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This chapter reviews publications in the field of ecocriticism published in 2015. The material under consideration deals with climate change fiction, contemporary poetry and literary fiction, narratology, gender studies, and the role of the humanities within current global climate change debates. The chapter is divided into three sections: 1. Introduction; 2. The Anthropocene; 3. Econarratology, Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Animal Studies. The review covers single-author and edited volumes. Each of the themed sections refers to previous publications in ecocriticism in order to situate the most recent work within the field, and to track any continuities, influences or points of productive contestation.

1. Introduction

One sign of the health of a given critical field is when it is substantial enough to undertake a family history, as it were, or in other words, when the field reaches a point where it warrants an anthology of its most influential formative and contemporary interventions. Ecocriticism has been the subject of several such projects in the past two decades, with notably, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (UGeorgiaP [1996]), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty, and *The Green Studies Reader* (Routledge [2000]), edited by Laurence Coupe. But with Ken Hiltner's recently published volume *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, one gleans a more complete sense of the historical evolution of the field, together with its current theoretical complexity and variety. Hiltner pays due respect to what has been nominated the 'first wave' of ecocriticism, with which he opens his edition, and this is followed by a 'second wave' selection. Numbered among the foundational critics of the 'first wave' are, for example, Raymond Williams, Arne Naess, Carolyn Merchant, Gary Snyder, Jonathan Bate, and Cheryll Glotfelty. Such a diverse set of authors is suggestive of the key interdisciplinarity of ecocriticism but equally, re-enforces the idea that ecocriticism is not internally homogenous, and is as

pockmarked by internal intellectual and political tension and contradiction, as any other critical discourse. The book is pitched as a resource for teachers, according to Hiltner, and overall the volume does include what he terms ‘classic and representative writings, as well as new, cutting-edge work’ (Preface: np). Useful selections of the latter ‘cutting-edge work’ are generously included in the ‘second wave’ section, which touches upon issues such as the Anthropocene, queer ecologies, race, class and ecology, environmental justice and green postcolonialism. As Hiltner assures the reader from the outset, and his assertion is well-founded: ‘In the pages to come, we will see the birth and maturation of ecocriticism as displayed by quite a few of the major voices in the field, including those who provided major interventions. While the work that has appeared in the twenty-first century is often different from, and sharply at odds with, earlier studies, the thinkers anthologized here all share a commitment in better understanding the relationship that our species has to our planet’ (p. xvi). One of the problems that any editor, like Hiltner, faces, of course, is precisely the development they seek to represent; as the remainder of this article demonstrates, there are potentially new candidates for inclusion in any future such project.

2. The Anthropocene

Motivated by the tangible acceleration of anthropogenic degradation of the non-human natural world, and by their accumulated scientific evidence of the irreparable scars inflicted on the global environment by humanity, Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer diagnosed that humanity has, in fact, ascended to the role of geological agent. In other words, religious and philosophical questions on man’s relation to nature, which assumed its dominance, have, through increased industrialization and its attendant corruption of natural resources and pollutant run-offs, become a devastating ecological reality. As Crutzen details, with Christian Schwageral: ‘we humans are becoming the dominant force for change on Earth’ (‘Living in the Anthropocene’, *Yale: Environment* 360[24 January 2011] np). And this assumption of power presents itself in profound qualitative alterations to global ecosystems:

Changing the climate for millennia to come is just one aspect. By cutting down rainforests, moving mountains to access coal deposits and acidifying coral reefs, we fundamentally change the biology and the geology of the planet [. . .] We spread our man-made ecosystems [. . .] as landscapes characterized by heavy human use—degraded agricultural lands, industrial wastelands, and recreational

landscapes—become characteristic of Earth’s terrestrial surface.
 (‘Living in the Anthropocene’ [2011])

In seeking official scientific ratification of the Anthropocene, Crutzen and his associates anticipate that humanity’s responsibility for ecological depletion will be fully accepted and advertised. Counter-intuitively, though not symptomatic of further anthropocentric hubris, confirmation of the Anthropocene as a geologically legitimate epoch will certainly endorse humanity’s destructive capabilities but, Crutzen and Schwageral believe, this temporal marker ‘would highlight the immense power of our intellect and our creativity, and the opportunities they offer for shaping the future’ (‘Living in the Anthropocene’ [2011]).

Timothy Clark’s much anticipated *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* is one of a number of publications within the field to unpack the Anthropocene in terms of orthodox models of literary and cultural criticism. In some respects, Clark’s intervention is a further assault on orthodox historicism witnessed in earlier ecocritical publications. And Clark underscores the profound philosophical implications of the advent of the Anthropocene; in his estimation the idea ‘blurs and even scrambles some crucial categories by which people have made sense of the world and their lives. It puts in crisis the lines between culture and nature, fact and value, and between human and the geological or meteorological’ (p. 9). The lines between natural and human histories, previously understood as insoluble, have been drained of such integrity, and thus the boundaries of human subjectivity are rendered insecure. As we have seen in previous volumes of YWCCT, Clark’s work has been seminal to the contouring of Anthropocene ecocriticism, particularly his attention to the recalibrated scalar proportions of literary and cultural criticism on foot of humanity’s role as planetary geological agent. The Anthropocene may have reached some level of definitional clarity from a geo-scientific perspective, but what the Anthropocene means for the human imaginary and for the future of humanity is far from certain. Part of the disruptive charge of the Anthropocene is precisely such volatility, and, of course, as we have mentioned, the sheer scales on which humanity’s future is placed under threat.

