

Eco-Crip Cultures: Disability and the Environment An Introduction

Cripping Solastalgia: Cultural Responses to Bodily and Planetary Disability

Maryanne L. Leone

Assumption University, United States

maleone@assumption.edu

Shanna Lino

York University, Canada

slino@yorku.ca

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2026.17.2.6361>



Eco-crip cultural engagement is urgent. It forms an integral part of a broader resistance to what ecofeminists and documentarians Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor have termed “supremacist survivalism” (“The Rise of End Times Fascism”). In their 2026 book, *End Times Fascism: And the Fight for the Living Word*, the social activists argue that, currently, an apocalyptic alliance of religious fundamentalists, Silicon Valley technologists, and ethno-nationalists are intentionally bringing about a planetary demise, striving to make the world unlivable while seeking to protect themselves from the fallout, whether on Mars or in bunkers. While “they are choosing to let the Earth burn,” say Klein and Taylor, “[o]ur task is to build a wide and deep movement, as spiritual as it is political, strong enough to stop these unhinged traitors. A movement rooted in a steadfast commitment to one another, across our many differences and divides, and to this miraculous, singular planet” (“The Rise of End Times Fascism”). “Eco-Crip Cultures: Disability and the Environment” responds to that call with essays that dismantle fantasies of autonomy and technological mastery, centre more-than-human attunement and interspecies care practices, and elucidate fragility, impairment, and dependence as ethical resources that displace hyper-capitalist delusions of strength, immunity, fitness, and progress, and that are, therefore, more aptly poised to counter the genocidal and treasonous values that seek to bring about the Holocene extinction.

This special focus of *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* explores the intersection of ecology and disability by recognizing the materiality of both human and more-than-human bodies and by considering the possibilities afforded by eco-crip theory: first, to examine the marginalizing cultures of normalization, ableism, and speciesism; and second, to positively value wide-

ranging understandings, experiences, and contexts of embodied disability and environment. The literary, photographic, and critical texts showcased in “Eco-Crip Cultures” interrogate culturally situated power structures that devalue sentient and non-sentient beings and that cement exploitation through institutionalized, pathologized systems. Whereas nonhuman tropes have long been employed to derogate people with disabilities, the essays here comprised deploy critical strategies from the fields of disability studies and the environmental humanities that together argue for non-hierarchical appraisals of differing abilities and of embodiment along with affirmations of interdependence. Crip theory deepens critiques of homogenization, defiantly salvaging and resituating the derogatory term that it reappropriates. Its merger with ecocriticism expands the material intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality to likewise engage ecology. Thus, eco-crip cultural criticism explores the potential for symbiotic existences of disabled bodies and communities with the nonhuman natural environment and, in so doing, defies erasure by those seeking Armageddon.

“Eco-Crip Cultures: Disability and the Environment” moves beyond treating the environment as a setting for disabled characters or disability as a metaphor for ecological degradation, instead investigating the processes through which bodily and ecological conditions become mutually constitutive. The essays in this special focus vary significantly in their generic and geographic orientation, studying from an eco-crip lens East-German diary and reportage, contemporary American nature writing, Egyptian Arabic short fiction, Chicana photography, Irish dystopian young-adult literature, Indian post-disaster narrative, and Nigerian memoir and novel. The articles expound the intricate connection between environmental damage and disabled bodies through analyses of eco-crip manifestations that intersect with various subdisciplines, including post-disaster studies, cli-fi, queer and Latinx studies, postcolonial studies, and animal studies.

Contributors to the special focus consider, for example, how eco-theorists Stacy Alaimo’s trans-corporeality, Karen Barad’s relational ontology, and Donna Haraway’s multispecies ethics shed light on literary and photographic representations of the material entanglement of human bodies with oil and nuclear pollutants, aquatic and terrestrial landscapes, wild and domesticated animals, as well as industrial, economic, and sociopolitical infrastructure. Through Rob Nixon’s slow violence and Jasbir Puar’s debility framework, the studies illuminate how more-than-human enmeshments are structured by racial capitalism, colonial histories, and unequal distributions of environmental risk in order to articulate how toxic exposure, chronic illness, respiratory impairment, and other consequences of ecological degradation occur more often incrementally than they do through a single spectacular event, and are not individual manifestations of contamination, but part of a broader organization of vulnerability. Essential to the theoretical positioning of “Eco-Crip Cultures” is the work of critic, painter, and disability rights activist Sunaura Taylor—sister to Astra—whose groundbreaking *Disabled Ecologies: Lessons from a Wounded Desert* (2024) provides a model for analyzing how damaged ecosystems and

