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Framing Feminist and Intersectional Ecologies: An opening note

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Preliminary considerations[1]

The connections between feminism and environmentalism are as rich as they are complex. The contemporary articulation of ecofeminism can be traced back to Françoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term *écoféminisme* in her 1974 work *Le féminisme ou la mort*. What sets ecofeminism apart is its insistence on a structural link between the domination of women and the exploitation of natural resources. However, as Stacy Alaimo argued in her 2008 essay *Ecofeminism without Nature?*, it would be misleading to assume a natural affinity between these two fields. Feminist theory has often sought to distance itself from essentialist associations between women and nature, what Alaimo described as the "flight from nature" (2000), striving instead to reposition the category of 'woman' within the domain of culture. This move, while strategic, frequently left dominant culture/nature dualisms unchallenged. In contrast, critical ecofeminism actively contests such binaries – human/nature, male/female, culture/nature – revealing how these hierarchies construct the former term as normative and the latter as othered and exploitable. Today, the theorization on the multiple and layered intersections between the oppression of women and nature has evolved through a variety of intersectional, decolonial, and queer perspectives that challenge the limitations of an essentialist woman-nature bond, offering more nuanced and transformative frameworks for environmental critique.

This issue of *de genere* moves beyond the woman-nature connection, with the aim of exploring the evolving entanglements between feminist and intersectional ecologies across literary and visual media. By focusing on a variety of national contexts, the essays explore how ecofeminist and intersectional approaches can unsettle normative environmental discourses and foreground alternative epistemologies and political imaginaries. Rather than focusing solely on the overlaps between feminism and environmentalism, we aim at highlighting their tensions, contradictions, and alliances, echoing Alaimo's assertion in *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (2016) that their intersections are "generative – far beyond the territory where they overlap" (12).

In recent years, the Environmental Humanities have grown into an interdisciplinary space that brings feminist, queer, posthumanist, and post/decolonial theories into dialogue with environmental thought. As many scholars (Haraway and Kenney 2015; Malm 2013; Moore 2015; Mirzoeff 2016; Davis and Todd 2017; Demos 2017) have pointed out, the Anthropocene does not refer to an undifferentiated humanity responsible for the ongoing environmental devastation, but rather underscores the urgency of analyzing the ecological crisis in its interdependence with other systems of domination, such as heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, and speciesism. Precisely in the effort to explore zones of intersection between queer theory and ecological thought, queer ecologies challenge normative ideas about nature, sexuality, and the environment. As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson write in their foundational collection *Queer Ecologies* (2010), this field reconsiders the heteronormative assumptions embedded in environmental discourse, such as the naturalization of gender binaries or reproductive imperatives, it acknowledges queerness as part of human and non-human experience, and emphasizes interdependency between different living species. Interrogating the humanist subject at the heart of modernity, posthuman feminism

[1] Although the authors conceived and developed this introduction jointly, Chiara Xausa wrote the section "Preliminary considerations", and Giulia Fabbri wrote the section "Structure and articles".

rethinks feminist theory through the lens of posthumanism. It criticizes human exceptionalism, anthropocentrism, and the hegemony of a presumed universal 'Man', while exploring how gendered subjectivities are entangled with technology, matter, and environment. From this point of view, it also intersects (critical) animal studies, as both question the hegemony of the human and the ontological separation between humans and non-humans. Scholars such as Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Carol J. Adams have highlighted the connections between patriarchy, speciesism, and ecological degradation, and have encouraged multispecies alliances, moving beyond liberal humanist rights frameworks toward an ethics of care and co-becoming. Postcolonial ecocriticism interrogates the environmental consequences of colonialism and foregrounds the entanglements of ecological degradation with histories of imperial domination, resource extraction, and environmental racism. As scholars such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010), and Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (2011) have shown, the convergence of postcolonial and ecological thought emerges from a shared commitment to justice and the recognition that environmental and social inequities are inseparable. This crossover field emphasizes how categories like land, habitat, or species are historically and materially shaped by processes of colonization and resistance and calls for epistemic decolonization alongside ecological critique.

