

## Editorial 15.1

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2024.15.1.5462>



In the Anthropocene, some plants are rapidly moving north or south, some are going extinct, and some are going rogue. Rogue, mobile, weedy, invasive, resistant, and even radioactive: the lives of plants have always been dramatic as they feed us all and shape our local systems but their drama is taking new forms, and the arts are formulating new responses to them in our climate-changed, asphalt-covered, globally interconnected world of plantations, urbanization, and industrialized landscapes whether monoculture green or oil-spill brown. Those vegetal beings that we humans deem of value to us are stripped of fertility and torture-cultivated to be free of their entanglements with insects and fungi but tolerant of poison, whereas those we deem to be pests, “weeds,” or “invasive” are declared to be interfering with our rather haphazard reconstruction of ecosystems. We strip the world of much of its biodiversity and curse at the forms that nevertheless resist and emerge. Eager green lives will always spread and engage in lively exchanges with other beings in the forms of flowers, fruits, volatile organic compounds, or underground, fungal-based webs of connection; these facts might be considered a sign of vegetal agency, though defining anything other than the humans as having agency is also all-too-often deemed problematic unless in ecocriticism, fairy tales, and children’s or youth tales. Indeed, literature, film, and other media story forms created for children and young adults often retain the animist magic/reality of our active, vibrant world. One issue for ecocritical study is thus the question of how vegetal life is presented in the texts that remain broadly open to the possibilities of animism such as children’s and youth literature. Do plants in anthropocene texts appear as sustaining, gentle, collaborative, and beautiful beings, or as rogue, invasive, weedy, and resistant pests? What kind of plant-human relations are portrayed and emphasized? Finally, how does the vegetal function as metaphor/s in these texts for younger readers of today?

The special section of *Ecozon@*’s volume 15.1 on “Plant Tendrils in Children’s and Young Adult Literature,” guest edited by Melanie Duckworth (Østfold University College), Lykke Guanio-Uluru, (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences), and Antonia Szabari (University of Southern California, USA) includes seven essays focusing specifically on the variety of both material and metaphorical portrayals of plants in children’s and young adult literature with an emphasis on plant growth, disruptive behaviours, and vegetal communication forms. The first essay, “Seeds of Change: Negotiating Hierarchies in Seed Picturebook Stories,” by Lizao Hu addresses “the entanglement of seeds and children” in picture books emphasizes the agency of

both children and plants. The other six essays consider young adult literature, including Samantha Hind's discussion, "'The Trees Got Their Own Ways to Hurt Us': Entangled Bodies and Fragile Flesh in M.R. Carey's *The Book of Koli* (2020)," which portrays trees gone rogue and becoming flesh eaters. In the ecofeminist study by Sara Pankenier Weld, "Survival, Sustenance, and Self-Sufficiency: Taking a Plant-Based Perspective in Jean Hegland's *Into the Forest*," imagines a postapocalyptic world from which the protagonist flees to begin a new a life in the redwood forest with a more positive take on interactions with trees. In the fourth essay, Sushmita Pareek continues the positive and ecofeminist portrayal of tree-human relations and a coming of age story in: "Unlikely Friends in Patriarchal Lands: An Ecofeminist Reading of 'Sonal Bai' and Sandalwood Tree." While continuing with the postapocalyptic scenarios, Cynthia Zhang's "To See with Eyes Unclouded: Nonhuman Selves and Semiosis in *Princess Mononoke*" features, as the guest editors note, "Hayao Miyazaki's legendary anime to explore the ability of the fantasy genre to expand understandings of interspecies communication—including between plants and human and nonhuman animals."

Turning to ever more optimistic possibilities, Lykke Guanio-Uluru's "Seeds of latent hope: The figurative entwinement of children, adolescents, and plants in Maja Lunde's *The Dream of a Tree*," attends to climate-change fiction with an emphasis on hopeful vegetal metaphors of growth and development for the future. Finally, the seventh essay, Lydia Kokkola's "Living and Dying as Compost in the Torne Valley Mires" studies the Swedish novel, *Som om jag inte fanns* [As though I wasn't there] by Kerstin Johansson i Backe (1978) in terms of both Donna Haraway's "compost" theory and Robin Wall Kimmerer's indigenous perspectives on plant-human relations. The seven essays open a wide spectrum of vegetal views across continents and traditions in the Anthropocene, thereby providing important insights into our understandings of non-human agency and entanglements of which we are all part.

