

Editorial 14.2

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Industrial human activities are transforming much of our Earth's surface and beyond, including the planetary climate itself and all its contributing flows and cycles, but also the rocky, geological Underworld. In the wake of the massive and extraordinarily rapid alterations to our living ecosystems and to their undergirding of mineral support as we frack away at the outer layers of the our world in order to extract fossil fuels while injecting secret industrial poisons, creative authors and artists imagine new narrative forms of collapse and apocalypse. Although many of these tales and artworks feature the popular tropes often labeled "catastrophe porn" for their dwelling on death and destruction in a frenzy of cultural and ecological toxicity and emerging ruins of modern urban landscapes, there are other inspired stories focusing instead on wildly divergent forms of care that emerge within catastrophes. Who and what are left to care, for example, and to be cared for, these authors ask, and in what forms among the rubble and on the overheated planet of expanding storm systems? There are forms of care dedicated not only to the many types of "humans" (for what is it to be human today?), but also to beings who are nonhuman, posthuman, more than human, or even to entire ecosystems, and especially to our co-species and the plants that started it all, this pioneering march across the once rocky Earth's surface that we humans have now shifted into a march of monocrop plantations, deforested desertification, and industrial, fossil-fueled agriculture. Let us seek and consider narratives of care in which caring is carried out by, or for, manifold human beings in their variegated spectrum of genders, but also the nonhuman, hybrid forms, cyborgs, cross-species beings, and entangled beings enacting symbiosis; one might find, too, tales of the "end" that present or imagine trans-kinds of care and queer forms of care that share much with Donna Haraway's vision of "oddkin" in *Staying with the Trouble*. If forests and plants produce living systems enabling all large land animals including humankind and our companion species, does this qualify as "care"? Is reforestation care when it also benefits us during our march towards devastation? What kinds of plants or weeds remain or will remain in the future, and what animal beings and single-celled creatures will live on? What hybrids emerge, and will we care for them, will they care for us? In short, can we industrial humans, in our manifold collapse-imaginings, formulate new/renewed/old kinds of care that extend beyond our self and limited vision of families or of those who are claimed to "matter" due to their finances / skin color / religion / class / geographical/national location? Indeed, this special edition of

Ecozon@ dedicated to “Contemporary Collapse: New Narratives of the End” resonates with reshaped or rediscovered ideas of care extending across all kinds of beings who are nonhuman, posthuman, vegetal, animal, alien, cyborg, and more. These narrative and artistic visions of life acknowledge how we are all (meaning “we,” now, as all living things) transformed by colonial, extractivist, imperialist, and economically “rationalist” waste-cultures; in response, several of the authors and artists in this volume feature cyclical time-frames, which is to say, they have overcome the linear claims of “progress” that seems to be moving inexorably toward calamity, and have re-inserted human cultures back into the vegetal and seasonal cycles in which we always have been immersed, despite our “illusions of disembeddedness” (to quote Val Plumwood’s *Environmental Culture* and Eric Otto’s discussion of Plumwood in *Green Speculations*). *Ecozon@* 14.2 features analyses and stories that rethink human beings from within the entangled and trans-corporeal world of living things that we are changing and, perhaps, caring for or about, as they, too, change us and, one can hope, care for us, during these drastic times.

The special section entitled “Contemporary Collapse: New Narratives of the End” is guest-edited by Sara Bédard-Goulet, University of Tartu, and Christophe Premat, Stockholm University. It includes seven marvelous essays, which, as the editors note, “investigate a posthuman aesthetics in contemporary literature, which builds on, but mostly shifts Western and anthropocentric conceptions of collapse, and diverges” from apocalyptic traditions. Importantly, the authors achieve this shift away from expected tropes found in declensionist narratives by considering “what happens after death, where the posthumus renegotiates the assemblage of chains of life between animals, plants and humans,” thereby potentially reimagining care and our entanglements during the “end” that extend beyond simple “human” concerns. These essays offer new possibilities for imagining and perceiving our current ecological and political situatedness within the shifting tides of extinctions and rebirths.