impaired human and nonhuman bodies emerge through shared histories of contamination and exploitation. Taylor's book offers a case study of industrial and military-related pollution in Tucson, Arizona, particularly the contamination of the aquifer beneath the city's predominantly Mexican American Southside, and argues that disability justice and environmental justice must be pursued together. Taylor builds on Alison Kafer's foundational *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013) to conclude that care must be understood as a sustained collective responsibility, not simply as individual rehabilitation or environmental restoration. For ecocritics who may be new to contemplating the ways in which their environmental humanities research intersects with disability, Taylor's work shows that knowledge-making and activism in this field offers valuable lessons about adaptation, interdependence, and mutual assistance that are key to engaging with ecologically embedded cultural production. Conversely, critical disability scholars considering the incorporation of ecological perspectives into their studies will enrich their understanding of disability as they consider jointly the environmental conditions and the political structures that distribute exposure, vulnerability, and access to care.

Woven throughout the special focus is the imperative of a spatiotemporal reconceptualization that allows us to grapple with our collective disability and debility, caused by and experienced through ecological crisis. We refer to this notion as an eco-crip timespace and, from within it, we acknowledge that our paradoxical existence requires both urgent (climate) action and a (crip) slowing down. Spatially, we are faced with another apparent contradiction. We have been tasked with apprehending the very localized experience of environmental disability, that which is felt in our bodies, lakes, and forests, while simultaneously responding to injuring forces that are produced on a planetary scale. If Timothy Morton's hyperobject describes phenomena so spatially and temporally vast that they cannot be apprehended as complete, bounded objects within ordinary human experience, a crippled hyperobject necessarily becomes bodily in its manifestation. To think through the spatial articulation of disability and ecology is to recognize the body as a site where planetary processes become intimate. In an eco-crip epistemology, dominant accounts of environmental knowledge that frequently privilege large-scale measurements, aggregate data, and abstract representations of planetary change are accompanied by an attunement to the palpable ways in which ecological transformations are registered in everyday life and on disabled bodies. Crippling nonlocality means holding both scales together. It means respecting embodied knowledge while tracing the political, economic, and ecological relations that catalyze our individual experiences.

It is within this eco-crip timespace, that eco-anxiety gives way to solastalgia. Emotional responses to present-day planetary conditions are no longer adequately captured by eco-anxiety, the anticipatory distress about future ecological harm. Solastalgia, the anguish of a very present environmental degradation and dislocation, has taken hold. Eco-crip perspectives invite us to reimagine temporal frameworks that are more attentive to inhabiting disabled bodies and a disabled planet, and to

shifting from futurities measured by progress, resilience, and recovery and which presume uniform bodily capacities, linear development, or the inevitable restoration of supposedly healthy bodies and environments, to a presentness that attends to the lived, embodied, and affective experience of our collective now. Kafer's crip time denotes the zigzagging, flexible, and irregular pace of time governed by disability, and her notion of crip futurity challenges assumptions about which bodies and minds are imagined to belong in the future. Here lies a call for us to attune to a crip present, one that counters the ableist, supremacist forces destroying our planet while planning for the salvation of a select few.

This special focus attends to such a crip present. Its seven articles model the value of reading disability and ecology together to contest the structures that generate environmental degradation and debility, while imagining alternative forms of interdependence, accessibility, care, multispecies solidarity, and collective survival. Their work elucidates counter-narratives that, for example, turn bed-ridden nature writing into a method for accessing a domestic wildness; that see fragility not as a lack, but as a way of inhabiting damaged worlds and bodies; that celebrate the heroism of embracing human-(non)human dependence rather than climbing the highest summit or overcoming illness; and that respond to the ableist assumption that one can control one's own health with eco-crip proposals that find power in vulnerability and agency in dependence.

