Editorial 16.2

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As Val Plumwood writes in *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* with regard to the current economic and extractivist practices that are rather absurdly considered "rational" despite wreaking havoc on the Earth's ecological systems, "such monological and hegemonic forms of reason" fail in "that they misunderstand their own enabling conditions—the body, ecology and non-human nature" (Plumwood 17). She deems our industrialized, "Western" cultures instead as "irrational," since they tend to assume that undermining our "enabling conditions" is irrelevant in the face of human power and profit that benefit the privileged. Plumwood thereby inspires us to seek more rational perspectives, those that are actually rational and based on reason, rather than being primarily power-driven. Reasonably, our human social conditions would acknowledge the living world around us, the living atmosphere, our co-species, and the more-than-human beings on which we depend, especially the vegetal. We might therefore pose two questions as part of this quest for ecological rationality: are plants vital and agential beings whose lives compose the green force enabling the very existence of large animal beings (including humans) on Earth; and, can industrialized cultures that have lost sight of the obvious power and central relevance of plants for our lives regain better ecological knowledge by attending to cultures who retain a more rational understanding of our vegetal enablers?

In the introduction to the special section of *Ecozon@* Volume 16.2 (2025) guest-edited by Patrícia Vieira, Center for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, "From *Hylaea* to *Kawsak Sacha*: Introduction to the Vegetal Humanities in the Amazon," Vieira makes it clear that the answer to both questions is yes. She contrasts the European colonial terms and concepts of the Amazonian forest to that of the Kichwa Indigenous community of Sarayaku, in the Ecuadorian Amazon, who "call their ancestral land *Kawsak Sacha*, or 'living forest.'" Alexander von Humboldt's simultaneously proto-ecological and yet also inevitably colonial/imperial response to the Amazonian rainforest led him to coin the German neologism, "Hyläe," taken from the ancient Greek term, *hylē*, or "forested plain," a concept that Vieira notes still reflects the connotations from Aristotelian philosophy, in which it signifies "amorphous matter that needed a given form to become a concrete thing." While the tendency of "Western" cultures to describe the vegetal (irrationally) as passive matter,

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mere backdrop, or something unformed has very old roots, the more recent visions of plants as mere resources to exploit are not limited to German or European cultures but rather characterize most contemporary industrialized cultures to varying degrees. Vieira describes in contrast to Humboldt, etc., the Sarayaku community's knowledge that the rainforest is an "interspecies community" of more-than-human and human relations composed of many beings, all with their own intelligences, volition, and communication forms. Alongside the long-term Indigenous understandings of the living rainforest, recent work in botanical science is awakening to recognize (once again) the actively agential, communicative, and social lives of plants, as are numerous fields in the arts and humanities such as critical plant studies (of which *Ecozon@* has previously featured in numerous individual essays and in entire volumes such as Volume 15.1, "Plants, Plant Relationships, and Plant Metaphors in Children's and Young Adult Fiction" (2024); and Volume. 14.1, "Gardening in the Anthropocene" (2023)). This current volume 16.2 undertakes just such work of re-recognition alongside, and with the guidance of, Indigenous perspectives.

The three essays in the special section offer new insights to critical plant studies with their particular focus on Amazonian Indigenous thought. The first essay, by Kevin Ennis, Yale University, USA, "Narrating in Multinatural Word and Color: Vegetal Vitality in Lastenia Canayo's *Los dueños del mundo Shipibo*," presents a vision of "vegetal vitality" as a counternarrative "to extractivist deforestation and destruction on Shipibo Amazonian lands." Combining Shipibo language with Spanish, Canayo enables vegetal-human and more-than-human relations to emerge in her works with a focus, according to Ennis, on both long-term Indigenous knowledge and current cultural challenges wrought by industrialized practices transforming green life into capitalist objects. The second essay, by Cinthya Torres, University of South Alabama, USA, "Rooted Resistance and Vegetal Life in the Poetry of Ana Varela Tafur," turns to the plant beings portrayed in her poems that actively grapple with the "Rubber Boom" in the Amazon. Torres explores how "three recurring plants in her [Varela Tafur's] work—the rubber tree, the Ayahuasca vine, and the shihuahuaco tree" offer insights into vegetal-human relationships, the exploitation suffered by the Indigenous peoples as their local plant beings are transformed into objects of mass consumption, but also, as Torres describes it, "the potential of plant life to resist, heal, and foster ecological and cultural regeneration." Finally, our guest editor herself, Patrícia Vieira, University of Coimbra, Portugal, provides the third essay, "Phytopoesis: Plants in Amazonian Women's Poetry." Vieira begins with the "ontological turn" in anthropology and related fields that have been influenced and inspired by Indigenous "worlds, realities and thought," thereby greatly enhancing non-Indigenous, Western thinking. With a focus on the impact of Indigenous worldviews, particularly ideas centered on "*phytopoesis*, or the poetry on/with plants," she studies here the poetry by "two Amazonian women authors from different countries and generations—Brazilian Astrid Cabral (1936-), and Peruvian Dina Ananco (1985-)." This poetry, Vieira states, continues the rhythms and expressions of

