ART REVIEW OXFORD

SPRING 2024

Editors Note

Xinyue Liu

Ecological grief—the overwhelming sense of loss in the face of climate instability and mass extinction, has entered the public discourse to describe a sociopolitical and psychological phenomenon thanks to the efforts of environmental scholars, such as Renee Lertzman, Ashlee Cunsolo, Karen Landman, Glen Albrecht, and Neville R. Ellis. What I want to explore in this issue of *Art Review Oxford* is the diverse responses to ecological grief within contemporary art, history, and literary studies. In selecting essays from writers representing different disciplines and geographical locations, I aim to exercise what art historian T. J. Demos calls 'ecology as intersectionality', where ecology is positioned within critical thought by 'insisting on thinking, being and becoming at the cross-section of multiple fields of social, political, economic, technological, and material determinations.' This issue thus gives space for our respective grievances, so like many modest tributaries, they can meander and intersect with each other, before converging into a single gushing stream.

Rivers flow in Harmanpreet Randhawa and Joe Boyle's correspondence. As Randhawa and Boyle confide in each other sometimes observational, oftentimes intimately through thoughts on toxic mining practices, waterway management, and extinct eels. Their exchange serves as a guiding thread throughout this issue. Reflecting on her time in Alaska, Regina Kong asks what if grief were the size and shape of a glacier? Her delicate writing reads like an eulogy and grapples with a body of frozen water's 'incremental' but nonetheless 'spectacular' death. Rachel Seah investigates artist Kent Chan's installation, *Hot House*. Seah wonders, as she feels the released warm air as part of the art piece condense on her skin, whether she could accept living in a future with human-induced tropical weather.

Isabel Oakes' film review of Wes Anderson's *Asteroid City* takes us farther to an imagined future where post-apocalyptic apathy abounds. This emotional impasse, argues Oakes, parallels the numbness found in our contemporary neoliberal society. Pained by humankind's unwillingness to mourn beyond their kind, Claudia Ford traces her experiences after her grandchild's birth. Ford demonstrates how grief is a complex emotion that can be triggered by the joy of a newborn. Maya Adam's artwork and excerpt from her poetry succinctly conclude the feedback loop we seem to be stuck in—in destroying nature, we destroy ourselves.

Peering underground, Dmytro Chepurnyi's review of Kateryna Aliinyk's art and writing zooms in on the latter's depiction of roots. While Ukraine has been devastated by Russia's invasion, Aliinyk's garden harbours something reminiscent of hope. In her essay, Mia Yu returns to a coal mine in northeastern China, to undertake a gesture of dazed redemption and return a gift to the land. As earth unearthed, coal mines have propelled economic prosperity, yet the tailings protrude from the landscape like ugly scars. Tatjana Söding's recipe, 'Ecological Lentilism' (a wordplay on 'eco-Leninism') practises socio-ecological justice through everyday food preparation. She imagines how ecosocialists can triumph against capitalist extraction of natural resources and enslavement of animals.

I interview Joshua Trey Barnett, the author of *Mourning in the Anthropocene*, where we discuss how grief relies on rhetorical practices such as naming and archiving, which in turn can strengthen our sensitivity, allowing us to grieve more capaciously. Miriam Autin's back cover image lowers us to the spine of a Conger eel. Miriam performs with the Conger eel that had died accidentally. The image evokes the fate of the European eel, which has become critically endangered due to the drainage of Fens, a wetland in eastern England. Her hand rests gently on the skin of the animal as if attempting to revive it with a thaumaturgical touch.

While grief as a human condition is irrefutable and highly subjective in equal measure, it should not drive us ever deeper into the abyss of solitary suffering. If anything, I often think of environmental philosopher Thom Van Dooren's words, that grieving points to 'a shared world.' Above all, I think of this issue as a means of keeping each other company.

[1] Demos, T. J. "Ecology-As-Intersectionality." TheDistancePlan. 2016. https://thedistanceplan.org/lexicon/ecology-as-intersectionality.

[2] Van Dooren, Thom. Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, 12.

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Table of Contents

Who Grieves for Rivers? A Correspondence - *Harmanpreet Randhawa & Joe Boyle* - **p.6, p.21, p.28, p.42, p.59**

On Grief the Size and Shape of a Glacier - R*egina Kong* - **p.8**

Review: Kent Chan, Hot House, Liverpool Biennale *Rachel Seah* - **p.14**

Film Review: Wes Anderson, Asteroid City - *Isabel Oakes* - **p.22**

Mercy, Mercy, Me - *Claudia Ford* - **p.30**

Climate Changed - *Maya Adams* - **p.36**

Book Review: Kateryna Aliinyk, Collective Fantasies and Eastern Resources - *Dmytro Chepurnyi* - **p.38**

Returning a Gift to the Coal Mountain - *Mia Yu* - **p.43**

Recipes for the Cookshops of the Future - *Tatjana Söding* - **p.47**

In Dialogue with Joshua Trey Barnett on Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence - *Xinyue Liu* - **p.55**

Backpage: *Miriam Austin*, SEAXBURH 3, Two tone print on paper, 2024

Dear Joe,

Recently, I came across this postcard at Modern Art Oxford featuring Kiki Smith's artwork, *Pool of Tears II,* from her show *I am a Wanderer (2020)*. With a young female figure swimming in the dark waters and a group of animals following/accompanying her from behind, I couldn't help but think about the Skywoman.

The Skywoman, who fell from the Skyworld into a world full of darkness, water and no land with sweetgrass clenched in her hand. An "Immigrant", as Kimmerer reminds us in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, who descended on our world with "nothing but a handful of seeds" and instructions to "use your (her) gifts and dreams for good". *And these deceitful waters* (Adham Faramawy, 2023) comes to mind here too.

Particularly, the prints Adham made from film stills, *Welcome Newcomers III,* supporting the Southward Day Centre for Asylum Seekers. They picture the performers knee-deep in the seawater of seven sisters, arms open. Welcoming perhaps?

The wanderers? Skywoman? migrants? refugees? All who are connected by or find themselves floating on and across the rivers and the seas?

Wandering,

Harman

Dear Harman,

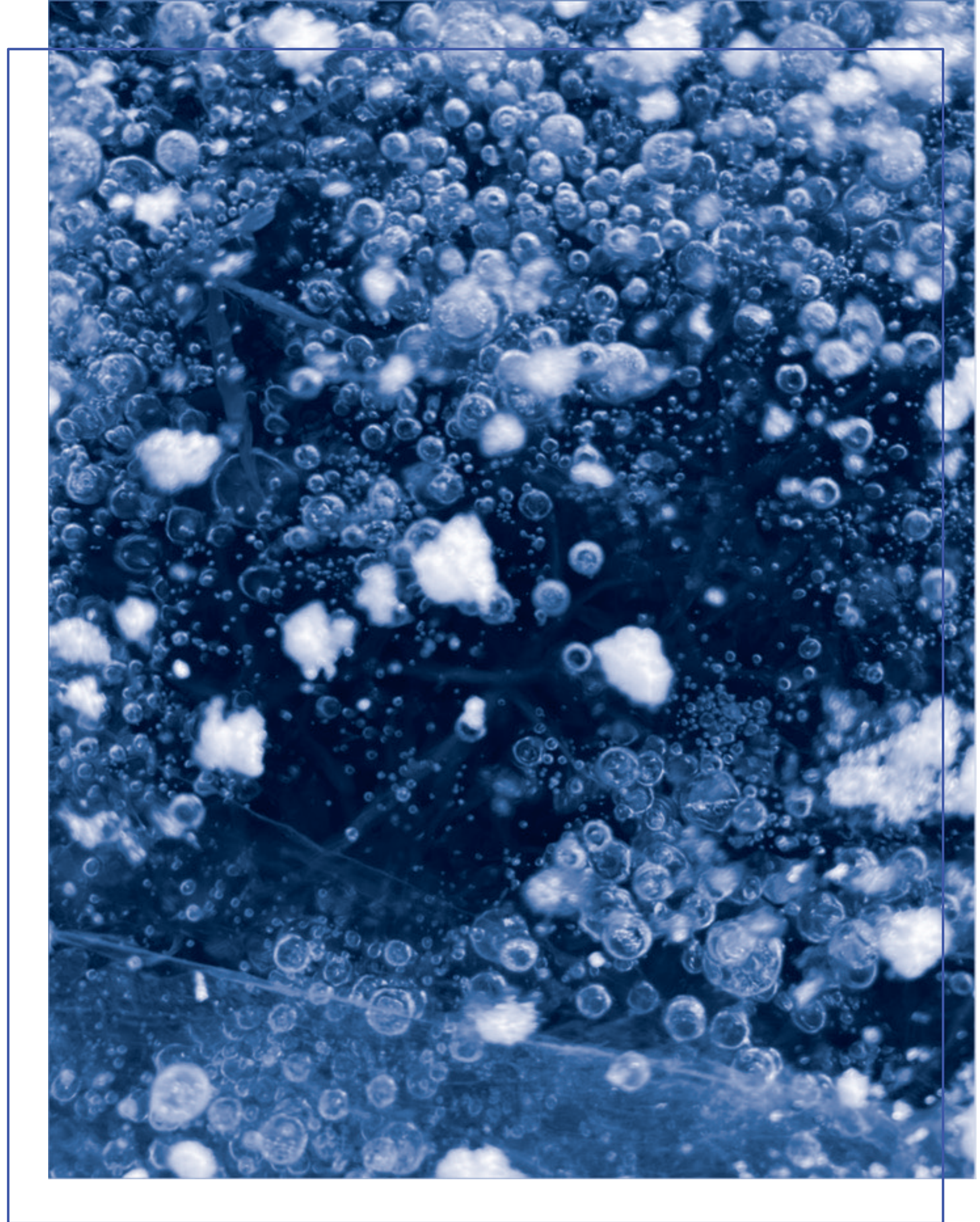
Waters are many things to many people. Today, at Port Meadow, I thought about Adham's film. Funny that we see 'waters' fixed relative to land, when water itself passes through. Source to sea to sky and back through rock, bodies, and air—perhaps we need to confine them? If waters deceive, how do they think? I wonder how the Thames sees its history, between geologic meandering and a kingfisher's splash. If waters here know (become?) city waters. I'd imagine rivers feel mixed, enabling so much cruelty and so much beauty. I suppose rivers are always dual: connecting and separating, quenching and submerging, giving and taking and all the time flowing.

Perhaps we could ask Whanganui, Klamath, Mutuhekau Shipu, or any river in Bangladesh, all considered legal persons. Amazon too, though recognised 22 years behind their slippery, twisted namesake. What might rivers think about that? Maybe they're more concerned with actions than words. What's a river's legal date-of-birth?

Is Port Meadow's ecology (defined by water) the river's work? Creativity? Mourning? Resistance? The sheer thrill of running over/ through land? Maybe it's none, or something incomprehensible (at least to me).

