

Editorial 17.1

Sea More Blue: Toward Blue EcoPoetics

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In the long history of life, it is said that human beings came down out of the trees and onto the African savanna. While this tree-centric evolutionary story deserves ecocritical attention for its accurate acknowledgement of plant life and the site of modern human emergence in Africa, it nevertheless reflects a relatively short-term, anthropocentric, and land-centered perspective. In this volume of *Ecozon@* 17.1, “Sea More Blue: Towards Blue EcoPoetics,” the guest editors, Bénédicte Meillon, University of Angers, France; Bertrand Guest, University of Angers, France; and Marie-Pierre Ramouche, University of Perpignan, France, present the much more all-encompassing and planetary view of life on our blue planet: one based on the sea. All life evolved in the Oceans and came from their watery realm; we land-based animals still carry Ocean-like saltwater in our blood, coursing through our veins. The moving, living, blue Oceans coloring the Earth as seen from space engage with the universe on multiple scales. The waves flow in response to the cosmic forces of the moon’s gravity with their tides, and life sways along with the sun-roiling energy of photons absorbed and transformed not just by trees and other land-based plants but also by the vast array of phytoplankton fueling the sea and producing fifty percent of the atmospheric oxygen that we breathe. Yet now, in the Petro-Anthropocene’s fossil-fuel burning, plastic-producing extravaganza of death, the waters of life are shifting course and composition due to our industrial activities. Addressing the Ocean world from within its watery embrace presents sensory problems of spatial and temporal scales for land-walking beings. How could the vast majority of land-based human beings witness the now tragically mundane deaths of entire coral reefs below the sea, as the water acidifies? How could we hear and perceive the changes wrought by the sonic explosions in the depths, preventing whale communication across vast distances? How could we broaden our senses to perceive Ocean-sized flows stuttering and shifting with the warming temperatures? Should we all travel to the massive islands of plastic, the floating piles of death now littering the seas? Could we go small-scale into the gullet of seagulls starved by ingesting bright plastic toys? How can we see more blue? Volume 17.1 of *Ecozon@* is dedicated to exploring the Oceans, to documenting their impact on our existence, to acknowledging their mobile fluidity and its meaning for life, and to portraying creatively the blue seas on our blue planet

that we industrialized human beings are currently metamorphizing willy-nilly into gray, red, and algae-green death zones filled with agricultural runoff and vast fishing nets of death.

The special guest-edited section by Meillon, Guest, and Ramouche begins by noting “that the future of humankind is inextricably tied to the health of the Ocean,” and, furthermore, that “the Ocean constitutes 99% of the global volume where life can develop on the planet.” When human activity seriously impacts this zone of life whence we all originated and upon which we still depend, the stakes are high. Over the past twenty years, the blue humanities and critical Ocean studies have developed responses to such dramatic yet purportedly distant alterations to our global waters and their living constituents. Indeed, as the guest editors note, this Ocean focus was the theme for the 2024 EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment) conference held in Perpignan, France, and it is the inspiration for this spring 2026 volume of *Ecozon@*. Providing an overview of scholarship in the blue humanities, their introduction washes over the terrestrial bias of much ecocriticism with a “blue eco-poetics” that might re-connect our readers and scholars to the Oceans. In their words, the editors have selected “papers that tease out the blue implications of narratives, performances, practices, and artistic productions that can help restore the partly broken bonds between sea and land creatures, ecosystems, places, and various forms of discourses.”

The special section presents an impressive linguistic diversity with essays in French, Spanish, and English. It is organized into three parts; Part One includes four contributions emphasizing the “Ocean turn,” or the returning of our attention to the blue watery zones on Earth. First is a Francophone essay by Dominique Ninanne, Universidad de Oviedo, Spain, “*Écume de Véronique Bergen. De l’écocide océanique à une nouvelle alliance avec tous les vivants,*” studying the Belgian author Véronique Bergen’s novel *Écume* (2023), a critical revision of Melville’s *Moby-Dick* that uses the famous whale hunt as a launching point for a critique of the Anthropocene’s Oceanic ecocide. Secondly, Gian Maria Di Cristofaro’s, Università di Siena, Italy, ecocritical reading of Richard Powers’s *Playground* (2024), “See below the surface of the waves”: Blue Anti-Human Exceptionalism in Richard Powers’ *Playground*,” emphasizes the materiality of the Ocean waters and the vitality of their creatures. As Di Cristofaro writes: “*Playground* shapes submarine life through the semantic fields of awe and unknowability and stages an environmental sublime,” by simultaneously anthropomorphizing the Oceanic beings so that we might approach them intellectually despite the inadequacy of human senses, while also representing their unique particularity. The third contribution is a Spanish-language essay on film; Christelle Colin, Université de Pau et des pays de l’Adour, France, seeks an “eco-poetics of the depths” in “Sumergirse en la alteridad del mar: Eco-poética oceánica y nuevas mitologías marinas en el cine gallego contemporáneo.” Positing a “transnational Atlantic geopoetics,” Colin writes that the essay explores “the reconfiguration of marine representation in contemporary Galician cinema through the comparative analysis of *De Profundis* (2006) by Miguelanxo Prado and *Sica* (2023) by Carla

