

***Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art: Towards Theory and Practice*, eds. Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki, Peter Lang, Berlin 2023, 326 pp.**

In the era of the Anthropocene, the humanities face an urgent task of developing new theoretical and analytical tools. The multi-author volume edited by Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), *Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art*, is an excellent and exceptionally timely response to this challenge. This publication is not only an important voice in the discussion taking place at the intersection of posthumanities and environmental humanities but also a bold proposal for a new narrative that has the potential to inspire researchers across many fields.

The book's conceptual core is the proposed "symbiotic turn," a framework for rejecting anthropocentrism and rethinking relations in terms of mutual interdependencies. As the editors remind us, the concept of symbiosis itself, deriving from the Greek verb συμβιώνω (to live in close connection), has deep etymological and scientific roots (p. 16). The volume situates this idea in its scientific-philosophical heritage, referring to its key role in the Gaia hypothesis developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis (p. 17). By placing symbiosis in dialogue with concepts from new materialism — such as Jane Bennett's "vital materiality," Karen Barad's "intra-actions," and Donna Haraway's "compost kinships" (p. 21) — the book carves out a unique analytical path. The ultimate goal of this intellectual project is to pave the way towards envisaging a more sustainable future, a new post-geological symbiotic era referred to as the "Symbiocene" (p. 34). The publication's authority is confirmed by the forewords from Pramod K. Nayar and Francesca Ferrando, who place the volume at the center of current debates on

multispecies ethics and climate justice. The volume's argument unfolds across a meticulously designed three-part structure that logically guides the reader from theoretical foundations, through practical applications, to deep philosophical grounding.

Part I, "Framing the Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies," builds the conceptual framework for the entire publication. The texts included in this section explore the concept of symbiosis in the context of technology, interspecies relations, and language. In the volume's opening section, Roberto Marchesini argues against the traditional humanistic view of technology (*techne*) as a simple tool, proposing instead that it has a "hybridizing effect," acting like a "virus" that enters the human system and creates entirely new ways of being. This complex vision of human-technology entanglement is then critically examined by Teresa Heffernan, who questions the posthumanist tendency to group animals and intelligent machines together in concepts like "queer kin groups" by highlighting the profound ethical and ecological problems of such an analogy. In her chapter, Mieke Bal provides a crucial methodological critique of the language used in the humanities. She questions prefixes like "post-" for irresponsibly disavowing history and "trans-" for implying a detached indifference. In their place, she proposes "inter-ship," a concept of relational engagement that directly parallels the volume's central theme of symbiosis. The section concludes with Peggy Karpouzou's examination of "symbiotic citizenship" in speculative fiction, analyzing how imaginaries of "smart biocities" can reshape ecological and political frameworks. This contribution not only enriches the theoretical discussion but also provides a tangible example of how speculative thought can inform practical solutions for more sustainable urban futures.

Part II, "Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Literature and Art," serves as a practical application of the book's theoretical framework, moving from abstract concepts to the analysis of specific cultural works. In the literary field, Bruce Clarke masterfully shows how Richard Powers' novel *The Overstory* translates complex scientific knowledge about plant communication into a powerful narrative about a "sentient symphony" of interconnected life forms trying to communicate with humanity. In turn, Irene Sanz Alonso's reading of Rosa Montero's *Los tiempos del odio* demonstrates how symbiotic relationships between humans and androids in a world damaged by climate change can be interpreted as a "healing practice" for broken ecologies. Moving into performance and new media, Aleksandra Łukaszewicz analyzes the work of cyborg artists Neil Harbisson and Moon Ribas, whose technologically augmented bodies become a new kind of medium for perceiving and expressing ecological connections, such as hearing colors or feeling earthquakes. The section is rounded out by Dimitris Angelatos, who explores how sculptures made from waste materials can critique environmental exploitation through a concept he calls "folded tactility," and David Fancy, who contrasts earth-connected "geomancy" with capitalist "technomancy" to propose new ways of imagining ecological futures.

Part III, "Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Continental Philosophy," grounds the symbiotic turn in a rich philosophical tradition, demonstrating its deep connections to post-structuralist and phenomenological thought. Nicole Anderson, for example, uses deconstruction not to erase the boundary between humans and animals, but to argue that only by respecting their profound differences can we truly challenge a human-centered worldview. Fred Evans draws on Deleuze and Guattari to imagine a new political ethic — "Deleuzian cosmopolitanism" — that moves beyond capitalism by including

the “voices” of non-human entities in a new cosmic era he calls the “Chaosmocene.” The phenomenological contributions of Glen A. Mazis and Cassandra Falke explore our embodied, sensory connection to the world; Mazis argues that literary language is the best medium to express our symbiotic “co-birthing” with nature, while Falke uses the experience of being in the dark to reveal our position as receptive, rather than dominant, beings. The volume concludes with Avital Ronell’s provocative reading of thinkers like Nietzsche and Freud, who interpreted weather not just as a physical phenomenon, but as an unconscious, ethical force tied to collective guilt and the urgent need for political change.

The greatest strength of the reviewed collection is its interdisciplinary character and methodological maturity. The editors have successfully gathered a group of distinguished scholars who illuminate the book’s central problem from various perspectives. The dialogue between literary studies, philosophy, art history, and cultural studies is exceptionally fruitful here, leading to conclusions that would not be possible to achieve within a single discipline. The book distinguishes itself from other publications in post-humanism and ecocriticism through its consistent focus on symbiosis as an overarching analytical category. The editors’ introduction offers an excellent overview of how “symbiosis” can function as a bridging concept between Posthumanities and Environmental Humanities, noting that it “transgresses disciplinary boundaries” and “could stand for a re-grounding... in a materially embedded sense of action, awareness, and ethical responsibility for our planet” (p. 24).

Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies makes a vital and timely contribution to debates about the Anthropocene, posthuman subjectivity, and multispecies justice. It will be of great interest not only to literary and cultural scholars but also to philosophers, ecocritics, and artists seeking frameworks for reimagining human-nonhuman relations. What makes the volume’s central concept of “symbiotic posthumanist ecologies” so compelling is its dual function: it serves as both a precise analytical tool for interpreting contemporary culture and an ethical, normative project that points towards the more just and sustainable future of the Symbiocene. In the words of the editors, the “symbiotic turn” they advocate encourages “new epistemologies, ethics, politics, and aesthetics of the future” (p. 26), and this volume will undoubtedly shape and inspire future research at the intersection of ecological thought and the humanities. Furthermore, the collection serves as an excellent resource for academic teaching, providing students and emerging scholars with a model of rigorous, ethical, and deeply engaged interdisciplinary research. Ultimately, the volume is not just a collection of essays, but a compelling manifesto for a more responsible, attentive, and interconnected humanities.

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