Swimmingly,

Joe



On Grief the Size and Shape of a Glacier

Regina Kong

M, whom I'd met on an Alaskan fishing homestead earlier that summer, had dropped me off in her red hatchback half an hour outside Juneau, by the icefield. I wandered ahead, passing the winding stream where sockeye salmon piled on top of each other. I was nineteen, alone, and shivering despite the brilliant clean sunlight. A few families trickled past me in the other direction. It was getting late into the evening and the salmon made a throbbing scarlet mass in the silty water. Everyone was going home.

Thinking of the life that waited for me in a few weeks, back to my second year of university and palm trees and hours stewing in the Northern California traffic, I followed the wooden planks until the air crispened, chilled. Before me stood the Mendenhall glacier, streaked blue and rising above the water which pooled at its feet. A sign nailed to a wooden post showed a photograph of the glacier from half a century ago, indicating how much it had retreated since then. Local residents told me how extraordinary, how *heart-breaking* it was to witness such loss in a lifetime. One man could remember stomping, as a teenager, on surfaces of the glacier that were now completely liquified. His story and others treated melting glaciers as a form of loss ultimately unknowable yet viscerally—and existentially—felt.

Climate change is often relegated to a form of "slow violence," Rob Nixon's identification of a kind of violence "that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales."[1] Slow violence underscores the politics of visibility inscribing environmental loss, how some forms of violence are more seen than others, more sudden and spectacular than incremental. Glacial loss, I argue, provides an example of a kind of violence that is incremental—at the molecular level of ice melting to water—as well as spectacular: The rate of glacier loss has nearly doubled in the last twenty years, with Alaska accounting for 25% of global loss and tremendous impacts on sea level rise worldwide.[2] Extinction, let's be clear, does not lie within the singular jurisdiction of the human—or even living—consciousness.

Although glaciers constitute a vital part of many ecosystems, once they begin to melt, they can pose enormous environmental hazards including increased risk of glacial lake flooding. Mark Carey notes that, due to their status as instigators of natural disaster events, glaciers have been made into epistemological objects, at once "hazard and resource." [3]I think of hazards as shards of glass on a road, a slippage in the otherwise safe system. To be a hazard is to be a danger, a liability. To be a resource, on the other hand, means to offer something that may not be able to be reciprocated. To be a glacier is to be all these things—hazard and resource and object of grief—through the process of one's own disappearance. Nowadays, to be a glacier means to signal death as well as life.

When one mourns melting glaciers, one also makes grief into both a hazard and resource. When we confront a glacier melting before our bodies, we must ask ourselves for whom we grieve, and why. The loss of glaciers identifies not just what grief is, but also where it comes from, and what might be done about it. Many indigenous cultures, such as the Quechua-speaking communities in Peru's Cordillera Blanca region, relate to glaciers as sentient beings, with significant legal and socio-political consequences.[4] Without attending to indigenous relations to glaciers and grieving, our affective attachment to glaciers amounts to compassion at best and at worst, a form of epistemic violence in which our mourning circumscribes glaciers in an image and worldview of our own making. The way that we grieve glaciers, as Jeremy Schmidt emphasises, may thus reinforce racial and colonial ways of knowing[5], making the process of grieving one that directs inward as much as outward.

Leaving the Mendenhall glacier that evening and heading back to the parking lot, I walked past the salmon, their bodies already beginning to decompose as they battled their way upstream. Throughout the rest of the Alaskan summer days, the salmon would use the remaining resources in their bodies to spawn. Their offspring would venture into the unknown Pacific Ocean, returning next year under the endless summer light until their own bodies would be eventually consumed, returning to the ocean and trees and sending nutrients into other lives, other cycles. As these entangled lives ebbed and flowed, so too perhaps would the Mendenhall glacier continue to melt until, one day, it would be no larger than one of the cruise ships carrying tourists into the Juneau harbour to gape at all the disappearing beauty. Goodbye blue streaked ice. Goodbye salmon corpses. Hello, all you that are departing from us.

In his poem "Spring and Fall," Gerard Manley Hopkins ruminates on the ethics of grieving the more-than-human world. Addressed to a child named Margaret who mourns the end of spring, Hopkins writes, "It is the blight man [sic] was born for/ It is Margaret you mourn for." Hopkins' poem sees grieving as essentially self-reflexive; Margaret mourns the loss of spring because she mourns an unretrievable event of childhood—she mourns, essentially, herself. Similarly, we grieve for glaciers because they are extensions of our own fragile lives on this planet.

It is dangerous to grieve without attending to the ways in which glaciers also exist separate from our grief, and are known prior to our recognition. When we extend this inward conception of grief to glaciers, we must ask whether it is possible (and ethical) to locate a sense of grief beyond ourselves. Rather than as the objects of mourning, is it possible to see glaciers as also the subjects in their own narrative? Grief, in other words, should function as more than a signal of attention. We must utilise our grief as a means rather than just an end in itself, to locate not just what is in danger of disappearing, but also the mode in which we respond to that disappearing, as well as, crucially, that which is still existing.

Regina Kong is an artist and cultural geographer currently working on the transcorporeal dimensions of dust and mining in Mongolia.

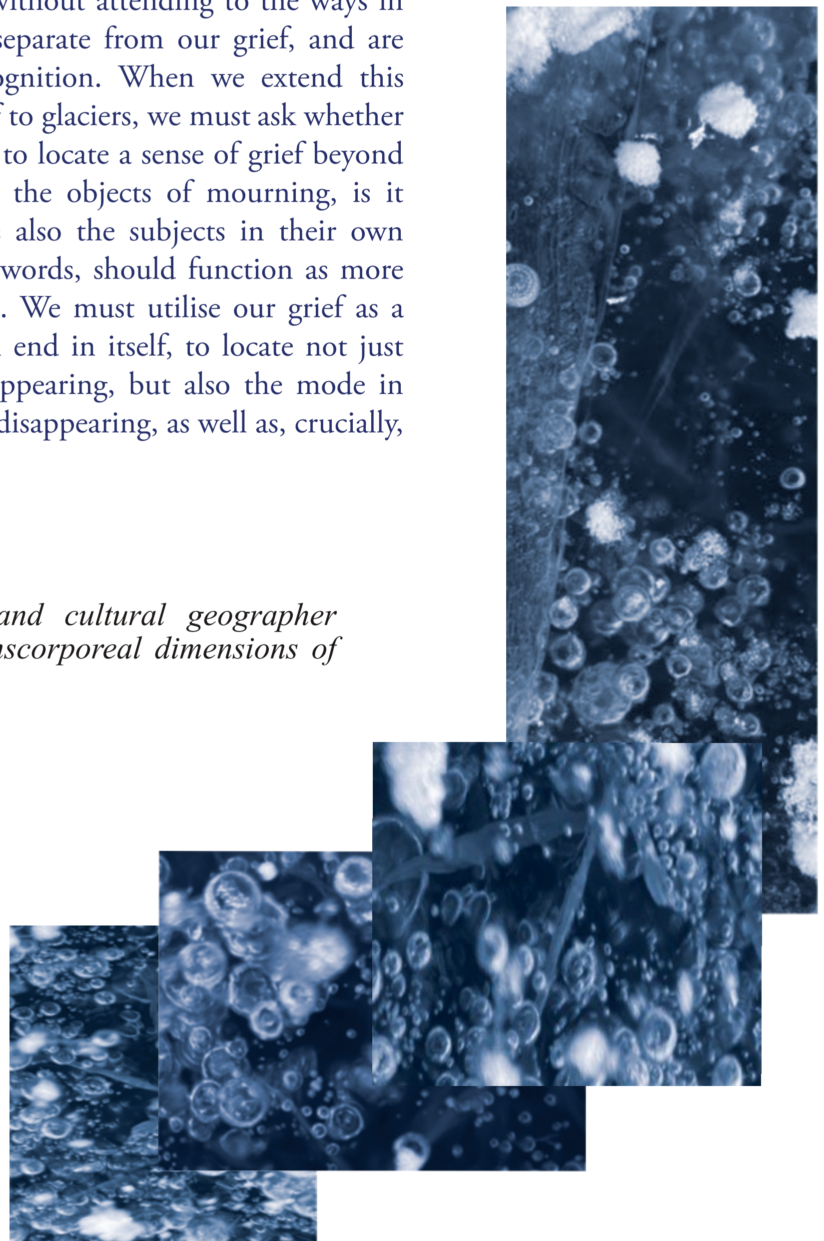


Image: Designer's own

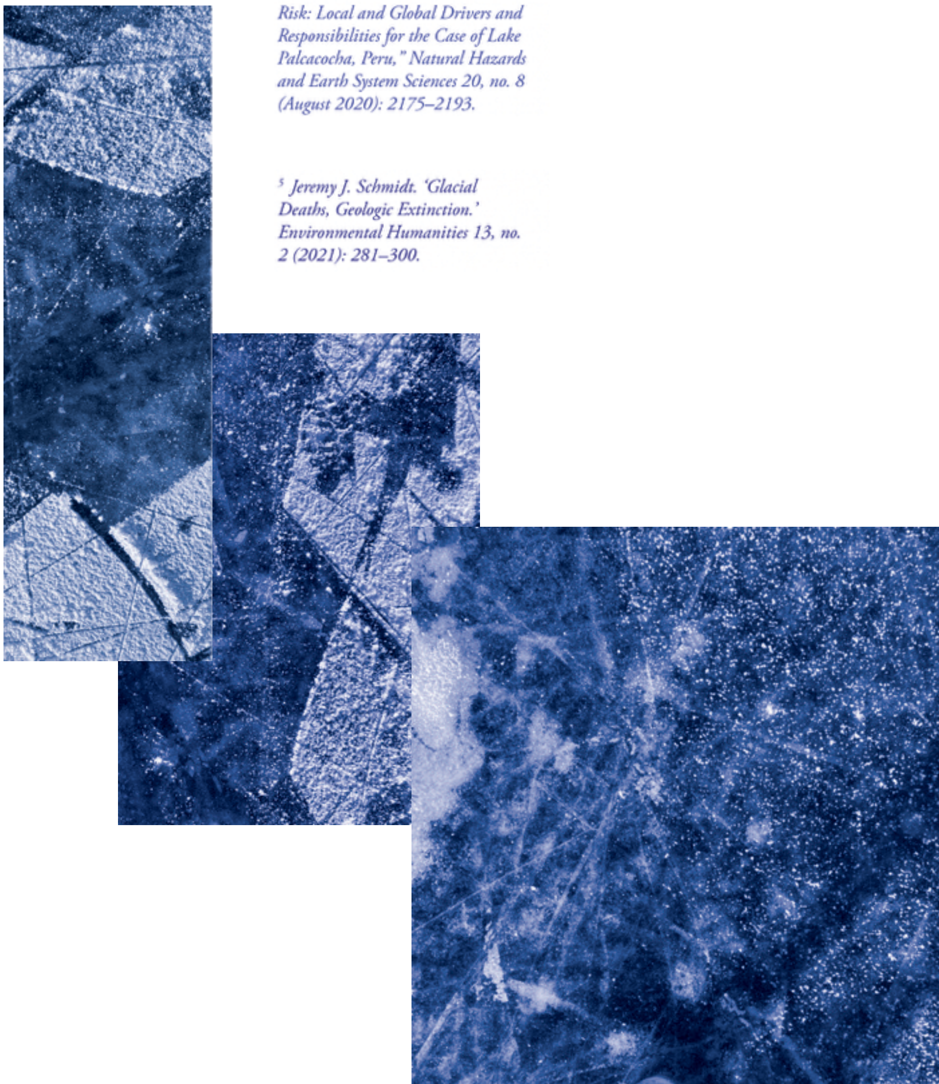
[1] Rob Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

[2] Romain Huggonet et al. "Accelerated Global Glacier Mass Loss in the Early Twenty-First Century." Nature (London) 592, no. 7856 (2021): 726–731.