Yet, the disruptive force of the Anthropocene is nested within everything we do in the present, as well as linking us directly to humanity’s history since the Industrial Revolution. As Clark states: ‘Intellectually, the Anthropocene effects a general crisis of tone and of proportion—what might be nicknamed “Anthropocene disorder”, a sense of the destructive incongruity of given norms of behaviours and thinking, without, as yet, any clear sense of an

alternative' (p. 54). The 'norms' we in the Global North have established, inherited and continue to live by are, counterintuitively, poisonous agents, extensions of our own desires that offer nothing assured other than the destruction of the biosphere. But it is when Clark broaches the issues that attend scale, and of the implications for humanity and for literary and cultural criticism, that he touches upon familiar ground, as well as rising to his most astute in terms of the future trajectories for ecocriticism. As he details: '[s]cale effects in particular defy sensuous representation or any plot confined, say, to human-to-human dramas and intentions, demanding new, innovative modes of writing that have yet convincingly to emerge' (p. 80). It has been noted that one of the ways to gloss Clark's broader project is as a critique of historicism, or, in exact ecocritical parlance, historical anthropocentrism. The latter is adjudged, as is widely established, as the perpetrator of global climate change, but for Clark an assault on historicism goes beyond merely identifying the guilty party of global climate change. He writes at length:

What seems as commonsensical as the immediate life-world of our ordinary experience, our given sense of familiarity and even of responsibility, may now be implicated in destructive scenarios we can neither see nor barely calculate. What was once a norm, the 'natural', emerges as a biological contingency that is becoming deeply problematic. If consideration of literary and cultural criticism in the Anthropocene involves the need newly to think on differing and conflicting scales, then the default scale of human terrestriality will have to be kept constantly in mind, often now as an object of suspicion. (p. 40)

The question of scale makes the local, the immediate and the microsocial consequential; just as capitalism 'empowers' the individual consumer, the Anthropocene enlists us all as geological agents. But, of course, what the consequences might be in the imminent future or within longer-term timeframes can too often only be guessed at or 'imagined'. In a sense as geological agents we know that humanity's imprints are spoiling the planet but, for many, these are invisible and remote imprints and effects—large in scale, certainly—but distant in spatial and temporal terms, and therefore hard to grasp and to act upon. The challenge, then, is to retune our imaginative, conceptual and empathetic scale frames; we are no longer simply 'human', we have ascended to a different scalar order in terms of our climatic impacts, and must as a result face the heightened scalar implications and costs of our

newly found geological agency. Again as Clark makes plain when he addresses the foci of his intervention:

This study will approach the intellectual challenges of the Anthropocene and its unreadability in terms of the inevitable question of scale. As a concept transferred from geology, the Anthropocene enacts the demand to think of human life at much broader scales of space and time, something which alters significantly the way that many once familiar issues appear. Perhaps too big to see or even to think straight (a 'hyperobject', certainly) the Anthropocene challenges us to think counter-intuitive relations of scale, effect, perception, knowledge, representation and calculability. (p. 13)

Of note here is Clark's reference to the Anthropocene as 'a concept transferred from geology', and such an idea re-enforces the notion that any viable ecocritical praxis will remain terminally limited if it does not and cannot embrace a necessary interdisciplinarity. Glen Love has written incisively about these disciplinary relations previously, but the advent of 'Anthropocene ecocriticism', from Clark's perspective, makes interdisciplinarity a *sine qua non* of future interventions. In other words, the sheer scale of the issues means that attenuated cultural readings and critical exegeses within ecocritical cultural studies are, in a sense, playing with one hand behind their backs.

From Clark's standpoint: 'One question central to this book is this: how far is much environmental criticism vulnerable to the delusions that the sphere of cultural representations has more centrality and power than in fact it has? Worse, might this exaggerated sense of significant agency in turn produce or perpetuate an illusion all too convenient for the destructive status quo, the belief that endorsing certain symbolic or the imaginary events may be far more crucial or decisive than it really is?' (p. 21). Notwithstanding the political and empirical stresses under which the Humanities currently operate, we cannot disavow the necessary materialities that dwarf our disciplinary concerns. But what is just as important is that cultural agents who partake of ecocritical practice need to be flexible and deranging in their future methodologies. Again as Clark explains:

The kinds of reading demanded by the Anthropocene surely need to be rather more sophisticated than finding its image in any past text that deploys waste land or desert motifs. Its emergent unreadability cannot be so easily decoded. After all, it may be that texts with no

apparent ‘environmental’ focus can be shown to be most implicated in environmental damage [. . .] In effect, the meaning of a past text is a site of emergent effects [. . .] The cognitive and ethical claims of the Anthropocene underline just how deeply a text is *not* completely ‘understood’ by being resituated solely in the cultural context of its time of production. It jumps out, lingers and may have unexpected consequences [. . .] its emergent sense exceeds that of the situation in which it occurred, or, more strictly speaking, that situation is being reconceptualized as a context that must now also include the present and an uncertain future. Furthermore, a reader’s being part of the situation of the past text as issue is not the guarantor of a more secure understanding. (pp. 63–5)

And that, in many respects, is the kernel of Clark’s text; we have become over-reliant on critical reading strategies that do little to truly unsettle a humanist or anthropocentric consensus. In Clark’s terms: ‘the retrospective light of the Anthropocene casts into new relief developments that many regard as human advances, including social changes such as the rise of the liberal values of individualism, and personal freedom, for these cannot now be disengaged from such environmentally degrading impacts as increased consumption, individual property rights, growing markets and expanded resource use’ (p. 52).

