



Narratives in the Anthropocene era

Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Eds.)

Countering Anthropos with Trans-Corporeal Assemblages in Rita Indiana's Tentacle

*Sarah Sierra*¹

Abstract

Rita Indiana's 2015 novel *La Mucama de Omicunlé*, translated in English as *Tentacle* in 2018, portrays an attempt to intercede in the events leading to an ecological disaster in the year 2024 by appealing to the agent of the Anthropocene, Anthropos, to restrain from world-destroying behaviors. Characterized by an exceedingly autonomous and individualistic nature, Anthropos is compelled by an incessant and singular focus to fulfill personal desires. Seemingly isolated from the enviroing world, Anthropos – as an embodiment of human exceptionalism – fails to comprehend that every subject lives entangled with diverse agents at any given moment. The character of Anthropos emerges, then, as a destructive force that interprets the powerless human and more-than-human entities as expendable objects reserved for the improvement of its privileged position in the world. In contradistinction to the self-perceived exceptionalism of Anthropos, Indiana's novel also generates trans-corporeal assemblages. Successful aversion of the apocalyptic ecological event depends upon these assemblages created by the dispersed consciousness of a prophesied savior, Olokun. This figure's power emerges from the ability to exist simultaneously in distinct moments of time, what Walter Mignolo characterizes as 'pluriversal' that counters the Western hegemonic idea of unilineal temporality and hierarchical classification of subjectivity. However, avoiding the catastrophe that decimates all oceanic life will depend upon a decisive moment when Olokun is forced to choose between his individualistic pleasures to live in the present or to sacrifice himself and his avatars by altering the timeline that would prevent his emergence. In spite of Olokun's doomed human struggle between self-preservation and the collective good, he engenders multi-temporal and intersubjective assemblages capable of altering the disembodied perspective that guides the Anthropos. These diverse entities that he creates - or actants to use Jane Bennet's terminology - unite and display the dynamic and productive experience of converging with the richly populated disenfranchised human and more-than-human inhabitants of the planet. The constellation of actants generates potent connections across temporal and spatial boundaries and produces an alternative ontology that resists conceiving of humanity as removed or above a vibrant and diversely inhabited world.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Anthropos, Trans-corporeal, Rita Indiana, *Tentacle*, *La Mucama de Omicunlé*, Environmental Disaster.

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¹ Associate Professor of Spanish, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24060 USA, e-mail: ssierra2@vt.edu.



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