Subirana.” Closing Part One of the special section is the French-language contribution by Noémie Favennec, Université Paris 8, France; and Irène Mopin, ENSTA, France, “Donner à entendre les océans: Sensibiliser à l’écologie des milieux sonores sous-marins par l’immersion acoustique et la création musicale,” a sound-studies essay focused on underwater soundscapes damaged and altered by technophonic pollution, and featured in the transdisciplinary research-creation project and “immersive multimedia concert,” “(S)e(a)scape.” As the guest editors write, Favennec and Mopin base their analysis on a “sound ecosophy that views listening as an ethical and relational act, capable of weaving connections between humans and non-humans.”

In Part Two of the special section, the guest editors situate the three articles in terms of watery and queer approaches, which “offer insights into the fluidity and nonbinary qualities reflected in the changing states of aquatic milieux and in the lifeforms that dwell in watery worlds.” The first of these three contributions is Pascale Peyraga’s, Universidad de Pau y de los Países del Adour, France, Spanish-language exploration of the multimedia works by photographer Carmela García (*Paradise*, 2000) and video artist Tania Candiani (*Tidal Choreography*, 2023) depicting immersed female bodies, “Cuerpos inmersos y biotopía en las obras plásticas de Carmela García y Tania Candiani: del espacio utópico del paraíso perdido al cuerpo utópico del ecotono acuático.” Peyraga describes how these works bring viewers into the Waters and thereby “elevate the human perspective beyond anthropocentrism and lead towards ecological utopias in which women are entrusted with reconciling with nature on behalf of everyone, their creations invite a double decentring and a shift from the ‘utopian place’ to the ‘utopian body’ in a heterotopian space.” Next is the essay, “Swimming with the Trouble: Queer Hydrofeminism and the Sea Cure in Deborah Levy’s *Hot Milk* (2016)” by Barbara Barrow, Lund University, Sweden, whose analysis of Levy’s novel suggests that the Mediterranean swims and Medusa-stings experienced by the protagonist bring her into new kinship structures. Barrow asks if these structures might serve “not only as a breaking of heteropatriarchal familial norms but also as a breaking of the boundary that purportedly separates the human from the marine,” a “becoming animal,” as it were, with queer and hydrofeminist insights that also build on and adapt Donna Haraway’s famous phrase into “Swimming with the Trouble.” Thirdly, Margarida Vale de Gato’s, University of Lisbon, Portugal, Maritime Gothic and hydrofeminist essay, “Water Specters and Sea Changes by Women around Surrealism: Re-envisioning Poe’s Maritime Gothic,” reworks pictorial references to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym* by shifting the emphasis from Poe’s fearful portrayal of sea creatures to psychoanalytical interpretations of them so as to “‘medusify’ both the maritime gothic in Poe and in Gustave Doré[’s]” surrealism. In the guest editors’ words, Vale de Gato’s study reveals how “tropes such as shipwrecks and whirlpools, once linked to the depths of the unconscious, come to represent the reemergence of repressed ideas and oppressed bodies,” especially the feminine.

