FACING PLANETARY ECOCIDE, TRANSFORMING HUMAN-EARTH RELATIONS

An Eco-Cosmopolitan and Transcultural Comparison of Maja Lunde's *Blå* and Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a rarely undertaken transcultural literary study, comparing the non-Indigenous novel *Blå* by Norwegian author Maja Lunde with the Indigenous novel *The Back of the Turtle* by Cherokee (US-American and Canadian) author Thomas King. By exploring the co-evolutionary relationships among art, literature, culture, ecosystems, and the environment, this study positions itself within the framework of eco-cosmopolitanism. It examines human-Earth relations and possibilities for action in the face of the climate and environmental crises portrayed in the novels. The analysis engages equally with Eurowestern approaches—ecophenomenology, ecophilosophy, ecopsychology, and ecocriticism—to address themes related to ecological elegies, ecological grief, the ethics of mourning, and symbiocenic critiques of the Anthropocene, and with Indigenous concepts of all-relatedness, particularly Anishinaabeg epistemologies and the cosmogonic story of Skywoman. By juxtaposing an Indigenous narrative's capacity to convey storied resilience and survivance in the midst of extreme crises with a non-Indigenous narrative's reliance on didactic warnings, negotiations, and techno-managerialism, this article underscores the importance of Indigenous perspectives in transcultural, eco-cosmopolitan approaches.

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KEYWORDS: ecocriticism, environmental humanities, North American Indigenous literature, Scandinavian literature, Maja Lunde, Thomas King

Prologue

Ours is a time of lived erasure: Habitats disappear, species vanish. It dawns on some of us that we are also erasing ourselves. "The western world is in dire need of Indigenous knowledges in order to survive," Hartmut Lutz states, reminding us that "we have to address in a . . . complexly encompassing and relationally accountable way our own givens here and now, to develop an ethics and an axiology of survival" (Lutz 2018, 82).[1] Indigenous perspectives and knowledges matter in literary texts and in literary and cultural studies. Transculturally comparing contemporary Northern European and North American Indigenous and non-Indigenous fiction on climate change and environmental disasters encourages critical self-reflection among people of the Western world and reveals eco-ethical insights necessary for facing the task outlined by Lutz. The novels *Blå* (2017) [*The End of the Ocean* (2019a)] by Norwegian Maja Lunde and *The Back of the Turtle* (2014) by Cherokee US-Canadian Thomas King are reminiscent of today's real-world ecological scenarios and include aesthetic features of ecological elegies. Their protagonists deal with inconsolable ecological grief, contrasted with characters adhering to the Western economic and capitalist ideas of the Anthropocene. While *The Back of the Turtle* is an independent work and—like other works by King—has been favorably embraced in both Western and Indigenous circles, *Blå* is the second book in a climate tetralogy popular in the dominant Western culture.[2] There is no evidence that Lunde's works gained significant attention in Indigenous circles. A critical comparison of texts dealing with

1. The term "Western world" as used in this article encompasses the human-nature duality that the Anthropocene, anthropocentric worldviews, and anthropogenic activities bring about, for example, colonialism, neocolonialism, green colonialism, exploitation, resource extraction, unsustainable economies, and an ecopsychological state of deliberately turning away from ecological problems, helplessness, and vulnerability in the face of environmental disasters and climate crises. The term is used in contrast to ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies of respect, reciprocity, relationality, circularity, and balance as found in Indigenous worldviews (see Posey 1998; Wilson 2008; Sinclair 2013). Therefore, "Western world" is to be understood neither geographically nor exclusively in reference to Western European countries or countries of the so-called first world.

2. The climate tetralogy considers different geographical regions, spans a time frame from 1852 to 2111, and refers to a global ecological catastrophe called The Collapse set in 2045. The books were translated into many languages. The Norwegian titles of the

similar climate and environmental issues, written by members of dominant and marginalized cultures, provides interesting insights. Interpreting *Blå* and *The Back of the Turtle* with concepts of ecophilosophy, ecophenomenology, and ecopsychology discloses their pointing toward a new longed-for era, the Symbiocene. King extends beyond this, inviting readers to Indigenous worldviews, storytelling, and experiencing all-relatedness. Unlike Lunde, who with two regularly alternating storylines spreads narratively structured dystopian despair, unfulfillable hope, and future horror in a highly realistic story, King refers to the reality and the liminality of our world and creates an inspiring, action-guiding myth out of multiple intertwined storylines developing around environmental damage. This (re)creation story in a polymythological universe is of planetary significance in achieving a new ethical attitude toward Earth to ensure humans', more-than humans', and Earth's survival.

Guiding Thoughts

Even though a special issue of *Studies in the Novel* identifies a "rising tide of climate change fiction" (Craps and Crownshaw 2018, 1) and assesses the novel's representational capacities concerning climate change, an exploration of the interrelation between literary texts and natural ecosystems is insufficient. Due to the planetary relevance of the subject, it is vital to consider cultural ecologies, that is, the "co-evolutionary interrelation [of arts, literature, and cultural creativity at large] with natural ecosystems; . . . their mutual interactivity and cross-influences with other cultural ecosystems" (Zapf 2016a, 4; see also Zapf 2016b, 139). Mindsets shaped by and shared between cultures, local and planetary applicable ideas, sociopolitical and historical developments need to be recognized when exploring literary works about natural ecologies and ecological crises, acknowledging that all aspects of human life—including literary art and storytelling—are interrelated with the rest of the cosmos. "The challenges of difference and those of globally shared ecological crises" encourage Ursula Heise "to envision an 'eco-cosmopolitanism' that would be informed by deep knowledge of at least one culture other than one's own, including a knowledge of the ecology in which this culture is situated and of which it forms part" (Heise, 2013, 29). Thus, transculturally and comparatively focusing on the diversity of our shared humanity and the myriad perspectives delivered in fictional literary texts from various geographical areas teach important lessons about

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four books are *Bienes historie*, *Blå*, *Przewalskis hest*, and *Drömmen om et tre* (Lunde 2015, 2017, 2019b, 2022).

dealing with human-Earth relations and shared natural goods. Following Heise's suggestion, my literary analysis and interpretation are informed not only by Western academic perspectives but also by Indigenous (especially Anishinaabeg) perspectives.

