MacEwan UNIVERSITY

RO@M Research Online at MacEwan

What Does Reading Do in the Anthropocene?

David Hollingshead

NOTICE: This is the author's version of the following article: Hollingshead, D. (2024). What Does Reading Do in the Anthropocene? *Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 57*(1), 109–117, which has been published in final form at https://doi.org/10.1215/00295132-11052401.

Permanent link to this version https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14078/3703

License All Rights Reserved

This document has been made available through RO@M (Research Online at Macewan), a service of MacEwan University Library. Please contact roam@macewan.ca for additional information.

ANTOINE TRAISNEL, *Capture: American Pursuits and the Making of a New Animal Condition*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota, 2020. JENNIFER WENZEL, *The Disposition of Nature: Environmental Crisis and World Literature*. New York: Fordham UP, 2020.

WHAT DOES READING DO IN THE ANTHROPOCENE?

Antoine Traisnel's *Capture* and Jennifer Wenzel's *The Disposition of Nature* are two new manuscripts in animal studies and postcolonial ecocriticism respectively that chart very different paths for environmental scholarship in the wake of the nonhuman turn, yet they are both shaped by a context that exceeds their stated methodological frames. My aim here is to give short accounts of each work before addressing a broader shift in the field of literary studies, which I describe as a reconsideration of texts' political and material efficacy in the face of anthropogenic climate change and species extinction. I suggest that a unique set of institutional factors including neoliberal austerity measures underwriting the turn to "postcritique" as well as the rise of environmental justice-oriented ecocriticism have rendered the fields embracing the nonhuman turn newly uncertain about what texts (and the work of studying texts) *do* in the Anthropocene. The different tracks Traisnel and Wenzel take in addressing this uncertainty can nevetheless put them in a fruitful conversation with one another about the future of ecological approaches to literature despite their significant divergences in focus and method.

Traisnel's *Capture* is a densely theoretical but impressively pithy exploration of the changing shape of animality in nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture. Moving chronologically through the works of John James Audubon, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Eadweard Muybridge, *Capture* tells the story of what Traisnel calls "the shift from the hunt regime to the capture regime" over the course of the nineteenth century (2). Hunt and capture, for Traisnel, name two modalities of apprehending animality that correspond obliquely to the distinction between sovereign power and biopower

traced by Foucault: whereas the logic of the hunt presumes an aleatory encounter with an individuated animal whose only options are to escape or to die, capture takes as its object not individual animals but *the animal* as such, a technologically mediated abstraction that can never be encountered directly but only apprehended as an intangible and perpetually vanishing essence to be administered and regulated as resource. "Capture's ability to present itself as a mere taking—of the animal's likeness," writes Trainsel, "in fact conceals a making—of what I call a new animal condition—a making that is all the more efficient because it appears nonintrusive" (3). The book's chapters address a wide array of capture technologies that illuminate this imbrication of taking and making. Opening with a reading of a patent for the 1883 "Kilburn Gun Camera" (a shotgun with a camera mounted at the end that promised to photographically "bag" animals at the moment of their escape), Traisnel moves through Audobon's ornithological still life drawings, Cooper's speculative settler land management techniques in *The Prairie*, Poe's representation of decryption as a mode of biopolitical detection in "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Hawthorne's critique of Cuvier's taxonomies in *The Marble Fawn*, and Muybridge's use of trip wire cinematography for recording animal motion. Sequentially, the chapters make a persuasive case for the historical eclipse of the logic of the hunt by the regime of capture at the close of the century: Audubon's fantasies of strenuously subduing and memorializing individual birds of prey eventually give way to Muybridge's efforts to grasp the abstraction of *horsepower* through the cinematic freeze-framing of domesticated horses, which would then be repurposed for the expansion of capital and industry in the settler-colonial development of the railroad.