Anthropocene Humanities, then, might be envisaged as an ecocritical field that offers a radical critique of the normative and normalizing critical reading methods of liberal humanist politics. Though, as we shall see, there are other critics such as Adam Trexler and Tom Bristow, who take the Anthropocene as critical concept in alternative directions to those taken by Clark. Clark’s work is immensely inventive and engaging, and will certainly be hugely influential within regions of the field of ecocriticism. It draws and builds upon previous work on Anthropocene Humanities—work by Kate Rigby, Bronislaw Szerszynski and Dipesh Chakrabarty—which is appropriate and lively. This leads us to one of the unfortunate presentational issues with the book: the latter’s name appears in three separate versions: ‘Chakravarty’ (p. 3); ‘Chakrabarty’ (p. 14); and ‘Chrakrabarty’ (p. 17). But Clark has a broader eco-theoretical palate than the Anthropocene branch, and invokes other seminal figures and their signature ecocritical concepts. Clark does this again in order to magnify the scale at which Anthropocene ecocriticism must operate and he pays particular attention to ‘concepts such as Timothy Morton’s “the mesh” or Stacy Alaimo’s “transcorporeality”’ (p. 57). The currency of these concepts is

based on the fact that they ‘also express the fact that human cultures are always entirely part of natural systems of energy exchange in the biosphere, as subject as any other entity to the laws of physics and biology, even while, on the other hand, concepts of “nature” have, simultaneously and confusingly, never been separable from human politics. And now both these points become further underlined by the inextricable mess that is the Anthropocene’ ([2015], p. 57).

Poetry has typically been the genre that has been given primary significance within mainstream ecocritical literary studies, and it has been a critical commonplace to question the effectiveness of the novel in representing the core concerns of ecocritical analysis. As we will see below, Tom Bristow continues the former trend of highlighting the value of ecologically based poetics, even in the wake the Anthropocene, but Adam Trexler has produced the first and most complete study of the novel genre in the context of global climate change. Trexler’s capacious intervention is alluded to by Clark, who admires its ambition and scope but questions the extent to which it tackles the nature of readerly, affective response to climate change narratives. Trexler’s study commences by furnishing a cursory critical genealogy, as well as an intellectual back-story of the concept of the Anthropocene, but also poses a series of telling questions that link the scientific sphere with that of culture, or a corrective co-identification of the scientific with the broadly cultural. Included within Trexler’s catalogue of questions are:

Setting aside questions of fact, how has the immense discourse of climate change shaped culture over the last forty years? What tropes are necessary to comprehend climate change or to articulate the possible futures faced by humanity? How can a global process, spanning millennia, be made comprehensible to human imagination, with its limited sense of place and time? What longer, historical forms aid this imagination, and what are the implications and limits of their use? [. . .] And finally, how does climate change alter the forms and potentialities of art and cultural narrative? (p. 5)

The early inquiries listed above are fairly standard in ecocritical circles, as the ontological and epistemological urgencies to which global climate change is causal force critics to reconsider the shapes, possibilities and responsibilities of all forms of human narration as acts of power on non-humanity. Of more significance for Trexler are the potentialities within literary form: how can the narrative possibilities of the novel form represent and/or develop to represent the ongoing and imminent crises of climate change? And, for Trexler, one of the key characteristics of the relationship between literature,

the novel, and global climate change, is the renewed viability of genre fiction as a mode appropriate to serious cultural and political critique. As he proposes: ‘One way to measure innovation is against the backdrop of genre. Many pre-existing genres offer extraordinary resources to think about complex issues like climate change’ (p. 13). Some of the ‘pre-existing genres’ invoked by Trexler include, science fiction, chiller fiction, teen fiction and suspense novels—forms typically marginal to academic critical commentary. If the hierarchy of literary criticism had settled into an established pattern, in Trexler’s view, crisis at this global level has reawakened the latent possibilities of genres that have too long been adjudicated as secondary to literary fiction. If, as Clark outlines, the Anthropocene compels us to rethink the scales on which we think, act and imagine, for Trexler this has its correlative in how we ‘narrate’ our Anthropocenic era. Trexler’s overarching argument has, of course, echoes with other periods of cultural crisis, when radical change at the level of artistic form became symptomatic or curative of the crisis at hand. Thus form is crucial to *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*:

In the face of these challenges, climate novels must change the parameters of storytelling, even to draw on the tropes of recognizable narratives. More often than not, the narrative difficulties of the Anthropocene threaten to rupture the defining features of genre; literary novels bleed into science fiction; suspense novels have surprising elements of realism; realist depictions of everyday life involuntarily become biting satire. For these reasons, novels of the Anthropocene cannot be easily placed into discrete generic pigeonholes. (p. 14)

