Editorial 16.1

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The singular, solitary subject of white masculinity with its bounded body set off from the natural world via "rationality" and technology stands atop a mountain surveying His realm. This hyperbolized Man feels the awe, the terror, the vastness—but then measures it, represents its unrepresentability to himself, and so contains it within His own individual and so very rational mind, thereby putting "Nature" back in its chaotic, irrational, likely feminized, "Otherized," and definitely conquerable, place. Such versions of the sublime have dominated in the Post-Holocene (yet, have we ever been truly Holocene?), more commonly known as the Anthropocene, or, more accurately in the mind of this editor, the Plantation-Industriocene (the massive exploitations and colonizations of people, land, plants, animals, etc. need to be thought together with the fossil-fueled accelerations), and yet, the resonance of awe in response to our vast world remains, perhaps, a viable means of rethinking our existence fully within ecological systems where we (still) abide. For one thing, the sublime raises the specter of scale and unscalability, as it were, an issue of extreme importance in considering the rather ungraspable enormity of the industrialized-human impact on ecosytems across the entire planet. Indeed, the special section of *Ecozon*@'s volume 16.1 provides a plethora of insightfully provocative re-assessments of the sublime in all its grandiose horror. In "Anthropocene Sublime," guest editors David Lombard, the Research Foundation Flanders and KU Leuven, Belgium; Alison Sperling, Florida State University, United States; and Pieter Vermeulen, KU Leuven, Belgium raise the question of how the human ability to perceive the sublime, feel the awe, and then measure or (mis-) represent it within the "human" mind can be more productively rewritten both ecologically and ecocritically by beings other than the Subject Male of White Rationality noted above. Their call for papers for this special topic brought in a record number of submissions to *Ecozon*@, indicating the significant interest and potential for sublime pluralities, alternative and inhuman (but not necessarily inhumane) versions of the sublime, for rejecting the old Burkean-Kantian versions of humanized sublimity, or for resituating them within alternative trajectories emerging from other voices and other beings on other scales.

Of the nine essays in the special section of *Ecozon*@ 16.1, there are seven in English, one in French, and one in German. The section opens with an inspiring Introduction from the guest editors Lombard, Sperling, and Vermeulen, who first

feature French artist Pierre Huyghe's 2008 twenty-four-hour exhibit, "A Forest of Lines," in the Sydney Opera House. By transforming the Opera House into a temporary forest, the editors note "how faithfully it sets up a sublime scenario—a scenario in which, in Immanuel Kant's classic account, the human mind is confronted with its inability to represent an overwhelming reality, and yet recuperates that moment of failure by its superior insight in the impossibility of representation." The exhibit both conveys and undermines the Anthropocene sublime by revealing its racist, imperialist background of a settler colonial nation with an "encrypted reference to Cook's diary" and a "song that provides orientation" which "is modeled on the Aboriginal notion of the songline: songs that correspond to walking tracks across the land." The guest editors' note, however, the challenge of utilizing the tainted concept of the sublime as well as the need to remain critical, noting that if "this special issue proposes to pluralize the sublime, it also opens up a critical space for such radical critique—critique that holds that not even pluralization will make the sublime a viable tool for the present."

In the next section, the guest editors present a compelling overview of the "Discourses, Trajectories, and Destinies of the Sublime" that includes its history as well as the many efforts to reformulate it with such environmental frames as the "animal, haptic, and toxic sublimes" to the cosmic, creaturely, stolastaglic, and whale sublimes.

Opening the volume after the introduction is Tacuma Peters' essay, "Querying the Ecological Sublime: Colonial Aesthetics, Anticololonial Thought, and the 'Double Fracture,'" which goes after the sublime with a highly relevant frontal assault; in the editors' words, it traces "the sublime aesthetics historically tied up with settler colonialism and enslavement in the US, starting with Burke's well-known treatise—unsurprisingly cited throughout this issue—and its influence on Kant." Peters, in other words, recontextualizes the sublime's history via Black and Indigenous thought, specifically with a reading of Ottobah Cugoano's (1757-1791) *Jeremiad* against colonialism. After this powerful recontextualization is Matthias Klestil's essay, "Blackness and the Anthropocene Sublime in Jesmyn Ward's Fiction," which looks at Ward's recent novels (*Salvage the Bones* [2011] and *Let Us Descend* [2023]) in order to reveal how, in Klestil's words, the sublime was "assumed to be ideally suited 'to register and interpret the 'uncivilized' wilderness of the American continent,'" and then to label the Indigenous as similarly "uncivilized" and needing taming. Having begun with such powerful critiques of the sublime through the lens of ongoing colonialism and racism, the editors position the next essay as a presentation of a provocatively alternate form of sublime: "The Whale Sublime in Doreen Cunningham's Soundings and Rebecca Giggs's *Fathoms*" by Charlie Ng. This study of "cetacean texts," including the inevitable *Moby-Dick* as well as commercial whaling texts, offers a feminist and multispecies-focused exploration of the oceanic non-human beings as paradigmatic for both long-term exploitation and the possibility of reformulating human and more-than-human interactions. Ng presents, in her own words, how "the environmental whale sublime does not merely reinstate human or

whale-privileged speciesism, but instead offers visions of multispecies dependencies through cetacean ecologies."

