to understanding and living in this new epoch” (Reno 6). Seth T. Reno’s “Introduction: The Anthropocene and the Humanities” argues convincingly for clarifying how this widely used interdisciplinary concept can contribute to the survival of humanity increasingly hard-pressed to adapt to accelerated climate change and unprecedented technological development. The Anthropocene, “simultaneously a geologic epoch, a scientific term, and a cultural concept with no single, definitive narrative” (Reno 3), impacts us all in this last capacity, as it seeks to address the philosophical premises and the social, political, and economic forces that led to the major shift in the way humans relate to the natural world. The book highlights the collective responsibility this entails, since the narratives that help us make sense of the Anthropocene are currently being negotiated—who will be the story-tellers and what stories will be told—and invites the reader to engage with the concept through accessible, jargon-free language.

In order to accomplish successful engagement, Part 1 covers major theoretical approaches in seven chapters: from the already established environmental humanities, queer theory, and literary criticism to more novel branches: the energy humanities and environmental racism. Part 2 puts these into practice in eight chapters, relying on re-readings of works by classic authors like Mary Shelley, Henry David Thoreau, Virginia Woolf or H.G. Wells, while it also discusses contemporary authors: Nigerian poet and playwright J.P. Clark, Filipino writer Gina Apostol, and writers of speculative fiction, Jeff VanderMeer and Kim Stanley Robinson. The editor’s intent to provide a practical guide to newcomers, both students and teachers, is made clear in the introduction in a section explaining how to use this book for research projects, lesson plans or courses on the Anthropocene. This is a welcome addition bridging theory and everyday practice in an academic publication that argues for the necessity of wide-spread engagement with the issues at hand.

In Part 1, Lisa Ottum’s “The Deep Time Life Kit: Thinking Tools for the Anthropocene” draws readers in by addressing “a sensation in search of a word” that so many people experience these days: “the unsettling feeling that Earth is off-kilter, and that everyone, but

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no one in particular, is responsible” (Ottum, 2022: 13). She explores the emotional barriers that often cause disengagement and denialism, preventing the formation of habits of mind that could lead to a fruitful engagement with the Anthropocene as an analytical framework for the power structures, the narratives, and the affects typical of the times.

Scott R. MacKenzie summarizes the narrative promoted by capitalism in “The Two Households: Economics and Ecology” to point out the crucial change around the mid-nineteenth century which led to the separation of the disciplines of economics and ecology, to the detriment of the latter, also emphasized by the term Capitalocene, proposed by historian Jason W. Moore as an alternative to Anthropocene. In a similar vein but relying on literary works as well to demonstrate that “energy and culture are co-constitutive” (Linthicum, 2022: 38), Kent Linthicum gives an overview of the field of energy humanities that date back to the 1990s in “Energy and the Anthropocene.” This piece will resonate with readers all too familiar with the global energy crisis that hit shortly after the publication of the volume.

The following three essays all highlight the environmental precarity that Black and Indigenous peoples have been living with for centuries, emphasizing that “it is precisely the West qua Europe that historically and violently formed the contemporary understanding of what human and human activity is” (Juárez 2022: 65). Rebecca Macklin focuses on the detrimental effects of settler colonialism in the USA and Canada in “Environmental Racism, Environmental Justice: Centering Indigenous Responses to the Colonial Logics of the Anthropocene” and advocates for turning to Indigenous literatures, which are capable of revealing the objects of erasure and alternative, decolonial worldviews. In “The World Is Burning: Racialized Regimes of Eco-Terror and the Anthropocene as Eurocene,” Nicolás Juárez gives a compact and lucid account of the underlying ontological structure that sanctioned and still sanctions genocides, slavery, and regimes of ecological violence, all based on the premise that Black and Native people are categorized as non-human. Nicholas Tyler Reich coins the word Trans*plantationocene, as explained in the eponymously titled essay, to denote the forcible diasporic displacements of human and non-human bodies across space to different ecosystems and across time due to the afterlives of these events, at the same time recognizing “those displacements as seated in sex and gender, as well as resistance strategies thereof” (Reich, 2022: 78). Reich puts the term to the test by reading the film *Tangerine* (2015) to demonstrate the enmeshment of racialized gender, trans*ness, and environment: it fills a gap in scholarship addressing Anthropocene ecocides, which fails to admit the centrality of gender and sexuality as a major factor bearing on racialized environmental (non)belonging in regions historically affected by the plantation economy.

