

Eco, Eco... Eco poetics, Ecopsychology: Literature and Psyche

What My House Would Be Like if It Were a Person
This person would be an animal.

Denise Levertov

The thematic special issue “Eco, Eco... Eco poetics, Ecopsychology: Literature and Psyche” of *Poznan Slavic Studies* has been developed as a link between ecological literature and ecopsychology. As E.O. Wilson pointed out in his book, *Reconciliation: The Uniqueness of Knowledge*, the desire for reconciliation is found in all-new academic disciplines that seek to return to ecology. Thus, ecopsychology was initiated in 1992 by Theodore Roszak in his book, *The Voice of the Earth*, which explores the relationship between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles and seeks to develop ways to expand the emotional connection between individuals and the natural world by establishing and developing a sustainable way of life and removing alienation from nature. Gauthier Chapelle, Raphaël Stevens and Pablo Servigne in the book, *Une autre fin du monde est possible. Vivre l'effondrement (et pas seulement y survivre)* (Another End of the World is Possible Living the Collapse [and Not Merely Surviving It]), which they dedicate to survivalists, collapsonauts, zadists and other activists, to wish them courage,

pay tribute to Joanne Macy and her understanding of ecopsychology in the service of reconnecting to nature.

The crisis that threatens our planet stems principally from a pathological notion: the severance of ties with nature is accompanied by a deep severance with ourselves. Although several different psychological sub-disciplines deal with nature, ecology and the environment, we decided to use the name ecopsychology after the example of Theodore Rozsak. By this *green* term, we mean his definition of ecopsychology, but also environmental psychology. This field combines a fundamental interest in researching the relationship between an individual and their environment, including environmental stressors; the study of spaces and their impact on an individual's psyche, and motivations for ecological action; the psychology of place, which has been developed since the 1970s with a special focus on belonging to a place, the pleasures, and symbols associated with a particular place; and ecological psychology founded in the 1960s on the work of Roger Barker and James J. Gibson, and focused on the importance of the surroundings and the environment in defining an individual's behavior, actions, or social capital. This collage of subdisciplines, regardless of their diversity of approaches and thematic differences, has its similarities in the study of nature, environment, and ecology from psychological research. Since the thematic issue of the journal *Poznań Slavic Studies* is oriented toward nature, ecology, and the environment from the point of view of ecopoetics and ecopsychology, we considered the term "ecopsychology" to be broad enough to capture the complexity of individuals within nature and environment.

Ecological literature and ecopoetics are border concepts or areas of intersection in the creation of literary works with a perspective on poetics and ecological efforts in the Anthropocene towards "our Earth home," or as conveniently noted by Jonathan Skinner, the editor of the journal *Ecopoetics*—ecopoetics is a creation of home. Ecopoetics has been expanding from Anthropocenic literature through ecophenomenology, ecocriticism, and ecomelancholia. In contrast, ecological literature provides a space for different interpretations and analyses of the interpenetration of words, art, ecology, and nature. While ecopoetics tries to be politically neutral and marked by the idea of poetry as the construction and development of human action in harmony with nature,

ecocriticism interprets the similarities and differences between nature and culture as well as cultural representations of nature in literary and artistic works from utopia to dystopia, with an emphasis on the Anthropocene and Anthropocentric agency.

Within this topic, the editors of the journal try to connect “word” and “psyche” (the studies will include ecopoetics, environmental and ecological literature, and ecopsychology) in the context of the pandemic (2020–2022) which has fundamentally changed our relationship to natural-cultural contact zones, including, posthumanism and transhumanism. These concepts are subject to interpretation within various theoretical directions and bonds of the human and the more-than-human world, so it is possible to analyze different aspects of the relationship to ecological ties and separations within literature and other subdisciplines such as cultural botany, technologies, androids, and cyborgs and the post-pandemic world of the Anthropocene and Wastocene as defined by Marco Armiero.