The approach adopted in this issue is both intersectional and transmedia. Drawing on Nancy Tuana's concept of "ecologically informed intersectionality" (2019: 3), we recognize the need to analyze environmental issues through the interlocking systems of oppression that shape them, including race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and species. Intersectional environmentalism is an inclusive form of environmental advocacy that foregrounds the inseparability of ecological harm and social injustice, striving for justice for both people and the planet. While the term itself was first used by Rob Nixon in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2013), ecofeminist thinkers had long been "doing intersectionality" even before the term was coined – broadening the woman/nature connection to focus on gender as a social structure causing inequalities – though it is only more recently that intersectionality has been explicitly adopted as a methodological and political tool. This issue seeks to map (albeit partially) the evolving entanglements between feminist and intersectional ecologies across literary and visual media. By adopting a transmedia perspective, it examines how ecological and intersectional concerns are expressed across a range of cultural forms – including literature, film, and performative arts – and how different media contribute to shaping ecological imaginaries and critical discourses, as well as to rendering visible the entanglements of environmental and social injustice.

The call for this issue received an enthusiastic response, with numerous contributions from emerging scholars. This strong interest from a new generation of researchers highlights the vitality and growing relevance of the intersections between feminism, intersectionality, and ecological thought – confirming that this is a rapidly expanding and intellectually generative field of inquiry.

Structure and articles

The issue opens with four essays that explore the intersection between queer theory and ecological thought, illustrating the critical potential of queer ecologies to challenge normative frameworks of nature, sexuality, and embodiment, while also intersecting with posthuman and neomaterialist feminisms. In her article, Annamaria Elia offers a queer, feminist posthuman and eco-narratological reading of Jeanette Winterson's *The*

Stone Gods (2007), arguing that its narrative structures of return and deviation serve to disrupt the linear, progress-driven conventions typically associated with science fiction. Drawing on *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* by Ursula Le Guin, as well as the work of scholars such as Sara Ahmed, Donna Haraway, Erin James, and Marco Caracciolo, the analysis explores how Winterson critiques anthropocentric, patriarchal, and colonial worldviews, using the cautionary tale form to challenge binary thinking and normative ideologies.

Building on this critique of binaries and likewise employing an analysis that operates on both thematic and structural levels, Luca Baruffa and Chiara Maciocci examine how contemporary German-language authors Ulrike Draesner and Kim de l'Horizon employ experimental literary forms to blur the boundaries between human and non-human, gender and nature. Through the perspectives of feminist new materialisms, ecocriticism, and queer theory, the authors analyze Draesner's notion of "liminality" and de l'Horizon's *Tropfenschreiben* ("drip writing") as strategies that reimagine ontological and linguistic thresholds. Their contribution highlights how porous textual practices can open new pathways in literary ecology.

The third article shifts the focus from literature to online visual cultures, as Abigal Felice Mar examines human-animal transformation (TF) art as a form of posthuman sexual practice. Informed by posthuman, (post-)pornographic, and trans studies, as well as empirical research, the article analyzes 21 questionnaires completed by TF creators and investigates how becoming animal can be connected to sexual desires, what kind of imaginaries this art evokes, and in which ways TF art can provide new insights on the relation between erotism, affect, and animal representation.

The following contribution by Ilenia Caleo moves into the realm of live performance and material agency, positioning its reflection at the intersection between performance and critical theories, live arts and queer ecologies. In the effort to think beyond anthropocentric limits, Caleo deploys the concept of performativity beyond the borders of human subjectivity, in order to focus attention on matter's agency and on its ability to produce new and different 'grammars of perception'. Analyzing the artistic practices of several artists through feminist and new materialist approaches, Caleo explores human and non-human dramaturgies and demonstrates how the performance can constitute a political path towards radical imagination.