The general section of Volume 15.1 features a full six essays, including two in Spanish, one in French, and the rest in English. Several of the essays readily connect to the special section's focus on the non-human vegetal lives and cli-fi. The first essay, "'Grump Mountain': Viewers' Attributions of Agency to a Climate Fiction Film," is by Heidi Toivonen, Unversiteit Twente, Netherlands, and Cymene Howe, Rice University, USA. The authors consider viewers' responses to a short trailer for the climate-change documentary, *Not Ok: A Little Movie about a Small Glacier at the End of the World*, assessing how and if viewers attribute agency to the volcano, and how the discussion of the trailer impacts their responses. The essay provides important data for affect theory in ecocriticism, noting how films present special opportunities especially when combined with discussion. Within the context of a "structured interview" with viewers about their experience of the short trailer, the authors conclude that "such a video can trigger constructions of complex agency that exceed traditional, simpler representations of the nonhuman environment as either threatening natural force or sublime source of divine experiences" and that longer, more complex stories and conversations might be even better for greater ecological awareness. In other words,

large-scale environmental education about the non-human, whether plants or volcanoes, is essential for situating climate stories and their implications. Stories can make a significant difference, but the impacts are stronger with broad cultural contextualization (including education and conversations). And the second essay, “Narrating Loss in James Bradley’s *Clade* (2015); or, Introducing Arrested Narrative in Climate Fiction,” by Karoline Huber and Geoff Rodoreda, both from University of Stuttgart, Germany, also focuses on narrative strategies for creating empathy in climate fiction. They argue that the Bradley’s portrayal of characters with arrested development “parallels a sense of environmental loss evoked at the level of storied content,” combining the loss of a character arc with the loss of species, biodiversity, and environmental health. Furthermore, they note: “the sudden disappearance of character-story imitates the sudden erasure of species, landscape and lived experience.” While Huber and Rodoreda insightfully focus on the human trajectories reflecting environmental systems, Toivonen and Howe seek, in turn, a greater understanding of how non-human agency reflects human cultural responses. Such different approaches to reciprocity greatly enrich the volume.

The next two essays address poetic possibilities for environmental writing as well as potential insights offered by poems and “cosmo-poetical” paths. First is Juan Ignacio Oliva’s Spanish-language contribution, “Permeabilidades rizomáticas en la nueva poesía de la Partición india,” which discusses a number of female poets from India in terms of how their poetry presents both the “biological reality of the corporeality of territories and their inhabitants” on the one hand, and the “entropic kinetics of tense bodies and their holistic and rhizomatic permeabilities,” on the other. Bertrand Guest, Université d’Angers, France, then expands the focus to a “cosmo-poetic” view of how words can “freely reinvent the world” in his French-language contribution, “Cosmo-poétique et écologie de la parole. Sur Erri De Luca et Jean-Claude Pinson”

The last two essays in the general section also connect to the special section’s focus on the non-human but in very different ways: Jonathan Sarfin’s (University of Bern, Switzerland) contribution, “Then We Build a System to Deal with It”: Waste, the Technological Sublime, and the Object in Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*,” recontextualizes human bodies not in terms of plants or geological bodies but rather in terms of waste and the “technological sublime” that disrupts any possible boundaries while also reinscribing the very boundaries that it seeks to override in a time of global change and planetary scales expressing: “the finitude of the embodied human, the abjection that accompanies the awareness of our relative powerlessness, enmeshed amongst the world around and in us.” Our human bodies are, in short, fully enmeshed with technological, cultural, linguistic, and biological, ecological, and vegetal activities. Finally, Julia Ori’s (Universidad Complutense de Madrid/GIECO-Franklin-UAH, España) Spanish-language essay, “Ruptura con la Tesis de la excepción humana en novelas francesas del siglo XXI: Chevillard, Message y Brunel,” evaluates three contemporary French novels in terms of animal studies, maintaining the focus on the

non-human and the important contextualization of human lives within our broader ecological frames.

