

# INTRODUCTION\*

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In an era defined by accelerating planetary crisis of climate breakdown, ecocide, mass extinction, environmental injustice and technological compliance with oppressive and greedy capitalist systems of fossil fuel production and distribution, a paradigmatic shift is emerging across Ecocriticism and the Environmental Humanities. This shift, recently described as the “symbiotic turn” (Karpouzou & Zampaki 2023, 25) signals a critical move beyond the conceptual bounds of the Anthropocene<sup>1</sup> and the Capitalocene<sup>2</sup> toward what Glen Albrecht in *Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World* (2019) has characterized as the age of the Symbiocene (102); a new period of human intelligence and praxis with a reinvigorated posthuman language aimed at counterbalancing the current destructive forces and reestablishing the “symbiotic bonds (...) that have been severed in the Anthropocene” (104). With its roots in Gaia’s theory of Lovelock and Margulis (1974) and its interdependent forces that makes life thrive, symbiosis, the “cooperation between radically different types of organisms living in close proximity” (Albrecht 2019, 98), strongly challenges Darwin’s models of evolution based on competition between species/organisms in competitive environments. Indeed, from a posthuman mindset that denounces the status quo, a new subjectivity has emerged in the last decades to demand intersectional situated positions against ecological destruction and to recognize the need for symbiotic posthumanist ecologies in Literary and Cultural Studies<sup>3</sup> (Karpouzou & Zampaki 2023). Thus, “the very nature of human thought must be changed” (Wolfe 2010, xvi) to be able to understand that it is not just the land that is broken, exploited and polluted but most importantly, it is human beings’ relationship to the Earth that needs to be restored. Drawing from a critical posthumanism<sup>4</sup> that radically de-centers humans’ arrogant position as the apotheosis of the planet’s evolutionary process, a symbiotic posthumanism highlights a “reorganization of the thinking on ‘ecology’ and ‘ecosystems’ by pointing out the symbiotic nature of all life on earth, including a symbiosis with the non-human and the technological” (Nayar 2023, 7). Hence, realigning humanity with the “rest-of-the-world” implies embracing new connections (7) within the realm of symbiotic interconnectivity with the more than human world, the forces of nature and the universe.



Interestingly, in this association with the cycle of life and the cyclical forces found within nature, the figure of an earth-based, green “witch”<sup>5</sup> embodies a perfect example of a symbiotic posthumanism whose praxis and practice emanates from a deep-rooted bond with a living Earth (Murphy-Hiscock 2017; Sotelo 2022). Far from being simply a practice based on botanical and medicinal knowledge of trees, plants, herbs and the performing of seasonal rituals, “the green witch’s practice revolves around working establishing and maintaining harmony within herself, within her community, and with nature” (Murphy-Hiscock 2017, 30). However, as it is well-known, the prevailing archetype of the “witch” within Judeo-Christian traditions and sexist practices is still being one in which she is portrayed as a malevolent and demonic woman in alliance with the evil and the most harmful forces in the natural world. Consequently, in general terms, the “witch” is unfairly perceived as a figure to be despised and feared.

In response, increasingly interrogating the patriarchally constructed and historically entrenched figure of the “witch” as a pernicious and malicious agent of the devil, a growing number of ecofeminist voices have significantly contributed to the reconfiguration of the “witch” as a historical marginalized figure deeply associated with nature, healing and pre-capitalist communal care (Sjöö & Mor 1991; Christ 1997; Federici 2004 [1998]; Ehrenreich & English 2010 [1973]). Hence, recovering

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<sup>1</sup> A term coined by Dutch biologist Paul Crutzen in 2000, the “Anthropocene” describes how human activity is having such a destructive impact on ecosystems that it is causing profound changes in the Earth’s geological, atmospheric, and biological systems. Because of this negative human footprint, climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental transformations are currently being triggered on a global scale.

<sup>2</sup> Interrogating the colonial legacy of the “Anthropocene” framed in capitalist systems, the term “Capitalocene” is suggested to underscore that not all human populations are equally responsible for the current socio-ecological destruction of our planet (See Haraway 2015 & Moore 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See also Braidotti 2022 & Thomas 2022.