The next two essays open up new horizons of alternative sublimes, first with Catherine Girardin's bodily- and materiality-focused essay in French on a dance performance, echoing, according to the guest editors, a kind of "haptic sublime": "Un sublime de l'ordinaire dans le spectacle *Weathering* (2023) de Faye Driscoll." Girardin's study seeks to reimagine and resituate the sublime through a focus on the "'lower senses' (touch, smell, and hearing)." In the next essay, "The Anthropocene Cosmic Sublime: Viewing the Earth from Space in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*," Claire Cazajous-Augé moves upwards and outwards from the often overlooked sensory experiences of the body, and expands our view beyond, as the editors note, "the terrestrial (or oceanic) sublime into the realms of outer space in a reading of Samantha Harvey's recent Booker Prize-winning novel *Orbital* (2024)." This move out into space and into its somewhat less sublime field of debris circling our planet leads Cazajous-Augé to develop, as the guest editors write, "what she calls the 'Anthropocene cosmic sublime,'" a rather aptly ironic term.

With a return to Earth, the next two essays explore technology-related sublimes, specifically, Cybernetics and the Digital World. Thomas Storey's essay, "Romantic Cybernetics: Jorie Graham, Trevor Paglen, and the Sublime Contradictions of the Anthropocene," explores the hybridity of Anthropocene sublimes in terms of Alexander Galloway's notion of the "juridico-geometric sublime," which Storey explains as a "confluence of the Romantic sublime and cybernetic control paradigm." The essay notes the critical contradictions at the heart of both the Anthropocene itself and the so-called sublime; he describes these contradictions in terms of "conflicting poles: environmental entanglement and anthropocentrism, the collective more-than-human and the singular Anthropos," out of which artistic hybridities of, on the one hand, opacity, and, on the other, material environmental realities emerge in full incommensurability. Similarly interested in forms of Digital sublime is Mohammad Shabangu's essay "*Zombies*, Attention and the Sublime in the Digital Anthropocene." Shabangu asks the following questions in reference to the ubiquity of cellphones and environmental devastation that demands more attention than one seems to have, "What are the prospects of the sublime in an era of generalized attention deficiency? How is the imaginative potential of the sublime foreclosed by our collective suffering of attention deficiency in a Capitalocene?" The essay studies the Congolese artist Baloji's short film *Zombies*, which has an Afrobeat composed of "traditional" Congolese music—soukous and rumba—and "modern" tonalites of techno and pop" whose mixed tones weave through a visual landscape of ecological degradation in the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kinshasa. Shabangu's analysis features a kind of aesthetic sublime distorted by polluted urban chaos and mediated via small cell phone screens and short attention spans.

The issue of scale in the Anthropocene sublime takes on new dimensions with attention to multispecies encounters—wolf-sized and microscopic bacteria—in the final two essays of the special section. Sophie Wennerscheid's "Vom kreatürlich

Erhabenen zum solastalgisch Erhabenen in Kerstin Ekmans Roman *Wolfslichter*" considers, in the guest editors' words, "how the formal and thematic choices in a recent Swedish novel revise the customary association of hunting with the sublime." Wennerscheid describes how the hunter's encounter with a wolf evokes the "creaturely sublime" (perhaps the wolf sublime) but also the hunter's distorted connection to/destruction of the forest life in the act of hunting: "wie die Begegnung des Protagonisten mit einem Wolf zu einer Erfahrung des kreatürlich Sublimen wird, die sein instrumentelles Naturverhältnis radikal in Frage stellt." Finally, Maxime Fecteau's "'A Tough Bitch': Lynn Margulis and the Gaian Sublime," scales down even further to microbial life. As Margulis helped us all realize, the real power in the living world resides with the microbes upon whom we (of the multicellular bodies) all depend and which shape all living ecosystems. While Fecteau features the smallest beings, their microscopic existence nevertheless enables the most massive impact; this contrast creates a sublime of impossible scalar confusions.

