

## Gardening the Symbiocene: Andrea Zanzotto's and Daria Menicanti's Poetic Hospitality

Serena Ferrando  
Arizona State University, USA  
[serena.ferrando@asu.edu](mailto:serena.ferrando@asu.edu)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ecoazona.2023.14.1.4828>



### Abstract

This essay explores the weaving together of vegetal and elemental narratives through the poetry of Andrea Zanzotto and Daria Menicanti and shows how their experience of the landscape is punctuated by cross-species encounters, a radical openness to the world, the belief in the common roots of all life, and the embrace of vulnerability in interactions with others. Starting from the premise that these poets comprehend that an emphasis on verballity reflects the anthropic desire to translate life into a one-species code and constitutes an impediment to universal and meaningful communication, this essay argues that Zanzotto's and Menicanti's embrace of the nonverballity of plant communication becomes key in the process of meaning-making. A narration of and with plants is the antidote to what they understand as the ultimate malady of language that prevents it from grasping and conveying the richness of the world after it has supplanted the nonhuman domain. Through a close reading of four poems that illustrates how the poets embrace the eloquent silences, gaps, hesitations, and overabundance of meaning of the vegetal realm, this essay foregrounds the boundary-breaking quality of Zanzotto's and Menicanti's poetry as a space for rich human-nonhuman exchanges. Ultimately, this essay argues that by declining to place themselves above plants and exert power over them, Zanzotto and Menicanti usher in the Symbiocene, the era characterized by multispecies coexistence, mutual support, and interdependence. Their poetry creates spaces where the human can lean into the more-than-human and, for one brief instant, get a taste of existing in harmony with the life that pulsates all around.

*Keywords:* Poetry, Zanzotto, Menicanti, vegetal, Symbiocene.

### Resumen

Este ensayo explora el entrettejido de las narrativas vegetal y elemental a través de la poesía de Andrea Zanzotto y Daria Menicanti, y muestra cómo los encuentros inesperados con diferentes especies, una actitud receptiva radical del mundo, la creencia en las raíces comunes de todas las formas de vida, y la aceptación de la vulnerabilidad en las interacciones con otros puntualizan sus experiencias del paisaje. Partiendo de la premisa de que estos poetas comprenden que un énfasis en la verbalidad refleja el deseo antrópico de traducir la vida a un código de especie y constituye un impedimento para una comunicación universal y significativa, este ensayo sostiene que la actitud receptiva de la ausencia de verbalidad de la comunicación con las plantas se convierte en clave en el proceso de construcción de significados. Una narración de y con plantas es el antídoto para lo que ellos entienden como la enfermedad suprema del lenguaje, la cual le impide captar y transmitir la riqueza del mundo después de que haya suplantado el dominio no humano. A través de una lectura atenta de cuatro poemas que ilustran cómo los poetas aceptan los elocuentes silencios, intervalos, titubeos y la sobreabundancia de significado del reino vegetal, este ensayo pone de relieve la cualidad innovadora de la poesía de Zanzotto y Menicanti como un espacio para intercambios fructuosos entre humanos y no humanos. Finalmente, este ensayo sostiene que al rechazar situarse por encima de las plantas y ejercer poder sobre ellas, Zanzotto y Menicanti introducen el Simbioceno, la era caracterizada por la coexistencia de las múltiples especies, el apoyo mutuo, y la

interdependencia. Su poesía crea espacios donde lo humano puede acercarse a lo más-que-humano y, por un breve instante, saborear la experiencia de existir en armonía con la vida que late a nuestro alrededor.

*Palabras clave:* Poesía, Zanzotto, Menicanti, vegetal, Simbioceno.

The UN declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health and brought together plant advocates from across the globe to engage with the most pressing issues concerning the vegetal world.<sup>1</sup> In the humanities, the current environmental emergency has sprouted ways of writing and studying literature that transcend human dimensions and pull us toward new modes of encountering the nonhuman. An example is Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder's *Through Vegetal Being. Two Philosophical Perspectives*, which designates plants and natural environments as the gateway to "changing our way of perceiving" other living beings and forging a path of coexistence "with all the elements of the environment without aiming at dominating them" (48). Another example is Emanuele Coccia's *La vita delle piante. Metafisica della mescolanza*, whose goal is to define a new cosmology founded on the life of plants (33). Steeped in silence and yet powerfully eloquent (not unlike poetry), gardens' vegetal narratives model for us bridge-building and cohabitation behaviors that do not preclude the preservation of separate roots and individual bodies. However, cultivating the ability to tune into such narratives can awaken "in us a wording foreign to our traditional logos and predictive logic" and "reopen the cultural horizon within which we have been trapped" (Irigaray, "What the Vegetal" 135). This essay explores how the literary strategies of the widely acclaimed Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto (1921-2011) and the lesser-known poet Daria Menicanti (1914-1995) employ vegetal and elemental narratives that, to adopt Walter Benjamin's stance, resist translation into the language of humans and stage encounters among living beings that offer a new way forward (73). Subtly critical of anthropogenic ills, the poets' images of vegetal existences and green spaces create what Giampaolo Piccari defines as "ample spaces of syntony," where human/nonhuman oppositions are resolved in the tension toward a more-than-human dimension (445). For this reason, I use Glenn Albrecht's term Symbiocene to describe Zanzotto's and Menicanti's poetic portrayals of human-vegetal companionship, since it befits the poets' understanding of the "interconnectedness" and "mutual interdependence" between all species and life forms (13, 14). While the term Anthropocene places a distance between human and nonhuman, Symbiocene focuses on nearness. It highlights the proximity of people to animal, vegetal, and mineral life without drawing boundaries between them, recognizing that they are equal agents in the same symbiotic system that is based on collaboration rather than competition.

In *La vita delle piante*, Coccia envisions a world where "everything [...] is fluid, everything [...] is in motion, with, against or in the subject" and where being-in-the-world means the absence of any "material distinction between us and the rest of the world" (45,

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/home/en/>.