Literary experimentation and the sundering of generic boundaries are the hallmarks of what Trexler deems the novelistic response to the crisis of the Anthropocene. If, as we have discussed, the Anthropocene is a ‘threshold concept’ and we are living through a global climate change ‘tipping point’, then we cannot fall back on cosy consolations of mainstream literary fiction. Again, such a critical position is not, at the level of the abstract, entirely novel and resonates with the professed literary radicalism of earlier historical periods, when alienation through artistic form was traded as a necessary virtue in the face of historical upheaval. We can hear some historical echoing when Trexler states: ‘At a more theoretical level, the novel is founded on the tension between fact and invention, history and place, society and interiority, and the practice of making a living. These sites are integral to the meaning-making of a novel, and each of them is being radically reordered as we locate

ourselves in the Anthropocene' (p. 15). It is the last phrase here that differentiates Trexler's literary critical project from its predecessors. The telling question then is: 'What are the implications of representing, or mediating, climate in different kinds of texts?' (p. 22). The value of the novel, the malleable and capacious novel form, in the context of global climate change is laid out by Trexler in terms that challenge the primacy of formalist aesthetics, and situate his readings within a more materialist critical constituency—a point that fits with his later attention to the relationship between science studies and literary studies:

Analysis of economic formations challenges the nature focus of much ecocriticism but also allows environmental critics to more specifically describe the causes of environmental degradation and the opportunities for sustainable living. Accounting for things in fiction challenges canonical criticism's preoccupation with authentic character, author-geniuses, and master texts [...] Climate fiction can convey cultural narratives, create detailed speculation, incorporate diverse points of view, and hold a multitude of things, from species to machines, places to weather systems. These features make the novel a privileged form to explore what it means to live in the Anthropocene moment. (p. 27)

If, within literary studies, the complexities of generic hybridity and mutation are one of Trexler's foci, then at a broader remove, his investigation partakes of the interdisciplinarity alighted upon earlier in our discussion. Again, this is seen as a consequence of the Anthropocene, wherein the literary and the cultural cannot persist in their disciplinary silos while the planet burns. Equally, science cannot disregard its necessary 'narrative' structures given its origins and perpetuation within anthropocentric codes of understanding and argumentation. Thus another stated intention of Trexler's is that '[t]hrough the analysis of these novels, *Anthropocene Fictions* hopes to develop the disciplinary relationship between science studies and environmental criticism' (p. 22). To this end, Trexler devotes attention to prominent and critically problematic, as well acclaimed, climate change novels such as Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* (HarperCollins [2004]), Ian McEwan's *Solar* (Random House [2010]), Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (Saqi Books [2004]) and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Forty Signs of Rain* (HarperCollins [2004]), among many others. Even briefly dissecting Trexler's treatment of these texts reveals the critical concentrations that guide his wide-ranging survey. Trexler poses a general problem prior to his literary exegeses, one that tests his interdisciplinary approach and also tests the modes and methods of the

creative writing under scrutiny: ‘Beneath all of these choices lies an even more fundamental problem: the way that science enters fiction. This issue gets to the heart of what it means for science to be true and what it means for fiction to be distinguished from fact’ (p. 30). The exchange at the level of text is suffused with tensions, and in many climate change novels, as Trexler reveals ‘scientists play a fundamental role, developing the meaning of climate change while helping to frame questions about both knowledge and the novel as a formal entity’ (p. 31). And some of the tensions are alluded to by Trexler in his discussions of *State of Fear* and *Solar*, respectively. Firstly, ‘the problems of *State of Fear* are endemic to climate change novels and to climate change discourse more generally. Novels struggle to describe what it means for climate change to be real. They also struggle to envision how human beings might respond to its challenges. In the most serious contemporary fiction, these shortcomings reveal the instability of both science and the literary in the face of climate change’ (p. 46). The Anthropocene re-emerges as a threshold concept here; its impacts upon human futures are unpredictable, and though its incarnation in imaginative form is a constant of climate change fiction, in Trexler’s view, the adequate reconciliation of climate science and literary form is frustrated. With respect to McEwan’s *Solar*, Trexler locates another problem: ‘The tensions between Beard’s personal failings and Western society are brought to a peak in the question of whether *Solar* is an allegory [. . .] *Solar* is undergirded by a scientific account of the human mind, rather than the ideal moral order of classic allegory [. . .] Instead, *Solar* pins it hopes on a realist model of science, with culture and human nature left largely intact (pp. 48–9). Once more, attending to the potential and productive malleability of literary form, Trexler remains disappointed with McEwan’s retention of an undiminished faith in scientific realism. The novel seems to bear the weight of McEwan’s well-established interest in scientific knowledge exhibiting ‘a qualified hope that science will discover objective solutions to climate change’ (p. 53). On the other hand Robinson’s and Gee’s works garner rather more approval within Trexler’s schema, as both not only confront global climate change as an objective phenomenon but narrate such events through the deployment of ‘displacing’ narrative forms in Robinson’s case, and moving from the social to the human–personal in Gee’s novel. Both, in effect, respond to the Anthropocene through respective formal and thematic manoeuvres, rather than retaining and recycling the strictures of a humanist novelistic form. Consistent with much of his previous work, Robinson’s novel skirts the borders between realism and fantasy, including among its features: ‘wish fulfilment, surrealism, affective incongruence, bodily nausea and amputation, foreignness, media failure,

ironic allusions, social unrest, racial unrest, racial integration, carnival, and legislative revolution' (p. 108). Such 'pluriform effects' are part of the required literary response to the 'deranging' and 'displacing' scale effects of the Anthropocene. Gee, on the other hand, retains a social format but, according to Trexler, its primary strengths rest with its commentary 'on the limits of individual revelation, humanism, and society itself in the Anthropocene' (p. 108). Rather than admit triumph or resolution of crisis through heroism, epiphany or 'social omniscience', by tracking the effects of climate change on non-human ecologies, and pointing out that class or race will save populations from the planet's degradation, Gee's *The Flood* 'finds new ways to narrate the breadth of climate change's effects, while accounting for the limits of knowing the Anthropocene' (p. 118).