While the five essays in the general section (four in English and one in Spanish) do not center on the sublime directly, they share numerous topics with the essays in the special section such as grappling with the vastness of climate change and the ensuing delusions and denials, decolonizing Settler Time, the power and relevance of multispecies actors and agents, whether hippopotamuses or plants, and the never-ending trajectories of extractivist colonialism. The first three essays in the general section, for example, all center around portrayals and perspectives of More-Than-Human animals (instead of whales or wolves, these essays feature a hermit crab, a (dead) seal, and armadillos and hippos). First is "Entangled Existence: Posthuman Ecologies in Nathaniel Rich's "Hermie," by Zlatan Filipovic, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Based on Kristeva and Deleuzoguattarian economic critiques, Filipovic analyzes Rich's short story about a talking hermit crab, Hermie, and his distracted scientist/human friend who studies marine biology but "helps" Hermie by flushing him down the toilet, back into the sea, despite the fact that his beach has been destroyed. The essay reveals, Filipovic states, "the extent of self-deception climate emergency elicits in order to maintain the authorship of the cogito and the imperatives of our economic existence." Laura Castor (University of Tromsø, Norway) also features the more-than-human in her essay, "Decolonial Interruptions of Settler Time in Tanya Tagaq's Art," and critiques the seemingly rationalizing voices of science and colonialism with her focus on the Inuit artist, Tanya Tagaq, and her controversial "Sealfie" featuring her infant daughter and a dead seal; the Inuit meaning and the colonial meaning of the seal produce significant cultural clashes. The third essay in the general section also highlights animal lives in human settings: Diana Lee's (Hope College, United States) essay, "Armadillos, Hippopotamuses and Biopolitics in *The Sound of Things Falling* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez," utilizes Giorgio Agamben's theory of biopolitics in order to track the novel's rarely discussed pet armadillo, which Lee claims "exposes the categories of sovereign power functioning in the novel, particularly as they relate to drug trafficking." The hippos imported by the drug lord (suggesting Pablo Escobar) also take on special significance as the novel's first line

describes the shooting of one of the massive beings. For Lee, the hippos' meaning emerges through the empathy or lack thereof that each human character has for their lives and deaths: "The story of the hippopotamus intertwined with Laverde's is powerful proof of the violence against vulnerable creatures in modern biopolitical hierarchies."

The next two essays portray the perspectives of women facing massive cultural and ecological change in the form, on the one hand, of extractivist and colonial cultures bringing environmental devastation and, on the other, of a deadly pandemic and familial loss. Clara Seitter's (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Germany) Spanish-language essay, "Cuerpos de mujeres* en resistencia al extractivismo y a la destrucción medioambiental: Perspectivas feministas ecocríticas sobre artistas* latinoamericanas" addresses with an ecofeminist lens the climate crisis, land expropriation, and pollution in terms of art interventions in works from artists in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. Finally, Merve Günday (Turkey), takes us in her essay, "Greening the Desire by Plants in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*," back to the garden as a living engagement with vegetal life. The children undertake gardening projects embodying the possibility of physical and ecological health enabled by countering, in Günday's words, "the idea of horizontal progression embedded in traditional bildungsroman and thereby contesting the Cartesian idea of human self-containedness." In this new reading of a well-known novel, Mary survives the cholera that killed her parents and finds a connection to, and joint transformation with, her cousin Colin via their labor in the garden. Both of these final two essays feature transformations through forms of labor—art and gardening—as counter-forces to colonial, extractivist, patriarchal, and/or repressive systems of order. Much as in discussions of the sublime, the scales of perception shift with the intense engagement with non-human elements and beings in the world; here as protest.

The Creative Writing and Arts section edited by Elizabeth Tavella, opens with Tavella's words on the spectacle and distance created in the Anthropocene Sublime, in which there is no "safe haven" or "wilderness" to escape from the anthropogenic alterations to the Earth. Tavella describes how the "site-specific installation titled *The End of the World* for the Kesselhaus at the KINDL in Berlin" by the "Chilean-born artist Alfredo Jaar, in collaboration with human geographer and political geologist Adam Bobbette," grapples "with the unspeakable magnitude of planetary crises" with its exhibit of "a 4×4×4 cm cube composed of ten layers, each made of a raw material: cobalt, rare earths, copper, tin, nickel, lithium, manganese, coltan, germanium, and platinum," each of which is used in civilian and military technologies of today. Tavella's selection of inspiring literary and artistic works in the Arts section reflect the plurality of sublimes emerging from the ecological horror stories now making themselves apparent in the twenty-first century. After the introduction, the section opens with two paintings, *Our Life-3* (2021) and *Immunity-2* (2019) from the Mongolian artist Urjinkhand Onon, who, as Tavella, writes, "rejects Eurocentric ideals of the pictorial sublime, positioning her work as a form of resistance to Western aesthetic norms by maintaining a commitment to traditional Mongolian technique."

The brightness of the first painting, *Our Life-3*, infuses the reader with a sense of flowers bursting into life only to reveal fainter images of sheep awaiting slaughter near large, toothy mouths awaiting a bite. In *Immunity-2*, the bright green of apparent trees and falling leaves transform with a closer look into technological, digital-like forms taking over the small human heads standing on rippling green bodies that are not vegetal after all but rather strangely technological wave patterns.