Stephen Tedeschi’s “The Anthropocene and Critical Method” synthesizes how the Anthropocene has mutually fertilized knowledge projects shared by the humanities and the natural sciences; the process involves redefining relevant texts and such fundamental concepts of critical theory as agency or the subject after revisiting the distinction between human and non-human, and doing away with anthropocentrism. This essay wraps up Part 1 with foregrounding the role of literary criticism as facilitating adaptation to changing conditions by discovering “alternative ways of thinking, living, and being and new perspectives on dominant social systems” (90).

Part 2: Contexts demonstrates the versatility of the theoretical approaches starting with Romanticism. Matthew Rowney’s analysis of Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*, the very first novel to describe a global pandemic makes an outstanding piece, which integrates literary criticism

and medical science to uncover a social structure based in female tradition that Shelley proposed as an alternative to the human- and male-centered world of her times. “Henry David Thoreau: A New Anthropocenic Persona” by Robert Klevay argues for tempering the Transcendentalist optimism of Thoreau’s earlier publications by teaching them alongside his later works that place “emphasis on physical materialism, ecological connectedness, and the implications of humanity and its actions within the natural world” (Klevay, 2022: 116).

Tobias Wilson-Bates in “It’s the End of the World: Can We Know It?” turns to the most influential speculative fiction to date, H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* to introduce deep time as a narrative concept and to highlight the impact of Victorian scientific thought on literature, which is also Naomi Perez’s premise for the next piece, “*Orlando* in the Anthropocene: Climate Change and Changing Times.” Her delightful rereading of Woolf’s novel points out that “*Orlando* lives through the birth of the Anthropocene, and Woolf shows how this new geological epoch upends everything, from climate to gender to architecture” (Perez, 2022: 125), and goes on to discuss how disruptions caused by climate change can be mapped onto the deconstruction of the male/female and human/nature binaries, followed by disruptions in widely accepted views on gender and sexuality.

The next two essays shift the focus to the Global South, whose invisibility in Anthropocene studies should be redressed, according to Antonette Talaue-Arogo, not only because the region bears the brunt of displaced environmental impacts from the Global North, but also due to the fact that it reveals how literature contributes to the ongoing theorization of the concept. She demonstrates this in “What Global South Critics Do” via Apostol’s *Insurrecto*, calling for a more ethical approach by means of the joint consideration of a dialogic relation between the region, and the self and other. Kimberly Skye Richards brings attention to Nigeria with an in-depth intersectional analysis of J.P. Clark’s *The Wives’ Revolt* in a chapter whose focus on embodiment renders visible how intimately the forces constituting the Anthropocene can be traced on the body through “the structural and interpersonal histories of gender, sexual, and racial violence” (Richards, 2022: 141).

The last two chapters underscore the significance of speculative fiction in shaping mainstream views on scientific research and the emergence of one of the fastest-growing genres of the new millennium, climate fiction. Kristin Girten reads VanderMeer’s postapocalyptic novel through Donna Haraway’s lens in “Queering the Modest Witness in the Chthulucene: Jeff VanderMeer’s *Borne* (a New Weird Case Study)” to conclude that the right approach to science is not transcendent objectivity, but should be based on humanity’s kinship with the nonhuman to ensure ecological responsibility in the pursuit of progress.

“Contemporary Cli-fi as Anthropocene Literature: Kim Stanley Robinson’s *New York 2140*” by the editor, Seth T. Reno also serves as a conclusion which reiterates many of the main analytical perspectives presented earlier through the contemporary genre of cli-fi. Robinson’s decades-long inquiry into “the relationship between climate change, science, and capitalism; and the political and economic modes of resistance to addressing climate change” (Reno 173), and the commitment to sustainability results in an apocalyptic and yet hopeful stance that translates climate science and climate change models into narratives to help us imagine and act in favor of a post-capitalist future on both global and local levels.

All in all, *The Anthropocene: Approaches and Contexts for Literature and the Humanities* gives an excellent overview of both the main theoretical strands and the narratives indispensable for

making sense of, critically evaluating, and actively engaging with the most pressing issue of our time. The intelligible writing and the brevity of the chapters facilitate understanding, while further research is encouraged by the copious notes and references sections, turning the volume into a valuable tool for educators.

References

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