Amazonian artists in oral and textual traditions and allows the readers to glimpse a world and worldview with wild plants in the active and sonic center rather than in the quietly potted periphery.

The general section of Volume 16.2 includes seven essays with a wide range of topics including an interview with Scott Slovic covering his experience with four decades of ecocriticism; two blue humanities contributions, one on "Hydro-irrealism," and the other on the Norwegian ocean; an exploration of "Post-extractivist" futures, and one of "Planetarity;" a study of the social revolution of Wole Soyinka's dramas, and a contribution on a Norwegian oil film. While not on critical plant studies, these seven essays offer relevant and related views to those of Vieira's Amazonian focus critiquing extractivist and colonial practices. The volume features scholars from around the world contributing analyses of texts from many global regions including, again, Latin America, as well as the U.S. and Mexico in North America, Norway in northern Europe, and Nigeria in Africa. As such, these seven essays represent *Ecozon@*'s ongoing commitment to publish studies utilizing diverse ecocritical approaches while also attending to a broad array of earthly areas and an impressive spectrum of more-than-human beings.

The general section opens with a retrospective, Lifu Jiang's (Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, China) interview, "Four-Decade Studies of Ecocriticism and Beyond—Retrospect and Prospect: An Interview with Professor Scott Slovic." Jiang and Slovic discuss both his own contributions to the field as the founding editor of the first ecocriticism journal, the U.S.-based *ISLE*, but also his thoughts on the ongoing development of the much broader theoretical and international work emerging from the expanding contributions of the environmental humanities, with a particular focus on the newer area of empirical ecocriticism. Continuing with contributions presenting North American contexts, Lya Morales Hernández, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico, discusses in her essay, "Dammed Ecologies, 'Hydro-irrealism,' and Aesthetic Slowness in Betzabé García's *Los reyes del pueblo que no existe* [*Kings of Nowhere*] (2015)," how the documentary film portrays "community-scale experiences of socio-ecological degradation, land clearings and mass displacement produced by the damming of a regional river for neoliberal hydro-development." Utilizing what Morales Hernández calls a "surreal and spectral visual grammar," the film's "realist" camera portrays dying fish, an altered river, and a vast coastal area damaged to the extent that almost seems to be a science-fictional spectacle of devastation. Morales' essay thus explores systems collapsing under the impact of extractivist practices in García's striking visual documentation. The next essay shares a focus on water but takes us to Florida, the sinking city that speaks not of climate change. Stacey Balkan's (Florida Atlantic University, USA), "*Losing Miami*: Imagining Post-Extractivist Futures in the "Magic City," also addresses collapsing systems based on the "rationalist" (irrational) practices that, as Plumwood notes, "misunderstand their enabling conditions." In this case, Balkan refers to the consequences of "agrocapitalism" in order "to explore the impacts of Florida's feckless development schemes on Miami's coastal precariat." As

Florida sinks with rising waters, its population grows, and its reliance on sugar and phosphate industries creates new disasters. Balkan's study of Gabriel Ojeda-Sagué's book-length poem *Losing Miami* presents what she describes as the "grotesque metaphor" of an emerging "undercommons" expanding with each movement of every tide. In the next essay, Madalina Stefan, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain, returns us to Latin America in "Knowledge Production and Planetarity in the Latin American Essay: An Ecocritical Reading of *Nuestra América* by José Martí." Stefan studies Martí's essay to demonstrate its decolonial and ecological views, offering thereby the possibility of writing "nature as a narrative that contests the anthropocentric, colonial exploitation of the environment and fosters a planetary vision of the human." Countering the colonists' writings, Stefan sees *Nuestra América* as "a milestone of Latin American literature" one that should no longer be understood as merely an anti-modern work but rather a ground-breaking vision that draws "on the language of nature (trees, stones, mountains, octopus, jaguar, condor, seeds etc.)," and thus already in 1891, when it was written, offers a view of immersion and entanglement, "rooted in the knowledge of the inhabited land and nature."