The title *Eko, eko* (Eco, Eco) has been a synonym for a cult children’s book *Eko eko* (1979) by Hrvoje Hitrec, in which the author discusses ecocide. Furthermore, the title of the special volume correlates with the abbreviation of the academic journal *Ekonomska i ekohistorija* (Economic and Ecohistory), currently the only journal dedicated to environmental history (or ecohistory) in Southeast Europe that has been published continuously since 2005 in Croatia. *Eko eko* is a part of the title of Tajči Čekada’s performance of thirty years later, “Eko / eko—human milk, the only human-specific milk” in which the artist embeds animal rights within the scope of feminism (Suzana Marjanić. “Na čemu si ti?": Primjer viševrsne etnografije/antropologije životinja i vegansko-ga ekofeminizma/feminističkovegetarijanske teorije, *Narodna umjetnost* 2017, 54, no. 2: 27–48).

Given the age we are witnessing, known as the Anthropocene with all its variants, posthumanism, post/digital age, instead of the literature-history-politics (political crisis) triad, we set up an ecological niche with the literature-ecosphere-ecology (ecological crisis) triangle, expanding its ethics towards a biophilic umbrella and literary ecology with an emphasis on the ecological crisis, or as Lord Ashby argues—climacteric. Namely, Ashby recalls that a crisis is a state that can be overcome;

however, the state we are in today, in ecological terms, can only be described as climacteric. (The English word climacteric, in addition to the established meaning that covers the physiological and psychological changes that mark the end of a woman's reproductive abilities determined by menopause, also covers the meaning of "critical period".)

Vittorio Höfle points out that we are on the threshold of a new moral-political paradigm—an ecological paradigm that will have to replace the paradigm of the economy: that is, a qualitative policy that aims to preserve the natural resources of our life-world (*Lebenswelt*), and one that no longer places the quantitative growth of the economy above all else. However, one needs to admit that a qualitative change in the moral-political paradigm is quite unlikely, as it is obvious that moral categories over *Gea* and nature are the same—anthropocentric or as ecofeminists would put it—androcentric. It is this thematic set, more poetically entitled, "Eco, Eco... Ecopoetics, Ecopsychology: Literary Worlds and Psyche," that we consider an ecopoetic and ecopsychological link in the broadest sense of these terms (including ecophenomenology, ecomelancholy, place psychology, the more-than-human world and transhumanist and posthumanist notions in culture) between our two collections of papers in Croatian—ecofeminist (*Ecofeminism: between women's and green studies*. Zagreb: Durieux, 2020) and ecocritical (*Ecocriticism: between nature and culture* is in preparation for publication, Đurđević and Marjančić are editing it together) in which we combined, among other things, ecofeminist and ecocritical interpretations of selected works of art.

The first part of "Nature and humans" includes texts in which the relations between people and nature, opposed or connected, are analyzed. Rafaela Božić uses a wide range of early Soviet literary works to document nature in the literary utopia and dystopia of the early Soviet period. In Zamyatin's works, nature manifests itself in the form of elements and an inexhaustible source of creativity, while in Platonov's works, the human is less than nature and can never master it. Henrietta Mondry emphasizes that the works of Vasily Rozanov, his solution to the issue of coexistence with animals, ethics, and economics of reciprocity between humans and domesticated animals are of particular importance for the current reality of the coronavirus pandemic. With particular reference to rural landscapes and links to the soil, Anna Horniatko-Szumiłowicz

also analyzes nature and space in the works of Vasily Tkachuk. This rural community in the Ukrainian region inhabited by Guculi (Huculi) is marked by nature and its protection, which has become a source of strong national emotions and identities. Oksana Pukhonska thematizes Chernobyl as a text of culture in the literary work *Оформляндія або Прогулянка в Зону* (Oformlandia or Walk in the Zone) by the contemporary Ukrainian writer Markiyam Kamysh. The sources of Kamysh's book, which enters the niche of nuclear studies and the so-called Chernobyl genre, are based on the author's experience of illegal travel to the exclusion zone.