[3] Mark Carey, 'The Story of Vanishing Water Towers," in In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society, (New York: Oxford Academic, 2010), 149.

[4] Christian Huggel et al., "Anthropogenic Climate Change and Glacier Lake Outburst Flood Risk: Local and Global Drivers and Responsibilities for the Case of Lake Palcacocha, Peru," Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences 20, no. 8 (August 2020): 2175–2193.

[5] Jeremy J. Schmidt. 'Glacial Deaths, Geologic Extinction.' Environmental Humanities 13, no. 2 (2021): 281–300.



Whose Tropics Is it Anyway?

Rachel Seah

At the press conference on climate and the situation in Niger this late July, the Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres announced that "the era of global boiling has arrived", detailing the level of fossil-fuel profits and climate inaction that have sped up climate deterioration. He urged urgent action from leaders and companies to come up with credible transition plans that are fully aligned with the United Nations' net zero emissions standard. "No more greenwashing. No more deception. And no more distortion of antitrust laws to sabotage net zero alliances" – cannot be emphasised further in his blatant call out and earnest call to action.

Across the world of art-making, climate change, environmental concerns and the relationship between humans and their environment have been adopted as concepts to engage audiences emotionally and intellectually to convey the urgency of climate action and environmental conservation. They served as a reminder to the art world of how visual culture played a crucial role in challenging institutional negligence. Kent Chan, an artist and curator based in Singapore and the Netherlands contests such modernity using his practice to comment on the tropical imaginary relaying the past and future relationships between heat and art.

In challenging both institutional structures and relational climatic conditions in relation to artworks and artefacts of tropical provenance, the artist based in both the Netherlands and Singapore exhibited an installation and project space titled *Hot House* (2020-ongoing) as part of the Liverpool Biennial 2023. This year's biennial, titled *uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things*, explores the ways in which people and objects have the potential to manifest power, as they move across the world while acknowledging the continued losses of the past.

Showing at the Bluecoat Contemporary Arts Centre located in the city centre and alongside artists Nicholas Galanin, Raisa Kabir and Benoît Piéron, this exhibition explores the possibilities for joy amidst catastrophe and considers how creative experimentation may provide different foundations from which to imagine a better future.

Positioned within Gallery Three, Chan questions the relationship between climates and cultures, underlining the influence of heat and humidity on our bodies and minds. Positing the manifestations of assumed superiority of one climate and culture over another, Chan opens a discussion about why artefacts that have arrived historically in institutions far from their home countries, from vastly different climatic conditions, are perceived differently.

Engaging with artworks and artefacts of tropical origins from the Global Cultures collections of World Museum, National Museums Liverpool, Chan created a wooden hot room structure with PVC strips and a heater and humidifier in the middle of the space to replicate thinking about art in a shared, hot and humid environment. Addressing the question—at what point does thought cease amid heat and humidity? He expands his inquiry into history, climate, culture and epistemologies with the use of experiential design to facilitate thinking within a prescribed temperature-monitored environment as though humanising the experience of a relocating artwork or artefact and how it becomes privileged in one climate and culture over where it comes from.

Chan, in introducing his particular interest in his interview with Gasworks, shares "I'm curious about how climate shapes culture and how the histories and contexts of the tropics have been the result of the interaction between different climate zones. And consider what might happen when there cease to be climate demarcation, whether that will mean we might not have culture demarcation anymore and what the ramifications might be."

Picture this sensation within the installation: Stepping inside this structure, feeling the air quickly wrap around you like a warm, embracing hug. But here's the catch – the humidity in this space isn't just a physical sensation; it is a complex interplay of emotions and perceptions. For some, it is like wearing an uncomfortable, sticky second skin that saps energy and patience, making everything feel dense. Yet, for others, it is a gentle, caressing touch, reminiscent of lazy afternoons in tropical paradises.

Those beads of moisture that glisten in the light, carry with them different lived experiences for audiences. Some might fret about comfort and preservation with practical thoughts swirling in the humid air. Others, though, delve into profound musings about the intricate dance between humanity and the environment. But it is in those lived experiences that we wonder if our culture, religion, ethnicity, language and social interactions will continue to exist in a globalised heat that rids off our personal and territorial belonging.

As an individual who is used to a level of humidity like Singapore, I wonder if I am able to accept living in a future human-induced tropical climate well knowing that it is not the tropics I know. There's a nagging question: Can I truly adapt to a future where this heat is not just nature's gift but a consequence of our own actions? It is a moment of contemplation filled with uncertainties about the world we are shaping.

Within the space, Chan also produced three-dimensionally printed artefacts to evoke discussions about the climate dystopic landscape (cue any one episode from Apple TV+ series *Extrapolations*) where climatic histories have become non-existent and viewers are encouraged to reflect about climate relationality as companions of thoughts as the climate collapses. Chan then completed the space with a new series of videos of artefacts and artworks being discussed in a manner of an object report typically done by a conservator which was displayed disjointedly on two screens as though to break free from colonial categorisation systems to rethink the construct of labeling and ways of seeing.

The apt reference to the legacy of colonialism, puts colonialism in the climate change context underlining the Global North's (consists of countries that have well-developed, mature economies and are both wealthy and politically stable) responsibility for the climate crisis, accounting for over 92% of carbon emissions (as reported by *Fairplanet*) with the Global South countries (consists of countries which are poorly developing with a shared history of past colonialism by the North), rooted in exploitative colonial practices, experiencing the worst impacts of climate change.

Kent Chan, climate-controlled wooden structure with PVC strips as part of 'Hot House' installation (2020-ongoing), Liverpool Biennial 2023 at The Bluecoat. Courtesy of Liverpool Biennial. Photography by Mark McNulty.

With the planet being hit with the double whammy of global heating caused by greenhouse gas emissions spurting warmth to an already overheating climate, especially among tropical countries that are easy to blame, climate-controlled museums are portrayed as messianic 'white saviour', creating an ideal climate for the institutions who are 'learning something about themselves' whilst in the process of 'rescuing' the artworks and artefacts.

This draws the same line with the Biennial's theme on the call for ancestral and indigenous forms of knowledge, wisdom, and healing where it explores the ongoing catastrophes caused by colonialism, towards an insistence on being alive by pulling threads from the periphery. Yet, to quote Guterres again, "This must not inspire despair, but action". the act of turning a year of burning metaphorical and physical heat into a year of burning ambition for change is—now. As the new year chimes in, Chan's installation stands as a reminder of the kind of world we want to live in and I am resolved to kickstart 2024 by holding myself accountable to buying less and buying better, committing to consuming local plant-based meals every other day and opting for sustainable transport whenever possible. And I hope we can collectively start the new year by being the change we wish to see.

Rachel Seah is a doctoral student at the Centre of Chinese Visual Arts in Birmingham School of Art with a research interest in contemporary photography and media, feminism, care ethics and alternative histories.

Kent Chan, climate-controlled wooden structure with PVC strips as part of 'Hot House' installation (2020-ongoing), Liverpool Biennial 2023 at The Bluecoat. Courtesy of Liverpool Biennial. Photography by Mark McNulty.

[1] Kent Chan, "Interview with Kent Chan," by Gasworks, May 25, 2023, https://www.gasworks.org.uk/exhibitions/kent-chan-2/

[2] Chermaine Lee, "Understanding Climate Colonialism," Fair Planet, August 14, 2022, https://www.fairplanet.org/story/understanding-climate-colonialism/.

[3] Matthew W. Hughey, "The White Savior Film and Reviewers' Reception," Symbolic interaction 33, no. 3 (2010): 475–496.

[4] António Guterres, "Secretary-General's Press Conference on Climate," July 27, 2023, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2023-07-27/secretary-generals-press-conference-climate.

Dear Joe,

After seeing Adham's film at Frieze, I asked them about how the oak logs serving as seats in the installation coupled with their film which uncovers a long history of imperial violence against nature. They replied, "I don't think a clean-cut or comfortable narrative exists here". So yes, our rivers must have very mixed feelings.

Reading your letter I remembered that I come from the land of 5 rivers, Punjab. Ashamed of not knowing their names by heart, I didn't think someone who lived on land built around waters could feel so distant from them. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't have learnt from them. Only Sutlej, Beas and Ravi flow through today's Punjab of India; sisters Chenab and Jhelum, separated by the Radcliffe line, now flow in the Punjab of Pakistan.

