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REFERENCES

Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt (eds.), *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet : Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 368 p, cloth ISBN 978-1-5179-0236-1, paper ISBN 978-15179-0237-7

- 1 Emerging from a collective project hosted by Aarhus University in Denmark and gathering essays and commentaries by a host of eminent scholars, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet : Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* is a difficult book to classify. Like other cutting-edge contemporary works, it refuses the categories of modern academic disciplines and favors the kinds of enquiry that demand collaboration among diverse fields. The book's very format announces the creative approach that the editors have encouraged. The reader is immediately forced to choose how to begin reading the book, since there is no front and back—each side of the cover sports a title page. Looking at the paler side one sees the word “ghosts” in unobtrusive white letters in the upper right hand corner, while the darker side of the book bears the word “monsters.” I spent several minutes turning from one to the other, wondering whether there had been a mistake. Arriving at the middle of the book, one has to turn it upside down to begin reading again from the opposite side. In this way the editors alert readers that they are embarking on an intellectual adventure that they may find disorientating. Indeed, the collection aims to unsettle received ideas about humanity, individuality, intelligence, and evolution. The essays collected here create new definitions of the ghostly and the

monstrous. The ghosts and monsters of the Anthropocene are not the inhuman apparitions of gothic literature or horror films; instead they are the uncanny more-than-human manifestations of environmental relations that we have ignored, forgotten, or overlooked.

- 2 In sorting these entangled relations into two groups, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt have introduced some order into their complexity; nevertheless, in their introduction to “Ghosts” they acknowledge that the essays in the book “tell intertwined stories” and that “monsters and ghosts cannot be segregated” (G3). So although the book divides very neatly into two sections, each comprising 174 pages and distinguished throughout by a G or an M in front of the page number, the reader cannot help wondering about the choices, finding ghosts in the monster section and vice versa. In fact, equivocation about categories is a key feature of the Anthropocene, and the authors and editors draw attention to the ambiguity and undecidability of the featured research findings. Whether one sees ghosts or monsters depends on the angle from which one considers ecological entanglements, and whether one’s gaze looks back to the past or turns to the present and the future. Two decades ago proponents of Actor Network Theory signaled the existence of hybrid monsters (John Law in *A Sociology of Monsters* and Bruno Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern*). More recently, in *Nature’s Ghosts*, Mark Barrow linked extinction to haunting. The two notions belong together; they refer to the same complex in that they acknowledge the feeling of strangeness evoked by a world that does not fit into the orderly classifications produced by the early naturalists. The ghosts and monsters found in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* seem uncanny because we have only just begun to recognize the complexity of ecological relations—they come to light as a return of the repressed.
- 3 The difficulty of separating the two notions is apparent from the very first article in the “Ghosts” section, Lesley Stern’s “A GARDEN OR A GRAVE ? THE CANYONIC LANDSCAPE OF THE TIJUANA–SAN DIEGO REGION” (G17–G29). Stern examines the reshaped ecology of the Tijuana watershed by studying the canyons on the border between Mexico and the United States. She finds a landscape that has been remodeled by human habitation and then partially reclaimed in an attempt to save some of the wetlands. The area thus seems both monstrous in its unlikely combinations of things and haunted in the absence of what was once there. Kate Brown’s essay “MARIE CURIE’S FINGERPRINT : NUCLEAR SPELUNKING IN THE CHERNOBYL ZONE” (G33–G50) presents a similar ambiguity. The first words of the title allude to the way that the touch of Marie Curie’s fingers has left traces of radiation on her notebooks that a Japanese manga artist finds decades later when examining the papers in a Tokyo library. The second part of the title refers to the essay’s main subject, the explorations of the Chernobyl sarcophagus that Aleksandr Kupny carried out in the years following the explosion. Both stories deal with ghostly atomic hauntings, with the long afterlife of radioactive decay. At the same time, they draw attention to the new monstrosities generated in the nuclear age.
- 4 In the “Monsters” half of the book, two essays that the editors have grouped under the rubric “At the Edge of Extinction” deal with vital entanglements that may soon become ghosts. Peter Funch’s essay, *SYNCHRONIES AT RISK : THE INTERTWINED LIVES OF HORSESHOE CRABS AND RED KNOT BIRDS* (M143–M154) alerts us to the threat that the diminution of the horseshoe crab population poses to a migratory bird, the red knot. These birds time their long migration to coincide with the crabs’ predictable spawning.