46).<sup>2</sup> In this physical and metaphysical environment, permeability is the ruling principle that presupposes that “everything is in everything,” that the world and the subject interpenetrate each other, and that the realities of matter and of the living meet in this fluid environment (Coccia 46, 44). In this world of “immersion” where nothing is fixed, neither the subject nor the object, I am interested in what type of language or communication can exist and what forms, if any, they could take. According to Coccia, the experience of listening to music is an example of this type of communication, since it provides an amalgamation of ourselves with the universe, where soundwaves and sensitivity “perfectly amalgam with each other” (47). This type of communication, then, based on a “relation between a living being and the world [that] can never be reduced to one of opposition (or objectification),” would have to transcend the traditional tenet of language that presupposes an interlocutor and, most commonly, an “other” or a subject and an object (Coccia 47). The poetry of Zanzotto and Menicanti provides examples of this intra-mingling that Coccia calls *mescolanza* or “mixture.” Zanzotto does so stylistically and idiomatically, while Menicanti—not one to experiment—does so thematically and philosophically. Both, however, converge in a vision of overlaps, cohabitation, and entanglements. This essay is a foray into these poets’ vegetal narratives, in which I isolate salient instances from their work and share some reflections on poetry, language, and vegetal life that emerge from them.

For context, I will begin by providing some brief bio-bibliographical notes on Menicanti and Zanzotto. They were contemporaries, and although their work is extremely different, their portrayals of vegetal life offer surprising points of contact. Daria Menicanti (1914-1995) published six collections of poetry during her lifetime, and an additional one appeared posthumously. She was an exquisite poet but is, unfortunately, relatively unknown both in Italy and abroad, even though her work almost perfectly responds to today’s posthumanist calls and for this reason alone would deserve more visibility. As we will see, Menicanti’s work manifests a tendency toward transversality and interdependence and against binary oppositions and the boundaries between species and habitats. Andrea Zanzotto (1921-2011) is extremely well established in the literary canon. Many critics, in fact, consider him the foremost modern Italian poet since Nobel Laureate Eugenio Montale (1896-1981). Zanzotto’s corpus includes fourteen books of poetry and several prose works. Both he and Menicanti were deeply rooted in their respective lands, and their work contains many localized references: Menicanti’s setting is preeminently Milan while Zanzotto’s is Conegliano and Pieve di Soligo, in the Northern Italian region of Veneto. Through the years, Zanzotto’s work became progressively experimental, almost flamboyant in the poet’s quest for ways to exceed and explode the borders of language via the inclusion of special spacing, signs, symbols, drawings, and sounds. Menicanti’s poetry, by contrast, was always poised, classical, epigrammatic, and stylistically contained. As much as Zanzotto tends to build his poems by accumulation, almost hoarding as much information as possible until it completely breaks down, so Menicanti is lapidary. But both poets embody the essence of poetry as described by philosopher Massimo Cacciari in the

---

<sup>2</sup> All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

introductory essay to the volume “*A foglia ed a gemma.*” *Lecture dall’opera poetica di Andrea Zanzotto*. Cacciari observes that Zanzotto’s poetry (and all poetry, I would add) “works tirelessly to reassemble what has been shattered” and “traces the finger along the margins of wounds, marks them [...] presses on them as on the *brutally* correct note” (14). Taking Cacciari’s observation as a starting point, I explore how these two Italian poets strive to “inhabit” the world “poetically,” or to find, in Cacciari’s words, “the concordance, the destined harmony, [and] the conversation” in the world (14).

In “What the Vegetal World Says to Us,” Irigaray pairs the modern neglect of the vegetal world with a progressive removal of humans “from our life”: “If our Western history has gradually neglected the importance of the vegetal world, it likewise forgot what ‘to be’ means. It assimilated this word to an idea extrapolated from any existence [...] removed us from our life” (134). Zanzotto and Menicanti take us back to our life by making the vegetal world prominent and showing the deep and complex entanglements of bodies, language, and earth. Zanzotto plunges us into the landscape with a disorienting, overwhelming poetic experience that is meant to capture the entirety of the life of the territory and its vegetal presence, which overflows the limits of human language. He therefore resorts to an idiom that adheres to the land but that is also constantly frustrated by its inability to transcend the limitations of being word-based and human-based. Let us consider three examples in which Zanzotto’s language takes on vegetal qualities in an attempt to break beyond this barrier.

HIGH, OTHER LANGUAGE,  
BEYOND IDIOM?  
Tongues *blossom* beguile  
*run wild* and betray in a thousand  
needles of muteness and deafness  
they *sink* and are *sharpened* in so very many idiots  
*Tongues* amidst whose *abysses in vain*  
we believe we pass--*blooming, blooming*, in the highest  
flavors and smells, but they are *idiocy*  
Idiom, none other, is *what runs through me*  
in *persecutions and panting h j k ch ch ch*  
idiom  
is that *ossified* gesture  
that accumulates  
evenings *snipped away toward nothingness*  
[...]  
And I drag myself there, to the *untranslatable why*  
*beyond-idiom*  
[...]  
But yes, on the other hand, *some*  
*small poem*, that doesn’t want anything to do with it  
yet lives and dies in idioms--I do care about that  
and about the piece of paper  
*carried off* forever from the windy  
darkness of a *Piave Valley*  
truly definitely  
*Canadian or Australian*  
or *other-worldly*. (*Tutte le poesie* 768-769)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Translated by John P. Welle and Ruth Feldman. Emphasis mine.

The poem desperately clings to the earth as a steppingstone for the “other-wordly” (“aldilà”) in the closing line and ping-pongs between the urge to skip over the “abysses” (“baratri”) that separate us from the fullness of the life of the universe and the impossibility of doing so that is intrinsic to our human nature and our human language. The blooming landscape then turns into an insurmountable wall against which the idiom becomes idiocy: “Tongues amid whose abysses in vain / we believe we pass – blooming, blooming, in the highest / flavors and smells, but they are idiocy” (“Lingue tra i cui baratri invano / si crede di passare – fioriti, fioriti, in altissimi / sapori e odori, ma sono idiozia”). We witness the breakdown of language into a string of isolated consonants “h jk ch ch ch” in the painful attempt to tear the veil with metaphorical scissors, but in vain, since the veil retreats (“snipped away toward nothingness,” “sforbicate via verso il niente”). The poet drags himself to the place of the “untranslatable” that lies “beyond-idiom” where his language breaks down (“intraducibile perché / fuori-idioma”).<sup>4</sup> The poem ends with an apparent declaration of faith in the humble power of poetry (“some small poems,” “qualche piccola poesia”) to cross the borders of human existence (“Piave Valley... Canadian or Australian or other-wordly,” “ValPiave ... canadese o Australiana o aldilà”). This faith is, however, undermined by the ambiguous use of the preposition “da” four lines up, where “rapinato dall’oscurità” (“carried off from the darkness”) may mean both “rescued from the darkness” and “robbed by the darkness.”

