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Book Review: *Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art* by Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki (eds.)

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Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki (eds.) ***Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art****, Series: Studies in Literature, Culture, and the Environment / Studien zu Literatur, Kultur und Umwelt, Volume 11,* Peter Lang, 2023, 326 pp., € 68.67. (Paperback), ISBN: 9783631845011

The Philippines, an archipelago of over 7,000 islands located in the western Pacific Ocean, is home to approximately 110 ethnolinguistic groups comprising more than 14 million Indigenous Peoples. These communities are collectively referred to as katutubo. These katutubo/s have historically maintained cultural identities and value systems that are deeply rooted in ecological harmony and reciprocal relationships with the non-human world. Hence, when I encountered the book titled *Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art*, edited by Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki, which offers a posthumanist framework that highlights and valorizes interdependence, co-evolution, ecological entanglement, and relational ontology, I, being a Filipino academic, was lured into reading the collection with much enthusiasm.

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At the outset, I thought that the book's aspiration to challenge entrenched anthropocentric paradigms through interdisciplinary engagement across literature, philosophy, and the arts is ambitious yet timely. Ambitious because it tries to reorient scholars and readers to rethink humanism beyond the anthropocene--post-antropocene continuum. The book tries to convince its readers to interrogate the limits of human exceptionalism and consider another mode of being, characterized by co-constitution, sympoesis (co-creation), porosity, and entanglement. It is timely, as the contemporary posthumanist/transhumanist intellectual discourse is beginning to enter what the editors call the "symbiotic turn" or a moment that points to the Symbiocene. The book is not just going with the flow or responding to a trend; it endeavours to help shape a philosophical epoch where the human is re-situated within a web of interdependencies.

The book informs its readers to acknowledge the blurred boundaries (if there is even a boundary) between and among species, systems, and selves by presenting articulations of symbiotic perspectives from various scholars of varied backgrounds (Bennett's vital materiality, Barad's intra-actions, Fournier's fermentation, Haraway's compost kinships, Tsing's interspecies relationship, Alaimo's transcorporeality, etc.) (20-23). Apart from this theoretical and metaphorical rhetoric about symbiosis, the editors also argue that the symbiotic turn is political and practical. It has potent implications for, among others, the "potential future forms of citizenship" (25). For them, "[a] new conception of citizenship implies an understanding of how we are inserted in an environment different from past centuries. The question is to evaluate and accommodate the concept of citizenship as a co-generative agency distributed among assemblages within the human and more-than-human world" (25). In other words, citizenship must be reimagined as unfixed and fluid. It is no longer the exclusive domain of the human. The right to participate, to belong, and to co-create may also extend to more-than-human assemblages. This may challenge the very foundations of political agency and inclusion. Along with the political implications of this symbiotic turn come changes in the field of humanities. Reason why there arise what the editors and Nayar called symbiotic lens, where key questions about symbiosis and how it is portrayed, conceptualized, and represented in the humanistic disciplines (soft sciences) like literature, philosophy, and art are asked and constantly cropped up in critical discourses.

Notes from scholars such as Pramod K. Nayar and Francesca Ferrando establish a critical posthumanist lens that resists anthropocentrism and techno-utopianism. Clearly, posthumanism achieved feats that paved the way for the symbiotic turn. Nayar reminded us that posthumanism reshaped how people think about ecology and ecosystems by highlighting the relationship of life with non-living entities, including technological systems. Ferrando, on the other hand, claimed that humanity is deeply entangled with other species, even with viruses. She noted that our DNA contains viral remnants (9-10). Posthumanism displaces the human/anthro from its privileged/dominant position at the center of the anthropocentric era. In other words, it addresses and reevaluates humanity's role and impact on the planet. Posthumanism encouraged mutuality and interdependence between the human and the non-human/ more-than-human.

The first part of the book challenges the traditional humanist view that technology merely serves human advancement. Instead, authors Meike Bal, Teresa Hefferman, and

Roberto Marchesini argue that posthumanism disrupts the notion of absolute human autonomy by revealing how technology reshapes human identity through complex, relational, and hybrid interactions. Their essays propose a relational paradigm in which technology acts as a transformative and hybridizing force, reconfiguring human predicates and agency. Within the context of techno-capitalism and global inequity, Bal calls for linguistic precision and promotes the concept of "inter-ship" rather than "post-" frameworks, emphasizing symbiosis, responsibility, and creative co-learning. Collectively, these perspectives advocate for a reimagining of the Humanities. This reimagining does not celebrate human exceptionalism; rather, it envisions the Humanities as a space for ethical, image-based, and multispecies engagement with technoscientific realities. Building on this, Karpouzou introduces "ecoprecarity" and the "smart biocity" as speculative models for sustainable urban futures. Through concepts like "symbiomimicry" and "symbiocracy," it reconceives citizenship as a multispecies, place-based practice. Engaging critical theory and speculative fiction, the text calls for inventive, interdisciplinary approaches to planetary cohabitation.