However, in the modern era, humans have found ingenious ways to exploit the crab population, from making them into fertilizer to using their blood in medical testing. By focusing on this example, Funch compellingly demonstrates the ecological cascade effect that can result from species' interdependence. In the essay that follows Funch's, Ingrid Parker studies the Great Meadow on the campus of the University of California, Santa Cruz. Casual observers might take this to be an iconic California landscape, yet Parker's study shows that only 7 percent of the meadow's plant species are native Californians. The remaining vegetation consists of species introduced with colonization. The amnesia of the essay's title, "REMEMBERING IN OUR AMNESIA, SEEING IN OUR BLINDNESS" (M155-M167), refers to the general forgetfulness of the ways in which California's indigenous human and more-than human populations co-existed before the European invasion. The word "blindness" refers to our inability to discern the complex ecological entanglements of the spaces we inhabit. Both terms evoke the repressed knowledge that produces the uncanny.

- 5 Another essay in the "Monsters" section, Margeret McFall-Ngai's "NOTICING MICROBIAL WORLDS: THE POSTMODERN SYNTHESIS IN BIOLOGY" (M51-M70) also touches on the ghostly as well as the monstrous. For McFall-Ngai, the "genomics revolution" allows "new modes of noticing" that permit us to see "bodies-as-ecosystems" rather than individuals (M65). At the same time, it shows how many symbiotic relationships are disappearing as the extinction of a single species brings on the loss of many (M66). The fact that the essays in the volume can conjure the ghosts of departed beings or ways of life along with the monsters of manifold interrelations demonstrates the richness of the collaborative project. The book gathers the results of a lively ongoing conversation across disciplines that the editors cleverly describe as "symbiotic scholarship" (M 8).
- 6 Each of the essays in the volume works to bring readers to fuller awareness of the weird interdependencies overlooked by the moderns in their obsession with the concepts of individuality and progress. Debora Bird Rose borrows "the Yolngu term '*bir'yun*' which translates as 'brilliant' or 'shimmering'" (G53) to describe the interspecies dance linking Australian flying foxes and angiosperms. The essay celebrates the vitality of their attraction and, at the same time, warns of the potential catastrophe of the decline in the foxes' population (G51-63). In "UNRULY APPETITES: SALMON DOMESTICATION 'ALL THE WAY DOWN'" (M107-M124), Marianne Elisabeth Lien describes the struggles of Norwegian salmon farmers to rid their fish of the parasites that develop in the confined space of the fishery. Observation of the companionship of salmon with wrasse, a fish that relishes sea lice, has led to the breeding of wrasse as an efficient means of pest control. Lien describes how this new development also requires paying attention to a host of other interdependencies, from the arthropods and copepods eaten by developing wrasse to the good and bad bacteria involved in these maritime relations.
- 7 In introducing readers to hitherto-overlooked relations, the book introduces a host of unfamiliar terms. Attention to language is one of the threads in the book's complex weave. As Mary Louise Pratt remarks in her "CODA: CONCEPT AND CHRONOTOPE," "These writers are not discovering anthropocentric landscapes; they are creating them in language" (G172). This work of creation involves reviving words that have fallen out of use, for example with the decline of the chestnut forests of Monti Pisani. For Andrew S. Mathews, "the loss of common knowledge of the full richness of this linguistic field is a sign of the changing relationship between people and plants" ("GHOSTLY FORMS AND