While its cast of literary and theoretical characters will be familiar to many, reading *Capture* produces the enormously satisfying experience of watching a single powerful thesis—the shift from hunt to capture—develop in a way that feels both surprising yet inevitable. As both

a concept and a keyword, "capture" is ubiquitous in Traisnel's archive (it features, for instance, in nineteenth-century legal debates over "rules of capture," the poetry of Emily Dickinson, all the way to Benjamin and Deleuze), and one of the manuscript's central achievements is to retroactively synthesize such disparate traces into a coherent and motivated logic. Traisnel's proclaimed intervention in the field—what he calls a "displacement" of "Foucauldian biopolitics' center of gravity from Man to the animal and the European metropolis to the U.S. settle territory" (3)—understates the project's accomplishments, which show how the development of a new, technologically mediated ontology of animal existence created the material and epistemological conditions for some of biocapitalism's constitutive phenomena: colonial land enclosures, factory farming, anthropogenic species extinction, and the expropriation of black life during and in the wake of slavery. Traisnel is a gifted explainer and rhetorical signposter (his account of Sylvia Wynter's critique of Foucault's eurocentrism is particularly lucid). The study is consistently attentive to the reader's situatedness in the argument (the Introduction contains a helpful axiom chart marking the distinctions between hunt and capture), and its prose is characterized by economy and precision. (The footnotes to *Capture* comprise a full quarter of the manuscript; much, in other words, has been strategically "buried" so that the chapters remain polished and brisk).

Where *Capture*'s analyses are ultimately in the service of a theoretically-informed historicist elaboration of a concept, *The Disposition of Nature* undertakes the construction and deployment of a method—what Wenzel calls "reading for the planet." The prepositional ambiguity in the phrase is purposeful: this is a method that seeks both to *uncover* the signs of a shared and precarious planetary ecology in a range of global media, as well as to read *on behalf of* the planet, for the cause of collective environmental justice. I'll have more to say about the

second sense of the phrase later, but here I'll cover the fundamental principles that Wenzel sees animating "reading for the planet." Building on the work of theorists like Dipesh Chakrabarty and Ursula Heise, who have pushed for rethinking the concept of scale in the Anthropocene, Wenzel describes her method as a "multiscalar reading practice": "Reading for the planet is not disembodied 'global,' cosmopolitan, or universalist reading from nowhere," she writes, "but reading from near to there: between specific sites, across multiple divides, and more than one scale" (2). *The Disposition of Nature* addresses a wide variety of forms and genres including documentary filmmaking (Hubert Sauper's *Darwin's Nightmare*, on the catastrophic introduction of perch fish into the Nile's ecosystem), global anglophone fiction (Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*, a fictionalization of the aftermath of the 1984 Dow Chemical gas leak in Bhopal, India that killed 3000 people and left 300,000 injured), and contemporary Nigerian poetry (Ogaga Ifowodo's *The Oil Lamp*, addressing the violence of corporate petrocultures in the Niger Delta), each of which stages the necessity and difficulty of thinking ecological crisis across scalar discontinuities of time and space.

One oft-repeated motif provides a helpful through-line for the book's wide-ranging chapters: "a world is not *the* world," meaning that the benefits accrued for some through extractive infrastructures always come at the expense of immiseration for others, and that such unequal distributions of harm and risk are by no means self-evident. Indeed, informing the practice of multiscalar reading is a premise Wenzel takes from her Columbia University colleague Rob Nixon regarding the "uneven universality" of environmental catastrophe, that it is "conditioned by biological parameters at the species level, yet inflected by social inequalities" (Wenzel 9). Wenzel is particularly interested in scenes of what she calls "world-imagining from below," where subaltern subjects seek to reframe their local experiences of environmental

degradation within global networks of pollution, trade, and textual circulation. Examining these marginalized perspectives through art, argues Wenzel, is crucial for avoiding the two most common traps of liberal environmentalist narratives: "quarantines of the imagination" and "gentrifications of the imagination," the former enabling the fantasy that *climate catastrophe* "over there" *could never happen* "over here," and the latter facilitating the fantasy of easy universalism, "a gesture toward new forms of community that is blind to the displacements it causes" (33). Because, for example, Western media and corporate narratives surrounding the Bhopal gas leak were able to toggle seamlessly between the logics of localization and universalization—ie. claims that the Indian plant was uniquely ill-equipped to deal with malfunctions sat comfortably alongside humanistic platitudes like "we all live in Bhopal"—Wenzel sees literature's capacity for world-imagining from below as uniquely powerful for critiquing such sleights of hand.