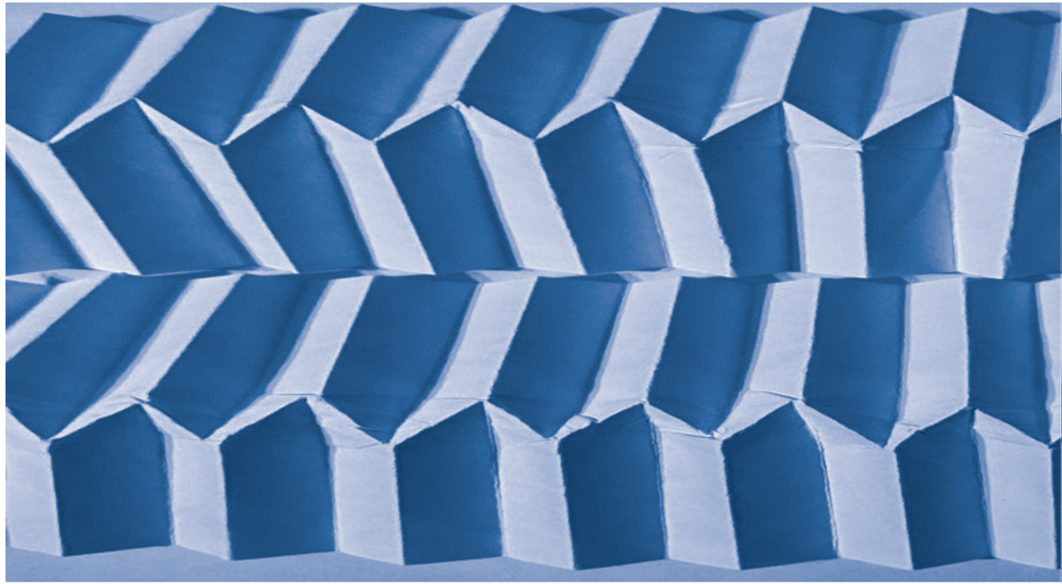
"They wanted a line…so I drew them a line"

- Cyril Radcliffe

How does a man who never even stepped on the land get to tear her apart like this? Like you ask I too wonder how the rivers felt of this…

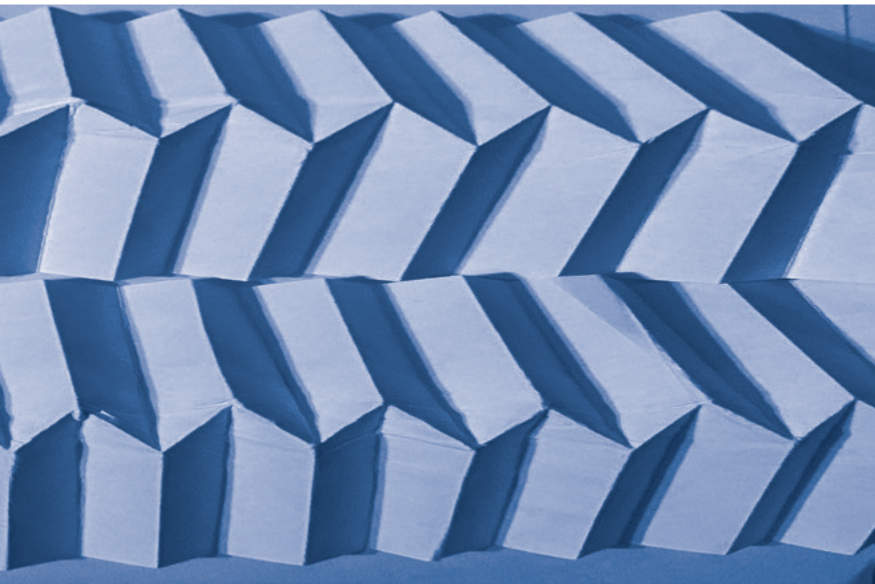
-Harman

P.S. I am personifying a river in a performance at Modern Art Oxford tonight, love to see you there



Review of Wes Anderson's Asteroid City

Isabel Oakes



When describing his newly released film *Asteroid City* (2023), Wes Anderson stated that both grief and death were 'always' at the centre of it. Grief has been a core theme in most of Anderson's acclaimed films. Ardent Anderson fans have even interpreted the characters in *The Royal Tenebaums* (2001) as representing the five stages of grief. Further, *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* (2004) centres around the protagonist channelling his grief over the death of a lifelong friend into a documentary focused on the pursuit of the shark responsible for his friend's death. *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007) follows the journey of a dysfunctional trio of brothers coping with the loss of their father.

Asteroid City similarly explores the profound impact of loss within a family, employing Anderson's signature aesthetic characterised by lowly saturated colours and a star-studded ensemble of quirky and emotionally detached characters. The film also gives insight into our, at times seemingly bizarre, responses to *Weltschmerz* (the sense of world-weariness), the injustices of life, and the unknowability of our futures.

Set in a retro-futuristic version of the 1950s, *Asteroid City* tells the story of the titular play being created by the legendary playwright Conrad Earp (Edward Norton), as well as the story of the play itself which takes place within a small fictional desert town of Asteroid City. The narrative is set against the backdrop of the Cold War's nuclear tensions and unfolds in the aftermath of two World Wars that witnessed unprecedented human, material, and ecological destruction. Within this fictional play, frequent atomic bomb testing rattles the buildings, but the protagonists respond with indifference.

Parallels can be drawn between the apathy to these cataclysmic occurrences and the apathy many people appear to feel today towards the impending climate disaster. Some have described this as a symptom of our modern market-oriented neoliberal society geared towards accumulating material wealth. This sentiment is encapsulated by the much-cited statement that 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'. Our commitment to maintaining the normative neoliberal order and seeing markets as the most efficient information processors prevents us from addressing crucial questions about our existence and the future of the human race. A further symptom of these neoliberal times is the commodification of our attention as is evident in our inclination to indulge in media-driven distractions which are prioritised over confronting existential questions regarding the future of humanity, as has been explored in films such as Adam McKay's *Don't Look Up* (2021).

Others have interpreted this apathy as a coping mechanism for ecological and societal grief—a reaction to the futility we feel in the face of impending disaster. As a result, we resort to cognitive dissonance as a mechanism to reshape our perception of reality which can lead to downplaying the risks of climate change or outright climate change denialism. Studies have also shown how the collective responses of grief, specifically after the two World Wars, which at times manifested in amnesia or repression, to the horrors witnessed, can give insights into the ecological grief we face in the present day and the amnesia regarding the destruction of life-forms that are such a central part of our own experience of the natural world.

Further parallels can be drawn between the experiences of characters in *Asteroid City* and the present day. General Gibson (Jeffrey Wright), host of the 'Junior Stargazer Convention' that brought all the protagonists to Asteroid City, exclaims to the group of youths that 'if you wanted to live a nice, quiet, peaceful life, you picked the wrong time to get born'. This certainly resonates when looking at the current state of our earth inherited from previous generations. Contrary to the adults, the youths in *Asteroid City* are portrayed as the most receptive and ready to spring into action in the face of world-changing and reality-altering events. The most prominent of such events occurs with the startling encounter between the visitors of Asteroid City and an extraterrestrial being. Shifting to a 'behind the scenes' shot, it is revealed that Jeff Goldblum plays the alien. During this shot, he admits that 'he doesn't play an alien but rather a metaphor'. The nature of this metaphor becomes clearer upon one of the play's protagonists, Augie (Jason Schwartzman), expressing his discomfort with the way the alien looked at them, as 'if they were all doomed'. Once again, existential questions about the future of humanity and our relation to the world around us are explored creatively.

Anderson is no stranger to the topic of existential angst and often creates relatable yet detached post-apocalyptic imaginaries in humorous manners. *Isle of Dogs* (2018) is set in a dystopian, near-future Japan, where an outbreak of canine flu leads to the exile of all dogs to 'Trash Island'. While *Asteroid City* does not delve into apocalyptic aesthetics, it effectively explores the emotions associated with such themes. Having actors portray both the characters in the play and the actors playing those characters, Anderson intended for the storytellers to be an integral part of the story, as they grapple with the complexities of their lives and seek answers through artistic expression. This is notably exemplified by Jones Hall, playing Augie Steinbeeck, who consistently admits to not comprehending his character or the play. The resulting anxiety about his role echoes the freeze of both character and actor, reflecting the perceived inevitability of the natural world's decline and evoking a sense of futility.

Anderson manages to explore these heavy hard-hitting topics in an ostensibly light-hearted way, often masked by beautiful aesthetics and bizarre character quirks and storylines. While not overtly delving into the theme of ecological grief, *Asteroid City* illuminates the universal experiences of existential angst and helplessness in the face of chaotic and seemingly immutable futures.

Isabel Oakes is a DPhil student in the history faculty of the University of Oxford looking at the history of the 'eco-social market economy' and the synergies of economic and environmental developments after the Second World War in Germany.

[1] James Mottram, 'Wes Anderson Took a Cast of Stars to the Desert and Made His Best Film in Years', The Independent, 24 June 2023, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/asteroid-city-wes-anderson-interview-b2361408.html.

[2] Sam Adams, 'Wes Anderson's New Movie Explains Wes Anderson', Slate, 17 June 2023, https://slate.com/culture/2023/06/asteroid-city-wes-andersons-new-movie-explains-wes-anderson.html.

[3] The initial quote is attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Zizek. See Mark Fischer, Capitalist Realism, (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 2.

[4] Douglas Burton-Christie, 'The Gift of Tears: Loss, Mourning and the Work of Ecological Restoration', Worldviews 15, no. 1 (2011): 29–46.

[5] Chris Corker, 'Ecological Grief and Uncontrollable Reality in Wes Anderson's "Asteroid City"', The Conversation, 21 August 2023, https://theconversation.com/ecological-grief-and-uncontrollable-reality-in-wes-andersons-asteroid-city-211419.

Dear Harman,

Just back from SEAXBURH, brilliant! Loved your generous and dynamic but understated embodiment of river, moving fluidly, subtly, not dominating but powering.

Who grieves for rivers?

Considering rivers, territory, and colonisation, I think of The Gambia—the smallest country on the continent most shaped by outsiders' lines on outsiders' maps, its borders placed about 10 miles beyond the Gambia River's banks, pushing upstream to the furthest navigable reaches (beyond which, Senegalese waters). Why claim what you cannot exploit?

The river made this land useful for Arabs, Mali and Ghana Empires, then Portuguese, Dutch, French, British. Merchants and colonisers sailed these waters to trade or steal gold, ivory, and people from continental depths toward global markets. Three million people over three centuries plus untold others. Post-colonisation, half the population live in poverty as the river ecosystem collapses, bounded by some of Africa's most-damaged forests. Floods, rising seas, sewage, and crocodiles plague The Gambia under climate change. Resilience is sought through reinstating forests which once protected land, waters, people.

S

ome say 'Gambia' comes from Portuguese 'câmbio' (exchange/ trade). Stories describe British boats firing cannons from the river, claiming everything within artillery range. Historically accurate in spirit if not letter.

Solemnly,

Joe

Mercy, Mercy, Me

Mercy, Mercy, Me

Claudia Ford

Despair has been keenly felt by humans over the past few decades as climate change and environmentally destructive activities have made themselves impossible to ignore. As a result of more than 100 years of human material consumption and the burning of fossil fuels for energy, year after year we slog through a growing volume of stories about melting ice shelves, burned forests, unbreathable air, intolerable heat waves, extinct cherished species, destruction of the built environment, increased forced migration and deaths. The term solastalgia was first used in 2005 by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht to signify existential distress caused by ecological destruction.[1] In 2020, journalist Miles W. Griffis reminded us that, "Climate-induced changes cast a particularly dark shadow. Even as we look at beloved, still-intact landscapes and ecosystems, we know what could soon happen to them. The term (solastalgia) asks us to consider not only the physical toll of climate change on the environment, but to assess how its decline affects our own mental health."[2]

What is climate grief? It is climate anxiety, eco-anxiety, and eco-guilt. It is the anguish of experiencing all too frequent extreme weather events. We mourn the lost homes, places, and wildlife, the helpless feeling of being unable to provide for family and community, and the knowledge that nature's special circumstances once experienced will never return. However, what we know about this condition of solastalgia remains sparse. The language to describe these feelings comes from research about human bereavement – the loss of loved ones, the loss of pets. Discussing bereavement, we are immediately reminded of the so-called five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance – as developed by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.[3] Certainly, the bereavement model is useful, even instructive, yet it is also woefully inadequate for describing our emotional lives amidst environmental tragedy.