Svetlana Sumpor interprets four stories from the *Decameron 2020: Priče iz karantene* (Decameron 2020 collection: Stories from Quarantine) that were initially published on the blog in the pandemic period from March 15 to May 15, 2020. In addition to utopian motifs in stories fueled by quarantine and the coronavirus pandemic, the author observes the phenomenon of nature as a remedy and refuge, and a model of co-existence with animals (i.e., non-humans). The emotions towards nature and/or animals, which form the ecopsychological mosaic of this work, also arise from these observations and mutual relations. One such emotion is the traditional care for nature conservation, which is part of Sylwia Nowak-Bajcar's work in which she explores the relationship between Nikola Malović and his works, *Latajući Bokelj* (Wandering Bokelj), *Jedro nade* (Sail of Hope) and *Prugastoplave storije* (Striped Blue Stories), to Nature and Imagination of Nature and Space/Home (*oikos*) in Boka Kotorska. The term is in line with the traditional notion of nature and ecological knowledge, as well as embellished images of nature from the past that form part of identity.

Domagoj Brozović's central research question about the fantastic novel of *Mor* by Đuro Sudeta is the relationship between nature and culture from an eco-critical perspective. Thus, nature ceases to be the backdrop and becomes an actor in the story's very structure, plot and message.

The second part of the texts, "Nature and children," is centred around children, children's literature and their (free) time, and the representation of natures (in the plural) in these works. Ana Batinić writes about the representations of nature, and especially wildlife, as she analyzes the work *Zarobljenik sumske kuće* (Prisoner of the Forest House) by Anđelka Martić. In the concluding part of her paper, the author points out that

“literature can be studied as art that reflects our interactions with the natural world, but also influences them.” Goran Đurđević’s work goes beyond merely the verbal elements in children’s literature and is oriented toward albums with stickers of fauna and flora from the area of Southeast Europe. The albums mentioned shaped children’s everyday life in the second half of the 20th century and their popularity depended on the socio-political context of green ideas and policies.

The next series of articles, “Non-human agencies,” is dedicated to the multispecies world we belong to as human beings, or as Shaun Monson would write—Earthlings (with all other Earthlings), which is reflected in cultural and literary debates. The issues of the multifaceted world are the subject of research by Marjetka Golež Kaučič, who interprets the poetry collections, *Tisoc osemdeset stopinj* (One Thousand and Eighty Degrees) by Alenka Jovanovski and *roko razje* by Vesna Liponik. Their poems are an interesting case study of animals as inherent beings depicted by looking critically at discursive, symbolic and material placement of animals that represent hierarchical relationships between humans and animals. The approach to non-human agents in the example of the fictional autobiography of *Terezin sin* (Tereza’s Son) by Vjerman Miladinović Merlinka is analyzed by Andrija Filipović, who connects queer identities and non-human actors as sufficiently similar groups of Others. Focusing on four dogs as important actors in the autobiography and their relationship with Miladinović, Filipović shows the complexity of such relationships in a wide range from coexistence and care to survival. All of this is set in the urban ecology of Belgrade—in the busy and crowded city streets, stations, means of transport, infrastructure and various technical and technological urban spheres.

Technology is part of the next group of texts entitled “Posthumanism, technology, body and nature,” which opened with a text by Vladimira Rezo on transhumanism and posthumanism in Croatian dystopian prose. Using a wide range of fourteen prose works, the author analyzes interventions on the human body ranging from plastic surgery, bioengineering, biotechnology and cybernetic projects that have created hybrids and cyborgs. A slightly different approach to the body is brought about by Anna Chudzik, who deconstructs the image of the body and nature by dealing with proponents of alternative medicine. Writing from the