What does "reading for the planet" look like in practice on the page? Where *Capture*'s style is subtractive, distilling its complex historical contexts into brief, illuminating vignettes, and tucking away its asides in footnotes, *The Disposition of Nature*'s is accretive and recursive. Averaging 50-plus pages each (footnotes comprise only 1/10th of the manuscript), the chapters shuttle between multiple geographical sites and timelines, often looping back to pick up dropped threads and then moving forward in a new time and place. Critical conversations in postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, and world literature sit alongside what Wenzel calls modes of "thick contextualization" (43), long and detailed excurses into the political histories of the Niger Delta, Jamaican tourism, and Dow Chemical. The effect can be both invigorating and disorienting. The book's third chapter, "From Waste Lands to Wasted Lives: Enclosure as Aesthetic Regime and Property Regime," for example, begins with a comparative analysis of John Locke and Garrett

Hardin's differing views of the commons, shifts to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century history of British colonial forestry in India, introduces a 1979 short story by Bengali writer activist Mahasweta Devi, moves to a discussion of W.J.T Mitchell and Ralph Waldo Emerson on colonial landscapes, relocates to Ruskin's "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," takes up the early environmental history of the Indian subcontinent, introduces Sanskrit etymology through the structuralism of Francis Zimmerman, returns to Devi's short story via Ruskin and Mitchell, before ending with a discussion of twenty-first century Anthropocene scholarship. "This is what it means to connect the dots from near to there," Wenzel notes in the introduction (44).

Both the pleasures and difficulties of this approach are the results of Wenzel's scholarly commitments. *The Disposition of Nature* makes a persuasive case for its necessity at the intersection of three fields, each of which lacks something the others can provide. To put it a bit simply: World Literature gives us the necessary thinking of global totality but without planetarity, "without regard for the living substrate and political ecology of its world" (28); Anthropocene discourse gives us the necessary thinking of planetarity but without sufficient attention to colonial histories of power; meanwhile, postcolonial literary studies gives us those missing critical resources but is too reliant on ecological literalism, reading texts for the "nature bits" instead of seeing environmental crisis encoded at the level of literary form and genre history. Adding to the complexity of triangulating these discourses and addressing their respective lacunae is Wenzel's new materialist tendency to view agencies as horizontally distributed across the ontological spectrum: "What happens to narrative when setting becomes character, plot becomes setting, objects become subjects, and part becomes whole?" she asks (19). Wenzel is aware that readings of a single text can spiral out into a proliferating network of spatiotemporal relations because of the unstable ontologies those texts assemble; indeed, the

language of redistributed agency inflects her work's self-description: "These chapters record what it means to be troubled by a text, with an eye toward making trouble" (44).

What does it mean for a work of literature or literary criticism to make trouble? And how should we understand the lexical correspondence above between a reader's experience of being troubled by a text (say, by the complexity of the relations it mediates) and its potential to make trouble in the world (say, for the beneficiaries of extractive capitalism)? In different ways, both *Capture* and *The Disposition of Nature* are preoccupied by these questions: Traisnel through his turn to an "ethics" of capture in the book's closing chapters, and Wenzel through her simultaneous incredulity and insistence that reading can be a mode of climate justice. The first sentences of the latter work—"Reading for the planet? How nonsensical is it to think that reading might help 'save the earth'?" (1)—dramatize a tension that runs through much new ecocriticism today: that literature's agency to save the planet is at once obviously nil *and* requires reestablishing. Both this assertion of obviousness and its subversion need some historicizing.

Not too long ago—let's say, the turn of the millennium—it would have been uncontroversial in literary studies to state that literary and cultural texts produce concrete material effects in the world. This premise could have come under a variety of names: some might have referred to a work's performative "force," its potential to not merely describe existing states of affairs but instantiate new ones; others might have cited a text's interpellative powers, its capacity to produce subjects through embodied acts of "hailing"; others could have alluded to the materializing effects of a text's "discourse," its system of enunciations that lend intelligibility to a problem or concept; and others might have referred to the text's hegemonic function, the "spontaneous consent" it elicits on behalf of the powerful. Many of the arguments that clustered around this assumption of continuity between textuality and materiality are almost

too well-known to gloss: the lyric address animates the unborn fetus, the novel form engenders bourgeois interiority, the social sciences establish the category of the homosexual, the European canon produces the "reality" of the Orient, etc. One of the governing methodological assumptions of literary studies, until recently, was that texts *do things*, *make things*, *possess material efficacy*, and that the work of studying them was crucial for redirecting those effects toward different, more salutary social and political ends.

