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Joshua Trey Barnett, *Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2022), 473 pp.

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Joshua Trey Barnett's monograph *Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence* explores the link between planetary loss and the role of affect. Central to Barnett's project is the political and ethical value of affective dispositions to generate capacities for environmental stewardship. Focusing on North American environmental history and present-day multispecies ecologies, and using a hybrid narrative methodology that combines personal experience, critical analysis, and theoretical departures, Barnett's monograph is an effective demonstration of the significance of rhetoric in practice. Barnett's book rests on a twofold premise. Firstly, he asserts that the propensity to mourn losses is not innate to humans as a cognitively superior species; rather, grief is an orientation that needs to be cultivated through conscious mediation, pedagogic intervention, and performative reiteration. Secondly, Barnett establishes a fundamental connection between forms of cultural expression and planetary conditions, particularly those of protracted ecological endangerment and extinction that index the Anthropocene as an era of unprecedented loss. The Anthropocene, as Barnett's introduction to the book argues, is not merely a time of large-scale extinction of flora and fauna; it is also marked by affective impoverishments conditioned by the cultural myopia imposed by neoliberal capitalism and its extractivist ideologies.

Barnett exposes loss as the common ground that humans and nonhumans collectively inhabit in the contemporary age. In our contemporary era of the sixth mass extinction, loss also becomes an anticipatory horizon that simultaneously imperils and implicates a shared locus of multispecies entanglement. *Mourning in the Anthropocene* parses the contours of loss—what it looks like in the present, its historical inheritances and moorings, and the possibilities it might harbour to elicit ethical and pragmatic responses towards questions of accountability, mitigation, recompense, and obligation. Serving as a corollary to the conceptualisation of loss is Barnett's investment in a series of 'hows': how to make loss visible, legible, and legitimate in the first place; how do our habitual systems of meaning-making fall short in comprehending and adequately translating the scale of certain kinds of epochal losses; and, how can alternative mnemonic and commemorative imaginaries that

depart from the logic of instrumentalist rationality be configured to accommodate such incomprehensible scales.

Barnett selects three rhetorical modalities for articulating loss—naming, archiving, and visualising—to unpack how rhetoric’s expressive repertoire generates modes of witnessing the familiar with critical lenses. Barnett’s goal in *Mourning the Anthropocene* is thus to articulate points of convergence between rhetorical habituses and planetary ecologies, showing (and also effecting) how rhetoric’s kinesthetic affordances and worldmaking possibilities can narrow the culturally mandated gap between the two through the generation of relational grief beyond the human. In doing so, he joins a tradition of environmentalist thought going back to Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jakob von Uexküll that approaches questions of ecological coexistence and justice by highlighting the links between ethology (the study of how specific, unique environments or relational worlds are produced by specific beings through daily situated existence) and ethics.

In “Anticipating Loss: On Naming” (33), Barnett’s chapter on the political and rhetorical potential of naming, he draws on Jacques Derrida’s theorisation of the proper name as a hauntological structure implicating us in ongoing and persistent mourning. The name is an anticipatory device that not only indexes a particular entity, but also is something that is meant to outlive the possessor. This device indexes the space of the latter’s finitude and potential absence, thus marking both the subject’s concrete presence and temporal fragility. Names are enunciatory acts that not only refer to what is being nominated, but also embed particular histories, ways of living, cultural knowledges, and relational structures within which the nominal subject is located. More significantly, as modes of articulation and enunciation “by which some humans carve up, categorize, organize, and manipulate the earth” (36), names like other rhetorical toolkits are phenomenological modulations and embodied carvings of acoustic and mnemonic sites. They use particular linguistic, epistemic, synaesthetic, and cognitive formulations to shape a certain structure of experience.

The artworks that Barnett analyzes negotiate with such enforced amnesias through the anticipatory power of utterance and naming’s function as an instrument of commemorative mourning for losses. By creating a participatory aesthetic whereby the spectator is called to intimately connect with loss through a sensuous and personal encounter with the shape of names and their subliminal histories of endangerment and extinction, Ackroyd and Harvey’s *Seeing Red...Overdrawn* (2016) enacts a process of resignification. Similarly, Robert Macfarlane’s weaving of an illustrated narrative around lexically excised words in *Landmarks* (2015) is a form of funerary resistance and melancholic activism.

In chapter three, “Revealing Loss: On Archiving,” Barnett provides a detailed analysis of phenology—the art of witnessing, documenting, and recording seasonal changes through careful attention to local biospheric, climatic, and elemental phenomena. Phenology is a historical practice popularized in North America by Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson in the twentieth century, as well as a component of ongoing citizen science and public knowledge building. As with naming, what makes

phenological data generative sites for environmental awareness is the archive's particular capacity as a rhetorical force field to document, preserve, memorialise, and, thus, make visible and legible the Anthropocene's extinction cascades. Such data are not mere records of ecological changes; they also produce ways of encountering, perceiving, and relating to losses through specific bodily, emotional, and cognitive orientations.

Extinction's relationship with perceptual optics and representational frames is further elaborated in chapter four, "Imagining Loss: On Making Visible." Focusing on a range of visual, installation, and performance art, along with design and architectural projects that mobilise public spaces as commemorative arenas, Barnett explores visual rhetoric's ability to recalibrate the limits and possibilities of what is visible and imaginable, "the rhetorical means of accomplishing salience" (108). From analyses of Jeff Orlowski's documentary *Chasing Ice* (2012), based on James Balog's efforts to document deglaciation in the poles through the use of time-lapse photography, Olafur Eliasson's *Ice Watch* (2014), a site-specific, participatory installation that involves transporting glacial ice from Greenland, to Robert Graves and Didier Madoc-Jones's futuristic photomontages offering dystopian, post-apocalyptic images of familiar cities—*Mourning in the Anthropocene* returns to a classical Aristotelian conceptualisation of rhetoric as an evocative force that elicits feelings in order to influence judgement. Rhetoric indexes grief's larger political function of disrupting normative representational matrices of legitimacy and legibility or what Judith Butler (2009) calls "grievability." As a politically mediated affect, grief passes through a system of distribution that arbitrates on the worthiness of a particular presence to be mourned and remembered in its absence. Barnett's excursus into the affective-ecological potential of rhetoric places him within a critical constellation of recent scholarship in affect and extinction studies, particularly by Kathleen Stewart (2007), Stewart and Lauren Berlant (2019), Thom van Dooren (2019, 2022), and Deborah Bird Rose (2011), whose shared focus on the less spectacular dimensions of loss recalibrate the Anthropocene beyond standard definitions of catastrophe and universal human geological complicity. The book's scholarship also references other explorations of the domain of environmental affect; for instance, Glenn Albrecht's work on the uncanny and unpredictable ecological emotions central to the affective topography of the Anthropocene, and Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman's engagements with generationally transmitted traumatic effects of indigenous habitat destruction by settler colonial violence. As van Dooren's work on scavenger species has shown, acknowledging losses also entails recognition of the limits of discourse. It generates a willingness to be redirected towards emergent discursive possibilities that begin with enmeshments rather than separation as the precondition of an ethically informed discursive praxis. *Mourning in the Anthropocene* grounds itself in such discursive reconfigurations, their rhetorical implications and ethico-political possibilities, offering in the process a nuanced and complex cartography of epistemic humility. Barnett's book is a useful resource for scholars interested in affect studies, rhetoric—particularly, new directions in rhetoric studies

after the ecological turn in the humanities—extinction studies, and indigenous histories.

### Works Cited

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