The next set of articles turns to interrogations of the humanist subject and critiques of anthropocentrism. Grounded in posthuman feminist theories and intersecting with (critical) animal studies, these works investigate how gendered and embodied subjectivities intertwine with technology, matter, and the non-human world. Opening this section, Claire Corbeaux's article theorizes the ways in which cultural artifacts from the onset of the United States' modern environmental movement to the present offer alternative responses to ecological crisis. Focusing on Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Alexis Pauline Gumbs's *Undrowned* (2020), and the social media work of Alexis Nikole Nelson (@blackforager), Corbeaux argues that these works challenge dominant epistemologies and cultivate a "participatory onto-epistemology" grounded in kinship among all earthly beings. Through this lens, the article enters ecofeminist and posthumanist discourses, proposing new affective and imaginative pathways out of environmental catastrophe.

This conversation continues in two articles that engage with feminist posthuman theory and anti-speciesist thought within the Italian context, where critical interest in more-than-human ecologies, feminist theory, and multispecies justice has been rapidly

growing. This intellectual and political flourishing is reflected in the work of scholars such as Angela Balzano (*Per farla finita con la famiglia*, 2021), Antonia Anna Ferrante (*Cosa può un compost*, 2022), Marco Reggio (*Cospirazione animale*, 2022), and Federica Timeto (*Animali si diventa*, 2024), among others. These authors are reshaping debates around the Anthropocene and anthropatriarchy in ways that center intersectional justice and the agency of both human and non-human subjectivities. Leading this exploration is Marco Malvestio's article on human-animal hybridization in Italian contemporary speculative literature. In the first part, the author discusses the animals' presence in Western culture through the lens of anti-speciesist and ecofeminist thought, offering a comprehensive survey on the theme of human-animal transformation in 1990s and 2000s Italian literature. In the second part, Malvestio analyzes Francesca Mattei's short story *Gli stessi occhi* (2022) through an ecofeminist perspective and highlights how the text deconstructs the human/animal dichotomy and portrays an ethics of care that challenges a hierarchical understanding of the human-non human relationship.

Giulia Fabbri's article continues this reflection by analyzing Laura Pugno's novels *Sirene* (2007) and *La ragazza selvaggia* (2016) through the lenses of ecofeminism, feminist posthuman theory, and anti-speciesist critique. Pugno's narratives explore the boundaries of gender and species difference, not by reiterating entrenched binaries – human/animal, man/woman, culture/nature – but by continuously dissolving their dividing lines. Fabbri shows how these texts challenge the identity constructs and systems of domination that underpin the Western symbolic order, imagining posthuman agencies and alternative forms of becoming beyond the human.

The next article extends this inquiry into the cinematic realm, further examining the destabilization of human/non-human and gender boundaries. Catherine Lord's contribution offers a psychoanalytic and ecofeminist analysis of Ali Abbasi's 2018 cult cinematic work *Border* (*Gräns*). Drawing on Julia Kristeva's work on the "abject" and the "semiotic," Stacy Alaimo's concept of "trans-corporeality," and Timothy Morton's theory of the "strange stranger," Lord's analysis centers on maternal figures and their symbolic unraveling, revealing how the film critiques the normative binaries of male/female and human/non-human.

The concept of trans-corporeality, along with notions of maternity and reproduction, also serves as a key connective thread in the next contribution. In the article titled *Plasticenta* – a portmanteau of *plastica* (plastic) and *placenta* – Sara Bonaventura discusses a research-based artistic project that explores how plastic contamination can prompt reflection on the blurred boundaries between inside and outside, material and immaterial, human and non-human. Inspired by scientific research that found microplastics in the placentas of six women, the author analyzes an artistic practice through the lens of feminist posthumanism, showing how various artistic forms – such as 3D printing, video, and lecture-performance – are used to reflect on technologies of reproduction, representations of pregnancy, and post-anthropocentric understandings of material agency.

Motherhood emerges once again as a central theme in the next contribution. Keitaro Morita's article revisits *Kugai-jôdo* by Ishimure Michiko through an ecofeminist lens, challenging earlier gender-neutral interpretations of her work. The work poignantly portrays the suffering and trauma – both physical and psychological – of Minamata disease patients, including fetuses affected in utero, and their families. While conventional Japanese ecocriticism has often disregarded gender, Morita aligns with Nishi Masahiko's reading of Ishimure's use of water imagery – particularly the symbolic

connection between the sea and the female body – as indicative of deep ecofeminist undercurrents. In contrast to Karen Thornber's claim that Ishimure's depiction of nature is degendered, Morita repositions *Kugai-jôdo* as a powerful text of ecofeminist resistance rooted in bodily, ecological, and cultural interconnections.