I focus on *Blå* and *The Back of the Turtle*, two novels that deal with the source of all life: water. Being indispensable for life, water is one of our most precious shared goods and induces a specific value experience:

> Water is regularly experienced as a good not only for me and my fellow homosapiens but for many other organisms and species. . . . We experience both sun and rain as good when we glimpse their roles in the fabric of the planet's biotic web. As we experience our own dependency on the planet's biotic web, we realize the massive and inescapable interdependency among other species and processes in a mutually sustaining web of life, and with it a constellation of shared goods. (Brown 2003, 12)

Ocean currents and water systems cross boundaries and reach far beyond certain geographic areas. Flooding, rising sea levels, drought, toxic spills, water scarcity, and water pollution easily qualify as ecological subjects of planetary relevance. Their frequent, multifaceted occurrences make it impossible to classify them as local phenomena of particular areas. Water concerns all of us. Likewise, confining ecocritical literary analysis to fictional literature from one country, one language, or one culture when dealing with the subject of water as part of planetary ecological crises is inappropriate. Scholars rooted in the dominant Western cultures should consider Indigenous paradigms and include Indigenous literature when it comes to human-Earth relations. In this sense, leaving Western perspectives in literary studies is an act of decolonization. Already in 2004, Sámi scholar Harald Gaski declared the necessity of globally comparative Indigenous literary studies (Gaski 2004). While some scholars have published in this field (Healy 1987; McDougall 1987, 2007; Moses, Goldie, and Ruffo 2013; Allen 2012, 2014; see also Egerer 2020b, 2023), addressing a planet-wide issue needs an even broader "eco-cosmopolitan" (Heise 2013, 29) approach. Following Gayatri Spivak's suggestion of planetary literature (Spivak 2003, 9–10, 15–16, 20) and countering the scandal of the absence of Indigenous literature in general comparative literary studies (see Spivak 2003, 81; Allen 2014, 380–1), I go beyond the idea of comparative Western literary studies. In this, I also transcend Scandinavian and Nordic studies (i.e., comparing literature written in any of the Scandinavian languages or originating from the areas geographically known as the Nordic region or Scandinavia, see DuBois and Ringgaard 2017) and comparative Indigenous literary studies (i.e., comparing texts written by Indigenous authors from various

Indigenous communities, geographical regions, and different languages). I take into account that ecological crises, like all pandemic phenomena, do not stop at borders but reflect imbalances of the worldwide biotic web, have unforeseeable effects, are highly fluent, are often multifactorial, and therefore spread dynamically all over the planet. In particular, this applies to crises that affect an element as fluent and volatile as water in its various aggregation states. The transgression of established boundaries in literary studies helps us not only identify the Western world's needs but also become aware of Indigenous knowledges that might be vital and helpful to humans, more-than-humans, and Earth.

Focusing on the implications of ecological grief and trauma, I introduce the two novels and show how in an "eco-melancholic zeitgeist" (Barr 2017, 204) they actualize the aesthetics of ecological elegies and communicate the ethics of the work of mourning (see Cunsolo and Landman 2017; Kretz 2017; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018). As a conceptional prerequisite, the Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007) is present in both characters and plot elements, contrasting and framing elegiac ecological mourning. By offering a contextualizing transcultural Scandinavian/Canadian, Indigenous/non-Indigenous perspective, I acknowledge Western *and* Indigenous ways of (re)telling the story of human-Earth relations. In my comparative reading, analyzing, and interpreting the novels, I draw on ecophenomenology, ecophilosophy (Brown and Toadvine 2003), ecopsychology (Vakoch and Castrillón 2014), and Indigenous worldviews, epistemologies, and axiologies of all-relatedness (Wilson 2008; Sinclair 2013). I point out the similarities and differences between the texts as well as the limitations of an exclusive, Western reading. Presuming that the paradigmatic turning point toward the era of the Symbiocene (Albrecht 2016; Albrecht et al. 2007) is right at the Western world's doorstep, I show that the concept of this new era falls short. Indigenous worldviews have the potential to turn the most important narrative of our time—the story of ecological massacre—into an encouraging action-guiding myth. Indigenous storytelling yields dynamic ethics-based narratives of fulfillable hope, encourages humble self-reflection, intimate attunement to human-Earth reciprocity, and mutually respectful healing relations.

Ecological Grief: A Still Unacknowledged Mental Disorder

Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis (2018) examined the mental suffering of ecological grief in detail. Defined as grief for more-than-humans "felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic

environmental change" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275), ecological grief encompasses a variety of complex phenomena, for example, "environmental degradation and destruction . . . severe drought . . . industrial activity . . . toxic exposure . . . and localized ecological disasters such as hurricanes and oil spills" (Cunsolo 2017, 170). A strong emotional and mental health response to climate change–related loss, global environmental change, and regional ecological decline (see Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275–6), traumatic ecological grief suggests "complex *psychoterratic* relationships between the state of the earth and states of the mind" (Albrecht 2012, 241, emphasis in original). Glenn Albrecht introduced an associated concept: solastalgia, the emotion of heavy homesickness while still being at home but witnessing irreversible environmental destruction and decline in one's home environment (Albrecht et al. 2007; see also Albrecht 2017). Although psychiatrists are preparing to help their patients deal with these types of eco-anxiety and related "chronic fear of environmental doom" (Clayton et al. 2017, 68), mental health responses to ecological change are not yet officially declared a mental disorder. Quite the contrary, ecological grief is "a form of 'disenfranchised grief' or a grief that isn't publicly or openly acknowledged" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275) as the mourned "other-than-human bodies" (Cunsolo 2017, 171) are "often left unconsidered or entirely absent, in climate change narratives, policy and research" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275). The still widespread denial of human-induced ecological disasters is not only life-threatening and destructive to mental health but also derealizes more-than-human bodies—"animal, vegetal, . . . mineral" (Cunsolo 2017, 171)—and whole ecosystems "from ethical and political consideration in global discourse" (Cunsolo 2017, 170) in just the same way as other bodies have been (and, terribly enough, still are) denigrated and assaulted: "women, racial minorities, sexual minorities, peoples of different religions, certain ethnic groups, economically and politically marginalized groups, and Indigenous peoples, to name a few" (Cunsolo 2017, 170–1).