But something has changed, such intuitiveness is waning, and the black box of textual instrumentality has been reopened. The shift can be felt most acutely at the intersection of two institutional currents that have gained increasing momentum over the last twenty years. The first is the consolidation of what has been termed a "postcritical" sensibility in literary studies, the intuition that the demystifying practices of ideology critique have "run out of steam," and that students of the humanities would be better served turning their attention away from the work of revealing a text's imbrication with its social and political contexts towards other, more quotidian "modes of textual engagement" in Rita Felski's phrasing, such as its capacities to enchant, inform, and shock (14). In *Uses of Literature*—the title already problematizing the issue of literature's efficacy as an agential force—Felski questions the ease with which scholars have made such grand gestures in the past: "When we look at many of the works that literary critics like to read," she notes, "it is often far from self-evident what role such works play in either initiating or inhibiting social change" (8). Where literature's ability to change the world is, for Felski, more tenuous than its proponents maintain, its power to affect *individuals* at the site of their encounter with the text remains undertheorized. Moreover, she argues, addressing this gap is a professional mandate, a move that literature departments must make to justify their existence and save themselves from budget cuts, precaritization, and diminishing enrolments. As "[o]ur

students…are migrating in droves toward vocationally oriented degrees in the hopes of guaranteeing future incomes to offset skyrocketing college-bills," literary scholars need to "come up with rationales for reading literature and talking about books without reverting to the canon-worshipping of the past" (2). What's required, then, is an expanded vocabulary of agency to describe the multiplicity of ways texts "hook" everyday readers. Instead of embracing the role of paranoid demystifiers, "forever on guard against the hidden agendas of aesthetic forms," scholars should attend more closely to "the mysterious event of reading," the forms of "attachment" texts solicit, and the "intellectual or affective responses […] involved" (11). Overstating a text's material potency, it seems, now poses a material threat to the profession, whereas cataloguing a text's more modest capacities for affect might prove to be its salvation.

The second current of thought signaling the erosion of confidence in the efficacy of literary works is, as we have already seen, the growing prominence accorded to ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, which seek to implement the tools of literary criticism (close reading, formal analysis, narrative theory, genre critique, etc.) toward the problem of climate crisis. But the promise of an account of the relationship between the teaching and reading of literature and anthropogenic climate change inevitably begs the question: remember that Wenzel's opening gambit is incredulity towards her project's own premises. Take, as another example, the introduction to Min Song's recent study, *Climate Lyricism*:

> I don't know if anything I do matters. I feel powerless. I run through the routine of my days, scurrying from one activity to the next while one thought gives way to another in an unrelated jumble, and this is all that my existence seems to amount to, a blur of mere busyness in the shadow of a colossus remaking shorelines, altering the seasons, transforming planetary hydrologic cycles, ending

the evolutionary pathways of billions of living beings, and changing the very quality of the air and water (1).

For Song, as for Felski, the question of what sorts of changes (the interpreting and teaching of) texts effect in the world has become problematic; and, like Felski, Song's answer is to advocate for a redistribution (or "democratization") of agency to nonhuman entities (including texts, but also the environment itself) "so that thinking about climate change emboldens rather than leads to a shrinking back" (1). *Climate Lyricism* makes clear that the activities of "thinking" and "doing" require a conceptual recoupling; "in the shadow of a colossus remaking shorelines," their imbrication can no longer be taken for granted. And, like Felski, Song argues that enacting this recoupling requires attending more closely to how texts *affect* us—in his case, to their role in "developing a practice of sustaining attention" to environmental concerns (2). A step further than Song in the same direction is the emergence of what Matthew Schneider-Mayerson has called "empirical ecocriticism," a form of sociological literary analysis that homes even closer on the phenomenological experience of reading climate fiction to determine whether, how, and to what extent it "influences readers' beliefs" ("Climate Fiction"). Schneider-Mayerson describes the results of a qualitative study at the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication that compared subjects' responses to reading two short stories, one that narratively represented the effects of climate change and one that did not address climate at all. "Readers of the climate stories became more concerned about climate change harming them personally and harming future generations, rated it as a higher priority, and expressed beliefs that climate change would lead to more droughts, more poverty, and more refugees than they had before reading." Thus, in Schneider-Mayerson's conclusion, "the stories worked" ("Climate Fiction").