The texts in the second part converge around posthumanist reimaginings of embodiment, perception, and interspecies ethics, each exploring how art, fiction, and technology destabilize anthropocentric boundaries. Clarke reads the Overstory as a narrative of vegetal agency and ecological communication, where trees call humans into symbiotic awareness. Alonzo's analysis of Rosa Montero's *Bruna Husky* trilogy foregrounds android subjectivity and climate collapse, which challenges humanist definitions through speculative intimacy. Łukaszewicz examines cyborg pioneers whose sensory augmentations (hearing color, feeling seismic shifts) reshape aesthetic experience and social orientation. Angelatos highlights sculptural practices that metabolize discarded and organic materials into ethical interfaces between space, body, and environment. Fancy adds a metaphysical dimension, where the geomancer (189) emerges as a conceptual persona attuned to the earth's resonant energies. This offers an intuitive, non-supremacist mode of geophilosophical engagement that contrasts with the technomancer's alienated rhythms of technocapital. Together, these works propose expanded modes of relationality and sensibility: arboreal, android, cyborg, sculptural, and geomantic. They resist ecological harm and reframe the human within multispecies, techno-material, and energetic networks beyond the Anthropocene.

Posthumanist thought in the third part of the book, as explored by Anderson, Evans, Mazis, Falke, and Ronell, collectively challenges the anthropocentric foundations of human subjectivity by foregrounding entanglement, ethical accountability, and ontological displacement. Anderson critiques the tendency of posthumanism to reify the very boundaries it seeks to deconstruct, arguing that only a radical, relational engagement such as a long-term human-animal bond can sustain its ethical force. Evans extends this critique into the political realm. He proposes a "parrhesiastic cosmopolitanism" (240) rooted in fearless speech and Deleuzian deterritorialization, where human and nonhuman voices co-resonate in a "Chaosmocene" that resists the capitalist axiomatic and the Anthropocene's reterritorializing grip.

Mazis and Falke deepen this posthumanist reorientation through phenomenology. They emphasize embodied perception and ecological receptivity. Mazis draws on

Merleau-Ponty's ontology of "flesh" (251) and poetic language to recover a matrixed sense of being, where perception is dialogical and co-birthed with the world. Falke, building on Merleau-Ponty and Marion, describes human subjectivity as symbiotically shaped by natural forces, especially in moments of sensory deprivation and ecological uncertainty. Ronell, meanwhile, traces a poetic-existential lineage from Goethe to Freud. Ronell, here, reveals climate as a psychic and metaphysical force that haunts human consciousness and history. Collectively, these thinkers call for a posthumanism that is not merely theoretical but lived, attuned to the gestures of the world, the voices of others, and the liminal spaces where being unfolds.

Lastly and finally, there should be an increased interest in the Symbiocene within Philippine scholarship as it tries to shift toward ecological awareness, multispecies responsibility, and relational ethics. This turn toward symbiosis draws strength from indigenous knowledge systems (like the Filipino concept of kapwa), environmental activism, and community-based lifeways that emphasize interdependence and care. It responds directly to the country's urgent ecological challenges and offers a framework that is both ethically resonant and locally grounded.

However, while the Symbiocene provides a compelling foundation for rethinking research and pedagogy, it should not exclude the critical contributions of posthumanist thought. Posthumanism offers tools for examining the lingering effects of colonialism, developmentalism, and anthropocentrism that continue to shape institutional structures and cultural imaginaries in the Philippines. Its critique of the humanist subject, attention to technological mediation, and challenge to species hierarchies can help deepen the ethical and philosophical dimensions of symbiotic thinking.

Rather than positioning posthumanism and the Symbiocene as opposing paradigms, Philippine scholarship can benefit from their convergence. Together, they offer a more comprehensive approach to decolonial practice, multispecies ethics, and planetary care. As scholars in the Philippines seek frameworks that respond to both global intellectual currents and local realities, this combined perspective can support a more transformative and accountable academic culture.

Disclosure Statement

The authors do not share any conflicts of interest.