Another poem, “Grasses and Manes, Winters” (“Erbe e Manes, Inverni,” from *Meteo*, published in 1996), seems arranged on the page in the shape of adjacent fields, as noted by Luca Bragaja, to mimic the “spatial self-expression of plants” (172; Irigaray, *Through Vegetal Being* 113). I am sharing the poem in its entirety so that you may see its structure, but I will only refer to a portion of it.

Grasses and Manes, Winters  
Pity for *finites and infinites*,  
memories  
perhaps twisting, twisted  
but everywhere everywhere  
arisen independently  
by your intrinsic oblivions,  
grasses amid grasses, Manes, our evenings...  
Iridium filings, crushed quartz  
in winter’s infused darkness,

---

“ALTO, ALTRO LINGUAGGIO, / FUORI IDIOMA?”

Lingue fioriscono affasciano / inselvano e tradiscono in mille / aghi di mutismi e sordità / sprofondano e aguzzano in tanti e tantissimi idioti / Lingue tra i cui baratri invano / si crede passare--fioriti, fioriti, in altissimi / sapori e odori, ma sono idiozia / Idioma, non altro, è ciò che mi attraversa / in persecuzioni e aneliti h jk ch ch ch / idioma / è quel gesto ingessato / che accumula / sere sforbicate via verso il niente [...] E là mi trascino, all’intraducibile perché / fuori-idioma [...] Ma sì, invece, di qualche / piccola poesia, che non vorrebbe saperne / ma pur vive e muore in essi--di ciò m’interessa / e del foglio di carta / per sempre rapinato dall’oscurità / ventosa di una ValPiave / davvero definitivamente / canadese o australiana / o aldilà.”

<sup>4</sup> Danilo Mainardi draws attention to the “semantic impotence” (“impotenza semantica”) of a language that only aims to describe human life and that for this reason cannot “overcome the borders between species” (“valicare il confine di specie”) (112).

precipitous acumens  
made fatuous by violet  
and yet always carried to you  
to grasses, grasses-Manes...  
Trifling Tiny Manes  
whistlings perhaps chilly  
chirping of *elf-threads*  
in mild supplication  
*poa pratensis, poa silvestris*--  
shrunk motility and  
low frequencies of the green: here  
it already gathers spurring spurring  
even in vast befogged *fields*  
consoled to violet  
consolations you dislodge from violet  
O there, away through the narrow and trash  
*poa pratensis, Manes, poa silvestris,*  
would you care for the no longer seamless  
garment  
of the world would you nurture  
the uprooted? Ttsch, sst, zzt  
Would you save them?  
[*poa pratensis, poa silvestris*: the most common grass.] (*Tutte le poesie* 823-824)<sup>5</sup>

The structure of the poem—very open, embracing the empty space of the page, but also very fragmented—matches the break-down of the poet's language as it opens to the more-than-human realm represented by the grass ("erbe"). Throughout the poem, like a refrain, the words "*poa pratensis, poa silvestris,*" which are Latin for the most common grass, paint the scene in the green and purple hues of the fields ("prati"). Bragaja remarks how the repetition of the syllable "ve" in the last five lines of the poem ("*silvestris ... veste ... divelto ... provvedereste ... salvereste*") "propagates utopianly the sounds of the 'green,'" which, in Italian, is "verde" (182). Bragaja also remarks how we can almost hear the blades of grass rustling in the alliterations "finiti e infiniti," "fatti fatui," and "elfi-fili." Emerging directly from the ground, Zanzotto's word-sounds seem to substitute themselves for his language and give the impression of a poem sprouted and living from the land.

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Patrick Barron. Emphasis mine.

"Erbe e Manes, Inverni

Pietà per finiti e infiniti, / memorie / forse distorcenti, distorte / ma che ovunque ovunque / da voi stesse crescete / e dai vostri intrinseci oblii / erbe ed erbe, Manes, nostre sere... / Limature d'iridio, fratti quarzi / nel cupo che invero insuffla, / rapidi acumi / fatti fatui dal viola / ma pure sempre arrivati da voi stessi / ad erbe, erbe-Manes... / Frivoli Pargoli Manes / zirlìi forse geliferi / grillii d'elfi-fili / in supplicità mite / *poa pratensis, poa silvestris*-- / rattratte motilità e / basse frequenze del verde: ecco / già vi si aduna spronando spronando / sì che in lati obnubilati prati / consolate al viola / consolazioni sottraete al viola / O là, via per le strette e trash, / *poa pratensis, Manes, poa silvestris,* / alla non più inconsutile veste / del mondo al divelto / provvedereste? Ttsch, sst, zzt / Salvereste? / ..... / *poa pratensis, poa silvestris*: le più comuni erbe."

Coccia describes the breathing of plants as a cycle of acceptance and alteration, through which, by taking in CO<sub>2</sub> and releasing oxygen into the air, they constantly mold the material world they inhabit (23). Analogously, in Zanzotto's poetry, the more language is used and disintegrated—typically by contradictoriness and polysemy—the more room is freed for meaningful communication. In fact, language and communication in his poetry are almost contradictory terms, so much so that destroying one opens the door for the other. I will not discuss here any of Zanzotto's work written in the Venetian dialect, but I must note that dialect—rather than Italian—provides Zanzotto with more opportunities to adhere to the earth because, as he writes in the notes accompanying his collection *Filò* (1988), the dialect is “viscous” and “poured into the earth” (“viscoso” and “riversato entro la terra”) (Zanzotto, *Tutte* 508, 509). The dialect is, he writes, “connected/unconnected” (“connesso/sconnesso”) and represents the “vague land in which [...] every territoriality fades into the adjacent ones” (“terreno vago in cui [...] ogni territorialità sfuma in quelle contigue”) (*Tutte* 509). The dialect is difficult to bridle because it contains a desire to “tear the margins, go far, ‘run astray” (“stracciare i margini, di andar lontano, di ‘correre fuori strada”) (*Tutte* 506). Zanzotto admires it because it inhabits a liminal space between language and life that the poet strives to capture on the page. Moreover, the orality of the dialect protects it from becoming static and endows it with what Zanzotto calls a “pulviscular-fluid-interreticular nature” (“natura pulviscolare-fluida-interreticolare”) and “the most radiant aperture onto alterity” (“la più smagliante apertura su alterità”) (*Tutte* 510). Zanzotto's poetic idiom, which becomes progressively difficult and intricate with each book, emulates and incorporates—among other things—the Venetian dialect's vitality and “absolute freedom” (“assoluta libertà”) to break the rules of institutionalized language while staying rooted in a place (*Tutte* 506). Zanzotto's definition of idiom, which is the title of his 1986 collection (*Idioma*), is a container of two opposites: a fullness, like a blooming, and a closure, synonymous with idiocy, that he calls “closure-privation-deprivation” (*Tutte* 777). This idiom/idiocy, mentioned in the first poem I analyzed, is described by Bragaja as a “unitary organism [...] nevertheless incessantly subjected to fragmentation” (173). Rooted in the landscape, Zanzotto's poetic language makes itself available to contamination and crosspollination in order to lose itself. To use Coccia's words, it is a language that works against itself to welcome the other (129). It is this full abandonment to the intermingling of places, bodies, and *logos* that animates Zanzotto's poetry and creates a space for new forms of discovery and communication.