With "Bodily Disability and Ecological Disaster: Eco-Crip Reflections in Christa Wolf's *Störfall*," Angela Conzo provides an eco-crip reading of the post-Chornobyl novel in which the act of witnessing affirms interdependence and ethics of care is not understood as the technical repair of a malfunction, but as a practice of attention and responsibility toward the (non-)human other. In "Crip Nature Writing? Domestic Wildness in Elisabeth Tova Bailey's *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*," Christian Hummelsund Voie proposes the subversive concept of a crip nature writing that is inclusive of underrepresented places and perspectives, while Mila Fantinelli's "Floating at the Edge: Eco-Crip Perspectives on Disability and Nature in Muhammad Makhzangi's 'He Was Chasing a Butterfly in the Sea'" analyses interspecies care in response to the impulse to dominate nature. Protichi Chatterjee's article, "Co-composing with Laura Aguilar's *Nature Self-Portrait Series: A Case for a Neurodivergent Gaze*," deploys ecosomatic and enactive paradigms to elucidate the entanglement of our affective, somatic, and cognitive constitution with our surroundings, as well as the potential of a neurodivergent gaze to participate in eco-crip co-composition. Somak Mukherjee's "Breathing through Catastrophe: Respiratory Disability in Sarah Crossan's Fiction" critiques the systematic conversion of ecological crisis into a logic of atmospheric infrastructure and bodily incapacitation through the production and control of respiratory dependency. With "Crippling the Eco-Disaster: Imagining Disability Ecologies in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and Veena Nagpal's *Radius 200*," Lisa Cristea identifies material-discursive entanglements in disaster-ridden environments in two novels that contribute to the production of knowledge about specific disability experiences in the Global South. Finally, Khawla

Bendjemil's essay "Debilitating Ecologies: Eco-Crip Resistance in Saro-Wiwa's *A Month and a Day* and Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*" critiques the ableist and extractive norms perpetuated by oil companies and state complicity, situating the Niger Delta's struggle within broader African environmental justice discourses.

A note about process: it was non-negotiable for us as guest editors of this special focus of *Ecozon@* that the preparation of "Eco-Crip Cultures: Disability and the Environment" follow an eco-crip scholarly praxis. Not only do the seven articles analyze literary and photographic texts that practice an ecological engagement with disability, in several cases, the primary sources are the compositions of disabled artists. "Eco-Crip Cultures" also consciously makes space for articles written by disabled scholars, each of whom discloses to varying degrees the ways in which their disabilities inform their critical readings. Finally, the peer review process sought the participation of disabled critics, intentionally cultivating room for dialogue about critical disability that values and is informed by lived experience. Thus, and inspired by Sunaura Taylor's own scholarly praxis, this special focus aims to contemplate ecological disability and disabled ecologies by foregrounding not only eco-crip art and theory, but also method.

In normative ableist discourse, disability is construed as a deviation, an anomalous body ill-equipped to navigate an environment that is imagined or built with ablebodiedness in mind. However, when an environment is purposefully disabled, when the political and economic order manufactures dependency to access water or air, then disability is no longer an anomaly but an intended yield. Manufactured disability, like manufactured environmental collapse, require the type of collective eco-crip resistance that essayists of this special focus examine. Given the apocalyptic authoritarianism that Klein and A. Taylor have identified, "Eco-Crip Cultures: Disability and the Environment" takes seriously the political stakes of representing ecological crisis and of determining whose survival matters. The interdisciplinary framework of the special focus builds on the well-documented notions that ecological damage is experienced unevenly and that disability is shaped by material environments and sociopolitical frameworks. The cultural representations studied by the authors whose essays we gather here help determine how these eco-crip relationships become legible, meaningful, and politically consequential.

Works Cited

- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007.
- Haraway, Donna J. *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

- Klein, Naomi, and Taylor, Astra. *End Times Fascism: And the Fight for the Living World*. Penguin Books, 2026.
- . "The Rise of End Times Fascism." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 13 April 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/apr/13/end-times-fascism-far-right-trump-musk>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2026.
- Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Puar, Jasbir K. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Taylor, Sunaura. *Disabled Ecologies: Lessons from a Wounded Desert*. University of California Press, 2024.