

## Editorial 13.2

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The question of how we attend to the nonhuman when discussing the array of destructive cultural inflections variously affecting global ecological systems is essential in this era of the Anthropocene with climate change and the ongoing sixth mass extinction event. Or, rather, the question would more accurately be: how could we not attend to the nonhuman lives and forms being impacted by such a wide variety of human actions, without falling prey to absurd assumptions of human exceptionalism that imply our existence at a distance from the other earthly beings? The nonhuman—whether forest, flora, fauna, or other multispecies entanglements with energy and the elements—is, to borrow from Ursula K. Le Guin’s famous 1972 story *The Word for World is Forest*, the world, the living world in which we exist. Though there are plenty of textual examples of fictional/historical human beings (seemingly) existing as if above, free from, or outside of ecological cycles, there is actually no life outside of the air/water/multispecies interactions. And human beings, it turns out (much to our surprise), are no exceptions to this rule. The massive interventions to land and cultural systems such those that take place with colonization and extractive societies influence all of these aspects of the world, human and nonhuman alike (or more-than-human, if you will). When writing and speaking of the human, we are always already writing and speaking of the nonhuman, too, though that is not often enough acknowledged. Our gut biota, for example, always travel with us, as do our other companions, the strange eyelash mites. And we tend to relocate our favorite vegetal beings and other companion species with us when moving across continents as well. Furthermore, colonization was as much about “conquering” land and transporting, exploiting, destroying, moving, and altering vegetal and animal life as it was about transporting, exploiting, destroying, moving, and enslaving other humans.

With such understandings in mind, our guest editors for this volume of *Ecozon@*, Erin James (University of Idaho), Cajetan Iheka (Yale University) and Juan Ignacio Oliva (University of La Laguna), offer an important introduction to, and array of, six excellent essays on the “postcolonial nonhuman.” They note that: “humans are not alone in peopling postcolonial environments. There is a growing awareness that environmental harm affects more than humans and that comprehensive accounts of postcolonial contexts must appreciate the interconnection of humans with nonhumans...” In other words, this is an important intervention in extending our study of postcolonial circumstances to include peoples, lands, and nonhuman beings together, entangled, and not as separate components that might only occasionally be linked. Using the tools of (green) postcolonial studies, material ecocriticism, and the now greatly expanding body of work on the non-

human including both critical plant studies and animals studies, these essays discuss “animist materialism” and “multispecies ethnography” that attribute a validity to a wide array of subjects/agents existing together and being changed by colonial impositions. The collection of essays offers significant contributions to formulating new aspects of environmental justice in startlingly interconnected forms. The places addressed cross borders, continents, and geographies from India to the Mexico-Texas border.

In the general section, there are five essays discussing, not surprisingly considering the relevance of the topics, related issues of the nonhuman, the post/colonial, and the posthuman. From the author of numerous works on the postcolonial green, Graham Huggan, we have the first essay: “From the Serengeti to the Bavarian Forest, and back again: Bernhard Grzimek, Celebrity Conservation, and the Transnational Politics of National Parks.” Huggan offers insights into Grzimek’s famous work for the African Serengeti in the context of his similar but less well-known work for the Bavarian Forest National Park, noting that such parks involve national and transnational discourse as “complex geopolitical formations in which human and animal interests alternately collide and converge.” Our second essay, from Timothy Ryan Day, also concentrates on the nonhuman, but in this case on trees: “The Forest for the Trees: The *umwelt*, the holobiont, and metaphor in Richard Powers’ *The Overstory* and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.” As a work of ecocritical narrative scholarship, Day links the trees of *Macbeth* to his own story of moving with his family during the COVID pandemic to a national park in Madrid where he encountered a tree with rich if disturbing historical implications (the tree marked the site of the death of Spain’s famous Olympic skier, Blanca Nieves Fernández Ochoa, as well as a site of Franco’s forces). Day’s work weaves together beautifully the tales of the trees with the interconnected fungal, vegetal and human lives. Similarly, our third essay by Jemma Deer explores the nonhuman, especially fungi, in an insightful study of “Mycorrhizal Metaphors: The Buried Life of Language and Elizabeth-Jane Burnett’s *The Grassling*.” Deer investigates the underground life of fungi and then moves through Burnett’s metaphors to reveal the subterranean currents of language itself that shares much with the interwoven, dispersed, active growth of fungi. With startling alacrity, Deer’s reading “invites us to recognise what lies below the surface of land, language and consciousness, thereby unravelling some of our restrictive anthropocentrisms.”