<sup>4</sup> See among many others, the foundational work of Rosi Braidotti’s *The Posthuman* (2013); Stacy Alaimo’s *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (2016); Donna J. Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016); or Francesca Ferrando’s *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2019).

<sup>5</sup> The term “witch” appears in quotation marks to highlight the need of the constant questioning of the term, unfairly associated with the demonic and malevolent.



her ancestral association with resilient, healing and regenerative practices in their communities as herbalists, healers, midwives, and mediators between the human and the more-than-human, little has been written, however, from an ecofeminist, ecocritical and posthuman perspective that examines the role of these “witches” as harmonizers in the face of socio-environmental unjustness, ecological destruction and as promoters of symbiotic relations (Sotelo 2025, 20). That is, despite a growing recognition of the green witches’ reparative role, nonetheless it still remains a critical gap in ecofeminist revisionism and in an ecocritical literary analysis, concerning the potential of earth-based “witches” to address contemporary ecological and social crises healing the patriarchal neocolonial wounds of injustices and exploitations. In this vein, with the intention to fill in this fissure, the term “ecobruja-ecowitch” has been recently embraced in *Narrativas de resiliencia, regeneración y futuros posibles: Aproximación ecocrítica, ecofeminista e intercultural de la figura de las ecobrujas*<sup>6</sup> (Sotelo 2025) to make visible practices, knowledges, worldviews and cosmologies, both current and past, that align with a “witchcraft” rooted in the earth but that actively promotes (or has promoted) resilient, regenerative, and utopian imaginaries in the face of social and ecological devastation and repression (Sotelo 2025, 18-21). Resisting nihilistic despair, ecowitches are intrinsically utopian concurring with Albrecht that in these trying times, “we need to pay attention to both destructive and creative forces in our universe” (2019, 2); that is, not just acknowledging the terrors of apocalyptic scenarios but also the possibilities implied in times of collapses, degrowth (D’Alisa *et al.* 2015), and rewilding (Tafalla 2022). And for that, ecowitches know that we desperately need utopias. Utopias understood as visions of hope (Weik von Mossner 2017, 164-66), not just as the projection of perfect worlds but as the ability to imagine “something sustainable and just through the Anthropocene’s despair and still finding hope” (Wagner and Wieland 2022, 1-2). Hence, this resilient, regenerating and utopian ecowitchcraft strongly differentiates itself from other types of witchcraft by always promoting the common good, by seeking harmony and peace among humans and non-humans, and by believing in the hopeful possibility of earth repair.

In this vein, the recent resignification of the “witch” into the restorative function of ecowitches illustrates how they embody key concepts in theory and practice within the field of ecocriticism, ecofeminism and posthumanism bringing together multispecies dialogues and collaborations that not only interrogate human exceptionalism, speciesism, and dominant andro-anthropocentrism, but also seek to rebalance the destructive effects of the Anthropocene, resist the colonial capitalist legacy of the Capitalocene, and promote new trans-corporeal ecological materialisms from symbiotic posthuman positions. As such, ecowitches revalue ancestral knowledge and practices historically associated with a demonized witchcraft<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Narratives of Resilience, Regeneration and Possible Futures. Ecocritical, Ecofeminist and Intercultural Approach to the figure of the Ecowitches* (own translation).

<sup>7</sup> A clear historical example that illustrates how ancestral earth-based practices were demonized by Judeo-Christian doctrine is the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hexenhammer, “the Hammer of the Witches”) published in 1486 by the Dominican monks Heinrich Krammer & Jakob Sprenger. Two years prior,

under patriarchal and colonial systems, spotlighting their relevance to contemporary ecological transitions, sustainability efforts, and environmental stewardship.

To this regard, ecofeminism, with its long-standing critique of the intersections of sexism, colonial legacies and ecological degradation, offers a fertile framework for understanding the ecowitch. Drawing on thinkers such as i.e., Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, Vandana Shiva, Carolyn Merchant, Silvia Federici, Starhawk, and Alicia Puleo, ecofeminism has consistently insisted that the degradation of the earth is inseparable from the domination of women and the erasure of Indigenous and other subaltern epistemologies. The ecowitch, as a symbolic, symbiotic posthuman and politically committed figure, emerges from this ecofeminist legacy as an agent of ‘earth repair’ – a term that connotes not only ecological restoration but ontological and epistemic healing.