Bereavement language is inadequate because it is based on a foundation of human emotional entanglement, upon the experiences of attachment, love and loss. Bereavement describes the wrenching pain in our chests that results from our breathing becoming shallow when we contemplate or experience the deaths of our loved ones. But we realize that human society is currently not in love with the Earth – with nature, ecosystems, biodiversity of animals and plants. People do not love the Earth in a way that bereavement language could, imaginably should, describe our sorrow at these losses. We do not properly grasp or sufficiently appreciate our zoetic entanglements with all of nature, with planetary systems.[4] I dare say, collectively and individually, that most humans do not view this planet as a beloved.

My own preoccupation with climate grief began with the joyous arrival of my first grandchild. Just taking this precious newborn into my arms for the first time catapulted me into a deep sense of longing and dread. I felt a jumble of joy, hope, wisdom, and alarm. Subsequently, during the following year, as I was doing research for a book on African American environmental philosophy, I joined the Panel on Planetary Thinking at Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen. That same year I became familiar with bustling Berlin through the eyes of my young grandson. The summer in Germany was hot-as-hell, with the broader continent suffering a nearly unbearable heatwave. The stories of interminable sunshine and heat-related deaths caused me to ache with misery. The fellowship allowed me to produce an interactive visual arts installation on the topic of climate grief – a funeral table for mourning Earth with stories and collaged books. Meanwhile, my grandson helped me remember how to push a stroller off and on public transportation, and, most importantly, how to read stories to a young child. Under the relentless, almost useless swishing of an electric fan, we found ourselves insatiable for *The Hungry Caterpillar,* giggling at the antics of *B is for Babies*, and memorizing the poetic silliness of the multicoloured animals in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?*

My summer of familial love mixed with environmental anxiety overtook me by surprise. Simultaneously, I was reminded through my research that the climate apocalypse is not a future event for Indigenous peoples. Colonialism, capitalism, and enslavement were all foundational to and supported by rapacious natural resource extraction and land decimation. Solastalgia began for Indigenous groups from the very beginnings of European expansionism, settler destruction of ecosystems and theft of land. The environmental apocalypse, its accompanying sorrows, traumas, and grieving, started hundreds of years ago for Indigenous peoples, for my people, and it is ongoing.

Yet another year described with the superlative of "hottest on record." Another week, another climate report – this one from Johan Rockström and his colleagues at the Stockholm Resilience Centre. This new report, authored by 29 climate and environmental scientists said that society had blown past six out of nine "safe and just" global planetary natural cycle boundaries.[5] I continue hopping off and on the mostly efficient public transportation in Berlin, and this information only serves to increase my sense of despair and angst. Through my earbuds, Marvin Gaye croons, "What about this overcrowded land? How much more abuse from man can she stand?"[6]

In my academic practice I have written, with two colleagues, a textbook about environmental studies and climate change and the message of environmental dysfunction is something I obstinately engage, every day, every classroom appearance in front of my weary, screen-addicted, minimally attentive Gen Z students. I acknowledge my students do not possess the privileged choice of disengagement from ecological catastrophes, what with having their entire lives of this madness in front of them, so I decide to meet their obligation with my own. At best my responsibility is to attempt to explain how we ended up in this situation. How we found ourselves "unprepared and not adapted on the highway to climate hell," as UN Secretary General António Guterres recently described it.[7]

I spend my work days with young adults – the majority between the ages of 18 and 24. It is my role to teach them about, arguably, the darkest, most depressing topic facing society—the climate emergency. To teach environmental studies, the current events, consequences, and responses to humanity's dysfunctional relationships with the natural world. I have taken it as my professorial responsibility to somehow, impossibly perhaps, find the balance between being realistic and maintaining resilience. I am, therefore, always teetering on the edge of a precipice between heartbreak and hope, between sorrow and solace. I attempt to impart to my students the sense of both my incalculable grief and my profound gratitude. In between my presentation on the history of the recycling crisis, I told my students that we must hold both the profound grief and the deepest sense of gratitude for being here at this very moment, clumsily but purposefully involved with the repair of the world.

I stopped the lecture and took a deep breath, and I observed that by now most students had looked up from their screens. I felt humbled and self-conscious at the same time. I was embarrassed to admit that this greed, extraction, and rampant earth-destroying consumerism are to be laid at the feet of their generation. I asked them if they were afraid? Angry? They looked up briefly and nodded again and again. I offered them a candle in the wind. I offered a weak palliative—"We can only get through this together." And then as I was packing my texts and notes back into my canvas bookbag an hour later, I concluded the class with a weak, "Honestly, I don't know when all of this will be fixed."

Arguably, my real desire, whether I am in a classroom or surrounded by toddlers on a playground is that the language of climate grief can reverse the direction of our dysfunctional environmental sentiments. Perhaps if we describe this point in the Anthropocene, this collective emotional state, as one of bereavement, then we can compel humans to fall deeply in love with this planet. But how could we formulate our emotional responses to such tremendous losses? Unresolved, I press repeat on the Marvin Gaye playlist on the Berlin subway.

1 Glenn Albrecht, "'Solastalgia'. A new concept in health and identity," PAN: philosophy activism nature 3 (2005): 41-55.

2 Miles W. Griffis, “Coral Griefs: Finding Hope Amidst Loss,” Nautilus, October 27, 2020. https://nautil.us/coral-griefs-finding-hope-amidst-loss-11738/

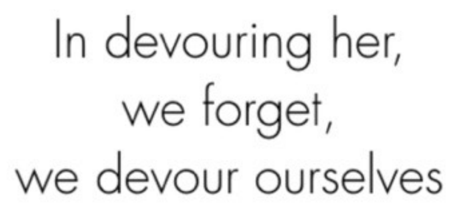
3 Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, On Death and Dying, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969.

4 Zoetic means relating to life, vital, alive, or living. Synonyms for zoetic include awake, conscious, animate, dynamic, viable, breathing. Zoetic entanglements are the right relationship between self, others, and the Earth, a balance of care that is essential to the well-being of the whole living network.

5 Katherine Richardson, et. al., “Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries,” Science Advances 9, no 37 (September 2023).

6 Marvin Gaye, “Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology),“ What’s Going On, Tamia Records, June 1971.

7 António Guterres, “Secretary General’s remarks to high level opening of COP 27,” United Nations, Sharm El-Sheikh, November 7, 2022.



In devouring her,
we forget,
we devour ourselves

Maya Adams, Climate Changed , Excerpt from visual poem, 2023.

Maya Adams is a multidisciplinary artist whose work delves into the complexities of race, the environment, spirituality, climate anxiety, and pathways to equitable futures.

BOOK REVIEW: Kateryna Aliinyk, *Collective Fantasies and Ecological Grief*

Dmytro Chepurnyi

Kateryna Aliinyk, Ukrainian Garden, 2022

Welcome to Eastern Ukraine, a region of scarred battlefields, marked by post-industrial transformation, and profoundly affected by Russia's war against Ukraine. In this context, I bring your attention to the poignant artworks and texts of Kateryna Aliinyk, specifically focusing on the recently translated book, co-written with Natasha Chychasova, *Collective Fantasies and Eastern Resources*. I am writing this piece of text as a curator (and in this case editor) who had the honour of engaging with Kateryna Aliinyk's work.

Kateryna Aliinyk, born in 1998 in Luhansk, Ukraine relocated to Kyiv in 2016 to pursue her studies at the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, earning a Master's degree in painting in 2021. She primarily works with painting and text, focusing on themes of war and the occupation of Donbas— exploring these narratives through depictions of nature and a non-anthropocentric perspective. In 2023, she co-wrote her first fiction book published by 89 Books in Palermo, Italy.

Reading Aliinyk's texts like *Who Else Eats Life With a Spoon?,* I find myself deeply connected to the narratives that unfold within the pages of *Collective Fantasies and Eastern Resources.* My personal history intertwines with the stories presented—this is not merely a distant tale, it is an integral part of my own story.

My childhood was spent in eastern Ukraine, on the outskirts of the city of Luhansk. The house my family lived in, purchased in 1998, came with a small garden left behind by the previous owners who were small retailers navigating the economic transition from a planned to a market-based economy in the 1990s. The young trees in the garden—cherry, apple, and peach— planted with a business-minded intent became over time symbols of cherished memories and a testament to our family's enduring connection to that home.

However, the war initiated by Russia in 2014 irrevocably altered the course of our lives. This tragedy forced us to abandon our hometown, leaving it empty, a silent witness to the collective tragedy that befell us and many others who were compelled to seek refuge elsewhere.

As I read Aliinyk's essay, I keep thinking about a common imagined future after the war. I imagine that Luhansk's *Guernica* may have been created by Kateryna Alyinik as a mix of soil and traces of our former lives. The question arises: what will preserve the memory of what happened in these cities after liberation, when the monuments to the occupation have been dismantled? I contemplate how to depict abandonment. I am thinking about the rhizoma depicted by her, under the ground surface where bones and ruins lie.

So how will we see the landscape after a long occupation? For decades, the region was associated with heavy industry and a male-dominated culture. Now, with war, Aliinyk's feminist perspective on this conflict unveils the multifaceted layers of its impact on our country: an ecological disaster, mined territory, demographic changes (i.e., the many fallen male soldiers), and the emigration of young people. Will everyone who belonged to this land return? What future can the region, one that has long been a battlefield, have? This year, our region will enter its second war-torn decade. To quote George Steiner, who described post-war Europe in terms of 'absence', during the years Donbas region has become a place where many people are now gone. Lives, environments, and histories have all been destroyed by Russian imperialism.

To depict the absence, Aliinyk immerses herself in a world of vegetables. She writes about and paints peas, berries, and the art of canning — traditions practised by her grandparents in the occupied territories. The garden emerges as a metaphor for life halted by the occupation, yet it remains a symbol of hope for natural healing. Beneath the soil of the Donbas garden lie countless hidden traces of history. Bones mixed with the pieces of trees and soil, where roots reach out to each other, somewhere unseen.

While we recognise the resilience of those affected by war, I extend an invitation to stand in solidarity with fellow Ukrainians. Together with Aliinyk, whose story we are privileged to hear in her artworks and texts, we share a common bond rooted in a profound connection to our native city and the lives it has shaped. If something green does not sprout through even the most hopeless ruins, hope dies. The images of roots serve as a deeper metaphor: even in the midst of the blood and dirt of war, there is hope for growth and life. Perhaps our task is to learn now from plants in the time of grief, developing our human network for future restoration and germination. Through these seemingly ordinary agricultural stories, a narrative emerges — a narrative that speaks of loss, hope, and the indomitable spirit of life that persists, a spirit embodied by those who continue to savour life even in the face of adversity, as they eat it with spoons.