perspective of digital humanities and using linguistic and anthropological methods applicable to the analysis of attitudes shared on Facebook, the author explains the new position and role of the body within nature. In his text, Aljoša Pužar draws attention to an almost unknown part of Eastern Adriatic art—the futuristic movement in the early decades of the 20th century. According to the author, futuristic endeavors could be located between panism and technopanism. By erasing the opposition between dichotomous pairs such as nature and technology or the village and the city from the perspective of mimesis and ecopoetics applied to the poetry of contemporary Croatian poet Sladan Lipovec, Branislav Oblučar addressed the question of the place of Lipovec's poetry: "If we put his poetry to typology by Garrard and Lindström, it could be placed between ecophenomenological and environmental poetry."

The last set of papers, "Ecopsychology, place belonging and space," opens up questions of ecopsychology permeated with spaces and places. The question of an individual's relationship with place and space (especially with regard to belonging) is also part of environmental psychology. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, "while space is freedom, place is security" (cf. Đurković in this issue). Uroš Đurković's article examines the similarities and differences between ecocriticism and geopoetics through the perspectives of ecopsychology. He conducts a case study on the landscape, a very popular, changeable and ambiguous term in which the interpretive niches of ecocriticism, geopoetics and ecopsychology permeate. Thus, the landscape becomes "meeting and enlightening the encounter." Ewa Szperlik writes about a different type of belonging to a place that can be characterized by the word "sea" (meaning the Adriatic Sea) on the example of the books *Kornatska prica* (Story from Kornat) and *Meka ulica* (Soft street) by Damir Miloš. Using a variety of theoretical literature and methodological approaches (e.g., Aldo Leopold's environmental ethics, Bruno Latour's hyperhumanism, Jean-François Lyotard's *oikon* and *poesis*), the author interprets the harmony, liminality and transgression of the sea as an entity. A different part of the relationship between man and nature from the perspective of harmony is examined by Lidija Stojanović. Using literary (Blaže Koneski), discursive (the ecoanalysis applied by Tatjana Miljovska) and cinematographic examples (*Zemlja meda* [The Land of Honey] directed by Tamara

Kotevska and Ljubo Stefanov), the author outlines a kind of eco-cosmos, i.e., a harmonious relationship based on a balance between man, biotope and nature.

The “Off-topic” section includes an article by Anita Gostomska whose subject of analysis is the particular and real place—Brlićevac—a cottage and vineyard where Croatian children’s writer Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić spent her summers. For the writer herself, this place was more than just a summer house, and her letters show a wide range of emotions she felt towards Brlićevac, which can be considered almost a sacred place.

The “Essay” section consists of a text by the intermedia artist Ivana Filip in which she discusses the community of free-roaming cats that she got in touch with to develop a line of research into interspecies communication, documented through video and text. Documentation of collaboration with fellow citizens, colleagues, and cat caregivers has been used as a source of creating textual and visual manifestos in utopian experiments as the second line of research. The author realizes the concept of *catopia* as a collage of utopia, symbiocene and empathy.

The aforementioned section also consists of two book reviews. The first one is by Ewelina Drzewiecka who writes about the monograph *Защото е на скрито... Християнският светоглед в творчеството на Атанас Далчев* (Because it is Hidden... The Christian Worldview in the Works of Atanas Dalchev) by Kamen Rikev. In the second one, Jarosław Poliszczuk reviews the book *Reading, Re-reading. Literary articles, portraits, reflections* *Читаючи, перечитуючи. Літературознавчі статті портрети, роздуми* (Reading, Re-reading. Literary Articles, Portraits, Reflections).

The end of the issue is marked by Suzana Marjanić’s essay about Ivana Filip’s exhibition, *Mjerica svih stvari* (Little Measure of All Things), that shows our relationship with our animal brothers and sisters.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our authors and reviewers. We want to believe that this is just one of the green initiatives of eco-poetic, ecopsychological, ecocritical and above all ecohumanistic research in the literatures and cultures of the Slavic world.

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