Fictional texts offer a much-needed stage for enfranchising ecological grief and empowering its energy of change and resistance. In taking up the subject of ecological grief, King's and Lunde's novels align themselves (and their protagonists) with "ecological emotional outlaws" (Kretz 2017, 258). Setting aside "differential allocation of grievablity" (Cunsolo 2017, 171), the novels acknowledge that more-than-human bodies are, in fact, mournable. The protagonists respond to events and resort to "myriad ways in which people experience and express this grief" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275) like:

> sadness, . . . despair, . . . and stress; elevated rates of mood disorders, such as depression anxiety, and pre- and post-traumatic stress; . . . attempts and death

> by suicide; threats and disruptions to sense of place and place attachment; and loss of personal or cultural identity and ways of knowing. (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 275)

In King's *The Back of the Turtle*, the academically and professionally successful but socially isolated biochemical engineer Dr. Gabriel Quinn, an Anishinaabe from Turtle Island (i.e. the geographical area now known by its English name as North America, in this case, Canada), is heavily struck by ecological trauma because he caused a mass extinction (for Gabriel's identity, see King 2014, 109–10, 120–1, 136–44, 166–73, 416–7). For his employer, the Toronto-based global agribusiness Domidion, Gabriel invented a biochemical weedkiller, GreenSweep, which consists of a highly toxic genetically modified bacterium that kills all life. The bacterium was never meant to get outside the laboratory (King 2014, 41–4, 91). When GreenSweep was used to clear undergrowth for pipeline construction at Kali Creek in coastal British Columbia, a toxic spill known as the Ruin caused a mass extinction in the regional water system and on the Pacific coast. In the Ruin, plants, animals, First Nations people on the local Smoke River Reserve, and settler inhabitants of the town of Samaritan Bay were killed (King 2014, 48, 51, 105, 142, 159, 248, 403–27). After becoming fully aware that he killed his sister and her family, who lived on the reserve, Gabriel begins a deep biographical reflection, realizing that he "had given up on most forms of intimacy long ago, had replaced them with research. . . . His world was a world of facts, of equations, of numbers. His family's world was made up of connections and emotions" (King 2014, 184). Asked about his occupation, he answers "I destroy worlds" (King 2014, 168). Gabriel's mourning moves beyond the human. As a scientist, he gradually understands his complicity in humans' and more-than-humans' deaths and his ethical responsibility (see King 2014, 171–2). He self-critically remembers that as a young man he wanted to "work on something that matters," only to go astray into social isolation and the Western mainstream opinion that "what matters is profit" (King 2014, 205–6). In his shock about the consequences, Gabriel helplessly tries to compensate for his ecological trauma by writing the names and dates of countless toxic and nuclear spills and environmental disasters of the twentieth century on the walls and furniture of his home (King 2014, 22–5, 38, 60, 62, 167). Eventually, he vanishes from his high-paid position at Domidion without leaving a note (King 2014, 20–1, 87–91) and reemerges at the very spot of the Ruin in coastal British Columbia. Clutching a hand drum and a photo of a girl and a baby (his sister and nephew), he climbs the Apostles, a rock formation in the tide. Singing and drumming, Gabriel waits for the tidal flood to devour him. His suicide attempt fails, and he is mysteriously

rescued by some Sea People (King 2014, 3–10) and finds company in Indigenous painter Mara Reid (see King 2014, 31–8, 73–4), a strolling dog called Soldier, and two white settler inhabitants, the mentally impaired boy Sonny and the flamboyant character Nicholas Crisp. These characters had all suffered from the Ruin but returned as soon as the worst toxics were gone, in desperate love for their coastal homes. With *The Back of the Turtle* being a "multi-storied novel" (Sandilands 2018, 284) with intricate episodic and narrative structures (see Gruber 2012, 5; Nischik 2012, 35), the characters' stories are not at all presented chronologically but simultaneously, interspersed with analepses that complicate linear tracking of events. In rapid episodic changes, they are intertwined and interwoven in multiple ways with episodic glimpses in the everyday personal and professional life of Gabriel's former boss, Domidion's jaded, dulled, white-collar CEO Dorian Asher, and his cold assistant, Winter Lee. Thus, the narrated time of the novel becomes a cyclical phenomenon.

In Lunde's *Blå*, two storylines alternate chapter by chapter, locally and temporally set in different surroundings, and, except for regular informative analepses, linearly told in chronological order.[3] On the one hand, there is the storyline of the Norwegian environmentalist and journalist Signe Hauger, who sails the oceans in her boat *Blå* [Blue]. As a teenager and young adult, Signe had been fighting in vain against the building of a hydroelectric power facility at Søsterfossene [Sister Waterfalls], the draining of Lake Eide, the damming and flooding of the River Breio, and the relocation of people in her home communities of Ringfjord and Eide in the fjords of Norway (Lunde 2017, 209–10). On hiking tours, her father (also an environmental journalist) sensitized Signe for feeling ecological grief and explained to her that the eventual building of the power facility meant an ecocide for all the species that relied on the Breio's ecosystem and habitat (Lunde 2017, 7–9, 77–84). Signe's parents divorced and her mother married the wealthy CEO of the Ringfallene hydropower company (Lunde 2017, 171–6, 312). Relocated local farmers were convinced that hydroelectricity brings more opportunities than harm to the communities. When Magnus, Signe's fiancé, lied to her about his enthusiasm for the power project and Signe understood that his environmental activism had not been sincere (Lunde 2017, 189,

3. All four texts of Lunde's tetralogy are composed of two or more alternating, linearly told storylines with some analepses. While first-person narrators tell the storylines in *Bienes historie*, *Blå*, and *Przewalskis hest* (Lunde 2015, 2017, 2019b), Lunde applies a third-person narrator frequently changing to internal focalizations with indirect thought reports in *Drømmen om et tre*, where only the final chapter is narrated from a first-person narrator by the character Tao (Lunde 2022).