Niva Lorenzini's brief but poignant study of Zanzotto's poetry, *Dire il silenzio: la poesia di Andrea Zanzotto*, circles back several times to the extreme stratification of the poet's language, “tirelessly stretching toward the roots, the traces of the lost origin” (“infaticabilmente proteso verso le radici, le tracce smarrite dell'origine”) as he strives to repair the break that separates him from the earth and that lies at the origin of his sense of nature's unknowability (65). The bipartite poem, “There's no telling how much green” (“Non si sa quanto verde,” also from *Meteo*), describes Zanzotto's frustrated attempts to invent a lexicon beyond language that is as richly stratified and—oxymoronically—as eloquently silent as the layers of green in the field that he is contemplating (“this green,”

“questo verde”).<sup>6</sup> I quote here the entire first section of the poem and relevant portions of the longer second section.

I  
There's no telling how much green  
is buried *under* this green  
nor how much rain *under* this rain  
many are the infinities  
that here converge  
that from here wander off  
oblivious, stupefied  
There's-no-telling            This is the relict  
of that                          rainy relict  
the green in which the extreme of the green  
is weaving  
Perhaps *there's-no-telling* for a  
deaf movement of light distilling  
itself in an ephemeral sound, and knowing  
Perhaps allowing blooming, extending  
combining / member to member, rejoining.

II  
How much green sleeps  
*under* this green  
and how much nihil *under*  
this richest nihil?  
You escape, ah, from names  
yet having perhaps a name  
and yet knowing something of it?  
But *who knows* how much rain  
sleeps *under* this most delicate  
superconfident rain  
*who knows* how much luster  
[...]  
“Here where                          I thought of thinking  
and of grasping and unbalancing  
[...]” (*Tutte le poesie* 791-792)<sup>7</sup>

The poem opens with Zanzotto's admission of his own limitations before a nature that Lorenzini has described as “unachievable” (“inarrivabile”) (40). The line “there is no telling” is repeated, in a slightly irregular anaphorical pattern, as if to underline not only nature's ultimate unknowability but also its consequent “unsayability.”<sup>8</sup> The phrase is accompanied by five repetitions of the preposition “under” (“sotto”) that point to the

<sup>6</sup> Zanzotto defined himself as “il botanico delle grammatiche” (“the botanist of grammars”) (*Logos Zanzotto*). The quote is at the 15'15" mark.

<sup>7</sup> Translated by Patrick Barron. Emphasis mine.

“I / Non si sa quanto verde / sia sepolto sotto questo verde / né quanta pioggia sotto questa pioggia / molti sono gli infiniti / che qui convergono / che di qui s'allontanano / dimentichi, intontiti / Non-si-sa Questo è il relitto / di tale relitto piovoso / il verde in cui sta reticendo / l'estremo del verde / Forse non-si-sa per un / sordo movimento di luce si / distilla in un suono effimero, e sa / Forse si lascia sfiorare, si sporge, / congiunge / membra a membra, ritorce. / II / Quanto mai verde dorme / sotto questo verde / e quanto nihil sotto / questo ricchissimo nihil? / Ti sottrai, ah, ai nomi / pur avendo forse un nome / e pur sapendone qualcosa? / Ma chissà quanta pioggia / dorme sotto questa debolissima / sovraconfidente pioggia / chissà quanto lustro [...] ‘Qui dove pensai di pensare / e di afferrare e sbilanciare [...]’”

<sup>8</sup> Note Lorenzini's excellent description of the “unsayable underlying truth” (“indicibile verità sottostante”) in Zanzotto's poetry (21).



stratification of land and language and the poet's urge to dig into the earth in search of meaning ("the infinities," "the relict," "gli infiniti," "relitto") (Lorenzini 2014, 38).<sup>9</sup> Zanzotto's mission to penetrate a deeply restrained ("weaving," "reticendo") landscape ("You escape, ah, from names / yet having perhaps a name," "Ti sottrai, ahi, ai nomi / pur avendo forse un nome") feeds his efforts to found a language that "can locate itself outside particular languages (*beyond idiom*)" ("riesca a collocarsi fuori dei linguaggi particolari (*fuori idioma*)") and imitate the knottedness and intricateness of plant bodies (Lorenzini 17). The impenetrable green web of vegetal life into which Zanzotto pours himself and whose texture, vitality, and reserve he tries to approximate through the imperfect and tragically limited language at his disposal exhibits an inaccessibility and a vulnerability typical of nonhuman life. The rich, thick, and seemingly impenetrable structure into which plants grow to protect themselves against their natural and unnatural enemies crosses over into Zanzotto's texts, making them look similarly exposed, frail, and dense. *Rinselvaticimento* (becoming wild again) is an Italian term that describes well Zanzotto's poetic participation in the secret life of vegetables and his tension to emulate its more-than-verbal communication modes. As the landscape "achieves an unreachable, impenetrable muteness" ("raggiunge una mutezza irraggiungibile, impenetrabile") so does Zanzotto's poem as it stretches past its word-based potential into a more-than-language (Lorenzini 48). While the poet's diction, phrasing, and idiom go out of balance and begin to unravel into vegetal-like muteness ("I thought of thinking / and of grasping and unbalancing"; "pensai di pensare / e di afferrare e sbilanciare"), the distance between Zanzotto and the layers of green in the poem shrinks.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, per Lorenzini's acute observation, the ultimate outcome of a verbalization that has reached its own limits is a resounding silence reverberating with multiple, inexpressible, meanings (25, 48).<sup>11</sup>