**Dmytro Chepurnyi, born in 1994 in Luhansk, is an independent curator and writer based in Kyiv, co-founder, and member of the Ukrainian Environmental Humanities Network.*

Dear Joe ,

It was quite the performance: “A boat, a large eel, a lot of lily petals and some surgical sewing”, how theatrical!

Though after the show, talking to friends left me questioning my involvement. A friend, distressed by the (mis)use of the eel’s corpse in the gallery, found seeing me and my brown body very confusing. As if my racialised presence, even if peripheral, facilitated complicity with the performance when otherwise they would’ve walked out of the space long before it finished.

Like the Eel, I feel like a tool.

Except, I chose to be there and she did not.

At school, we went through extensive paperwork when visiting the Physiology Department to draw from human cadavers. Documents nowhere-to-be-seen in the gallery where the Eel’s corpse was displayed and played with. It seems that in weaving together “stories of human and more-than-human encounters”, the performance reproduces the same imperial patterns separating (white) human and the ‘Other’. The ‘Other’, that Sepahvand notes in *Odarodle*, is “captured… displayed, to define what it is, or rather what the (imperial) eye/I is not”.

To answer your question:

The ‘Othered’ beings grieve for rivers. Akin to the triangle of bodies in Adham’s film. Connected by water and air, upheld by the earth…flowing with the river, they raise their hands in prayer, releasing them skywards—Sharing…perhaps remembering?

The Skywoman and the blessings she bestowed upon us…

Gratefully,

Harman

Returning a Gift to the Coal Mountain

Mia Yu

It was a sunny morning in May 2023. I came to Fushun in northeast China for my fifth research trip. While having breakfast in the hotel dining room, my attention was captivated by something hanging on the wall, a panoramic photograph of a coal mine—the colossal open pit stretching toward the infinite horizon with stratified terraces splaying out like a dark monster's stomach. The glorified photograph oozed grotesqueness with a tinge of nostalgia. This image was of Fushun's West Open Pit Mine, located only two kilometres from Fushun's city centre where I was having breakfast. Measuring almost seven kilometres long, two and half kilometres wide and four hundred meters deep, it is Asia's largest open-pit mine by size. The locals nicknamed it the Big Pit, or *dakeng* (大坑) in Chinese. The Big Pit is not only a local landmark for the 1.8 million residents of the mining city, but also an important site for China's fossil fuel modernity. However, the vicissitudes of a century-long excavation have caused serious environmental problems, ranging from disastrous land subsidence to water pollution. In 2019, the mine permanently closed. Since its closure, I have been regularly coming to Fushun to research the transformation of the post-mining landscape, the process of ecological repair, and the current transition from fossil fuel to renewable energies. Each time I come here, I always try to physically experience the mountains and waters that have been geologically and chemically altered on such a radical scale. Just the day before, I met Lao Guo, a retired mining engineer, who told me about a "secret hiking trail" to access the bottom of the Big Pit.

Lao Guo, who recently turned eighty, spends most of his time at *Xishechang* (西舍场). Literally meaning "West Discarded Field", *Xishechang* is the largest dumping ground for mining waste in Fushun. Located just west of the Big Pit, this eleven-square-kilometer "mountain" consists of millions of tons of coal gangue which have been separated during the mining process and dumped here since the 1920s. The gangue contains a large amount of carbon and sulfur, these elements constantly smoulder and emit toxic gas after being compressed under the ground. In short, *Xishechang* is a waste mountain that slowly burns. Since his retirement from Fushun Mining Corporation, Lao Guo had appropriated a small patch of land on *Xishechang* to cultivate crops for leisure. Lao Guo had a successful career as a mining engineer specializing in water management. He said that he chose to study mining because, as a young man in the 1960s, he was greatly inspired by a popular Socialist slogan, "Let's vow to rearrange the mountains and rivers of our motherland" (誓把山河重安排). For his job at the Big Pit, he worked on preventing the mine from being flooded by underground rivers, a daunting task considering the mine's colossal size and the complicated water network around it. While working for the mining company, Lao Guo designed eight super pumps to constantly pump water out, however, water always found its way back. Today, his concerns are how to ease the constant toxic smoldering at *Xishechang*, and how to clean up the rivers polluted by the mining and other industries. Lao Guo said to me in a sad voice, "After spending our lives rearranging the mountains and rivers, we now face the dire consequences of our actions."

Knowing that I would like to hike down to the Big Pit, Lao Guo described where the trail was and how to follow it down to the base, and then he asked me for a favour. He opened a wooden box, took out a small piece of coal, wrapped it up with a napkin and handed it to me. “Once you are down there, if you happen to find any active water, can you please place this in the water?” Bring a piece of coal back to the coal mine? I was bewildered by Lao Guo’s request. He paused a little and then added. “I found this at the bottom of the Big Pit over fifty years ago. I just started as a mining engineer at that time. I kept it all these years. Ever since I retired, I have wanted to bring it back, but I am too old to hike down now.” While I accepted Lao Guo’s tiny package, I heard him mumbling in a low voice, “It is a gift…… a gift.” A gift to whom? A gift for what? I was more confused.

* * *

After breakfast, I headed to the Big Pit with Lao Guo’s hand-drawn map in hand. The taxi first dropped me at a bridge on Artificial River Road. A wrinkly propaganda banner was hung across the bridge: “Carry out Xi Jinping’s thoughts on ecological civilization; Strengthen the greening project in a new era.” Down below, a shallow, greenish stream stretched out like a dirty carpet. Yesterday, Lao Guo mentioned this river, he said that this artificial river used to be a natural river called Yangbai. In 1928, when the Japanese occupying forces initiated the so-called “Great Open-Cast Mine Extraction Plan”, the Yangbai River was forced to change course. Due to its close proximity to Fushun’s mining and industrial belt, Yangbai River became a convenient dumping ground for wastewater for years. Following the riverbank, I walked for another kilometre until I found the trailhead that would lead me to the inner world of the Big Pit.

The beginning of the descent was incredibly slippery and steep. The ground in the mine pit was covered with loose crumps of coal, gangue, and sedimentary rock. Gradually, there was more green on the ground. Curious about these tenacious plants that grew in a coal mine, I turned on a plant recognition app on my phone to learn their names: Chinese motherwort, swallow-wort, daylily, artemisia and ……reed? I was surprised to find reeds as they usually grow close to wetlands. Soon after, I was not surprised to spot a small creek flowing on a stratified mining terrace. Lao Guo was right. After herculean efforts to keep water out of the Big Pit, water always managed to seep back. Seeing active water, I knew I should fulfill Lao Gao's wish here and now. I took out the piece of coal that Lao Guo gave me. As I held it in my hand and took a careful look at it, I realized that it was not ordinary coal. On it, there was a tiny fossilized seashell. At that moment, I recalled what Lao Guo said, "it is a gift." What I was holding was indeed a precious gift. Fifty years ago, nature revealed its cosmic energy and beyond-human timespan to a young engineer with a grand ambition to rearrange mountains and rivers. The fossil was both a gift and a metaphysical message. Today, the engineer - already an old man - was surrounded by the waste mountains and polluted waters, and simultaneously confronted with the consequences of the massive extraction which he participated in. Returning the fossil was Lao Guo's gift back to the Big Pit, a gesture of respect to and reconciliation with the damaged earth, and his final acknowledgement that water - just like the fossilized seashell indicated - has always been an intimate and inseparable part of us. As I gently placed the fossilized shell into the creek, I felt the same wonder and enchantment that Lao Guo may have felt when he discovered it half a century ago. Ultimately, this was also his gift to me because I started to understand the complex sentiments and embodied experiences behind the long process of healing in the rust belt of China.

Mia Yu is an artist, curator and scholar based in Beijing, whose current projects are focused on the visual culture of China's fossil fuel modernity and the ongoing transition toward renewable energies.

Food for thought

Recipes for the Cookshops of the future

Tatjana Söding

Black, small, shiny: Beluga lentils take their name from their resemblance with the eggs of the beluga sturgeon (*Huso huso*), better known as caviar. Particularly considering their place within the global food industry, however, beluga lentils and beluga eggs have nearly nothing in common. Caviar is one of the world's most expensive foods with a 1kg tin ranging from £5,000 to well above £20,000. The high price is a result of the fishing industry capitalising on the rarity of the beluga sturgeon (which is endemic to the Ponto-Caspian Sea region), the relatively long period required to reach sexual maturity (up to 25 years) as well as their infrequent reproduction (only once every four to eight years).

The beluga sturgeon ranks among vertebrate species with the longest lifespans, easily exceeding a century. But money-hungry-caviar- capitalists slaughter female beluga sturgeons as soon as their ovaries carry ripe eggs and sell them as “life-giving capsules” to self-acclaimed connoisseurs. The life of the mother and the unborn potentiality of her offspring are violently taken and sold as a luxury good to a subset of the ruling species. Such cruel commodification is just one but evident example of capitalism’s profit-driven ransacking of nature that destabilised much of the vast Earth-system in a mere two centuries.

The discussion of how to avert the worst consequences of an already unfolding ecological breakdown and to overcome its main driver – the fossil-capitalist system – leapt forward as the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the globe in 2020. “The time has come”, wrote human ecologist Andreas Malm that spring, “to experiment with ecological Leninism”. Malm draws inspiration from Vladimir Lenin who championed 'War Communism' during the Russian Civil War (1918–1921), when the Bolshevik government expropriated businesses, nationalised industry, disciplined labour, as well as centralised and rationed food distribution to tackle the interlocking crises of foreign invasion, economic collapse and famine. While acknowledging the often dire consequences of war communism, Malm asserts that in our imminent battles for survival on a climate-ravaged planet, drastic and large-scale measures must be instituted akin to Lenin’s radical approach. He leverages this historical event to counter social democratic and anarchist visions of change and to underline the state’s unique capacity to orchestrate the fulfilment of human needs within planetary boundaries.