The special section’s wide-ranging contributions study literary and artistic works from across Europe, Asia, and North America, including several indigenous authors and artists. Ida Olsen’s “Collapse and Reversed Extinction: Beyond Inherited Epistemologies of Species Loss in Louise Erdrich’s *Future Home of the Living God*,” features, for example, an insightful reconsideration of cyclical time in opposition to what the editors term “the Western teleological discourse of progress.” Similarly, Jasmin Belmar Shagulian’s essay, “Pachakuti, An Indigenous Perspective on Collapse and Extinction,” explores mythocritical indigenous ontologies that are also circular and so shift the focus away from teleological narratives. In “The Future is Collapsing: Feminist Narratives of Unmaking in Laura Pugno and Veronica Raimo,” Alice Parrinello demonstrates how these two Italian science-fiction authors adopt Haraway’s idea of “oddkins” in their stories of extinctions. The section includes a wide range of genres and formats, too, going beyond novels, myths, and science fiction; Armelle Blin-Rolland reads French graphic novels in terms of queer and feminist stories of the end in “Contemporary Graphic Narratives of the End: Sketching an Ecopolitics of Disorientation and Solidarity through SF *Bande Dessinée*.” The impressive linguistic and cultural diversity of the special section continues with Karl Kristian Swane Bambini’s “Norwegian Futurisms: Posthumanism and the Norwegian

Nordic Model in Tor Åge Bringsværd's *Du og Jeg, Alfred and Alfred 2.0*," that critiques the celebratory vision of Norway as an ecotopia and generous welfare state, establishing instead, through the reading of eco-dystopias, how Norway is also a country enriched by fossil-fuel extractivism. The final two essays analyze art works portraying various eco-apocalyptic visions. Deborah Schrijvers looks at mass extinctions in terms of nonlinear time in "Seeing the World Through Glass: Time and Extinction in Fiona Tan's *Depot* (2015)." Finally, Damien Beyrouthy's essay, "Facing Depletion. Artworks for an Epistemological Shift in the Collapse Era," queries the validity of "technofixes" for environmental crises by evaluating David Claerbout's *The Pure Necessity* (2016), Emilio Vavarella's *Animal Cinema* (2017) and *Amazon's Cabinet of Curiosity* (2019), and his own installation *She Was Called Petra* (2020) ART. Beyrouthy suggests that techno-fixes actually accelerate rather than alleviate ecological damage.

The general section features five essays with a similar sweep across continents and cultures, and includes important discussions of catastrophes, various means of reading both human and nonhuman bodies together, Norwegian birds, forms of feminist readings of bodies, culinary narratives as an antidote to tales of catastrophe, and an animal-studies reading of the Ibero-American coyote trickster. First is Sk Tarik Ali's essay from India, "Pesticide, Politics and a Paradise Lost: Toxicity, Slow Violence and Survival Environmentalism in Ambikasaran Mangad's *Swarga*." The narrative examines the historical endosulfan disaster in the Indian state of Kerala in terms of "slow violence" that impacts bodies, biological systems widely, cultures, and especially the poor. With its resistance against the pesticide industry and imaginative exploration of such a devastating ecological crisis, Ali's study ties in well with the volume's theme of "Contemporary Collapse" even as it presents forms of social protest that might bring change. Endre Harvold Kvangraven offers another Norwegian study, this one on Tomas Bannerhed's *Korparna* (The Ravens, 2011), in terms of both cultural narratives like myth and folklore, and ecological, botanical data from, as Kvangraven explains, "Småland—the historical province in Sweden where *Korparna* is set." With a study of birds and birding, the author's exploration of the novel emphasizes "emplacement" and connections to the nonhuman as a kind of cross-species care.

Next, Ashleigh McIntyre reconsiders the essentialism of some forms of older feminisms in her essay, "Zoomorphism and Human Biology in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*." McIntyre addresses both the insights from zoomorphism's focus on human bodies as part of a species within larger systems and the disadvantages that can emerge from overly deterministic gender assumptions. She insightfully concludes that: "Whilst zoomorphisation has the effect of challenging contemporary convictions around the malleability of gender and individual identities, it is an approach that also challenges some of the cornerstones of the perception of human dominance over the natural world." In another ecofeminist essay, Danila Cannamela's "Binding and Liberating: Recipes for Environmental Narratives," looks at Italian "second-wave feminism" in terms of the language of cooking that provides a welcome alternative to "dominant discourses of natural-cultural depletion." By including actual recipes from traditional Italian culinary traditions based on ancient grains, Cannamela provides a material, embodied reading of local, sustainable agriculture as

a form of human immersion in the world that continues, cyclically, throughout time, the cyclical time of living beings beyond one individual body.