In two vivid essays on the topic of green imagery in Zanzotto, Costanza Lunardi describes the "symbiotic communion" ("comunione simbiotica") between the poet and the landscape and the transfer of "wildness" ("selvatichezza") from plants to text visible in the residual traces of green that it contains ("Nel Kēpos" 309).<sup>12</sup> She also notes that wildflowers embody a so-called "botany of trespassing" ("botanica dello sconfinamento"), namely a disregard for human-set boundaries because they evade control and refuse to be contained ("Genius loci" 112). She observes how this phytological term applies to Zanzotto's poems, which—like wildflowers—heroically exist beyond imposed restraints and become prime vessels for an extraordinary display of the more-than-human ("a landscape beyond humanity," "un paesaggio al di là dell'uomo") ("Nel Kēpos" 314). The

<sup>9</sup> According to Karen L. F. Houle, human language excludes or prevents knowing the world in its totality because it relegates difference to a deviation from a human standard (168).

<sup>10</sup> Zanzotto described his goal as "restoring poetry's task" ("riabilitare la poesia al suo compito") of uncovering the truth, especially after WWII (*Logos Zanzotto*). The quote is at the 26'34" mark.

<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Lorenzini Zanzotto uses the words "frastuono e silenzio terminale" ("chaos and terminal silence") (95).

<sup>12</sup> Analogously, Marder argues that "we must leave plenty of room for the untranslatable" when embracing "the language of plants [...] into the more or less familiar frameworks of human discourse" ("To Hear Plants Speak" XXIV). The editors of *The Language of Plants* also recommend the adoption of a language that "implies our attunement to a speaking without words" (XX).

images of precariousness and linguistic instability in this poem (“There’s no telling,” “perhaps,” “who knows,” “Non si sa,” “forse,” “chissà”) also reflect the unsteadiness of a poetic operation adventurously leaping toward “the roots, the lost traces of the origin” (“le radici, le tracce smarrite dell’origine”) (Lorenzini 65).

The mirroring of the corporeal and elemental plantness in the three poems analyzed here makes the traditionally “anthropocentric turf” of poetry a “porous interface” between the verbal and the nonverbal, where what the editors of *The Language of Plants* call the “surplus of meaning” possessed but not signified verbally by vegetal life can emerge—at least partially (2019, 123, XXV).<sup>13</sup> By both anthropomorphizing the landscape and vegetalizing the human, Zanzotto cracks open the quintessentially human medium of language so that it morphs, in part, into an intrahuman tool that can “grow outward [...] with nonhuman others” (Ryan 275, *Through Vegetal Being* 174).<sup>14</sup> With this operation of recalling and reaffirming vegetal life, meanings multiply and words liquify, overflow, and transhumanize into a poetic space where the tenuous chance of ultimate knowledge is, to borrow Pia Pera’s phrase, “almost palpable in its elusiveness” (“quasi palpabile nella sua inafferrabilità”) (87).

In Menicanti, the invitation to open up to the nonhuman is much more composed and understated than in Zanzotto although the message is equally powerful. As she once stated, writing poetry today means “uscire dai limiti” or exceeding the limits (*Il canto del grillo* 767). In a poem titled “Divertissement (Itinerari coniugali),” Menicanti declared, “I would like to farm the land [...] because bucolic was my heart” (“Vorrei coltivare la terra [...] perché bucolico era il mio cuore”), and her complete adherence to the earth infuses her body of work (*La vita è un dito* 338). In the poem “The Word” (“La parola”), from the collection *Ferragosto*, where she gives a rare declaration of poetics, Menicanti compares words to plant bulbs picked from the earth (“ogni parola come un bulbo vecchio / levato dalla sua casa di terra”). I will only refer to some sections of this poem, which is surprisingly long by Menicanti’s standards.

*The Word*  
Every word by itself  
is *scream comfort cry* or perhaps  
just *sound and nonsense*.  
But it is not that it can survive alone  
for long  
[...]  
words are facts –  
believe me – they are the *thing*.  
[...]  
in the chaos of times *endless*  
significances  
have *clumped* themselves onto its *hungry* heart.  
*Peeling* patiently  
each word like an *old bulb*  
*taken from its earthy home*

<sup>13</sup> This statement is reprised by Marder: “Plants, as well as all other living beings, live in excess of the value systems we thrust upon them” (“To Hear Plants Speak” 114).

<sup>14</sup> Lunardi argues that the differences between species fade when Zanzotto assigns anthropomorphic traits to plants (“Connotando la pianta di una valenza antropomorfica, quasi ad annullare la diversità”) (“Nel Kēpos” 307).

you will find in the middle, the *uncorrupt*  
*beginning*, the *true and only*  
*preface* to a future life  
to the growing-with to its *combining*  
with the *always other* with the *always*  
*new—and the attempt at everlasting* (*La vita è un dito* 402)<sup>15</sup>