The fifth contribution to the general section is the award-winning essay for EASLCE's 2024 graduate student competition by Călina-Maria Moldovan, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, a blue humanities study, "The Ocean in Contemporary Norwegian Literature." Moldovan studies an array of recent Norwegian works, *Mandø* (2009), by Kjersti Vik, the so-called *Barrøy Chronicles*, by Roy Jacobsen (2013-2020), *Shark Drunk* (2015), by Morten Strøksnes, and *The End of the Ocean* (2017), by Maja Lunde, considering how each author projects different human stories "onto places where they are clearly absent: some read whales as planets, other interpret the movement of waves as a sea chantey." With the methodological frame of material ecocriticism, the essay demonstrates the foundational challenge of writing the sea from our land-based human perspectives, concluding with the excellent insight that anthropomorphizing is not only inevitable but likely our best tool to grapple with the physical realities of the more-than-human worlds and creatures with whom we exist. Jumping ahead to the seventh essay in the general section because it, too, addresses Norwegian literature, but this time from a petro-cultures approach, we have an essay from Ernesto Seman, University of Bergen, Norway, who writes "With or Without Oil: *Nordsjøen* and the Persistence of Norwegian Exceptionalism," exploring how the film *Nordsjøen* (*The Burning Sea*, 2021), presents an oil spill that reveals much about "Norway and its relationship with fossil fuels." The film, in fact, presents the oil spill not so much as an image of horror as in more traditional disaster films, but rather also a moment of national unification and heroic action, revealing how oil extraction provides much of Norway's considerable wealth without impacting their "romanticized idea of the national relation with the tenets of national exceptionality: economic equality, consensual politics and harmony with nature."

Bringing an important revolutionary focus, the sixth essay, "Nature, and a Social Revolution in Wole Soyinka's *Alápatà Àpáta*," is co-written by John Olorunshola Kehinde, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Nigeria, and Sule E. Egya, Nigeria.

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Described by the authors as being "about the agency of nonhumans and its use to achieve a social revolution in Wole Soyinka's play *Alápatà Àpáta*," this essay nicely rounds off the volume's attention to the non-human or more-than-human beginning with plants and moving through the ocean to a wide array of forms and beings in Africa, including "trees, rocks, waters, animals, ancestors, gods and goddesses." As the authors write of Yoruba cosmology, "most people believe that they are organically linked with nonhuman beings, which might be spiritual or nonspiritual," a vision that firmly places human beings within the larger living world. Soyinka's play contextualizes human social revolution in terms of this cosmology as a form of resistance to the oil-seeking, petro-culturally defined practices.

One of *Ecozon@*'s particularly unique and compelling aspects is its inclusion of an Arts section in each volume, a section dedicated to other forms of telling stories, other possibilities to portray the world's living beings, and/or non-narrative or visual frames that share the same topic as the special section of the volume. Collected by, and presented with, the inspiring insights of our Arts Editor, Elizabeth Tavella, The American University of Rome, this particular selection of contributions in Volume 16.2, similarly titled "Vegetal Humanities in the Amazon," provides exceptionally vibrant artworks and poetry that transform and transport us poignantly into the world of the rainforest. Tavella opens the Arts Editorial with the words of Amazonian poet Márcia Theóphilo, who "describes the Amazon forest as a pulsating body resonant with history and survival," noting much like Vieira how such a forest "stands in stark opposition to how the vegetal world has been represented in dominant Western traditions." These artists reveal the "living archive" of pulsating life in the Amazon, where they find a plethora of agentic beings who are typically overlooked in, as Plumwood writes, "the rationalist" and hegemonic forms of reason that perceive only anthropocentric acts as relevant.