FOREST HISTORIES” G152). Contributors to the volume also introduce new terms to better situate newly perceived entanglements in readers’ minds. Donna Haraway offers the term “*sym-poesis* . . . it means ‘making with.’ Nothing makes itself ; nothing is really auto-poetic or self-organizing” (“SYMBIOGENESIS, SYMPOIESIS, AND ART SCIENCE ACTIVISMS FOR STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE” M25). Haraway also cites Lynn Margulis’s terms “*holobiont*” (M26) and “*symbiogenesis*” (M27), words that refer to life’s “symbiotic assemblages” (M26) and their modes of evolving. Scott F. Gilbert further explores the significance of the concept of *holobiont* in his essay “HOLOBIONT BY BIRTH: MULTILINEAGE INDIVIDUALS AS THE CONCRETION OF COOPERATIVE PROCESSES” (M73-M89), showing how it upsets the concept of individual autonomy. He points out that “only about half the cells in our bodies contain a ‘human genome.’ The other cells include about 160 different bacterial genomes” (M75). In “HAUNTED GEOLOGIES : SPIRITS, STONES, AND THE NECROPOLITICS OF THE ANTHROPOCENE,” Nils Bubant applies the term “*symbiopolitics*” to the perplexing phenomenon of the Indonesian mud volcano, Lumpur Sidarjo, that enmeshes the local residents displaced by the disaster with the oil company that perhaps provoked it, the politicians that did or did not respond to it, and the stones that people believe concentrate the spiritual power of the volcano (G121-141). The articles collected in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* illustrate the role that language plays in the creation of monsters and ghosts, not only through designation but also through omission. The silence surrounding the complex phenomena the authors address and the effort required to name them are symptoms of the repressed knowledge that the book brings to light.

- 8 The Anthropocene is a concept that attracts new concepts and topples old ones. Karen Barad’s work on quantum theory has done a great deal to shake up our notions of reality. Her essay NO SMALL MATTER : MUSHROOM CLOUDS, ECOLOGIES OF NOTHINGNESS, AND STRANGE TOPOLOGIES OF SPACETIMEMATTERING (G103-G120) brings her ideas about *intra-activity* and *spacetimemattering* into the conversation on ghosts and monsters. She begins with a compelling discussion of the way “time died” in the atomic blast that hit Hiroshima, stopping its clocks at 8 :15 a.m. and burning the shadows of its inhabitants onto its walls. She discusses the ways in which the effects of the explosion persist in hauntings that are part of matter’s history. Andreas Hejnl’s essay “LADDERS, TREES, COMPLEXITY, AND OTHER METAPHORS IN EVOLUTIONARY THINKING” (G87-G102) asks us to contemplate the ways in which his work on tunicates, jelly fish, and sponges disqualifies familiar metaphors and schema depicting evolution. These creatures and their evolution toward greater simplicity “force us to rethink the anthropocentric notions of complexity” (G96). By focusing on ant colonies Deborah M. Gordon debunks the humanist tendency to see actions as originating in individual behavior. Her essay “WITHOUT PLANNING : THE EVOLUTION OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR IN ANT COLONIES” (M125-139) compares different populations of ants to argue for the impact of the environment on collective behavior : “each individual is swimming in a matrix of the collective which is embedded in a changing world” (M128).
- 9 By focusing on the strangeness of the empirical, on the surprising combinations that generate existence, each of the essays in the volume confronts readers with the limitations of modern naturalist thinking.
- 10 It may seem incongruous that a book dealing with some of the ghosts and monsters of the Anthropocene should be entitled *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. The classical

notions of *ars vivendi* and those of its modern avatars have to do with human modes of existence, whereas the writers gathered here are attempting to counter the human-centered bias of conventional research. The plural, *Arts*, hints at the originality of the project, for the essays deal with the myriad forms of multi-species cooperation and coexistence that have developed over the aeons—these are the monsters. When changes in the always-entangled relations that foster life threaten multi-species cooperation, ghosts may emerge in the absent or abandoned life forms that once coexisted. Changing environments demand changing relations, and adaptation may not be rapid enough. Multi-species arts of living may be lost before humans even become aware of them.

- 11 The essays in the collection draw attention to the urgency of changing the human-centered bias of research to address the complexity of other ecologies. They move from observations of specific traces of absence or examples of entanglement to ontological or political speculations. They invite us to pay attention to the diversity of life forms and to marvel at their more-than-human strangeness. Moreover, this book offers an aesthetic response to the Anthropocene. The essays and editorial commentaries address the problems of our era with passion, style, and care. Illustrated with many photographs and drawings by Jesse Lopez this book is an appealing visual and tactile object. While it reveals the environmental injustices of the Anthropocene, it also shows that paying attention to them is a way of cultivating the arts of living.

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Mots-clés: anthropocène, biodiversité, écologie, environnement, extinction, fantômes, monstres

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