Part Three of the special section features six contributions that, in Meillon’s, Guest’s and Ramouche’s words, “cast humans experiencing unmediated contact with

water via sea and ocean praxes.” Evaluating oral stories of Venetian fishermen in “Monsters of the Venice Lagoon: Feral Algae and Alien Invaders in Local Fishermen’s Stories,” Agnese Martini, University of St Andrews, United Kingdom, analyzes with an ethnographic methodology the monstrous transformations of the Lagoon and its climate-changed, feral, and invasive creatures, both flora and fauna. Julia Ori, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, then considers how popular ecological science on whales denotes subjectivity and wonder with first-person narratives in her French-language essay, “Entre discours scientifique et écriture autobiographique: engagement émotionnel et écologique chez Anne Collet et François Sarano.” Next, Noémie Mil-Homens Cavaco’s, Universidad Católica de Lovaina, Belgium, Spanish-language contribution, “Arraigos y desarraigos en *Aguas* de Alicia Genovese: Exploración (sub)acuática,” reads the Argentinian Genovese’s poetry of swimming as a means to, in the guest editors’ words, “transform the modern view of water as inert matter. Indeed, Genovese’s work presents several forms of sensory and ontological reconnection with water, an element which, Mil Homen shows, the poems transfigure into a ‘complete poetic reality.’” Moving from the aquatic poetry of swimming to that of dancing, the next contribution from Caroline Granger, University of Caen Normandy, France, brings us into dance studies with a French-language exploration of the choreographies of breathing and breath-holding. Granger writes that “these breathless marine encounters change our perception of the terrestrial world, invite us to ‘inhabit the threshold,’ to explore this space of transformation,” and even, possibly, to become other than the land. The final two articles of the special thematic section offer more critically political and less optimistic studies of the uses and abuses of Oceanic and water power. Charlotte Ladevèze, University of Augsburg, Germany, offers a French-language discussion of how the contemporary French works, *Barrage sur le Nil* by Christian Jacq (1994), *La Verticale du fleuve* by Clara Arnaud (2023), and *Mémoires sauvées de l’eau* by Nina Leger (2024), create a kind of “dam literature” tracing the transformation of rivers in Anthropocene energy policies with an ecologically damaging “regime of flow governance.” Finally, Matthias Klestil, University of Innsbruck, Austria, closes the special section with a study of the Atlantic Ocean in nineteenth-century African American literature considered in terms of elemental ecocriticism and the blue humanities, “Marine Encounters as Elemental Resistance: Frederick Douglass’s and Charlotte Forten’s Eco poetic Atlantic Prose.” As the guest editors cogently summarize: “This paper represents a pioneering step toward integrating African American corpora into the Blue Humanities, which can help disentangle the ways in which the invention of Blackness might be tied to the experience of Blueness.”

The General Section of *Ecozon@* 17.1, spring 2026, covers a broad geographical expanse from Latin America, through frozen northern icescapes to the Norwegian sea of oil drilling, and extends across many other toxic landscapes of petro-chemical activities. Two of the four contributions harmonize well with the watery thematics of the Special section; of the four essays, there is one in Spanish, one in French, and two in English. The first, a Spanish-language contribution from Andrea

Campaña, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile, “Integración de la alfabetización medioambiental en la formación de profesores de inglés chilenos,” offers a pedagogical exploration of possible curricula for teaching about climate change in Chilean schools. Campaña describes linguistic strategies to inspire climate awareness and provides key pedagogical steps, including “diagnostic tools, socio-semiotic mapping, and eco-journals.” The second essay of the General Section connects to the volume’s water-focused theme with attention to the cryosphere: in “The Affective Affordances of Ecopoetry. Notes from Simon Armitage’s *Cryosphere*,” by Marzia Varutti, University of Geneva, Switzerland. Varutti posits that scientific data and communication alone are not enough to address the current ecological crises that we are facing. He instead emphasizes the potential of ecopoetry to inspire affective responses in readers and undertakes a case study of how Armitage’s poetry evokes the materiality of the frozen Oceanic ice and the direct experience of it. The third article in the General Section is a French-language contribution by Chiara Salari, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, “Esthétique environnementale et visualisations photographiques du pétro-capitalisme. Au-delà du sublime industriel et toxique vers un sublime écologique.” As an interdisciplinary essay using ecocritical analysis to examine the aesthetics of environmental photography, Salari’s study includes “examples of industrial and toxic sublime landscapes” like Edward Burtynsky’s *Oil Fields* and Richard Misrach and Kate Orff’s *Petrochemical America*, and a “focus on the ecological sublime in Subhankar Banerjee’s project on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.” Finally, Reinhard Hennig, University of Agder, Norway, brings us back to the Ocean thematic with his petroculture-studies contribution, “Taking Young Audiences Offshore: Petroleum Extraction in Norwegian Children’s Literature.” Hennig evaluates and critiques the utopian aspects of four Norwegian children’s books published between 1986 and 2013. As he notes, the “fictional stories in these books tend to present oil platforms as utopian places that offer pleasant and exciting experiences, but remain silent about the environmental and climatic risks connected to this industry, and the possible depletion of the nonrenewable resources oil and gas.” Like the first essay in the General Section from Campaña on strategies for teaching climate change in Chilean schools, Hennig’s study makes clear the need for pedagogical expertise regarding, in this case, the uncritical use of such colorful books celebrating the large-scale Norwegian oil production with offshore drilling, particularly since the drilling platforms are far out at sea where they remain unseen by most citizens benefitting from their profitability. The well-known Norwegian children’s books portraying “daddy” and “mommy” working on the platform while failing to mention any of the concomitant disasters connected to offshore drilling, like oil spills and climate change, may appear harmlessly optimistic, but they also reveal the purposeful cultivation of an ominous gap in Oceanic and environmental knowledge.