In their reassessment of what it means for a text to "work," postcritique and empirical ecocriticism share the stage directions of an agency drama: on the one hand, they reject what Felski (invoking Amanda Anderson) calls "aggrandized agency," the impulse to see literary works as "able to singlehandedly impose coercive regimes of power or to unleash insurrectionary surges of resistance" (Felski 8); and on the other, they *multiply* the number of weaker, more quotidian micro-agencies at the site of an individual's encounter with literature (the power to solicit concern, sustain attention, etc.). In her recent essay, "Extinct Critique," Anna Kornbluh helps explain these shared moves by underscoring postcritique's entanglement with climate crisis discourse (a key text for both is Bruno Latour's *Critical Inquiry* essay, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?"): "The synergy between modesty, weakness, critique out of steam, and the ruin of the university combusts in the very specific historical situation of the post-great-recession university, but a longer arc of theoretical unbinding also tracks with the great acceleration of fossil fuels." (770). Climate exhaustion and critique exhaustion have become coextensive, they both share material roots in institutional capitulations to capital, and their shared investment in individualized affect is the symptom, not the cure.

From this perspective, the claim that an academic study "record[s] what it means to be troubled by a text, with an eye toward making trouble" comes more sharply into focus. For all its stated interest in the environment, *The Disposition of Nature* is very much a study about people, and more specifically, *how people feel* when they read. There is a remarkable moment in the manuscript when Wenzel describes her students' emotional responses to *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*, a hybrid book of photography and journalism that catalogues the environmental and social devastation caused by oil conglomerates in Nigeria.

> For my students, this counter-accounting of the cost of oil elicited powerful reactions; they saw how their own lives were subsidized by the suffering of others whom they will never meet. […] 'Fanon's anger became my anger,' one student wrote in response to the Niger Delta book. This radicalization took me by surprise, and posed challenges of its own. As they grappled with revolutionary violence and ecocide in the Niger Delta, some students began to imagine answering Fanon's call, nearly sixty years after his death (93-94).

It is difficult to imagine a clearer instance in which being troubled by a text results in casting an eye toward troublemaking. And yet, Wenzel is "horrified" by her students' reaction, and commences a long indictment of the supposed objects of their sympathy, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), "a high-profile yet mysterious militant group that began armed operations against oil installations in 2006" on the grounds of their "criminality" (95-96). My point here is not to litigate the validity of MEND's tactics but to highlight readerly affect as the site of an argumentative flashpoint: "Fanon's anger" is the *wrong* response to this text. Taking a page from Felski's handbook, Wenzel suggests that part of the problem is the agency of the text itself, which ostensibly mimics MEND's own militant tactics: "their imaginations [were] captured—held captive even—by juxtapositions of gorgeous color and abject harm verging on the apocalyptic" (98). Thus, the turn to affect and a redistribution of textual agency here enacts a collapse of the distinction between reading and insurgency. Decolonization, in this instance, *is* a metaphor.

The place of Fanon in the above anecdote is particularly interesting given his position in the epigraph for *The Disposition of Nature*. There, Wenzel splices together two sections of *The Wretched of the Earth* to create the impression that her book is, in fact, taking up the very

Fanonian call her students have misunderstood: "This European opulence," the epigraph reads, "is literally scandalous, as it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and subsoil of that underdeveloped world…Perhaps it is necessary to begin everything all over again…to re-examine the soil and mineral resources, the rivers, and—why not?—the sun's productivity" (ellipses in original). Fanon would seem to be advocating here for the intellectual work of retheorizing the natural world to show how it has been variously narrativized, exploited, and made complicit in colonial regimes—ostensibly the task of *The Disposition of Nature*. But this is not what Fanon is saying. The section that Wenzel has excerpted uses "re-examine" in an explicitly materialist extractivist sense: he is arguing for the necessity of postcolonial economic self-determination, "to change the nature of the country's exports, and not simply their destination," in the words missing from the epigraph (Fanon 100). Eclipsing Fanon's materialist (and not particularly eco-friendly) politics with a valorization of theoretical contemplation, Wenzel enacts formally what she elsewhere advocates for explicitly (via the philosopher Kelly Oliver) as "replacing the will-to-mastery of 'political sovereignty' with 'poetic sovereignty': a fluid, provisional, and relational 'power of interpretation' alive to the 'poetry in the codes, rituals, and tracks of each singular living being'" (Wenzel 24).