The final two essays study Italian- and Spanish-language texts addressing climate change and posthumanism. Anna Chiafele’s essay, “Francesco Aloe’s Climate Fiction: Ruins, Bodies and Memories from the Future in *L’ultima bambina d’Europa*” (*The Last Girl of Europe*), presents the Italian cli-fi novel in terms of a family’s journey across a devastated European landscape revealing its capitalistic, fossil-fueled self-destruction. While the parents experience “petro-melancholia” as they see old burnt up cars, their young daughter has only ever known the post-oil era of environmental and social collapse. Through her eyes as a vulnerable child who nevertheless brings strength in the landscape strewn with dead bodies, we see a new perspective on the spreading devastation. Our final essay in the general section by Nerea González Calvo, “San, le primere princese más que humane,” is a study of Hayao Miyazaki’s famous 1997 film, *Princess Mononoke*, and its protagonist as a posthumanist figure. In the animated film, animation of non-human

subjects is an inevitability, and González Calvo focuses her ecofeminist lens on the narrative's critique of capitalist extractivism. Overall, this volume of *Ecozon@* offers nuanced readings of literary works and film from across the world with insights into the human-nonhuman and energy landscapes that are relentlessly emerging from our endless burning of fossil fuels.

The Creative Arts and Writing section edited by Elizabeth Tavella also presents inspiring works that draw our awareness to the questions of environmental justice and the postcolonial nonhuman. As exquisite complements to the scholarly essays, these artworks reveal, as Tavella writes, the "slow violence of extractivism," particularly on rivers and waterways. The volume's cover picture and additional artworks are from Carolina Caycedo's *Serpent River Book* assembling images from rivers in Colombia, Brazil and Mexico, and exposing racial and colonial history in sharp relief.

Additionally, poems from five different authors are featured in this volume. The first contributions are from Amatoritsero Ede, an international award-winning Canadian poet born in Nigeria, whose poems wind through rivers in Germany and the Niger River Delta revealing the paths of water and the paths of devastating human impact. Second are poems from R. Sreejith Varma who writes poetry in English and Malayalam, and whose works here, as according to Tavella, play with "the synesthetic qualities of language to enter into dialogue with the nonhuman." The third poet featured is Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike, whose inspirations derive from African and African Diaspora, as we see in his poem, *The Raven*. Next, there are three wonderful poems by Manuela Palacios looking at whale-human interactions and dialogues. And finally, Rosanne van der Voet's work, *Living as Water*, returns us to visions of water networks enabling human-nonhuman lives. All these poems link water and/or nonhuman voices and subjectivities in various ways, giving us enriching, alternative perspectives on our entangled lives in these extractivist times.

Finally, there are four book reviews and one review essay in the volume that nicely complement the rest of the volume with the topics of Animal Studies, Climate History, Norwegian subjects, pedagogical hope, and narrative forms in the Anthropocene. In the review essay, Katsiaryna Nahornava considers "Developing Empathy Towards Other-than-Human Animals through Cultural and Literary Representations," with a discussion of Margarita Carretero-González's edited volume *Spanish Thinking About Animals* together with the 2019 book by Wojciech Małecki, Piotr Sorokowski, Bogusław Pawłowski, and Marcin Cieński, *Human Minds and Animal Stories: How Narratives Make Us Care About Other Species*. Michael O'Krent reviews Dipesh Chakrabarty's 2021 *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*; Georgiana Bozintan reviews the 2021 volume edited by Marcus Axelsson and Barbro Bredesen Opset, *Fortellinger om bærekraftig utvikling. Perspektiver for norskfaget [Narratives of Sustainable Development. Perspectives for the Norwegian Subject]*; Uwe Kuchler reviews Elin Kelsey's 2020, *Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis*; and Sean Singh Matharoo reviews Marco Caracciolo's 2021 book, *Narrating the Mesh: Form and Story in the Anthropocene*.

In addition, the editorial board would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Damiano Benvegnù, our former Creative Writing and Arts Editor, who stepped down after years of significant contributions, including his masterful comments and summaries of each volume's featured works. Dr. Benvegnù has handed on the tradition to Dr. Elizabeth Tavella, with whom he co-edited the previous volume, 13.1, and she is now continuing the excellent work for *Ecozon@*.

Thanks are also owed to a number of members of the Advisory Board who are cycling off of the board after many years of service and guidance. We are extremely grateful to: Stacy Alaimo, University of Oregon, USA; Franca Anik Bellarsi, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium; Julio Cañero Serrano, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain; Fernando Galván Reula, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain; Greg Garrard, University of British Columbia, Canada; Esther Laso y León, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain; Juan Ignacio Oliva, Universidad de la Laguna, Spain; Roland Racevskis, University of Iowa, USA; Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Rigby, University of Köln, Germany.