The old “bulbous” word plucked from its home in the ground, which I will call “bulb-word,” contains “the uncorrupt beginning, the true and single preface / to a future life / to the growing-with to its combining / with the always other with the always / new – and the attempt at everlasting” (“nel centro l’incorrotto / avvio, la vera prefazione / individua a una vita futura / al concrescere al suo combinarsi / con sempre altro col sempre / nuovo – e il tentato eterno”). Discourse and matter in this poem are intimately intertwined in the deeply material (vegetal and mineral) nature of the word, tied in a process of exchange and com-penetration or, to use Coccia’s terminology, “immersion” or *mescolanza*, “mixture” (53). Scholars of material ecocriticism have theorized the “complex interrelations between discourse and matter” that we find in Menicanti’s and Zanzotto’s work. For example, Serpil Opperman and Serenella Iovino describe discourse as “always co-extensive with the material world” (467). The vegetal imagery that we find in Menicanti’s poem reveals the discursive and material correspondences and contaminations where, in Coccia’s words, “the biological and the cultural, the material and the cultural, logos and extension” become indistinguishable (133). According to Iovino, permeability and porosity are key features of this world where “there are not clear-cut boundaries” but “an ongoing morphing process that involves organisms, structures, genes, languages, or ideas” (103, 102). In Menicanti’s poetic world, to use Opperman’s and Iovino’s phrase, “humans, nonhumans, and their stories are tied together” (5). Menicanti’s bulb-words—vibrant discourse-matter agglomerates extracted from the ground—belong to what Jane Bennett views as the web of connections formed by the materiality between human and nonhuman (17). In this poem, the past participle “attempted” (“tentato”) in the concluding line underlines the limitations inherent in our human finitude, which poetry constantly strives to transcend and does indeed transcend only on very rare occasions when the veil between us and the “other” or the “beyond” is lifted for one extremely short instant before closing again. Menicanti’s choice of the word *sfogliando*, whose prefix *s-* signifies a subtraction, hints at our human inability to capture the wholeness of life.<sup>16</sup> The same idea of removal is reprised two lines later in the past participle “taken” (“levato”). Utilized as language, the bulb-word’s “uncorrupt” (“incorrotto”) content-meaning, detached from its material housing, loses its wholeness

<sup>15</sup> Emphasis mine.

“La parola

Ogni parola a sé è grido conforto pianto o forse / soltanto suono e nonsense. / Ma non è che da sola sussista [...] le parole sono fatti – / credimi – sono la *cosa*. [...] nel caos dei tempi si sono agglutinate / al suo avido cuore innumerevoli / significanze. / Sfolgiando paziente / ogni parola come un bulbo vecchio / levato dalla sua casa di terra / ci troverai nel centro l’incorrotto / avvio, la vera prefazione / individua a una vita futura / al concrescere al suo combinarsi / con sempre altro col sempre / nuovo – e il tentato eterno”

<sup>16</sup> Also note how the gerund *sfogliando* (leafing through) contains the word *foglia* or leaf, which reinforces the vegetal imagery of the closing stanza.

and its more-than-human quality. For this reason, from this moment of disinterring on, the poet is forever striving to return the word to its earthy home, to recompose the unity of discourse and matter and thus rejoin the “uncorrupt” and “everlasting” of the concluding line of the poem. It is the essence of poetry to pursue this lost unison endlessly. In Menicanti’s poem the “uncorrupt beginning” of the bulb-word is tainted in two ways: one, through contact with humans—as described above—and two, through use. As they are incorporated into the structures of language, words become crystallized in their meanings as “scream, cry, comfort [...] sound [or] nonsense” (“grido conforto pianto [...] suono [o] nonsense”). We could say that from bulbs, self-contained entities full of potential to be anything, words bloom into just one and only one flower. For this reason, they lose their initial power of all-encompassing communication, which is much broader than just language itself and, above all, transcends the word by being one with the earth. As a consequence, Menicanti concludes, we feel the pull to grow-with and be-with, which is aptly expressed in the poem by the prefix *cum-* of the words *concreocere* and *combinare*. The lack of a period at the end of the poem signifies its open-endedness and constant striving toward that “everlasting” (“eterno”). It also indicates its lack of boundaries and total openness to contamination, or, to use Bennett’s words, the “porosity of the border between a human body and its out-side” (2010, 102). Marco Marchi defines Menicanti’s poetry as a “physiognomic mixture of various natures,” and Menicanti herself stated that writing poetry has always meant “living beyond and in others” and “going beyond the limitations” of living (516, 767).

In both Menicanti’s and Zanzotto’s poetry we find a desire to end what Marchi calls a “competition between two existences,” the human and the nonhuman (516). Starting with a premise similar to that of Zanzotto, where affection often meets concern for a living landscape that is threatened by human expansion, Menicanti’s poetic portraits are often marked by botanical references and are filled with an underlying empathy that crosses the boundaries between species. Her ability to acknowledge the presence of the other—whether human, vegetal, or animal—produces the images of cross-contamination that abound in her work. I will mention just a few examples of cross-species imagery that I have grouped into three categories: animal-vegetal, vegetal-mineral, and human-vegetal. A lizard is a “thin green leaf” (“sottile verde foglia”) or has “just bloomed” (“appena fiorita”); a snake blooms from the neck (“dal collo / sboccia la bestia”); a deer’s antlers are “two warm antler seeds” (“due caldi germogli di corno”) (*La vita è un dito* 254, 274, 475, 530). The moon becomes a flower: “It’s all in bloom, the moon,” and a “flower without a stem” (“È tutta in fiore la luna” and “fiore senza stelo”) (*La vita è un dito*, 266, 406). People morph into vegetal beings: an old man acquires a “blooming beard” (“barba fiorita”); the poet is compared to a leaf; a woman becomes a “thin birch tree” (“sottile betulla”) and a flower with “a long green neck” (“la lunga gola verde”); and, lastly, friends are a “safe clearing in the woods” (“radura”) (*La vita è un dito* 495, 414, 462, 290, 454).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> One note about Menicanti’s anthropomorphized portraits of vegetal and animal life is necessary to respond to possible objections that this practice may be inappropriate. Menicanti anthropomorphizes the nonhuman to identify cross-species contact zones. What Jeffrey Cohen writes regarding stone is also applicable to non-mineral life: “What if it is not anthropomorphizing to speak of a stone’s ability to resist

Menicanti crafted her poems painstakingly, devoting years to perfecting their style, language, and syntax. Their meticulously arranged forms contain within them a sense of the marvelous, so much so that her books may be labeled herbaria and bestiaries populated, in Marchi's words, by "bizarre beings," "cross-bred creatures, suspended between human and nonhuman" (517). Menicanti's semi-botanical, hybrid, metamorphic characters exhibit nearly magical qualities, which, in the overcrowded urban context of Milan, are often overlooked and threatened by destruction daily. Sharing their magical beauty, then, is their fearless and unavoidable way of "flaunting their vulnerability" in a place and at a time when and where the vegetal world seems to be under siege (Mullen 44).