This special issue contributes to the emergent discourse by engaging with the evolving symbiotic orientation in ecocriticism, the figure of the ecowitch as a resilient and regenerative ecofeminist agent of planetary healing, and the role of symbiotic posthuman narratives in reimagining life beyond the human. It argues that the figure of the ecowitch – both real and fictional – is emblematic of the imaginative, ethical and epistemological reconfigurations demanded by a world in ecological precariousness and peril. Situated at the intersection of symbiosis, resistance, and repair, the ecofeminist ecowitch becomes not only a metaphor but an epistemic site of posthuman convergence, a visionary force in the Symbiocene, fostering ecological reparation and resisting systemic eco-social injustices. Through her alliance with the more than human, as it will be shown in the different contributions, the possibility of earth repair is not only envisioned – it is ritualized, storied and enacted.

Moreover, as it will be unearthed in the different sections, within literary, cultural studies and lyrical expressions, this shift towards posthuman narratives in the age of the symbiocene manifests in symbiotic logics – dynamic interplays among fungi, plants, trees, animals, minerals, humans, and ecological technologies. Furthermore, a symbiotic shift also implies a renewed attention to narrative forms that accentuate the agency of nonhuman life, decenter the western Cartesian humanist subject, and imagine ecological futures founded upon “the more than human kinship as a core element of world-building” (Rupprecht et al 2021, 5).

Grounded in animist epistemologies and spiritual activism, the figure of a literary utopian ecowitch challenges andro-anthropocentric systems through the power of storytelling. In contemporary terms, Xiana Sotelo’s first article, underscoring an ecofeminist, ecocritical, and symbiotic posthumanist discourse, conceptualizes the literary ecowitch as a regenerative figure of ecological resistance in the recent *Bioluminescent. A Lunarpunk Anthology* (Norton-kertson 2023). Analyzing Starhawk’s

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the Pope Innocent VIII issued the Papal Bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* stating that what they understood as “witchcraft” (that is, everything that was not Judeo-Christian premises or practices), was now considered the enemy of the holy order and therefore a crime, thus legitimizing the systematic persecution and slaughter of “witches.”

and Brightflame's stories within this first Lunarpunk collection, Sotelo foregrounds speculative fiction's role in imagining sustainable, symbiotic posthuman futures. As such, the ecowitch emerges as a visionary agent of the Symbiocene, blending science, magic, and storytelling into a posthuman pharmacopeia for ecological restoration. Moreover, attempting to tracing the historical origins of the utopian ecowitch, the second article by Clara Contreras Ameduri focuses on XIX century women involved in the so-called Occult revival, exploring spiritualist communes as examples of proto-ecofeminist spaces fostering interspecies harmony. Contreras Ameduri examines the "Summerland" concept as foundational anti-hierarchical cosmologies and ecotopian activism, rooted in spiritualism's Edenic ideals. Through interpretations of biblical Paradise, the movement articulated anti-speciesist and gynocentric visions, female leadership, vegetarianism, and agrarian self-sufficiency. These practices synthesize esoteric belief with anti-industrialist ideals, producing a distinctive utopian model of ecological and spiritual reform.

Similarly, establishing intercultural bridges in the evolution of the concept of the ecowitch and its utopian nature, special attention is placed on how earth-oriented knowledges represent examples of resilient and regenerative strategies, either social, ecological and spiritual that, when revisited in the present, offer inspiration for environmentally conscious ways of inhabiting The Earth. Accordingly, the third article by María Tremearne Rodríguez, compares W.B. Yeats's *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Iris Peasantry* (1888) and Alvaro's Cunqueiro's *Tertulia de boticas prodigiosas y escuela de curanderos* (1976) through ecocritical and ecofeminist lens. Tremearne Rodríguez interprets the figure of the Irish fairy doctor and the Galician meiga as mediators of botanical, spiritual, and sustainable knowledge, embodying ecological resilience and ancestral wisdom. Drawing on the concept of "poetics of breathing" (Marrero 2021), Symbiocene theory, and cultural studies, the analysis frames these narratives as green utopias resisting dystopian imaginaries. The study concludes that literary witches serve as symbolic agents for restoring human-Gaia relations and inspiring regenerative ecological practices to coexist harmoniously with the environment. Following a comparative standpoint, synthesizing literary, historical and scientific perspectives, Abraham Vila Penas' study underscores the profound cultural significance of plant-based witchcraft. It traces how botanical knowledge, once central to healing, became linked to accusations of sorcery in early modern Europe. The study connects Literature –rereadings ranging from canonical works such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623) to the more contemporary and popular such as *Harry Potter's saga* (Rowling 1998)– myths and folklore with science by addressing the pharmacological basis of traditional remedies.