Edited by Elizabeth Tavella, The American University of Rome, the Creative Writing and Arts section of *Ecozon@* Vol. 17.1 begins with Tavella’s comments on the double nature of Oceans in human history: both as avenues for the violence of

colonization and the possibility of hope that require an “accounting for the layered, troubling, and multispecies confluences waters hold.” The introduction is itself both an analysis of the section’s offerings and a work of art unto itself, a multilayered attentiveness to both kinship with the seas and to the creative emergences from the waters. Beginning with an exposition of the Oceanic cover image by Rebecca Rutstein, painted during a residency aboard the R/V Atlantis in Mexico’s Gulf of California, Tavella notes how the image’s vibrant blues swirl us into the watery depths, both lovely and toxic. The first contribution contained within the Arts section is a photographic series, “De l’autre côté du miroir: Spécificités et merveilles du monde aquatique,” by Frédéric Ducarme, an underwater photographer and researcher in environmental philosophy and marine biology at the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris, revealing the strange beauty of the sea creatures and presenting their gaze that considers us from within the Oceanic realm. We are gazed at, as it were. The series has four parts, each presenting a different array of uncaptioned images that speak their own silent language: 1) the sunlit creatures of the sea; 2) “the marine gaze” whose eyes take in the observer; 3) the “deep forests” of coral reefs and sea grasses; and 4) lessons of darkness that starkly portray the deep-sea-dwelling beings who remain unnamed.

Next in the Arts section are three poems by Susan Richardson, who is, in Tavella’s words, “a writer, performer and educator from Wales, who translates embodied marine experiences into poetry while bearing witness to the anthropogenic harms that threaten their survival. The selection comes from her fourth collection *Words the Turtle Taught Me* (Cinnamon Press 2018), commissioned by the Marine Conservation Society to give voice to thirty ocean creatures on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.” The poems flow seamlessly through the wonder of a shark’s ability to smell the sea, from “the seastars’ tubefeet” to “the creeping acidity of sea, / tiny shelled terrors” with neologisms that paint new access to the water’s rhythms. The next contribution is from Rosanne van der Voet, Leiden University, the Netherlands, “Island river breath I,” which is, in Tavella’s words, “a hybrid ecological-literary reflection on the Eiland Van Brieneoord, a small island in the river Meuse in Rotterdam.” With a pastiche of photographs, poems, and ecocritical theories of the Anthropocene, van der Voet asks: “Being here is being metabolised. Ebbing grants reflection, thinking, slowing. How can this island hold us, sand human insect bird and fish, amongst other bodies beings boulders?” Also reflecting on living, dying Oceanic beings altered by human activity and thereby shunted into becoming more statistics in the Sixth Mass Extinction Event currently underway is Independent Researcher, Natan Feltrin’s, reflection, “After the Tide: Radical Waters and the Practice of Staying.” Their thoughts convey both the anthropogenic devastation and the efforts to counter it through “rewilding” that, however, often themselves lead to new destruction:

Here, rewilding leans over an edge.

There is a claim of responsibility: we drove the heat, we owe help.

There is also a risk of domestication: corals tuned to perform as infrastructure, living breakwaters for economies that refuse to slow.