If you look closely, you will notice that Menicanti's choice of words in the examples above communicates the frailty of fledgling life: "thin," "just," "bloom," "seeds." As mentioned earlier, such vulnerability is also acutely present in Zanzotto's poems of the 1960s and 1970s, where it is veined by a very intense anguish before the looming threat of industrial progress during the years of Italy's economic boom. Both Menicanti and Zanzotto, however, give life to what Piccari defines as "ample spaces of syntony" (445). For this reason, I encourage the use of the term "Symbiocene" to describe Zanzotto's and Menicanti's vision, since the term "underlines the interconnectedness of all species and biological processes and life" (Jones 156). Menicanti's poetry makes room for the nonhuman in two complementary ways: one, by zooming in on the plants that inhabit the city but are too often unseen and unheard because our human eyes and ears are no longer attuned to them and their ways of communication; and two, by transcending, through the poetic form, our traditional human-centric ways of deciphering the signs of the world around us so that we can evolve to contemplate and perhaps even adopt, complementary and parallel ways of expression that surpass the verbal.

One very evocative page from Michel Serres' *Biogea* denounces the limitations of being human when it comes to language and communication (196).<sup>18</sup> But, he goes on, "we're beginning to decipher the codes of living things [...] which, like us, receive, transmit, store and process information" (196). Terre Satterfield and Scott Slovic argue that language is not only evolving but also "an agent of [...] cultural change," and Zanzotto's and Menicanti's work demonstrates that poetry is especially suited for this role because of its intrinsic ability to push the boundaries of language beyond verbal communication (102). I see the emergence of this process of deciphering and of leaving

---

[...] and even of its sympathies, alliances, inclinations, and spurs?" (212). Similarly, Bennett argues that anthropomorphism can reveal "similarities across categorical divides and [light] up structural parallels between material forms in 'nature' and those in 'culture'" (99). More than anthropomorphizing, Menicanti's poetic portraits are intersectional suggestions of collaborative survival and of ways of challenging what Kathryn Yusoff identifies as "relations of domination and submission" characterized by "a network of power relations and subordinations" (30, 13). Menicanti employs anthropomorphism more as a rhetorical instrument than a philosophical approach or colonizing worldview.

<sup>18</sup> Serres writes, "we only listen to languages and human rumblings. Constricted in our noises, we shut ourselves up in our clamors. By splashing about in this foul rubbish of meaning, we appropriate the world" (196). Serres condemns "this invasive invasion of our voices" and continues, "we're only interested in ourselves and our properties. Never in others" (196). When it comes to "non-anthropocentric perspectives," Satterfield and Slovic declare the limitations of language, especially that of science and policy, because these perspectives "are simply inexpressible" (2).

room for nonhuman expression in the tension in Menicanti's and Zanzotto's poetry, which all poetry has, to write "the non-written" and express "the non-said." This impossible expression of the inexpressible is the reason why poetry exists. Poetry is an attempt to negotiate otherness and communicate beyond the human. Poetry, as Zanzotto and Menicanti demonstrate, offers opportunities to avoid a univocal and exclusionary use of language by accommodating silence, ambiguity, hesitation, and indefiniteness, and thus bring the world closer. Inspired by Marder's term "vegetal hospitality" that describes the "sense of place" and the "habitable world" that plants provide, I propose the term "poetic hospitality" to explain Zanzotto's and Menicanti's literary openness to the nonhuman ("To Hear Plants Speak" 121). Their poems are an encouragement, in Patrícia Vieira's words, to "broaden our horizons, and [...] make them capacious enough to accommodate our animal and vegetal others" (230). These poets find a "continuum" from human to plant where "literature is a mediator in the aesthetic encounters" with the nonhuman (Vieira 218).<sup>19</sup>

Catriona Sandilands observes that paying attention, as Zanzotto and Menicanti do, to the interactions between multiple species and environments moves one from being simply an observer to becoming "part of these relationships" and respectfully "participating ... as an element" among others in this exchange (Sandilands 26; emphasis in original). As if building on this premise, in "Theriomorphist Manifesto," Roberto Marchesini draws attention to "our inherently hybrid status" and points to the "external contaminations" with which our condition of humans maintains "relational contracts established with the otherness." Within the sphere of Zanzotto's poetics, Andrea Cortellessa reminds us of the poet's use of a "soil-flesh" ("terra-carne") analogy from *Vocativo* and his self-description as "mold" ("muffetta") growing on the surface of the earth in *Conglomerati* (Cortellessa 43, 37). Marchesini's notion of theriomorphic poetics, rooted in a belief in life as "participation and unanimity," reinterprets "spaces traditionally considered human" through a vegetative lens and advances the type of "germination in alterity" that scaffolds Zanzotto's poetic operation and transpires from Menicanti's "bulbous" words. It is not simply an opening up to the nonhuman but—especially in Zanzotto's case—an "introjection of external entities" into the poetry-making process (Marchesini). The poet's work is at one time the medium and the product of a quest to contain, honor, and embrace the landscape's logos that overcomes verbal language (Cortellessa 37). Cortellessa quotes Sara Bubola regarding Zanzotto's tearing up of language not as the "end point but on the contrary [...] as a 'root' or a 'bud' from which 'a new type of poetry can sprout'" (Cortellessa 17). Here, the co-constitutive nature of

---

<sup>19</sup> In *Filò*, written in the Venetian dialect, Zanzotto writes about poetry as a language that overcomes speciesism and binary oppositions: "and poetry isn't in any language / in any place [...] it's fullness and emptiness of the head-earth" ("e la poesia no l'è in gnessuna lengua / in gnessun logo [...] la è 'l pien e 'l vòdo dela testa-tera;" "e la poesia non è in nessuna lingua / in nessun luogo [...] è il pieno e il vuoto della testa-terra") (*Tutte le poesie* 496-99).

Zanzotto's poetry as a cross-species product of the entanglements of human verbal language and plants' nonverbal communication is in full display. Poetry's yen to crossover to the nonhuman realm exposes the limits of our humanness and in the encounters with the nonhumanness of the other reveals, to use Sandilands' words, "our plantiness," or the fact that we "are not really separate ... in our shared aliveness with plants" (Sandilands 19). As such, poetry makes visible the networks of mutual support, tolerance, and magnanimity of the Symbiocene or "organismic kinship", which is "an extraordinary dance of sustenance and relationship" (Sandilands 20, 26). This type of symbiotic "ecological kinship" lies at the core of Zanzotto's and Menicanti's poetic hospitality (Sandilands 19).