Certainly, botanical and medicinal Indigenous knowledges, as an example of ecowitchcraft, have been honoring an interdependent communion with an animate Earth since memorial times. For all indigenous tribes, past and present, Earth is honored as both a place and an experience ensouled and filled with greater agency and intelligence at every level (Blackie 2018; Jmail and Rushworth 2022). As such, plants, trees, and animals are not only our relatives, teachers, and guides (Wall Kimmerer 2013, 7) but they can be our environmental allies in times of climate change and in the preservation and repair of biodiversity loss. Reclaiming therefore the magic and





wisdom of the natural world, Mercedes Pérez Agustín and José Manuel Correoso Rodenas focus on indigenous traditions in the North American continent. Seeking to enhance the deep ecological relationship between North American Native cultures and communities and the natural world, Mercedes Pérez Agustín explores indigenous animistic spirituality and worldview. Drawing on oral traditions, stories, ceremonies and rituals by the Iroquois, the Abenaki, the Tuscarora and the Lacandon (Maya) among others, it highlights extensive indigenous knowledge of grains, trees and plants and their multifaceted applications for physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. In doing so, Pérez Agustín critically interrogates the representations constructed by European perspectives challenging Eurocentric romanticization by presenting indigenous ecological practices as complex and adaptive systems within an integrated worldview that resists simplistic or idealized portrayals. Additionally, José Manuel Correoso Rodenas, examines the Haida indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America, with traditional territories extending in Haida Gwaii in Canada and the southern half of Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, in the United States. Correoso Rodenas scrutinizes Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaa's "Haida mangas" as hybrid narrative forms that blend visual and textual storytelling to recover Haida traditions. Central to these works is the shaman figure, reimagined as a mediator between the Haida's static cultural world and the dynamic forces of external change. The shaman embodies resistance against ecological and social destruction, deriving from ancestral spiritual knowledge. Correspondingly, the study explores how such transcendent characters enact cultural healing through the integration of Haida cosmology and the supernatural.

Resignifying the supernatural dimension of the "witch" through interdisciplinary lens, Marta Miquel Baldellou's article analyzes Jaume Balagueró's film *Venus* (2022) as a feminist, posthumanist adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Dreams in the Witch House* (1933). While retaining elements of Lovecraftian cosmic horror, the film reconfigures the "witch" figure from a monstrous archetype into a symbol of feminist resistance within the so-called fourth-wave feminism. Using Gérard Genette's narratological categories, the analysis traces textual, metatextual, and hyper-textual links between the two works. The adaptation illustrates the evolving cultural meaning of the "witch" as a site of empowerment against patriarchal oppression.

Moreover, revisiting patriarchal repression from a distinctive ecofeminist and animal studies standpoint, Rodrigo Vega Ochoa applies an ecocritical close reading of Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron" (1886) and Katherine Mansfield's "The Canary" (1922). Vega Ochoa draws attention to Jewett's narrative as an exploration of a young woman's moral choice between economic security and ecological integrity, affirming environmental values as central to personal identity. Moreover, in Mansfield's text, interspecies bonds are examined within the domestic sphere, questioning whether they reflect domination or mutual interdependence, despite its anthropocentric framing. Together, the stories reveal nuanced intersections of gender, environmental ethics, and human-nonhuman relationships.

In the Miscellanea section, Natalia Rodríguez Nieto explores how integrating New Woman studies and Motherhood studies provides a fresh lens for re-evaluating nineteenth-century Canadian literature. Rodríguez Nieto argues that such an

intersectional approach enables the recovery of marginalized writers and texts, foregrounding their innovative contributions. Focusing on Joanna Ellen Wood and her 1984 novel *The Untempered Wind*, the analysis reveals the ambivalent critical reception of her work despite contemporary acclaim, advocating for Wood's reintegration into the Canadian literary canon.