While Morita frames Ishimure Michiko's work as an example of cultural ecofeminism – which links nature and femininity by reaffirming their association in order to simultaneously address ecological and gender-based oppression – the following contribution by Marica Albanese traces the evolution of ecofeminist thought toward contemporary ecotransfeminist debates, a trajectory that is further developed in the essays that follow. The article offers a comparative analysis of two landmark publications at the intersection of feminist and ecological art: the 1981 issue of *Heresies* titled "Earthkeeping/Earthshaking," and *Hedera* (2023). While the first distances the female body from an essentialist "Mother Earth" imagery, but simultaneously exposes early ecofeminism's limits, the second embraces a more inclusive ecotransfeminist vision rooted in queer ecology, ecofeminism, and ecosexuality. Placing these works in dialogue, Albanese traces the evolution of ecotransfeminist artistic discourse over four decades.

The next section explores issues of race and coloniality, topics that have become increasingly central to contemporary ecotransfeminist debates. Carlo Comanducci's article examines Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019) through ecocritical and new materialist lenses. Comanducci argues that Hartman's method and writing embody an 'ecopoetic' approach by challenging normative and essentialist notions of 'environment' and 'nature' that reinforce structural racism. Focusing on the representation of Black queer women living in U.S. slums, the article highlights how Hartman constructs a queer ecology grounded in gestures, habits, and pleasures that resist dominant expectations, continually making visible the co-constructed and transcorporeal acts of resistance emerging within anthropocentric, patriarchal, and racist systems.

Building on the exploration of race and coloniality, Victoria Jara's article shifts the focus to contemporary Mexican women writers, examining how gender, labor, and environmental crises intersect in recent fiction. Through feminist decolonial theory, political ecology, and Indigenous ecologies, Jara analyzes three novels - Gabriela Jáuregui's *Feral*, Sylvia Aguilar-Zéleny's *Basura*, and Cristina Rivera Garza's *Autobiografía del algodón* - to reveal narratives of resistance and survival that challenge extractivism, disposability, and colonial legacies, while imagining alternative relationships with land and community beyond the human.

Continuing the focus on Indigenous perspectives and resistance to environmental and colonial violence, Marco Caselli's article explores Tara June Winch's *The Yield* as a profound response to the climate crisis and settler colonialism. Through its multi-voiced narrative, the novel reveals the "slow violence" of ecological degradation while centering Aboriginal connections to Country and the revitalization of the Wiradjuri language. Caselli highlights how Winch draws on Indigenous epistemologies to challenge dominant Anthropocene narratives and envision pathways toward ecological and cultural regeneration grounded in resistance and remembrance.

The final contributions further explore colonial and Indigenous perspectives while introducing critical reflections on reproductive justice and family abolitionism. Chiara Xausa's article focuses on Louise Erdrich's 2017 dystopian novel *Future Home of the Living God*, where climate change and ecological collapse intersect with postcolonial and feminist critiques of reproductive oppression. The story centers on Cedar Hawk

Songmaker, an Indigenous woman caught in a system of reproductive surveillance amid environmental disaster. Xausa highlights how the novel links the loss of reproductive autonomy with broader ecological and social injustices, advocating for resistance strategies that address climate crisis, biocolonial exploitation, and gendered violence simultaneously.

Lucio de Capitani's article complements this focus by examining feminist critiques of the family as a social institution via Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and Ursula K. Le Guin's short story "Solitude" (1994). Through the lens of ecofeminism and family abolition – drawing on the works of Sophie Lewis, M. E. O'Brian, Silvia Federici, and Angela Balzano – De Capitani's analysis highlights how both texts imagine alternative forms of kinship that extend beyond human and familial bonds. Despite their seemingly individualistic focus, the two works intertwine ecological imaginaries with explorations of family abolition, challenge proprietary models of connection, and invite reimaginings of collective care and community.

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