192–3, 207–20, 257–9, 305, 309–20), she experiences anticipatory ecological trauma, realizing that the fjord area is her home and confessing that "Jeg har aldri følt meg så hjemme noe sted som der oppe, og jeg håpet det ville vare evig" (Lunde 2017, 255) ["I have never felt as much at home anywhere as I did up there and I hoped it would last forever" (Lunde 2019a, 273)], at the same time foreseeing a grim future: "snart skulle alt ta slutt, sammen med resten av livet mitt, slik jeg kjente det" (Lunde 2017, 255) ["soon it would all come to an end, along with the rest of my life as I knew it" (Lunde 2019a, 274)]. Signe faces "grief associated with anticipated future ecological losses" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 276), meaning "anticipatory grief for ecological changes that had not yet happened," a grief that "develops over time, with knowledge of what could come based both on already-experienced changes . . . and projected changes" (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018, 278). She responds with emotionally cold, uncompromising environmental radicalization and ideological ecocentrism, rejecting all human company. Despising everyone who is to betray nature, Signe harshly tries to convert people's environmental views. She aborts her unborn baby, detesting Magnus, the liar, and is disgusted at the prospect of giving birth to a child in a world without a future (Lunde 2017, 327–32). Eventually, she leaves Ringfjord for good, living her life alone as a profoundly misanthropic environmental journalist and activist on her boat. As an elder, she returns to her home community in 2017 to secretly steal boxes filled with ice from the melting local Blåfonna [Blue Glacier] that were packed to be brought overseas. The ice was meant to serve as exclusive Norwegian glacier ice cubes for drinks in luxurious restaurants (Lunde 2017, 37, 42–3, 59–64).[4] While he was the CEO of Ringfallene hydropower company, Magnus permitted the glacier's exploitation. With the ice, Signe sails to France, where Magnus has been living since his retirement. She confronts him with the results of his exploitational acts (Lunde 2017, 64, 355–60).

On the other hand, there is a second storyline in *Blå*: The story of climate refugee David and his six-year-old daughter, Lou, set in 2041. David lost his wife, Anna, and their son, August, when they fled from an extensive fire in their hometown Argelès in southern France. He is suffering from perpetual survivor's guilt because he had insisted they stay in Argelès as long as possible. When the family was running from the inferno, David barely saved his and Lou's life (Lunde 2017, 296–303). Following David and Lou, readers understand that Signe was right with her anticipatory grief, regarding not

4. Lunde took the debate about ice extraction from the already melting Svartisen glacier as a model. Ice exploitation of Svartisen glacier by the Svaice company and export of ice cubes to Dubai and Singapore was stopped by the Meløy municipality in May 2019 (see Vik 2019; NRK 2020).

only her own life but also the generations to come. Like all people from the geographic region that had once been the southern parts of the now broken European Union, David, Lou, and their fellow refugees desperately try to save their lives in the face of high temperatures, wildfires, wars about water, fights and rivalries in the refugee camps, drought and life-threatening water shortage (Lunde 2017, 164–5, 199–202, 242). David's increasingly desolated and comfortless mental stage is an obvious result of the climate crisis.

Linda Haverty Rugg coined the term "displacement" for the refusal of guilt for ecological crimes in Scandinavian ecocrime fiction (Rugg 2017, 597). Exemplified by Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (1992; *Smilla's Sense of Snow* [1993]), and Kerstin Ekman's *Händelser vid vatten* (1993; *Blackwater* [1996]) and the television series *Broen/Bron* (2011–2018; *The Bridge*) and *Okkupert* (2015–2020; *Occupied*), Rugg points out a specific Nordic relationship to nature, which along with sustainable use of nature is considered a decisive factor for restoring the well-being and happiness of Scandinavians. Like Høeg's and Ekman's novels, *Blå* and the other books of the climate tetralogy rapidly became international bestsellers. Unlike Høeg and Ekman, Lunde neither installs Indigenous characters nor implies Indigenous people's assumed privileged relation to nature (see Rugg 2017, 611). Instead, the tetralogy comprises characters framed in Western modes of thinking,[5] neither familiar with nor interested in Indigenous worldviews

5. This applies for all characters of the climate tetralogy: No Indigenous characters and worldviews, epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies of respect, reciprocity, relationality, circularity, and balance (see Posey 1998; Wilson 2008; Sinclair 2013) are presented or discussed. The only context in which Indigenous people, specifically Sámi, are mentioned is the collection and display of so-called exotic animals and people at shows and in museums in the Western world of the nineteenth century. Neither Sámi nor other Indigenous peoples are given a voice to speak for themselves but are described from a hierarchical view by an outsider to Sámi culture (Lunde 2019b, 417–21). This exclusion is remarkable. Lunde provocatively exposes Western neocolonial and exclusionary practices. Also, in all four books, humans are centered as the masters or managers of more-than-humans and other species, for example, bees (Lunde 2015), river mussels (Lunde 2017), Przewalski's horses (Lunde 2019b), or fruits and vegetables in a greenhouse (Lunde 2022). The characters Tao, William, and George (Lunde 2015); Signe and David (Lunde 2017); Eva, Karin, and Mikhail (Lunde 2019b); and Tommy, and Tao (Lunde 2022) appear as hierarchically superior beings who respectively manage, pollinate, harvest, catch, protect, conserve, breed, collect, or butcher animal or vegetal more-than-humans. More-than-humans are depicted as unable to take care of themselves (for Przewalski's horses, see Lunde 2019b; for plants growing to expand beyond the greenhouse, see Lunde 2022, 55). In Drömmen om et tre, Lunde takes up the issue of respect for all living beings, but satirizes it, for example, by having ill-mannered children disrespectfully imitate a respectful speech of thanks from Svalbard's Sysselmaster on Christmas Eve in a culture