In the Creative Arts section of volume 15.1, Arts Editor Elizabeth Tavella, University of Chicago, USA, introduces the two marvelous narrative contributions, each appearing with their own illustrations by noting the power of the vegetal not only to nourish our bodies but also our stories and imaginative works in all forms. Even as many plants go extinct or are transformed into exploited resources, Tavella suggests that plants continue to dominate as our powerful, photosynthetic allies, our plant kin, whose lives and agentic capacities continually inspire. Looking at both “western” views on plants as well as indigenous ideas such as the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer, Tavella describes how the artists offer us “stories with plants” rather than just being “about” them. The cover image is from Trace Balla, whose “cartoon-style drawings” whimsically speak to the volume’s focus on children’s and young adult’s literature but also to the need to contextualize human beings in the larger and life-giving context of the vegetal beings. The first tale is authored by Wendy Wuyts; she has translated and retold a Flemish folktale featuring nettles in a manner reinscribing their identity as cooperative, resilient, and agents of “mutual care” rather than as “invasive.” Included within this ecofeminist tale presenting active, agentic plants, are three powerful illustrations by the Belgian illustrator, Yule Hermans, who depicts the nettle spinner surrounded by the vegetal with an aesthetic frame of nettles surrounding her. The second tale is Bijal Vachharajani’s piece that also focuses on human-plant entanglements, this time in Shajapur, India, a tale opening with the author having a dialogue between herself and houseplants as “co-protagonists.” The humor of the story also evokes the pain of loss both personal and ecological, with the plants perspectives and bodies allowing the significant leap in scale from local to global. Illustrations for this introspective text are from Rajiv Eipe, who gives the talking plants beautiful bodies engaged in conversation such that we see all of the vegetal beings but just half of the human participant.

*Ecozon@* 15.1 also includes eight book reviews of recent environmental humanities works with an wide-ranging array of topics and traditions including climate-change fiction, ecofeminism, rethinking “nature,” mourning in the Anthropocene, the blue humanities, and animal studies. The section opens with a review essay by Kate Judith, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, presenting two recent books on climate change: Justina Poray-Wybranowska’s *Climate Change, Ecological Catastrophe, and the Contemporary Postcolonial Novel* (Routledge, 2020), 236 pp.; and Russell McDougall, John C. Ryan, and Pauline Reynolds, eds. *Postcolonial Literatures of Climate Change* (Brill, 2022), 408 pp. Second is Tom Hertweck’s review of Peter Remien and Scott Slovic, Eds., *Nature and Literary Studies* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2022), 418 pp. The third review is by Alejandro Rivero-Vadillo, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid / GIECO-FRANKLIN-UAH, España, looking at Ignacio Quintanilla’s and Pilar Andrade’s, *Los cien ecologismos. Una introducción al pensamiento del medioambiente* (Ediciones Encuentro, 2023), 294 pp. Fourthly, Julia Kuznetski (née Tofantšuk), Tallinn University, Estonia, reviews Terry Gifford’s *D. H.*

*Lawrence, Ecofeminism and Nature* (London, New York: Routledge, 2023), 193 pp. The fifth review is by Paromita Patranobish, Mount Carmel College, India, who reads Joshua Trey Barnett's *Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2022), 473 pp. Sixth, Eleonor Botoman, New York University, discusses Killian Quigley, *Reading Underwater Wreckage* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 184 pp. In the seventh review, Akshita Bhardwa, English and Foreign Languages University, India, comments on Dominic O'Key's *Creaturely Forms in Contemporary Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 206pp. And the eighth and final review by Jacob Abell, Baylor University, USA, reads Liam Lewis, *Animal Soundscapes in Anglo-Norman Texts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2022) pp. 197.