When broaching the field of ecopoetry, one encounters a diverse corpus of artistic and critical works devoted to often polarized formal and political positions. But a fairly unequivocal, and representative, summation of the field is furnished by the critic David Borthwick, who touches on several key issues regarding the material concerns that frequently animate ecopoetry. For Borthwick: 'The central concern of ecopoetry is recognition of human entanglement in the world. It explores the relationship that humans have with a shared world, at once connected to it, but also increasingly estranged from it. Ecopoetry seeks to question and renegotiate the human position in respect of the environment in which we are enmeshed' (David Knowles and Sharon Blackie, eds, *Entanglements: New Ecopoetry* (Two Ravens Press [2012], p. xvi)). Therefore, mutual implication, co-dependence, moral responsibility, and recognition of an uneven dualism are the kernel features of ecopoetry in Borthwick's estimation. Though in reading ecopoetry we are engaging with matters of representation, Borthwick's clarification of ecopoetry's essential features appears to endorse Lawrence Buell's criteria for environmental literature more broadly; namely, writing that does not treat or perceive the 'nonhuman environment [. . .] merely as a framing device', but rather, fully acknowledging such 'as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history' (*The Environmental Imagination* (HarvardUP [1995], p. 7)). Both critics then, move beyond nature as figuration, and Borthwick proposes the inherent political tenor and capacities of ecopoetry. Yet, he also stops short of endorsing ecopoetry as a wing of environmentalist propaganda, or of tendering a definition that reduces ecopoetry to an uncomplicated instrument of environmental politics.

In a more systematic survey, J. Scott Bryson provides a serviceable set of features of ecopoetry in his critical survey *Ecopoetry*, a list that links critical and creative voices. Distilling aspects of the critical work of Buell, Leonard

Scigaj and Terry Gifford, Bryson argues that ecopoetry is part of the lineage that descends from Nature poetry and Romantic poetics, but is marked by, firstly, ‘an emphasis on maintaining an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of the world; such a perspective leads to a devotion to specific places and to the land itself’; secondly, ‘an imperative toward humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature’; and finally, ‘an intense skepticism concerning hyperrationality, a skepticism that usually leads to an indictment of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe’ (*Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (UUtahP [2002], pp. 5–6)). Such works build, indirectly, on Jonathan Bate’s *The Song of the Earth* (HarvardUP [2002]), and form part of the ecopoetic context for Tom Bristow’s *The Anthropocene Lyric: An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place*.

Bristow’s ground-clearing exercise at the opening of *The Anthropocene Lyric* retreads some material that is native to ecopoetical studies; certainly much of the terminology is continuous with that encountered in works such as those cited above. Affect, the lyric moment, place, personhood and more-than-human worlds have long been taken as thematics by ecopoets and ecocritics alike. As an instructive instance, Bristow states: ‘In poetry, we are abnormally sensitive creatures; acutely and often uncomfortably attuned to perilinguistic wavelengths. The lyric registers personal, felt experience’ (p. 3). But where Bristow’s ecopoetical study of the work of Alice Oswald, John Kinsella and John Burnside breaks new ground is in its situation of the ecopoetical within the scalar proportions of the Anthropocene. For Bristow this has radical effects on what is considered the ‘human–nature’ relationship (one that breaks down under the Anthropocene, in Bristow’s view). Consonant with the work of Clark and Trexler, Bristow’s literary critical project mobilizes the Anthropocene to jolt the corrosive complacencies of humanism and historicism: ‘To then contemplate the Anthropocene is to be reminded of the need to consider the human subject within the plight of biodiversity loss and species extinction, supervened by human-induced climate change’ (p. 3).

As part of his relocation of ecopoetics Bristow suggests that ‘[e]copoetics, mobilized from this point onwards, is a synonym for contemporary poetry that exhibits a profound sense of selfhood as **Worldliness**’ (p. 6). The final term is **emboldened** as a key definition within the volume, as are all other key terms in a six-page glossary at the end of the book. In this case, a key term in elucidating the Anthropocene lyric, Bristow explains: ‘The human species understood as a historically conditioned, multivalent aggregate of discrete complex entities. From the perspective of the

Anthropocene paradigm, persons are always part of the more-than-human world' (p. 129). In one sense the inclusion of a glossary of idiomatic terms is welcome, but as can be gleaned from this definition, the conceptual originality of the term is open to question, granted its invocation of the Anthropocene into ecopoetics offers a measure of novelty. Nevertheless, this definition is one way in which the three contemporary poets under review offer new modes of lyricizing a newly networked human selfhood under the sway of the Anthropocene. As Bristow succinctly concludes: 'Contemporary poetry deconstructs the position of human as overlord; it dilutes the parametres of encounter to engender a sense of historical continuum in the environment while inviting thoughts on our limited biological continuity and empathic relations to human and non-human others' (pp 108–9). The incoherence of human identities rather than their continuing undeniable stability are cornerstones of Anthropocene critique, and Bristow is correct to pick up on the poetic possibilities of such dissolution and blending. In another respect, and as with the definition of 'Worldliness' above, there are explicit philosophical resonances with, *inter alia*, Deconstruction, Postcolonial Studies, Race Studies and Feminism. Thus, the study of how the works of three outstanding contemporary poets might be read through, and are reflective of, Anthropocene humanity's relation with its planetary co-inhabitants is rigorous and enabling, yet the critical language remains orthodox at other times. Still further, this aspect of the work may have been mitigated by close attention to the ongoing theoretical work on the Anthropocene cited above, or indeed in last year's iteration of this article, namely Clark, Noel Castree and Kate Rigby.