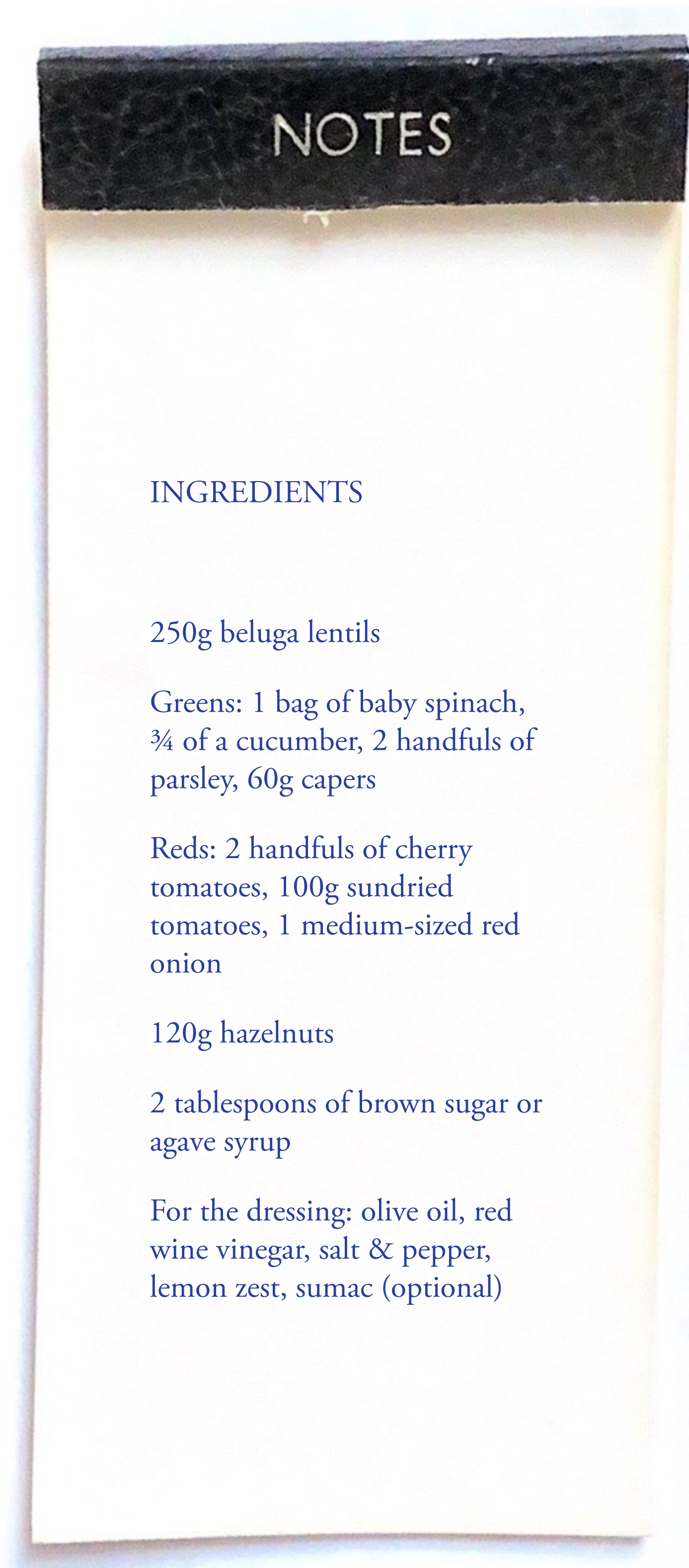
Ecological Leninism is predicated on the recognition that only a radical state can push against fossil capital by nationalising its infrastructure, prohibiting the mining of coal and drilling for oil, and repurposing existing infrastructure to produce ecologically- and socially-just technology (e.g., passive housing, organic agriculture, trams). It is not only the fossil-fueled industry and its inevitable byproduct, CO_2, however, that we must transition from. It is capital's devaluation of nature and peoples that leads to the loss of biodiversity, soil depletion, resource scarcity, extinction – and ever more epidemics. Malm turned to Lenin not only because humanity now faces a plight as urgent as 1918, but also because of Lenin's ambitious programme of forest conservation despite the young Soviet Union's hunger for resources.

Since the publication of Malm's pamphlet, numerous voices have advanced the concept of 'ecological Leninism'. Exemplary of this growing movement are political theorist Jodi Dean and political ecologist Kai Heron, who have warned against the spectre of authoritarianism inherent in the concept of ecological Leninism by arguing for political organisation from below. In their view, a vanguard party must play a crucial role in the "long haul" of revolution. "Recogniz[ing] the nonlinearity of political time" allows ecosocialists today "to accept the need to use ebbs in the movement, political downtime, to build and prepare, to acquire the skills and make the connections that will allow us to seize opportunities when they arise". Although prevalent in Malm's writing, Dean and Heron emphasise the necessity for – and ecological Leninism's unique suitability to develop – an internationalist and anti-imperialist path out of the crisis and away from the *Diktat* of capitalism. While Malm, writing in rage and desperation amidst a pandemic, argued that ecological Leninism is the revolutionary politics that *must* be carried out, Dean and Heron believe that revolution is also the *most likely* outcome, to result "from the mass migration of people fleeing floods, fires, and droughts, rioting for food, shelter, and energy, and seizing what is rightfully theirs".

Above all, however, ecological Leninism is a framework predicated on the interdependence between workers and the environment. It is only in unison that the prosperity of both red and green elements can be advanced. The same rings true for this revolutionary recipe: Ecological Lentilism. In contrast with beluga caviar, ecological lentilism elevates on the humble but mighty beluga lentil, a pulse packed with protein, dietary fibre, and antioxidants without requiring animal suffering and death. Lentils are cheap and there's plenty for all. Hence, this recipe is also perfect for easy meal prep for the (over-) committed lefty or feeding many hungry comrades at an action. Let your creativity flow with the ingredients as you prep your salad – which might also differ depending on regional agricultural produce and season. Ecological Lentilism proclaims certain do's and don'ts but it offers no detailed blueprint - much like ecological Leninism.

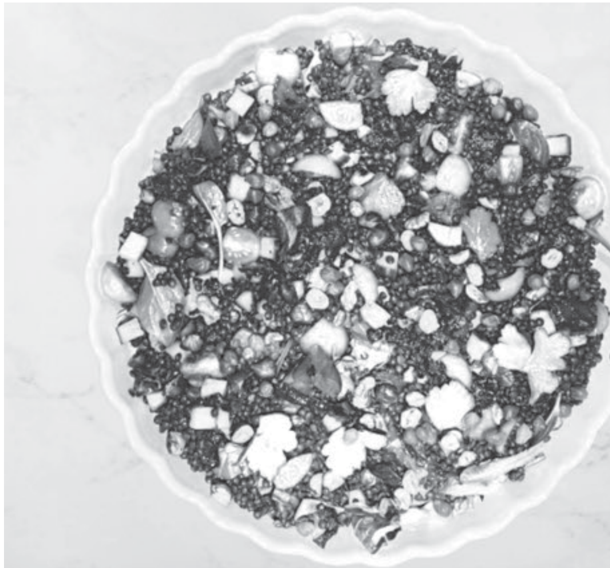
Ecological Lentilism

Of Green-Red Alliances



Ready in 25 minutes

Serves 4 people



Preparation

1. Rinse the lentils and place in boiling, unsalted water – the water should come three fingers wide above the lentils. Reduce the heat to let the lentils simmer for around 22 minutes. Start checking for tenderness after 15 minutes and every few minutes until they are ready. The lentils should maintain their firm texture (no mushy mash for hardened revolutionaries). Drain and rinse with cold water. Add to a salad bowl, garnish with a pinch of salt.

2. While the lentils are cooking, peel and thinly slice the red onion. Heat approximately 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a deep frying pan over low heat. Add salt and pepper and let onions cook slowly for around 15 minutes until they become soft and golden. Stir occasionally and add splashes of water if the onions start sticking to the pan. Add brown sugar/syrup and vinegar and let the onions caramelise for another 5 minutes.

3. Wash and chop all other ingredients in whichever shape and size is to your liking. I prefer cucumber cubes, thinly sliced dried tomatoes, halves and quarters of cherry tomatoes, whole parsley leaves and roughly chopped leaves of baby spinach.

4. Cut hazelnuts into halves and roast over medium heat for about 5–10 minutes. I reuse the same pan I used to cook the onion. Stir occasionally. You can wrap the roasted hazelnuts in a kitchen towel and let them steam for a few moments, then rub the nuts in the towel to remove loose skins.

5. Add olive oil, red wine vinegar, salt & pepper and sumac into a recycled jar, close and shake for a few moments. Stir everything together and top up with dressing and lemon zest.

6. Serve with freshly baked bread and cream cheese or vegan baked camembert with cranberry sauce.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels disdained to write 'recipes for the cook-shops of the future'. The most influential critics of capitalism contrasted their method of 'scientific socialism' to 'utopian socialism' which, in their view, imagined a future at the risk of being out of touch with the present's working-class movements .

Pace Marx and Engels, recipes can be used to convey revolutionary theory and praxis and thus turn even the most abstract ideas into concrete social experiences. Concrete utopian practices can provide a format along with a social context where diverse sets of people find an entry into radical left ideas in a fun, relatable and, above all, sociable way. Cooking can also be a way of organising people: from dinner parties to community kitchens to snacks in a street blockade, making and sharing food is a powerful way to connect, exchange ideas, and build solidarity.

And of course: Radically changing the way in which foodstuff is produced, distributed and eaten is itself essential to socio-ecological justice.

Acknowledgments

The original idea “Food For Thought – Recipes for the Cookshop of the Future” has previously been conceived in close collaboration with Christopher Olk. Thanks to Xinyue Liu, Troy Vettese, Johanna Siebert, William Callison, Inea Lehner and Charles Stevenson for comments and inspiration.

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In dialogue with Joshua Trey Barnett

Xinyue Liu

Sitting on the carpet of a hotel room while attending the 2023 Historical Materialism conference in London, I had a virtual conversation with Joshua Trey Barnett, author of Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence (Michigan State University Press, 2022). The book offers an elegiac and compelling advocation for grief, foregrounding the idea that our ability to mourn for beyond-human others is not only an inherent trait but a rhetorical achievement. Barnett is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Pennsylvania State University.

How did you come to care about grief and mourning?

The very first essay I wrote on ecological grief was about Endlings—the very last individuals of a species. And I was really focusing in on names and naming and trying to think: why is it that so many of these Endlings receive proper names? And how is it that those names mediate our relationships with those beings to such an extent that after their passing, the names continue to tether us not only to the lost individual but to the lost species? Take, for example, Martha the passenger pigeon. Even though people today never interacted with Martha, we can form certain kinds of relationships with her, and this is so in part because of the proper name, which connects us at once to a singular being and an entire way of being. While working on this essay, I learned about Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman's edited collection Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief (2017). I realised that other people were writing about ecological grief, too. And then over the years, in conversation with other scholars, I realised I had more to say.

I recently wrote about ghost species, which, akin to Endlings, are a particular kind of grief icon: the abhorrent tears that draw us to examine the conditions responsible for their demise. I'm particularly interested in the moments in which the species on the verge of extinction enter into the visual realm—presented in film, in photographs. I wonder if you could elaborate on your understanding of 'visual rhetoric' within the context of ecological grief.