From Onon's startlingly beautiful imagery that is rendered sublime precisely by its critical anti-sublimity suggested from within, the Arts section moves to a lyrical text, "The Miner's Daughter," a poem by Venezuelan poet and scholar Santiago Acosta, translated from the Spanish in a collaboration with Tiffany Troy. Tavella notes that the "poem engages with the coloniality of the Anthropocene and the destructive scale of mega-mining projects from the perspective of the Global South." Amid a 'sandy wasteland,' Acosta confronts the obscene wealth generated from the unmaking of Indigenous futures." As an evocation of petrocultures and the "toxic sublime," Acosta's poem begins with the line: "The miner's daughter sits next to her father in the back of a '67 Mercedes-Benz 300'," and it ends as they drive on having become the toxicity itself: "Your bauxite breath. Your amosite arms." The next poem, a verse in Spanish prose by Carlos Manuel Del Castillo Rodríguez, offers a vision of the Santa Catarina River in Mexico transformed via a mapping tool. Tavella describes its juxtapositioning of "the life-giving qualities of the river with the raw destruction it witnesses. Through the list of scattered images that include "cables junto a los pilotes del metro" (cables next to the subway pilings) and "un cadáver de perro pudriéndose abierto" (the decomposing corpse of a dog), the author conveys the paradox of progress and decay."

Next are five poems from Catherine Greenwood's text *Siberian Spring*, an Arctic ecoGothic work depicting Siberia being overtaken by climate change in its dissolving forms and fading peat through which ancient mammoth bones jut out. Greenwood begins her poem "Tails," for example, with "Dead fish awash in the shallows / shimmer, a tarnished silvery / hoard. Heads or tails?" Are we lucky, or are we dying? The final poetic contribution, another in Spanish, is by Alan Arias (Universidad de Guanajuato, México), who combines poetry with photography to depict the "sublimity" of national parks which mark a loss, a devastating transformation into curation, rather than a treasure. As Tavella writes, "Through a series of imperative statements, the author explores the paradox of the curated design of parks, "rodeados del romántico misticismo" (surrounded by romantic mysticism), alongside the transformation of nature into what he calls "museísticos espacios de naturaleza muerta" (museum-like spaces of still life), a metaphor that conveys a sense of isolation and artificiality tied to a lack of vibrancy." The final contribution to the Arts section for volume 16.1 is a photographic essay in Italian by cultural ecologist and psychoanthropologist Alessandro Balzaretti. His images of urban, industrial landscapes that are typically found behind buildings and away from sight, also contain reflections as if taken through a window through which we see vivid lives of overlooked beings like weeds, twisted trees in the concrete, and fungi.

The industrialized and built sites with their ragged emergences of life are framed, separate, vast in their captured emptiness distorted by reflections and filled with the unseen and thus "sublime," as it is only feasible in the Anthropocene.

Our five book reviews presented by *Ecozon@*'s Book Review Editor, Isabel Pérez, share numerous topics with the special section and Arts section on the plural sublimes: the first three reviewed books include the differing scales of climate change and of animal lives from our flawed human perspectives that tend to see ourselves as sublime. Pamela Phillips reviews *Teaching the Literature of Climate Change* by Debra Rosenthal (2024); and the next two reviews, both in Spanish, address animal lives: First is María Elizabeth Nuño Plascencia's review of *Zoopoética: La cuestión animal en la literature*, edited by by Pilar Andrade Boué, José Manuel Correoso Rodenas and Julia Ori (2024); and next is Miguel Rodríguez García's review *of Humans and Aquatic Animals in Early Modern America and Africa*, by Cristina Brito (2023). The final two reviews turn to books in French exploring plant- and botanical-imaginings. Gina Stamm reviews *Entre les feuilles: Explorations de l'imaginaire botanique contemporain*, by Rachel Bouvet, Stéphanie Posthumus, Jean-Pascal Bilodeau, and Noémie Dubé (2024); and Marie-Pierre Ramouche reviews, in French, the volume on forests, *Abécédaire de la Forêt Honoré*, edited by Pascale Auraix-Jonchière, Frédéric Calas, Christiane Connan-Pintado, Agata Jackiewicz et Catherine Tauveron (2024).

Finally, we must extend our fullest thanks to Carmen Flys-Junquera, the original Editor-in-Chief of *Ecozon@*, who was one of the original team members who founded this journal and has served over fifteen years as its leader. From its earliest beginnings to the successful journal that it is now, *Ecozon@* has been guided and shaped by all of Carmen's incredible contributions. Now we shall try to carry on her work into the future. Also stepping down is Gala Arias, our managing editor, after many years of service for *Ecozon@*. Thank you both for all of your work!

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