3. Econarratology, Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Animal Studies

'Capitalism,' David Harvey asserts, in *Spaces of Hope*: 'is under the impulsion to eliminate all spatial barriers [...] but it can only do so through the production of fixed space. Capitalism thereby produces a geographical landscape [...] appropriate to its own dynamic of accumulation at a particular moment of its history, only to have to destroy and rebuild the geographical landscape to accommodate accumulation at a later date' (EdinburghUP [2000], p. 59). Harvey's embedding of capital within, admittedly, changing and disposable geographies, offers us a critical route into materialist ecocriticism. By no means uniform in its politics or methods, such 'green' Marxism embraces further declensions of materialist critique that take feminist or postcolonial perspectives on global capitalism's environmental

impacts. Representative of the latter postcolonial angle is Pablo Mukherjee's *Postcolonial Environments* (Palgrave [2010]), in which he explicitly fastens his materialist postcolonial-ecocritical readings of the Indian novel to Harvey's argument above. Drawing still further on the intellectual impetus of materialist critics of postcolonial studies such as Benita Parry and Neil Lazarus, Mukherjee's reading underscores the synchronicities of global neo-imperialism and global capitalist accumulation. His case's affinities with Harvey's viewpoint are most in evidence when he suggests that: 'The rhythm of over-accumulation and underdevelopment means that capitalism is compelled to reorganize space, to expand geographically, and to insert itself unevenly across the globe. In other words, the economic dynamics of capital are etched onto the political, cultural, material and ecological fabric of our world' (p. 13.) Both Mukherjee and Harvey, then, foreground the historicity of ongoing ecological crises. Spatial politics suffuse their readings of capitalism's acquisitive reach across global ecologies. Yet, what is also significant about these affiliated Marxist readings of capitalism's spatial-geographical onslaught is the plasticity of capitalism itself. Though the accumulative underpinnings of capital retain a degree of uniformity and universality, for both Harvey and Mukherjee—in different ways—capital evolves and/or is self-adjusting according to specific historical and geographical exigencies. While Harvey discloses the geographical domination attendant to capital's systemic accumulation, Mukherjee's argument here speaks more directly to the politics of environmental and social injustice. Thus, if any effective resistance to, and critique of, the capitalist architecture of environmental injustice is to eventuate, we need to comprehend the historically contingent cultural processes that produced these reified notions of non-human nature.

If materialist and postcolonialist critics have not always been in accord, ecocriticism may be a form of common ground, but Erin James' *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* brings a third school to the discussion: narratology. James' volume is theoretically dense at times, but is cast in an economical format, taking chaptered approaches to a selection of postcolonial writers including: VS Naipaul, Ben Okri, Ken Saro-Wiwa and Sam Selvon. James' key point is stated from the off, when she asserts that: 'My primary concern in *The Storyworld Accord* is the way in which the modelling and inhabitation of a storyworld that narrative comprehension demands is an inherently *environmental* process, in which readers come to know what it is like to experience a space and time different from that of their immediate reading environment' (p. xi). Some of James' language here gives the reader an insight into the kinds of narratological theorization on which she bases her ecocritical-postcolonial claims.

Of significant interest is the work of David Herman and his elaboration of the mentally generated storyworlds with which we all engage when reading literary texts. Rather than limit our understandings and readings of narratives as predominantly temporal, James, via Herman, seeks to spatialize our appreciation of how and why narratives become storyworlds.

Another of James' opening gambits restates the renewed spatiality of postcolonial narratives, together with the ethical possibilities that issue from such imaginative spatialization: 'Reading narratives thus demands more than simply encountering a setting. It involves transporting yourself to an alternative, imagined environment that simulates the surrounding context of narrators and/or characters. In this sense, the storyworld is an important reading strategy for ecocritical approaches to literature as it foregrounds the virtual environments that readers must model and inhabit to understand narratives' (p. xii). Still more, in James' view: 'Importantly, an appreciation of storyworlds can lead to rich analysis of representations of identity politics in addition to environments, especially postcolonial texts' (p. xii). Again the stress on narratological modelling is striking, and not without some justification, as James pays close attention to the potential for comparative subjective representations of disparate geographical and cultural environments. That is not to say that the work does not gesture to the material realities represented in any given literary text, but that James' approach is such that it would assuredly fail to satisfy the materialist demands of 'green' materialist critics. Above, James indicates that the modelling basis of her storyworlding approach is apposite for ecocriticism given that it re-creates the environments of characters and narrators. Likewise, cross-cultural dialogue can be facilitated through this storyworld methodology; readers can be transported out of the confines of what Edmund Burke called our 'little platoons'. And the cultivation of such 'distant relations' has been a mainstay of postcolonial theorization, if not on the basis of narratological affect. For instance, cross-colonial sympathies and identifications score Irish colonial history. With such intuitions on display James' work intersects with the ethical concerns of the more self-evidently materialist field of environmental justice. By way of example, James offers the following: 'Narratives, via their world-creating power, are an important tool for sharing cross-cultural perspectives of environmental imaginations and experiences, and as such they stand to play an important role in alleviating some of the obstacles that jeopardize sustainable and just transcultural environmental policies' (p. xvi). Yet one is left wondering if this method is too idealist in its convictions. There is a profoundly utopic impulse at the root of James' convictions, and, from one viewpoint, of course, the plain fact is that