and knowledges. *Blå* focuses on these characters' dealing with environmental disasters, especially the suppression of recognizing complicity in environmental destruction. The above-mentioned corpus examined by Rugg belongs predominantly to the genre of Nordic noir. Rugg identifies a specific type of Scandinavian guilt in ecological crimes, which is dealt with through strategies of displacement. While I agree that specific Nordic aspects are noteworthy, I argue that they are also embedded in the overall Western worldview of capitalist societies. In this respect, Scandinavian literature cannot claim a special position in Western literature, but confirms a Western worldview (that is for the most part unaware of Indigenous worldviews) in a specific Scandinavian way. Rugg also emphasizes that in the Scandinavian texts and films she analyzes, a strong urge to free oneself from the guilt or complicity in ecological crimes becomes apparent (Rugg 2017, 597–98). This can be understood as seeking a kind of absolution. In much the same way, Sissel Furuseth analyzes *Blå* from an exclusive Western viewpoint and concludes that Lunde's novels fulfill the requirements of "dystopi med lysning" (Furuseth 2019) [dystopia with light] and "befolkes av handlekraftige karakterer som gestalter en konstruktiv form for miljøaktivisme" (Furuseth 2019) [are populated by energetic characters who create a constructive form of environmental activism]. When taking into account Indigenous paradigms as a basis of analysis, one comes to the opposite conclusion.

The characters in *Blå* disclaim blame, deceive themselves (like David, who thought he could escape the bitter reality that his wife and son are no longer alive; Lunde 2017, 296), and lie to their apparent bearers of hope, the children, about the true catastrophic extent of the ecological crises. David and Marguerite lie to Lou to protect her from and to gloss over the harsh reality, and Signe's parents lie to her to shield her from the grim fights between opponents and supporters of the hydropower facility (Lunde 2017, 243, 317–8, 325). Despite a deeply felt grief, Signe repudiates guilt and throws herself

otherwise depicted as nonreligious and nonspiritual (Lunde 2022, 96). In this way, Lunde creates a high degree of ambivalence and uncertainty and shows how difficult it is for descendants from Western-oriented systems to establish a new culture of reciprocity and sincere and truthful relationships with all animal, vegetal, and mineral beings. Lunde does not install narrative perspectives that could represent a more-than-human view. In the climate tetralogy, the equality of humans and more-than-humans is based on the fact that all are subject to the laws of nature, for example, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer's law of the survival of the fittest and the most adaptable or, in the case of vegetal more-than-humans, Carl von Linné's taxonomy and Gregor Mendel's laws of genetic inheritance (see Lunde 2019b, 527; Lunde 2022, 59 et passim). Throughout the tetralogy, Lunde maintains an anthropocentric perspective, setting disoriented humans at the center. For different analytical approaches and results, see Moldovan (2021).

into environmental activism that borders on ecoterrorism, dispersing blame for environmental crimes to humanity at large (for this kind of dispersal see also Rugg 2017, 601–3). Signe is not a caring ally of nature and does not perceive nature as an equal partner, but as a threatened and hierarchically subordinated protégé who needs her patronizing help. Her attitude is biocentric and therefore problematic because she "repeat[s] the pattern of the other centrisms by grounding value in a nonnegotiable moral absolute thus leaving the door open to the temptations of eco-fascism and eco-terrorism. The logic of domination reenters the picture with the emergence of a moral absolute" (Brown 2014, 156). Signe's ex-fiancé Magnus stylizes himself as a victim of his own need for security, both materially and financially, and apologetically appeals for understanding, to some extent disavowing being more responsible than others for climate change and exploitation. Similarly, climate refugee David succumbs to self-pity rather than acknowledging his complicity, with the novel highlighting his hopeless situation and helplessness (for the disavowal of ecocrimes, see Rugg 2017, 607–10).

While in *Blå* the reinstatement of anthropocentrism results first and foremost in humans being the victims (Rugg 2017, 612), *The Back of the Turtle* draws a different picture. By introducing the jovial character Nicholas Crisp, King shows that no one can escape from guilt, grief, and feelings. If not worked through very carefully and consciously, emotions always come back like a boomerang. King displays the displacement of ecological crime as highly dysfunctional by narrative fade-ins of the character Dorian Asher and an ominous tanker called *Anguis* full of toxic waste that sails the oceans forever, occasionally showing up at some coast or on the open sea (King 2014, 18–20). Despite this inescapability, humans do not have to lead a life in depression—hopeless, helpless, unable to act, and without any joy. Rather, it is about each human being becoming aware of their accountability and co-responsibility, recognizing the scope of their possible actions, learning from past failures, and doing everything to become a better human being and create a better future (see the conversation between Mara and Gabriel, King 2014, 501). Facing this hard reality means transforming and thereby contributing to transforming human-Earth relations.

Transculturally comparing Lunde's novel with King's supports the assumption that the displacement strategies found by Rugg are rather self-delusionary misplacement strategies. In a similar way, Furuseth's interpretation is revealed as culturally monologic: It does not promote a transcultural and eco-cosmopolitan dialogue but maintains the primacy of culturally dominant views. The Western world causes most of the ecological crises, while Indigenous people were among the first to suffer from them. Since ecological crises affect all humans now, literary analyses on this topic are

only fair when done in a transcultural comparative way and from an eco-cosmopolitan point of view (Heise 2013; Zapf 2016a, 2016b). Only in this way will all receive an equal voice in the discourses. Although displacement may superficially appear pleasant and comfortable, in the long term it prevents humans from choosing a more difficult but also more sustainable path.