Tavella begins with the cover image by Elena Valera Bawan Jisbe, a Shipibo-Konibo artist, *Preparing the Diet with Medicinal Plants*, a depiction illustrating, in Tavella's words, "a sacred *dieta*, a dietary ritual that involves the ingestion of plants who are acknowledged as guides of transformation, transmitters of knowledge, and agents of purification." The vibrant image features a spiritual engagement with plants portraying bold vegetation that weaves and grows in lucid patterns across most of the space, a space also including one human woman whose face presents similar geometric patterns and who shares her much more limited place on the far left of the picture with a very large butterfly. Central, of course, are the lively, colorful, vegetal beings and bodies entwined across the entire image.

In the first contribution to the section, "The Cosmopoetics of Plants: A Dialogue Between Shipibo-Konibo Botanical Knowledge, Ecology, and Science," Pedro Martin Favaron Peyon, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Perú, and Chonon Bensho, Artist, Perú, provide a collaborative dialogue containing words and images such as the "koros kene design" that the artists say symbolizes "the complementarity of left and right, of above and below, and of the spiritual world with our own." Furthermore, they state that the "*koros kene* design does not merely embellish cloth; the act of

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embroidering it is itself a meditative practice through which the artist synchronizes with ancestral rhythms of balance." Much like the design itself, with its central core composed of geometrically vegetal patterns surrounded by a leafy frame, Peyon and Bensho, who are both descendants of a Shipibo-Konibo family, create art that is lived and part of, in Tavella's description, "ancestral medicine, Indigenous research, food sovereignty and reforestation projects, and the care of an ethnobotanical garden." Human beings are obviously part of these projects and artworks, but are not in the center of the cosmopoetic works; instead, it is the vegetal beings whose patterns that shape the world.

The second contribution, "*Urihi* (The Jungle) – The World That Inspires Yanomami Artist Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe," is, as Tavella describes it, "an exclusive selection of eight illustrations by Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe, an Indigenous Yanomami artist from Sheroana, a community along the Upper Orinoco River in the Venezuelan Amazon." These beautiful images all express vegetal bodies in forms of Yanomami imagery that reshape our expected, and all-too-often culturally determined, visual perception. Tavella explains that in Hakihiiwe's works, "the Amazon not only escapes the 'dichotomous depiction of vegetation either as reminiscent of Earthly Paradise or as a green hell' [...] but also challenges the ocularcentric construction of plant-experience that dominates Western visual culture." The vivid vegetal patterns embody not what is often termed "the non-human" but rather the broader living patterns of the cosmos in which we participate.

Next, Maria Thereza Alves provides examples from her series of paintings of non-apricots and one of her previously unpublished poems: "Selection of 'This is Not an Apricot' and the Poem 'The Umbragiade.'" The bright yellow paintings show five different fruits, all round, but not apricots, being sold in a market in Manaus in the Amazon. As Indigenous fruits, the seller did not know their names and so simply called them all apricots. Tavella explains the fabulous images, commenting that through the title, Alves "intertextually nods to René Magritte's *This is Not a Pipe*," and so "undertakes a powerful act of semiotic resistance and botanical decolonization." Utilizing "Western" visual language, Alves brings forth the actual fruits, unnamed but present despite colonial interventions. In her poetic work, "The Umbragiade," Alves documents efforts to "preserve forested areas on Indigenous lands;" specifically, as she notes, a diverse group of peoples working to survive and sustain the forest. "The forest agents come from various reservations throughout the state of Acre and belong to different Indigenous peoples, such as the Huni Kuin, the Shanenawa, the Asháninka, the Shãwãdawa, the Yawanawá, the Katukina, the Nupiquin, the Poyanawá, and the Nawa, among others. All have survived genocide campaigns, first by the Portuguese and then by Brazilians." Her long poem of history is a collective work by, and about, the Indigenous peoples within the forest who themselves experienced being extracted from the forest, killed and used by colonists. The poem derives directly from the Indigenous statements taken from interviews that Alves undertook. In just one example, she references the words of the Yawa Kushu, Yawanawá people, TI Yawanawá do Rio Gregório, and the Tene, Huni Kuin people, TI Alto Jordão, in the

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following verses describing the colonial devastation to the forest, the people, the land, the animals but then also the return of the *Cupuaçu* trees:

> And then after the Captivity, they…
> they cleared much of the forest
> for cattle,
> for large plantations,
> and they did not use the land more than once.
> Just once, and then it was over.
>
> In that past, there were no more plants.
> Now we have our plants, the *Cupuaçu* trees.