there are a series of accepted macro-narratives that have occasioned and perpetuate global climate change. Equally, the multiplicity of the methods on view here leads a degree of scientific interdisciplinarity to the project, but as we have seen, the project retains an over-abstracted concern with the human and the Humanities—limits, again, challenged above by Anthropocene criticism. From another angle, and this is prompted by our discussion of the Anthropocene above, is this econarratological approach simply too anthropocentric? Does it lack the scale-framing self-reflexiveness we have seen in Clark's work?

Of materialist concern for James are the related Indian travelogues of VS Naipaul, texts that have been employed to vilify Naipaul and to ratify his credentials as a sell-out to Western imperialism in the eyes of his contemporaries and later postcolonial critics. Writers from Edward Said and Derek Walcott have polemicized against Naipaul's easy accommodation with the variegated histories of violence and expropriation across global colonial geographies. And one of the texts that has been utilized as a basis for such polemics is Naipaul's first Indian travelogue, *An Area of Darkness* (André Deutsch [1964]). Partly motivated by Naipaul's family genealogy—he is descended from indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent—the tone of the book has more often been accused of having dismissive, and even racist, overtones. Of particular attention to many early readers was Naipaul's persistent focus on the low hygienic standards on display in India. The Indian body and its functions, in effect, became a marker of difference and degraded otherness under Naipaul's jaundiced authorial eye. And James is well aware of the critical orthodoxy that precedes her own rather redemptive retrieval of Naipaul's creative non-fiction, as her introductory remarks on Naipaul rehearse the ideas and idioms of postcolonial critics of imperial travel writing, Mary Louise Pratt figures prominently here. But, for James simply applying the theoretical tools of such postcolonial criticism fails to detect the authorial anxieties of Naipaul's writing in *An Area of Darkness*; far from an uncomplicated and offensive portrayal of his ancestral homeland, the narrative actually reveals some deep-seated ambiguities on the author's part. And these can be best divined through narratological methods. If postcolonial studies 'produces' an all-knowing imperial 'I'/eye, then James' econarratological approach proposes that such one-size-fits-all theorization is marked by critical lacunae. As she suggests:

In this chapter, I argue that this popular interpretation of *Darkness* as engaging imperial tropes neglects the self-conscious failure of the imperial eye/I of Naipaul's narrator. An econarratological reading of

Darkness's storyworld offers an alternative interpretation that suggests the narrator's claims to being able to see India are directly countered by his representations of Indian space and time, or lack thereof. I am interested in the ways that Naipaul complicates his status as post-colonial travel writer with a myopic and unreliable narrator who cannot follow through on promises of clear-sightedness inspired by the generic legacy of travel writing. (p. 124)

Though focused on the (divisive) work of one canonical postcolonial author, the implication is clear: that the textual ambiguities registered by Naipaul's apparently prejudiced descriptions of an 'alien' and colonial environment can inaugurate a revision of received environmental stereotypes. In other words, such a methodology is proposed as a way of rendering the exotic, the spatially distant and different as something, and someplace, that can be embraced with empathetic feeling. The standard means of engaging with Naipaul's narrative is reading the text as an exercise in rational and intellectual dismissal; but James' point is that feeling and bodily sensation are just as formative to the structures and tones of Naipaul's Indian narratives. Moving on to discuss Naipaul's later *India: A Million Mutinies* (Heinemann [1990]), James accentuates the bodily as redemptive in Naipaul's writing about India, and in this section she introduces Stacey Alaimo's ecocritical concept, 'transcorporeality', to her reading. Initially, then, she points out that:

the gentler tone of *Mutinies* is built upon on ideas of travel, representation, and identity that Naipaul first grapples with in his exploration of the limitations of the imperial eye/I in *Darkness*. *Mutinies* picks up where *Darkness* leaves off, not only by continuing this exploration but also by providing an alternative to the unsupported claims of visual authority in the earlier text through a focus on the traveling and experiencing body—an alternative that drastically reshapes the structure of this text's storyworld and the ability of readers to relocate imaginatively to the India within which Naipaul travels. (p. 152)

But from an explicitly ecocritical perspective, it is the movement of Naipaul's body in space together with the 'sensory experiences of his body' that 'fleshes out a storyworld that represents a fuller, more dynamic, and more ecological understanding of the Indian environment' (p. 152). *A Millions Mutinies*, in particular, evinces an explicit concern with the indigenous populations encountered by Naipaul, and this interest extends to the

degradation of their non-human environment. James' reading, then, not only rehabilitates Naipaul from a postcolonial perspective, but gestures to the author's proto-ecocritical credentials in his writing about the pollution of Dal Lake.