This pastoralization of Fanon is especially striking given the attention Wenzel pays elsewhere to the "violence" of epigraphs: "What is an epigraph, if not a bon mot…at risk of being read without regard to, or against the grain of, its textual matrix—the discursive lifeworld where it first emerged?" (11). That Wenzel acknowledges this "violence" in the act of committing it is perhaps unsurprising given that *reflexivity* is the readerly response most prized in *The Disposition of Nature*. On a number of occasions, difficulties surrounding the sociological question of what effects texts have on readers are rhetorically solved by appeals to self-

awareness. In her discussion of "Poison," a speculative work of short climate fiction by South African author Henrietta Rose-Innes, Wenzel acknowledges that while reader responses are fundamentally unpredictable—texts "might elicit aversion and disavowal, solidarity, or something else entirely"—the story succeeds where others fail because "I understand Rose-Innes to be cognizant of histories of social division that inform the experience and imagination of eco-apocalypse" (36, 40). To be *aware* of history, and to *feel oneself* aware (as in Wenzel's disabusing her students of romantic notions re: the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), are the conditions for success; Fanonian anger and Fanonian politics are not.

The "trouble" that Wenzel advocates for, then, is of a very singular nature. It is not the trouble of the militant, the trouble of the criminal, or the trouble of the decolonial economist: it is the trouble of the tenured literary critic. To be properly troubled by a text—to reflexively *recognize* the network of histories and genres and environments that have etched themselves upon it, and to *feel* correctly toward those relations—is itself, for Wenzel, an act of causing trouble. It is a trouble caused through the interpretive power of "poetic sovereignty" rather than the strong agential associations of "political sovereignty." It is a trouble that Patricia Stuelke has recently described as the "ruse of repair," wherein the "turn to feeling and care as ends in themselves and limit points of possible action" must be viewed as "inextricable from the cultural and social forms of US imperialism" (9). Wenzel's readings are often dazzling in their scope and erudition, but I am dubious about this second sense of "reading for the planet" because of how sharply it cuts against the book's stated intentions. Too often, the readings are undertaken less on behalf of the planet than a particular historical instantiation of the profession buoyed by neoliberal austerity. Without the collective material demands of political sovereignty, poetic sovereignty won't exist for much longer.

In closing, it's helpful to turn back to *Capture*, which posits a very different model of relation between literary texts and the natural world. To the extent that Traisnel's work takes up the issue of literature's material efficacy, it tends to do so in the (older) languages of discourse and performativity rather than the (newer) languages of affect and sociology. One of the ways capture operates, he notes, is in the mode of "a performative utterance: it constitutes something called 'the animal' as that which disappears" (12). But, like Wenzel, Traisnel's work is marked by the pressure to instrumentalize its environmental close readings. The study ends by postulating "an ethics of life in capture" drawn from the work of Jakob von Uexküll, who, in Traisnel's words, founds an ethology "invested in a relationship to animals that is not based on shared experience or proximity but predicated on the recognition of an unbridgeable distance between living beings (193, 195). Where Wenzel's study seeks to "connect the dots from near to there," granting nonhuman entities the capacities to "gentrify," "quarantine," and "hijack" the imagination, Traisnel's posits an epistemological break between experiential lifeworlds that are "absolutely enclosed yet irreducibly entangled" (195). If the protagonist of *The Disposition of Nature* is the figure of the literary critic who undertakes the labor of connection, the protagonist of *Capture* is the unknowable animal, whose radical alterity offers an injunction to care grounded in the recognition of this untraversable distance. As in Wenzel, the lived practices such an ethics would endorse remain obscure. Nevertheless, two implications that illuminate common ground between the works are clear. An ethics of capture seeks to warn against both "sanctuarizing distance" (195)—what Wenzel might call the "quarantining" of nature for the sake of preservation—as well as naive anthropomorphisms that mask the interests of capital by claiming to speak on behalf of the nonhuman. Charting different paths for the environmental

humanities, Traisnel and Wenzel coincide on a prescription that feels impossible to gainsay: do not mistake *a* world for *the* world.

Works Cited

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1968. Print.

Felski, Rita. *The Uses of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Print.

Kornbluh, Anna. "Extinct Critique." *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 119. 4 (2020) pp. 767-777. Print.

Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. "Does Climate Fiction Make a Difference?" *Literary Hub*. 16 Dec. 2021. Web.

Song, Min Hyoung. *Climate Lyricism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2022.

Stuelke, Patricia. *The Ruse of Repair: US Neoliberal Empire and the Turn From Critique*. Durham & London: Duke UP, 2021. Print.