In the fourth contribution are four illustrations, "*Untitled* from Jatobá Series and Senhora das Plantas" by Afro-Brazilian artist Rosana Paulino, whose works are, as Tavella describes them, "[d]eeply rooted in Afro-Brazilian cosmologies," and offering "a vital voice attuned to the experiences of Black women navigating the enduring consequences of racism and enslavement in Brazil." Her works are composed of "sewing, collage, drawing, video, and installation," and they portray various woman-plant interspecies beings growing and flourishing with their roots exposed to reveal, one might say, both the standard Linnean portrait of plants not surrounded by their fellow green beings, but depicted alone against a blank background in the middle of the painting, but also, in contrast, the rootedness of all beings in the forest, directly in the soil or in the atmosphere of the world. Tavella describes the rootedness of the composite beings as "agents of connection," "The hybridized figure lifts her forearms and extends open palms, which evokes feelings of nurturing care and protection. Here, plants act as threshold beings, as agents of connection, and as symbols of cultural resurgence, marking a movement from diasporic fracture to collective rootedness."

The fifth and final piece of the arts section features Tavella's and Sophie Schrey's, Northumbria University, UK, joint interview with the Dutch artist Thijs Biersteker, the Netherlands, "Translating Data into Art: A Conversation with Thijs Biersteker on Ecology and the Amazon." Combining images from Biersteker's collection of "data-based" artworks bridging art and science with the conversation among Tavella, Schrey and the artist, this contribution plays with the scales of ecological damage, of deforestation and reforestation, and the possibilities of actual sustainability in our industrialized world. His Amazon-focused works are based on collaborations with UNESCO and include, in his own words from the interview, "projects on plastic pollution, air quality, glaciers, or root communication of trees," that are "rooted in data-driven storytelling." While featuring vegetal forms evoking the Amazon rainforest, tumbling as plastic leaves from the ceiling (photo taken at the Barbican Centre London, 2022), Biersteker avoids romanticization and instead inspires, in Tavella's words from the Arts Editorial, "affective materialities where viewers can experience loss, urgency, and the possibility of regeneration." The works document not just data of devastation but also the possibility of collaboration,

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reforestation, and the bridging of data and story that might bring hope for the future of our vegetally-based lives in our industrialized and industrializing world.

The book review section of Volume 16.2 includes seven individual book reviews, and one review essay on Ecocinema studies by Lenka Filipova, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, "From Representation to Material Entanglement: Tracing a Decade of Ecocinema, in which she reviews Stephen Rust, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt, eds. *Ecocinema Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2012), 344 pp.; and Stephen Rust, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt, eds. *Ecocinema Theory and Practice 2* (Routledge, 2023), 268 pp.

The individual book reviews include another study of eco-films undertaken by Anda Pleniceanu, Vilnius University, Lithuania, who reviews Jean-Thomas Tremblay and Steven Swarbrick, *Negative Life: The Cinema of Extinction* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2024), 222 pp.

Other books reviewed covered a wide array of topics and works done in English, German, and Spanish. Helga Braunbeck, North Carolina State University, USA, for example, reviews a German volume on shared species attributes edited by Roland Borgards, Frederike Felcht, Verena Kuni, Frederike Middelhoff, Robert Pütz und Antje Schlottmann, eds. *Von Fliegenfängern und Katzenklappen: 39 Kleinigkeiten zwischen den Arten* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2024), 379 pp. Additionally, there is a petro-cultures study reviewed by Reinhard Hennig, University of Agder, Norway: Daniel Worden, *Petrochemical Fantasies. The Art and Energy of American Comics* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2024), 212 pp. And Bryan Yazell, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, reviews a study of satirical and humorous works on environmental crises: Massih Zekavat and Tabea Scheel, *Satire, Humor, and Environmental Crises* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 248 pp.

Contributing to the vegetal focus of the volume, Marie Müller, McGill University, Canada, reviews Christina Becher, *Zwischen Mensch und Pflanze. Vegetabile Hybriden in literarischen und grafischen Texten des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2024), 440 pp**.** And, similarly, contributing to the Latin American focus of this volume, is the review by Valeria Meiller, Stony Brook University, USA, who comments on: Azucena Castro. *Postnaturalezas poéticas. Pensamiento ecológico y políticas de la extrañeza en la poesía latinoamericana contemporánea* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2025), 238 pp.

Work Cited

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