In her editorial introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* (CambridgeUP [2014]), Louise Westling outlines the scope of ecocriticism, which: 'includes poststructural critiques of nostalgia and theoretical naiveté in nature writing, Marxist and feminist exposure of political bad faith in the pastoral tradition and deep ecology, examination of literary engagement with biological sciences, links between environmental philosophy and ecocritical theory, critical animal studies and literary animals, postcolonial and globalist perspectives on literature from around the world, "posthumanism", attention to new media that has grown out of literature, and rhetorical studies of public and governmental discourse about the environment' (p. 2). Westling's inventory gives a taste of the breadth and elasticity of ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary field, one replete with internal contradictions and tensions, but also with urgencies and possibilities. *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture*, edited by Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbala Farago, intersects with, but also diverges from, some of the preoccupations namechecked by Westling, but crucially, it strives to offer an impression of the urgencies and possibilities of this global interdisciplinary field for Irish Studies, while, at the same time, providing critical space to exhibit the ways in which Irish Studies—in critical and creative forms—partakes of the political and philosophical energies of ecocriticism and critical animal studies in the broadest sense.

Building on Maureen O'Connor innovative work on Irish culture and animal studies in *The Female and the Species: The Animal in Irish Women's Writing* (Peter Lang [2010]), Kirkpatrick argues that the book 'offers an intervention in Irish studies of the twenty-first century by helping to map a future trajectory for an Irish animal studies' (p. 2). Both O'Connor's intervention and Kirkpatrick and Farago's edited volume remind us of the necessary imbrications of animal studies and ecocriticism. Echoing Tim Ingold's critique of humanism's 'logic of inversion', under which Ingold decentres human agency, the aggregated, and aligned, projects of animal studies and ecocriticism aim for equivalent critical and philosophical estrangement. There is a theoretical density to the book as whole, which facilitates precisely the kinds of vanguard readings suggested by Kirkpatrick. Moreover there are two articles that deal with the Irish Celtic Tiger period, which re-enforce the contemporaneity of the volume, including Maria Pramagiorre's 'The Celtic Tiger's Equine Imaginary', a fascinating snap-shot study of three Irish films,

Into the West (1992), *Crush Proof* (1998) and *Garage* (2007). For Pramagiorre, there was a noticeable oscillation in the received ideas about and representations of horses during the Celtic Tiger. Traditionally aligned with nobility and strength, and larded with nostalgic associations, the socio-economic climate of the Celtic Tiger altered the cultural currency of the horse. Now less symbolic of pastoral haunting, the horse figure and those dependent upon the horse are recoded within specific exclusionary class-based idioms: 'As Celtic Tiger economic and cultural development increasingly focused upon the modernization of urban Dublin, the horse, which had long resided within the city limits in the pony clubs of Ballymun and the Ashtown Stables near the Phoenix Park, not to mention in tourist locales in the city centre, was reconstructed as an overtly inappropriate and even unwelcome sight in the city environs' (p. 218). The second piece on the Celtic Tiger is Amanda Sperry's 'Dennis O'Driscoll's Beef with the Celtic Tiger', which provides a provocative reading of a critically undervalued poet and a writer who consistently challenged the iniquities and the inequities of Ireland's so-called economic 'boom'. As Sperry notes briefly, 'O'Driscoll's poetry of the Celtic Tiger period presents a continuum wherein the exploitation of animals is connected to the exploitation of human workers' (p. 42). The article devotes its attention to O'Driscoll's collections, *Exemplary Damages* (Carcanet [2002]) and *Reality Check* (Carcanet [2007]), and unpacks the plethora of references to indignity and violence the inflicted upon animals. By way of example, Sperry points out that there are a dozen references to cattle in *Reality Check* alone, and that such insistent invocation of the animal is analogous to the 'othering' and, indeed, 'self othering' experienced by the Irish under the concussive culture of consumption during the Celtic Tiger. For Sperry: 'In order to address the level of animal exploitation in Celtic Tiger capitalism, O'Driscoll represents the effects of assembly-style slaughter and then attempts to reconnect the consumer with the product by representing the system of exchange in human terms' (p. 48). For the poet, then, both the human and the non-human remain undifferentiated within the consumer capitalism nexus of Celtic Tiger Ireland. Having been disabused of the long-term tenability of copious wealth; fevered accumulation; and high-value property, it seems appropriate to consider and to endorse a renewed sense of eco-consciousness within the Irish context. Of course, this cannot restore the peaks of wealth enjoyed under the sway of the Celtic Tiger economy, but such eco-consciousness can engender productive senses of humility, as well as attachment to place and community, and sensitivity to the pressing urgencies of global climate change. Thus, if one of the features of the Celtic Tiger, and its subsequent demise, were feelings of betrayal amid

a frenzy of irresponsibility, then the critical resources of ecocritical thinking offer at least a partial alternative to such mind-sets (Eóin Flannery, *Ireland and Ecocriticism* (Routledge [2015])).

Books Reviewed

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Clark, Timothy. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury. [2015] pp. 218. £19.99 ISBN 9 7814 7250 5736.

Hiltner, Ken. *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*. Routledge. [2015] pp. 382. £32.99 ISBN 9 7804 1550 8605.

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Trexler, Adam. *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*. UVirginiaP. [2015] pp. 260. \$29.50 pb. \$65 hb. ISBN: 9 7808 1393 6925.