

WeChangeForLife

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Although the Anthropocene and climate change are widely known as scientific issues, they are also significant cultural problems. In literary criticism and ecocriticism, the main challenges are to steer criticism toward a redefinition of the factors that define contemporary culture, namely any “toxic” value, belief, practice or ideology (e.g., unfettered capitalism or consumerism). As literary scholars, we need to develop new constructive ways to critically interrogate representations of natural and technological landscapes, situations and objects — as well as issues such as climate change — in contemporary culture to continue to foster more ecologically responsible behaviors. Recently, I have started to redefine all my actions and choices as intrinsically political. For example, I have come to consider consumption but also political leanings and social behaviors as having wide and significant societal impacts. I have therefore been writing ecocritical academic and general-audience articles (for Etopia or Eclasio) that seek to emphasize the political dimension of academic research and to promote ecological responsibility. In addition, I often engage in debates and conferences that aim at changing unecological behaviors and attitudes on a — if not global — local scale. Generally speaking, our very conception of social life itself is problematic. In other words, I would argue that any stressful, excessively work-oriented and profit-driven ethos makes it very difficult for people to lower their ecological footprint. For instance, they would

constantly need to use their car to be faster, send many emails for work and eat processed food that would be rapidly consumed to become more efficient. Our “toxic” relationships with work, people and life itself have tremendously adverse effects on our relationship with the environment. I believe that one of the main challenges we are facing is to evolve toward healthier lifestyle and way of living that would eventually allow us to realize that improving the current environmental situation is a terrifying urgency.

Finally, I think that Belgium should become an international example at the political level with respect to climate change and global warming. We need to promote politics that would help citizens and governments stop viewing ecological responsibility as an obstacle but rather as an essential and rewarding goal.

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