The final essay in the general section by Miguel Rodríguez García, our one Spanish-language contribution to the volume, “Hacia una historia cultural, literaria y natural del coyote hispanoamericano en los siglos XVI–XIX,” looks at the Ibero-American coyote as a being both a part of natural history of the continent and as a cultural icon of folklore. The essay takes a historical view, tracing the coyote from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, and thus situating human beings alongside this trickster figure featured so prominently as yet another canid whose relationship to us shapes our material and biological bodies and worlds through time.

In the Creative Writing and Arts section, Arts Editor Elizabeth Tavella summarizes the exquisite works she includes in this volume, all of which bring additional nuance and perspective into the theme of, again, “Contemporary Collapse: New Narratives of the End”. Tavella notes that such art works not only help us to “confront the enormity of the global issues, they hold the potential to produce an epistemic shift in how we perceive the future.” She offers a more optimistic note considering how collapse and decay are part of renewal and change, of, in fact, new, alternative states of being.” In continuing the possibility of collapse alongside considerations of care, Tavella promises that the contributions extend beyond the human perspective, that is, they “prompt a reconsideration of the concept of “end” beyond anthropocentric narratives of annihilation.” The full array of creative works in this volume, *Ecozon@* 14.2, includes various works of eight authors/artists. On the cover of the volume is Diana Lelonek’s striking cover image of life merging with plastic and so offering an aesthetic vision of new hybridities to the narratives of collapse. Similarly, the images presented by Nnenna Okore shape waste products and discarded materials into biologically-inspired forms with bioplastic beauty that is startlingly provocative if disturbing in implication.

The poetry and creative writing in the Arts Section brilliantly reconceives interspecies care in our age of industrial processes, genetic engineering, and pandemics. While Yaxkin Melchy Ramos invites readers, as Tavella writes, “to question the ethics of genetic engineering of more-than-human animals,” José Manuel Marrero Henriquez continues his beautifully cross-species project of poetics, “The Poetics of Breathing,” with a short story based on newspaper columns, *Antiviral Writings*. The tale connects directly the breath of humans and non-humans alike as we try to breathe in our industrialized world. The next two poems, “Helm” and “Fathom”, are from Stuart Cooke, who considers relationships that emerge from extinctions and the resulting languages they necessitate. Then, both Laura op de Beke, in “Ticking Like a Mountain—or the Bezoszoic”, and Start Flynn, in “15,000 Metres Above Time”, consider new views of time, especially deep time or stopped time in the eye of a cyclone, as a means of extending beyond short-term anthropocentric visions of Earth’s systems. Finally, the Arts Section closes with three images by Rowan Kilduff that also suggest deep time, multispecies care, and the collapses that occur with the explosions of nuclear weapons. I end my summary with the words from Tavella’s introduction that point towards issues of care in ecological crises; she writes: “In order, then, to nourish a deeper sense of care, it is essential to visit the root causes of ecological collapse and to challenge the systems that support it.” And this visitation

and thus challenge of root causes is exactly what we see in the prism of art works, poems, and scholarly articles in *Ecozon@*'s volume on "Contemporary Collapse."

Ecozon@ 14.2 also features eight book reviews of new works of environmental humanities and arts: 1) Safak Horzum's review of Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran, eds. *The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Medical-Environmental Humanities* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 416 pp. 2) Jack Rondeau's review of Pramod Nayar, *Nuclear Cultures: Irradiated Subjects, Aesthetics and Planetary Precarity* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 198pp. 3) Lisa Ottum's review of Marija Grech, *Spectrality and Survivance: Living the Anthropocene* (Lanham, Maryland: Littlefield and Rowman, 2022), 184 pp. 4) Gabby Tapia's review of Douglas A. Vakoch, ed., *Transecology: Transgender Perspectives on Environment and Nature* (London: Routledge, 2022), 242 pp. 5) Bart Welling's review of Kate Judith, *Exploring Interstitiality with Mangroves: Semiotic Materialism and the Environmental Humanities* (London, New York: Routledge, 2023), 212 pp. 6) Rachel Dowse's review of Pippa Marland, *Ecocriticism and the Island: Readings from the British-Irish Archipelago* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022), 276 pp. 7) Grania Power's review of Ve-Yin Tee, ed., *Romantic Environmental Sensibility: Nature, Class and Empire* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 304 pp. And 8) Micha Gerrit Philipp Edlich's review of Daniela Francesca Viridis, Elisabetta Zurru, and Ernestine Lahey, eds., *Language in Place: Stylistic Perspectives on Landscape, Place and Environment, Linguistic Approaches to Literature (LAL) 37* (Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2021), 258 pp.