The distinction is not between intervention and restraint, but between reopening space for ecological self-organisation and locking life into narrow service.

Indeed, as Feltrin notes: “No one controls all the variables. Rewilding here is intervention braided with surrender, repair that does not close the future.” Alessandro Balzaretti, University of Parma, Italy, steps back from the direct discussion of human activities in order to inspire new visualizations of our entanglements, portraying a freshwater marsh in Casalvolone in Piedmont, Italy, in his Italian-language photo series “Dove l’acqua ristagna, dove l’acqua risuona: Nascite dal fondo.” Each photo captures lily-pads, rushes, and other aquatic flora, but in black and white, thus stripping, in Tavella’s words, “the aquatic imagery of any trace of greenness,” so as “to leave the observer disoriented, from which ‘a new wonder may arise,’ not as aesthetic romanticization of nature, but as attunement to the art of noticing” much as Anna Tsing calls us to do. Moving then into the mountains with a French-language memoir reflecting on the seas resonant in an ammonite fossil found in the rocky peaks of her youth, Athane Adrahane, a Belgian writer and multidisciplinary artist, presents “Mémoires de mers et échopoétique des abysses.” She poses and seeks to answer the question: “Toutes les ammonites échopoétisent, murmure quelquefois le mistral, mais qu’entendre par *échopoétiser*?” The final contribution to the Arts and Creative Writing Section is by Pinar Yoldas, a neuroartist, bioarchitect, and researcher at UC San Diego, “From Eco-Conscious to Eco-Unconscious: On the Death of the Ocean and the Unconscious,” a contemplation of words and images that explore with a Jungian approach the fate of our dreams dipping dangerously into the depths during the Anthropocene’s era of Oceanic death, and a fine finale for the section.

The final section of *Ecozon@* Volume 17.1 presents our book reviews. Edited by Isabel Pérez-Ramos, Universidad de Oviedo, Spain, it includes six reviews: five are English-language books, one is in German; the reviews themselves are written in English, German, and Italian. First, Summiya Abid, Ted University, Turkey, reviews Avi Brisman’s and Nigel South’s study of green criminology in *Monstrous Nature and Representations of Representations of Environmental Harm: A Green Cultural Criminological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2025), 247 pp. Second, Valentina Graziuso, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA, reviews in Italian the edited volume by Daniel A. Finch-Race, Emiliano Guaraldo, and Marco Malvestio, eds. *Italian Science Fiction and the Environmental Humanities* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023), pp. 280. Third, Helga Braunbeck’s, North Carolina State University, USA, German-language review of Solvejg Nitzke’s critical plant-studies volume, *Fremde Verwandtschaft: Eine Kulturpoetik der Bäume* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2025), 368 S., offers high praise: “Nitzkes Studie wird für lange Zeit das Standardwerk über die Kulturpoetik der Bäume bleiben, sowie ein ausgezeichnetes Modell bieten für alle, die über die humanarboreale Beziehung sowie generell über literarische und kulturelle Pflanzenstudien lesen, nachdenken und schreiben.” Fourth, Ileana Nachescu, Rutgers University, USA, reviews Darya

Tsymbalyuk's book, *Ecocide in Ukraine: The Environmental Cost of Russia's War* (Polity, 2025), pp. 208., describing it as "a scholarly book that reads like an elegy, blending personal stories, research, folklore, and photography in an accessible yet rigorous text." Fifth, Juan Javier Rivera Andía, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Peru, reviews Jens Andermann, *Entranced Earth: Art, Extractivism, and the End of Landscape* (Northwestern University Press, 2023), pp. 336; noting how Peru, like other areas of the Global South, "ended up as a 'zone of submergence' in 'deforested, pesticide-sprayed, mega-dammed, precariously housed, and monocrop-planted extractive frontiers,'" and that re-conceptions of the role of art are therefore essential. The sixth and final review is by Akshata Bhatt, DCT's Dhempe College of Arts and Science, India, commenting on Caitlin E. Stobie, *Abortion Ecologies in Southern African Fiction: Transforming Reproductive Agency*. (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 214 pp.; Bhatt concludes that "*Abortion Ecologies* will be a useful resource particularly for scholars foraying into the fields of (new) materialism(s), ecocriticism and ecofeminism, multispecies ethnography, postcolonial studies, posthumanist affect studies, (post)colonial African literatures, and legal studies in reproductive discourse."