The 'visual' in 'visual rhetoric' is, for me, a capacious concept—one that encompasses 'moving images' in the sense of cinema specifically and, more broadly, images that move viewers in some way. The term 'visual rhetoric' also points toward what I describe in the book as practices of making-visible. It seems to me that this is especially significant with regards to the sorts of ecological losses that are, to some extent, imperceptible. For example, the relatively slow and, for most humans, spatially distant melting of glaciers. I discuss two different forms of visual rhetoric related to this particular kind of loss: Olafur Eliason's Ice Watch and director Jeff Orlowski's Emmy Award-winning documentary Chasing Ice. Although they function in quite different

ways, each goes a long way toward bringing otherwise unseen losses into visibility and, thus, into the realm of what we can collectively imagine. And this seems key to me since the diversity of losses unfolding in the Anthropocene often push the limits of our imagination.

That said, I'm not a film scholar. I'll leave that to you to figure out how cinema is operating in these spaces to make losses visible and imaginable.

This is precisely what I'm grappling with in my doctoral thesis, 'Cinema of Ecological Grief', where I ask how we could meaningfully expand the practices of moving images to give shape to the inexpressible forms of losses. I find Judith Butler's framework of (un)grievable life rather helpful. Recently, you have been writing about invasive species and the problem of ungrievability. I'm curious to know if you think it is possible to form sympathy with others even when they are invisible, invasive, and therefore, ungrievable.

Invasive species overlap with what Deborah Bird Rose once called 'unlovable' others—various beings and species that we are so often taught to despise. As a rhetorician, what is important to me is to examine the rhetorical conditions under which unlovability comes to seem inevitable: How does a being become 'unlovable' in a particular context? How does a species become 'invasive'? These are human categories, human constructs that we apply to particular beings. They have profound implications, symbolically, but also materially. A part of what happens when you call a species invasive, at least in the US, is that you make it disposable. You make it intolerable. I've been writing an essay about people who actively resist those frameworks of relation and hesitate in the face of exhortations to kill. There are occasionally examples of carving out a space of grievability for these unlovable others. But it's so rare. And here is where we as scholars can make an impact around these issues by paying attention to those moments of resistance and disruption, where the terms of unlovability and ungrievability are reworked.

Speaking of our role as scholars, the relationship between the rhetorical conditions and material conditions is particularly interesting to me. Is it enough to prioritise the former when the latter needs changing? Especially when market-based solutions and technocratic visions are altering our living realm at such an accelerating rate?

I don't know that we can separate the 'rhetorical' from the 'material,' at least not in any neat or simple sense, in part because how we perceive and understand the 'material' depends to a considerable extent on the 'rhetorical'. And, at any rate, rhetoric is essential to achieving transformations of the material conditions that surely also constrain and enable us in various ways. As I understand it, the rhetorical conception of ecological grief and mourning that I present in the book underscores how transforming our material

conditions requires that we also change the rhetorical conditions under which we come to perceive and understand, to use your examples, the various market-based solutions and technocratic visions on offer. When the rhetorical conditions that make ecological grief more possible are in place, my suspicion is that we are also more likely to view with scepticism the claims that promise reductive 'ways out' of the mess we are in, and that we are more likely to counter such claims with a realistic, if also depressing, reminder of the myriad beings we have already lost to such 'material' interventions. In other words, I don't think we confront a choice between the 'rhetorical' and the 'material'. Instead, we must think about how they are entwined and about how the former is—or can be—mobilised to make the latter more conducive to caring relations.

I want to consider the possibility of a certain callousness that stems from too much exposure to grief. For example, how one extinct species quickly replaces another in the media as the next poster child of ecological devastation, making each individual death less significant than the one before. How can we prevent grief from becoming performative and lacking substance?

Here, I think you are onto something really interesting. It reminds me of the notion of 'compassion fatigue,' or this sense that there are real limits to how much one can engage with or respond to the suffering of others. I think that there is certainly some truth to the idea that we cannot grieve for everyone or everything that ever has been or will be lost. That seems obvious enough.

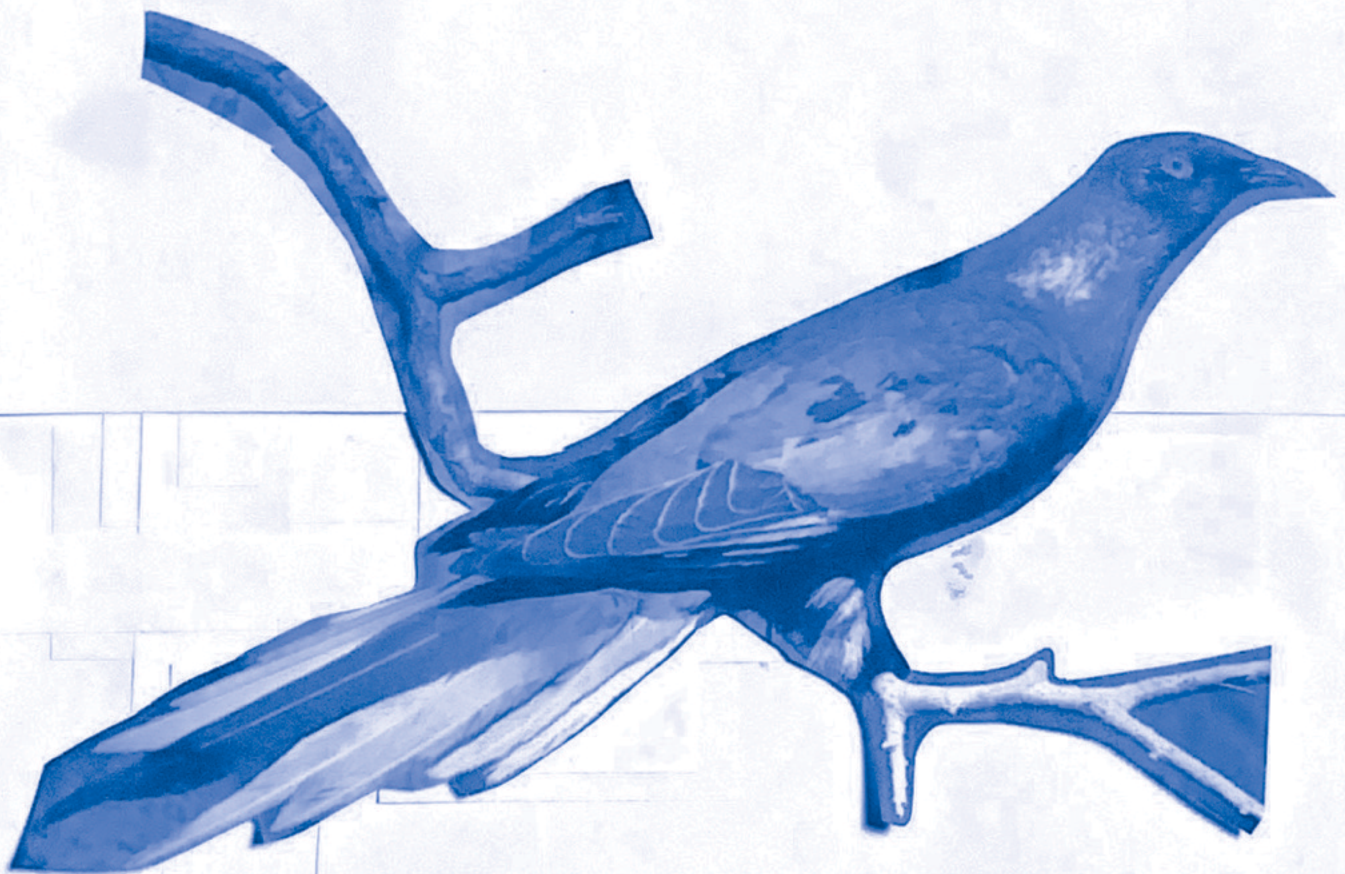
But the notion of callousness points in a slightly different direction. It points not to a lack of expression of grief but to a certain insensitivity to the specificity of losses. And this, I worry, may be inevitable in times of mass loss. How, after all, can anyone—or even any collective—do justice to the haecceity of each being that is lost? I don't know that we can. And yet, it's perhaps worth striving for. My guess is that trying harder to honour the singularity of the dead and dying will make our ecological grief a still more profound, and profoundly disturbing, undertaking. It is one thing to accept that a species about which one knows little has been pushed over the edge of extinction; it is quite another to grapple with such a loss when one is intimately familiar with that particular species. I suspect that if the goal is to counter a certain callousness, then one way to do so is to become even more familiar, and therefore more sensitive, to that specificity. But this is going to compound our suffering as survivors.

Compounding our suffering is an interesting notion. You are one of the few scholars who write in favour of melancholia as a sustained form of grief. Similarly, I argue that film has a carrying capacity for grief and can prolong our remembrance of earthly losses. I do wonder what the end goal of such carrying might be. Carrying out the tasks of mourning for a long period is a tremendous ask. To what extent can we subject others to these grieving experiences? Won't these psychological and physical tasks

cause more precarious conditions? After all, grief is already so unevenly felt depending on one's class, race, and gender position.

Well, you are right that there is already so much to grieve that encouraging people to grieve more, and to grieve more kinds of losses, is tricky business. But I don't know that mourning and grieving more capaciously necessarily makes anyone more precarious, especially not if their grief is attended by an understanding of the ways in which the heightened precarity of some humans is not distinct from but deeply entangled with the heightened precarity of many more-than-human beings and ways of being. So, although I do think that we collectively owe it to more-than-human others to acknowledge and sit with ecological and earthly losses, I also believe that we cannot think about those losses outside of the economic structures and political systems that generate all forms of precarity.

Xinyue Liu is a DPhil researcher and artist of ecological grief based at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford.



Dear Harman,

Liquid freshwater covers 0.5% of Earth, holds 1/10 known lifeforms, and supports most of the rest. Rivers flow life. Lives doubly threatened as those of lands or oceans, but less-noticed. SEAXBURH's focus, the marvellous, mysterious European eel, is critically endangered, declining 98% since the 70s. Might more people come to know rivers? The lives and stories they hold? We'll certainly all miss them.

Mismanaged waters lose lives and bring deaths, some through lines controlling people, others through controlling water itself. Vale? (Marcelo Barbosa and Paul Heritage), details the Brumadinho dam disaster's negligent horror, alongside local artists' resilience in articulating grief. Despite repeated safety warnings, a mining company killed 270 people in toxic waste-'water' floods. Eleven remain missing, swept out of perpetrators' sight and mourners' reach. Toxins spread throughout the São Francisco river basin, poisoning human and non-human communities.

St Francis of Assisi patronises ecology and poor people—always linked, whether by ecological harm's outsize impacts on poorer people or neo-colonial conservation blaming Indigenous/traditional/rural/poor lifeways for 'degradation'. Do some consider interaction with poverty inherently degrading?

Ecologies are grieved by 'Others' fighting to sustain them, through story, care, harvest, reliance, resistance.

Take care,

Joe

Harmanpreet Randhawa is a transdisciplinary artist whose practice deals with the notions of longing, belonging and desire through an autoethnographic lens.

Joe Boyle is a researcher and educator focusing on co-production, human-ecosystem connections, and transdisciplinary marine science.