Novels as Ecological Elegies

Blå and *The Back of the Turtle* qualify as ecological elegies, a term not defining a specific literary genre but a general aesthetic-artistic approach to dealing with ecological grief. "Ecological elegies mourn past losses such as habitat destruction and species extinction" (Barr 2017, 197). While elegies in Western literary studies were conceptualized as "resolving mourning and finding consolation" (Barr 2017, 192), ecological elegies with their "perpetual, 'ethical' mourning" disclose "resolvable and consolatory mourning" as illusory, "impossible" and even "unethical" due to the enormity of the losses (Barr 2017, 192; for similarities to interwar elegies, see Rae 2007a, 2007b; Barr 2017, 191). Elegy is regarded as "a quintessential mode of ecological writing" (Morton 2010, 251). What is more, ecological elegy reverses traditional Western elegy because nature and environment are not a reverberating backdrop anymore; they do not resonate and console human sorrow but are foregrounded as they are to be mourned (Morton 2010, 253). Acknowledging humans' deep attachment and affective relationship to nature and environment (Morton 2010, 253) leads to "*ecological thought* . . . the thinking of the interconnectedness of all beings, in the most profound possible way" (Morton 2010, 257, emphasis in original). From this intimacy, the insight arises that humans *are* nature and environment (Morton 2010, 253, 257)—as much as humans are the emissions, greenhouse gases, and exploitational acts (Trexler 2015, 5). Consequently, ecological elegy mourns nothing less than humanity's self-destruction, the loss of humanity itself. Therefore, "ecological discourse holds out the possibility of mourning without end. Ecological elegy, then, must provide forms that undermine a sense of closure" (Morton 2010, 253).

King's novel ends openly concerning story as well as discourse and narrative composition. Readers do not get to know whether Gabriel and the other characters eventually succeed in overcoming their sorrow, but witness that all the characters start evolving new attitudes in small steps, commented on by the flamboyant character Nicholas Crisp, who seems to enjoy the never-ending process of transformation, jubilantly exclaiming "Aeterna Sustineo," "I endure eternal! [*sic*]" (King 2014, 219, 246; see also Rhoads 2019, 130). This feature renders *The Back of the Turtle* a strange,

paradoxical humorous ecological elegy. Concerning the discourse, a covert, heterodiegetic, and quite humorous narrator often applies internal focalization, inviting readers to co-experience the characters' actions, thoughts, and feelings. The five focalizers are identical with Gabriel, Mara, Sonny, Dorian, and Crisp, a feature facilitating unmediated access to the characters' minds.[6] This narrative technique eliminates any sense of closure and gives readers the impression of taking in a variety of situational perspectives and evolving more or less continuously with the characters and their thoughts.

Often ecological elegies are proleptic elegies that organize time in an unusual future perfect way (Morton 2010, 254; Barr 2017, 197; for the related concept of proleptic inter-war elegies cf. also Rae 2007a, 2007b) and "warn against the kind of absences we will be mourning in the future should present losses be allowed to continue" (Barr 2017, 197). This resonates with Signe's anticipatory grief in *Blå*. What is more, David and Lou's story functions as a proleptic elegy to Signe and Magnus's story, picturing a dystopic future in 2041. David and Lou's inconsolability manifests in an endless, precarious journey from France to

> landene i nord, hvor regnet ikke bare kom en sjelden gang i løpet av de kalde månedene, men også om våren og sommeren. Hvor langvarig tørke ikke fantes. Men hvor det snarere var motsatt, hvor regnet var en plage, kom i stormer. Hvor elver flomma over, demninger brast, brått og brutalt. (Lunde 2017, 27)

> the countries in the north, where the rain didn't just come once in a great while during the cold months, but also in the spring and summer. Where long-term drought didn't exist. But where instead the opposite was true: the rain was an affliction, arriving in storms. Where rivers flooded over and dams burst, abruptly and brutally. (Lunde 2019a, 24–5)

It is any geographical location and their own fading lives that David and Lou mourn in an elegiac way. From a place devastated by drought, they head for a place destroyed by flooding. In *Blå*, readers will not get to know whether they reach a turning point in the downward spiral and make it to a better life.[7] The two storylines meet when David and Lou end up in Magnus's

6. The characters also interact with Soldier, the dog, who often gets near the narrative position of a focalizer (King 2014, 92–100).

7. In the third novel, *Przewalskis hest*, readers meet Lou, that is, Louise, again, learn about her odyssey to Norway and the hard life she is leading, and understand that neither David nor Marguerite survived (Lunde 2019b, 329–42). As an adult, Lou is restless and always on the move in a desperate search for a place she might be able to lead a better life without being permanently threatened by the global climate crisis. Readers learn in Drömmen om et tre that Louise ended up on Svalbard, where she became part of a new

long-deserted pensioner's house in France. The characters accidentally come across the boat *Blå* beside a dried-out channel, find the boxes with melted glacier ice, and anxiously count the days, hoping for rain before they exhaust the water supplies (Lunde 2017, 352–3). Furuseth interprets the discovery of the boat *Blå* and the water containers as an intergenerational gift, identifying a "kløktig komponert gaveøkonomi" (Furuseth 2019) [smart composed gift economy]. She emphasizes that every action—like Signe's sailing trip with the stolen ice containers—can have an unexpected and hopeful meaning. From an Indigenous perspective, there is no wise, mindful, planned action that would be conscious of the preceding or the following generations in Lunde's novel. The presumed gift of the containers with melted ice prolongs David's, Lou's, and their fellow refugee Marguerite's lives and thereby their suffering and anxiety, but it does not save them in a reciprocal, respectful, and relational way. David and Lou's desperate need and desire for a secure water supply is never met in *Blå*, nor is their hope for permanent shelter. To them, Earth has lost its quality as humanity's home. Instead, they are perpetually haunted by their traumatizing past and by the present results of human actions misguided by profit. The mourning elegiac tone is pronounced when David thinks about his daughter's future and admits: "Jeg kan kjempe for livet. Jeg kan kjempe for henne. Men det hjelper ikke når det ikke lenger finnes noe sted å leve" (Lunde 2017, 199–200) ["I can fight for my life. I can fight for her. But it makes no difference when there's no longer anywhere to live" (Lunde 2019a, 210)]. Only death will end their fight, and death is their disturbing prospect. As the stories are told through David's and Signe's eyes, readers participate through two homodiegetic first-person narrators with internal focalization in the characters' thoughts, memories, and feelings that never broaden in view but keep revolving around the same sorrowful issues in a vicious circle.[8] Also, in *Blå*, any sense of closure is avoided, but in a different way than in *The Back of the Turtle*. None of Lunde's characters evolve—all remain static and helpless, literally trapped in a whirl of dead ends.