In *The Secret Life of Plants*, Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird remind us that in the 1700s Linnaeus' nomenclature system had reduced the vegetal world to static lists of plants species and genii, with the result of estranging people from botanical life (108). The restoration of life, dignity, and enchantment to the vegetal world came nearly a century later from the realm of poetry. It was Goethe, in fact, who, with *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, reversed Linnaeus' work and instilled wonder and passion back into the way we moderns looked at plants by observing them through a poet's eyes and describing them with sympathetic words. As Menicanti wrote in the opening poem of her very last book, *Ultimo quarto*—and I am sure Zanzotto would agree—"what matters / is always the word" ("Quel che conta / è sempre la parola") (*Il canto del grillo* 615). It must be, however, a poet's word, or one that, like a seed, does not tire of developing up and down at the same time, and, like a branch and a root, always searches for new territory to explore.

Submission received 13 July 2022

Revised version accepted 26 February 2023

## Works Cited

- Albrecht, Glenn and Gavin Ban Horn. "Exiting the Anthropocene and Entering the Symbiocene." *Minding Nature*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2016, pp. 12-16.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Benjamin, Walter. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man." In *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings. Volume 1. 1913-1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 62-74.
- Brotto, Denis. *Logos Zanzotto*, in collaboration with Università' degli Studi di Padova (Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari), Gooliver Associazione Culturale, 2021.
- Bullock, Marcus and Michael W. Jennings, editors. *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings. Volume 1. 1913-1926*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Cacciari, Massimo. "I classici di Zanzotto." "A foglia ed a gemma." *Lecture dall'opera poetica di Andrea Zanzotto*, edited by Massimo Natale and Giuseppe Sandrini, Carocci, 2016, pp. 9-15.
- Ceserani, Remo and Danilo Mainardi. *L'uomo, i libri e altri animali. Dialogo tra un etologo e un letterato*. Il Mulino, 2013.

- Coccia, Emanuele. *La vita delle piante. Metafisica della mescolanza*. Il Mulino, 2018.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Stone. An Ecology of the Inhuman*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Cortellessa, Andrea. *Zanzotto. Il canto nella terra*. Editori Laterza, 2021.
- Gagliano, Monica, John C. Ruan, and Patrícia Viera, editors. *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, and Gordon L. Miller. *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. MIT Press, 2009.
- Karen L. F. Houle. "A Tree by Any Other Name. Language Use and Linguistic Responsibility." *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*, edited by Monica Gagliano, John C. Ruan, and Patrícia Viera, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 155-72.
- International Year of Plant Health, <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/home/en/>. Accessed 8 Oct. 2021.
- Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Opperman, editors. *Material Ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press, 2014.
- . "Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2012, pp. 448-75.
- Irigaray, Luce, and Michael Marder. *Through Vegetal Being. Two Philosophical Perspectives*. Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Irigaray, Luce. "What the Vegetal World Says to Us." *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*, edited by Monica Gagliano, John C. Ruan, and Patrícia Viera, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 126-35.
- Jones, Lucy. *Losing Eden: Why Our Minds Need the Wild*. Penguin, 2020.
- Marder, Michael. "To Hear Plants Speak." *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*, edited by Monica Gagliano, John C. Ruan, and Patrícia Viera, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 103-25.
- Lorenzini, Niva. *Dire il silenzio: la poesia di Andrea Zanzotto*. Carocci, 2014.
- Lunardi, Costanza, "Genius loci: Andrea Zanzotto tra erbe e fiori." *Andrea Zanzotto tra Soligo e Laguna veneta*, edited by Gilberto Pizzamiglio. Leo Olschki Editore, 2008, pp. 111-16.
- . "Nel Kēpos della poesia." *Andrea Zanzotto, la natura, l'idioma*, edited by Francesco Carbognin, Canova, 2018, pp. 307-14.
- Marchesini, Roberto. "Theriomorphist Manifesto." [https://www.academia.edu/95839295/Theriomorphist\\_Manifesto](https://www.academia.edu/95839295/Theriomorphist_Manifesto). Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
- Marchi, Marco. "Prefazione." In *Il concerto del grillo. L'opera poetica completa con tutte le poesie inedite*, edited by Brigida Bonghi, Fabio Minazzi, and Silvio Raffo, Mimesis, 2013, pp. 515-17.
- Menicanti, Daria. *Ferragosto*. Lunarionuovo, 1986.
- . *Ultimo quarto*. Scheiwiller, 1990.
- , and Matteo M. Vecchio. *La vita è un dito: tutte le poesie*. Ladolfi, 2012.
- , Brigida Bonghi, Fabio Minazzi, and Silvio Raffo. *Il concerto del grillo. L'opera poetica completa con tutte le poesie inedite*. Mimesis, 2013.



- Mullen, Harryette. *Urban Tumbleweed. Notes from a Tanka Diary*. Graywold Press, 2013.
- Natale, Massimo, and Giuseppe Sandrini, editors. "A foglia ed a gemma." *Letture dall'opera poetica di Andrea Zanzotto*. Carocci, 2016.
- Pera, Pia. *Al giardino ancora non l'ho detto*. Ponte delle Grazie, 2016.
- Piccari, Giampaolo. "Scheda editoriale." *Il concerto del grillo. L'opera poetica completa con tutte le poesie inedite*, edited by Brigida Bonghi, Fabio Minazzi, and Silvio Raffo, Mimesis, 2013, pp. 444-46.
- Ryan, John C. "In the Key of Green? The Silent Voices of Plants in Poetry." *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*, edited by Monica Gagliano, John C. Ruan, and Patrícia Vieira, University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 273-96.
- Sandilands, Catriona. "Vegetate." *Veer Ecology. A Companion for Environmental Thinking*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, University of Minnesota Press, 2017, pp. 16-29.
- Satterfiled, Terre and Scott Slovic. *What's Nature Worth? Narrative Expressions of Environmental Values*. The University Utah Press, 2004.
- Serres, Michel. *Biogea*. Univocal. 2012.
- Tompkins, Peter, and Christopher Bird. *The Secret Life of Plants*. 1973. Harper, 2002.
- Vieira, Patrícia. "Pythographia. Literature as Plant Writing." *The Language of Plants. Science, Philosophy, Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019, pp. 215-33.
- Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocene or None*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
- Zanzotto, Andrea. *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Andrea Zanzotto. A Bilingual Edition*, edited and translated by Patrick Barron, The University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- . *Tutte le poesie*. Milano: Mondadori, 2011.