The Creative section includes poems that resonate with ecowitches, ecofeminism and symbiotic posthuman hearts by compassing movements from pain to empowerment, bearing witness to the resilience of women who refuse silence. Thus, the first collection titled *Threaded* by Nadia Falah Ahmad includes twelve poems which explore identity, exile, and inherited trauma through the lens of Palestinian womanhood and intergenerational memory. Weaving personal and historical narratives, the collection resists erasure through recurring motifs of fire, thread, and voice. The next piece named *Overflow* by Paloma Sebastián Quevedo, is composed of three poems and it seeks to connect the identities of gender and place through which a woman may feel close to the natural world while coming to terms with a common patriarchal oppressor. Each poem focuses on identity, giving greater importance to different elements: the experience of nature, finding oneself in the natural world, and the experience of gender. Additionally, the last two poems of this section capture the magnificence and transcendence of nature and the forces of the universe. As such, the poem "Ode to the Sun" by Eliz Ebazer portrays the sun as more than just a star. It becomes a vital source of energy, joy, and companionship. Through personification, it is depicted as a friend who brightens each day and transforms moments of sadness into hope. To conclude, "The Beating Sea" by Sara Alcaide Delgado, provides a lyrical description of a picture in which the frame shows a full moon over the sea. A prominent concluding image of the moon, understood as a symbol of the womb of stillness, silence and introspection that becomes a cradle of becoming, holding the first spark of all that is yet to emerge. A moon that illuminates these poems in coalition with the ecowitches resilient and regenerative worldviews, fostering utopian imaginaries that dare to challenge and confront socio-environmental injustices, ecocides and genocides (as the one currently undergoing in Palestine which all the contributors of this issue strongly oppose), and advocating for alternative futures rooted in care for the earth and all its peoples.

Finally, there can be found two reviews about Renée M. Silverman and Esther Sánchez-Pardo González's mid-twentieth century women nomadic travelling between Spain and the Americas, by Antonio Jiménez Hernando, in the first place, and the annotated translation of Antonio Ballesteros' and Beatriz González's *A Journal of the Plague Year* written in the eighteenth century by Daniel Defoe, by Raúl Montero Gilete, in the second.

Subsequently, as the different contributions demonstrate, symbiotic post-human expressions—whether literary and cultural, speculative fiction, Indigenous ancestral knowledge or poetical visions—explore narrative strategies from a regenerative imagination that allows us to visualize symbiotic pasts and futures by refusing andro-anthropocentric subjects in favor of inner healing and multispecies kinship. In doing so, they align with the ecowitch not only as a figure of ecofeminist critique but as a guide toward relational flourishing. She reminds us that earth repair is not



only necessary, but it is already underway –in gardens and stories, in rituals and resistances, wherever life insists on connection, care, and collective becoming. As a result, the symbiotic posthumanism elaborated in this monograph is presented not as a destination but a process –that is, becoming-with, rather than becoming-other.

Ultimately, the urgent need for ecological reparation demands more than technological innovation or policy reform. It requires a transformation of worldview –a shift from extraction to care, from domination to reciprocity, from human exceptionalism to multispecies justice. The symbiotic turn in ecocriticism, exemplified in the emergence of a symbiotic posthumanism, offers a critical and creative vocabulary for this transformation. In tandem, the figure of the ecowitch reclaims marginalized ways of knowing and being, offering both resistance and restoration in the face of planetary crises.

In this spirit, the contributions of this special issue center ecofeminist figures-ecowitches, fairy doctors, meigas, shamans, healers, forest-dwellers, bird lovers and strong empowered women –whose symbiotic alliances enact ethical alternatives to systematic oppressions and compulsive and polluting uprooting. In these worlds, healing is neither a metaphor nor abstraction; it is a concrete, embodied, and shared process. The world is layered. The soil is not a background, but a co-agent. Trees, plants and animals communicate, and they are our renovation allies. Stones remember and vibrate. The sun is our friend. Most importantly, these posthuman narratives, either from speculative logics or relational poetics, open up imaginative spaces for what the Symbiocene demands: not a return to a mythic past, but a deep and radical reconfiguration of how we live, think, and tell stories of interconnectivity and earth repair together.



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