Any "psychoanalytic model of compensatory, resolvable mourning" (Barr 2017, 193) is inadequate in the light of irrecoverable ecological losses. In the

community with her son and his children. Even there she tries to live out her restlessness, her urge to move and run away (Lunde 2022, 61–64).

8. Unlike King, Lunde hardly differentiates the writing style and mode of narration between the individual first-person narrators in *Bienes historie*, *Blå*, and *Przewalskis hest*. In *Bienes historie* the first-person narrators are Tao, William, and George; in Blå Signe and David; in Przewalskis hest Eva, Isa, Mikhail, Karin, Louise, and Mathias. As a result, all of Lunde's focalizers seem similar and hardly distinct from one another. The same applies to *Drømmen om et tre* and the rapidly changing focalizations chosen there, which underscore the characters' disorientation and their blending into each other. The characters of the climate tetralogy are not as distinctively created as the ones of *The Back of the Turtle*.

case of ecological grief, there is no getting over, and no chance of replacing the mourned and lost with the attachment to a substitute (Barr 2017, 192; see also Rae 2007a, 15–8; Cunsolo and Landman 2017, 9–11). It would be more than absurd to replace freshwater and a healthy, livable environment on Earth with anything at all. No substitutes for climate change-related losses exist because they leave one deprived of the basis of existence.

In *Blå*, the characters are caught in their revolving thoughts. Similarly, *The Back of the Turtle* portrays the "tragic, silent scream," "the melancholic cry of modern elegy" because "wilderness, bodies of water, entire species . . . [become] . . . a lacunal absence to be perpetually mourned" (Barr 2017, 195). Again, the mode of the portrayal is different because the characters find other-than-verbal ways to express emotions as they feel muted, struggling for solutions given the scale of the disaster. Indigenous local artist Mara Reid, for instance, finds some relief in painting. She installs her paintings of the killed residents at every house on the reserve (King 2014, 127, 189, 208, 247–8, 261, 278–82). The mentally impaired Sonny, unable to speak coherently, always wields a hammer that reflects his mood and, when fighting off the *Anguis*, alludes to the Old Norse god Þórr fighting giants (King 2014, 501–2; see also Rhoads 2019; for action-guiding myths see below). Soldier, the dog, shows doggish, often out-of-place behavior that opens up for speculative interpretations (e.g., King 2014, 143). Gabriel sits naked on a rock formation in the tide, singing Native American songs and drumming on a hand drum (King 2014, 4–5). Unspeakable emotions are expressed through obscure, performative actions. Lunde does not equip the characters in *Blå* with similar possibilities.

Because closure is absent, both texts can also be read as resistant ecological elegies (Barr 2017, 195). In the act of permanent mourning, human-induced ecocide remains unsettled. To readers, this kind of elegizing means upholding a continuous mindful state of ecological mourning, too. Likewise, bereft of its generic consolatory function, elegy may be disfigured as a literary genre but gets new power (Barr 2017, 194) as an ethical-aesthetic mode, because its original work of mourning is transformed into "an ethical salvo against complacency and forgetting" (Barr 2017, 195). Contemporary ecological elegy deliberately resists consolation, defies oblivion, sustains anger, and permanently reopens wounds of loss (Barr 2017, 193, referring to Ramazani 1994, x–xi).

As these novels show, the elegiac mode of ecological grief and trauma is inextricably intertwined with the present era of the Anthropocene in which human activities have become obvious as an irreversible, global geophysical

force. Their impact on climate and environment is evident and noticeable (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007).[9]

Representing and Challenging the Elegiac Anthropocene

In both novels, certain characters represent the Anthropocene, the current period defined by the concepts of anthropocentrism and anthropogenic impact on the natural environment. These characters' design is a stage set and in some way a driving force for the texts. Lunde's novel conveys the idea that the Anthropocene and its underlying attitudes are destructive and must be fiercely fought to regain a balanced relationship between humans and more-than-humans.[10] The plot in *Blå* concentrates on how to tear down the anthropocenic stage set and disempower characters who have anthropocenic impacts. However, no sustainable alternative is provided, and the fight remains without a profoundly positive effect for recovering the balance between humans and the environment, resulting in an unbridgeable abyss.[11] The exhausting antagonism is performed in an ethically empty space.[12]

9. In this article, I use "Anthropocene" first to depict a new geochronological epoch in which humans have irreversibly influenced and altered the Earth. A phased beginning of the Anthropocene can be assumed because human influences and their irreversible effects have gradually increased over the past centuries (Subramanian 2019). Second, I use the term to gesture toward worldviews, attitudes, behavior, and modes of thinking and acting that lead to this geological era. In this respect, the geochronological epoch of the Anthropocene is perceived as a product of human history that parallels and intersects other "-cenes" or human histories (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016). Undoubtedly, the term "Anthropocene" also implies components of intellectual and cultural history, because a geochronological Anthropocene is inseparably associated with and reciprocally related to the human ideas and actions that brought about it. Conversely, intellectual, cultural, and artistic creations and their fruitful interpretations can act as ecological forces that influence the development of Earth and the species inhabiting it, as I show here. With this, I emphasize the "co-evolution" (Zapf 2016a, 4) that lies at the heart of environmental humanities.

10. The term "Anthropocene" is explicitly used in *Drømmen om et tre* (Lunde 2022, 38).

11. In the climate tetralogy, Lunde depicts humans' fighting for more-than-humans. In *Blå*, for example, Signe's father fights for the river mussels and the preservation of their habitat; in *Przewalskis hest*, veterinarian Karin fights for the reintroduction of Przewalski's horses in Mongolia. All these fights are not an expression of a harmoniously balanced and reciprocal relationship between the beings on Earth. Rather, these fights for other species place humans at the center and deny equal agency and reciprocity to humans and more-than-humans alike.

12. See Moldovan, who arrives at a different conclusion using a new materialist and post-speciesist approach. Accordingly, "The traditional anthropocentric perspective that

By contrast, King's text not only plays in front of the anthropocenic stage set but also plays with it, actively engaging with the characters that represent it. In some way, King personifies and animates the Anthropocene, attributing to it the capability of self-reflection and change. He takes away its horror, rejects the idea of an insurmountable abyss, and by means of the characters shows the vulnerability and need for help that come with an Anthropocene way of life. To varying degrees, the characters embodying the Anthropocene have the capacity for dynamically developing themselves and their identities. It is widely accepted that anthropocenic concepts are related to an egoic identity, a master self, and human-nature separation that derive from "insidious Cartesian dualism" (Tucker 2014, 90), as well as other Western European ideas and discourses, Christianity, and the Enlightenment (Lutz 2018). For anthropocentrism, "value and meaning are centered primarily on the human" (Mickey 2014, 159), supporting "manipulative and exploitative actions of humans toward the environment" (Mickey 2014, 160). At the same time, the Anthropocene "exposes the fallacy of human exceptionalism, reminding us of the entangled nature of human and nonhuman agency, and the vast . . . *non*human proportions of human action" (Johns-Putra 2018, 26, emphasis in original). The Anthropocene also facilitates the emergence of ecological grief as well as the aesthetic of ecological elegy as explained above.

The comparison of Lunde's and King's novels reveals a difference: playing with versus playing against the Anthropocene. In *Blå*, the environmentalists' activism against Søsterfossene's exploitation by the Ringfallene hydropower company is countered by arguments for improved local development and money earned by producing electric energy: "Bedre skole, nytt gamlehjem, svømmebasseng" (Lunde 2017, 159) ["Better schools, a new old folks' home, a swimming pool" (Lunde 2019a, 166)], "strøm, . . . arbeidsplasser . . . liv i bygda" (Lunde 2017, 84) ["electricity, . . . jobs, . . . life to the village" (Lunde 2019a, 86)] are seen as promising and profit-maximizing results. In addition, supporters praise the hydroelectric plant's fascinating technology (Lunde 2017, 172–3). Eventually, even former protesters and relocated people look forward to further earnings from the shares they hold in the company (Lunde 2017, 310–2). These well-known arguments that accompany and justify irreversible damage to the environment function as an anthropocenic frame. Similarly, readers easily understand Signe's disappointment, when her fiancé Magnus, who just finished his studies as an engineer, talks to her about his plans:

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promotes the superiority of human beings over non-human animals is undermined and eroded" in Lunde's novels (Moldovan 2021, 61).

> Svein har ordnet jobb til meg, Signe . . . Moren din og Svein vil ansette meg i Ringfallene, de trenger ingeniører . . . lønnen er mye bedre enn jeg kan håpe på noe annet sted, du trenger ikke engang jobbe, vi vil få råd til å ta oss av barnet, du kan skrive, seile, sånn som du elsker, vi kan bo her, og det vil bli et godt liv, Signe. Et godt liv. (Lunde 2017, 319)

> Svein has arranged a job for me, Signe . . . Your mother and Svein want to hire me at Ringfallene, they need engineers . . . The salary is much better than what I could hope for anywhere else. You won't need to work, we'll be able to afford to take care of the child, you can write, sail, do the things you love, we can live here and it will be a good life, Signe. A good life. (Lunde 2019a, 342)

Magnus's identity is unmasked as anthropocentric, his sense of self as egoic (Beyer 2014, 128) because he "seem[s] driven on by the logic of 'progress', writing off all compassion for its victims as mere sentimentality" (Kohák 2003, 19). In addition, he seems to support gender inequality as he imagines Signe as an unemployed, leisurely homemaker and mother.[13] Magnus is convinced of humans' domination over more-than-humans, emphasizing human exemptionalism and exceptionalism and claiming that "vi klarer å forestille oss en fremtid, sørge for oss selv, våre barn, vår alderdom" (Lunde 2017, 213) ["we are able to imagine a future, provide for ourselves, our children, our old age" (Lunde 2019a, 225)]. The antagonistic fight escalates: Signe accuses Magnus of having a habitual egoic sense of self, for wishing an "alminnelig . . . liv, . . . hvor det ikke var for skarpe kanter, ikke for mye støy, ikke for mye av alt som var meg" (Lunde 2017, 320) ["ordinary . . . life . . . where there weren't too many sharp edges, not too much noise, too much of everything that was me" (Lunde 2019, 343)]. Magnus's self never changes throughout the story; his identity proves to be static. When he and Signe meet again in France as elderly people, he is still convinced that she lives in her own world of environmentalism (Lunde 2017, 355). In a jovial and arrogant way, Magnus states halfheartedly and somewhat melodramatically: "Jeg syns ingenting av det du noensinne har foretatt deg, har vært latterlig" (Lunde 2017, 356) ["I don't think anything you've ever done has been ridiculous" (Lunde 2019a, 380)]. To Signe's complaints about her activism being too weak to prevent people from exploiting and destroying the planet, Magnus responds patronizingly: "Du vet ikke hvordan verden ville vært hvis du lot være" (Lunde 2017, 356) ["You don't know how the world would have been if you hadn't tried" (Lunde 2019a, 380)]. Asked by Signe why he allowed the exploitation of ice from the Blåfonna glacier, Magnus states

13. Gender roles are discussed in all four of Lunde's novels. For an analysis of gender roles in *Bienes historie*, see Hennig (2019).

that he hasn't changed at all over many decades but has been interested in short-term profit to uphold a seemingly stable economy and a secure life. "Jeg er den jeg alltid har vært. Fordi strømprisene har gått ned. Fordi det var en mulighet til økte intekter. Til fortsatt trygghet. Og det hjelper vel ikke at jeg sier at jeg har stanset utvinningen nå. For skaden er allerede skjedd" (Lunde 2017, 357) ["I am the same person I've always been. Because the price of electricity has gone down. Because it was a chance to increase revenues. A chance for continued security. And it probably doesn't make any difference when I say that I've stopped the excavation now. Because the damage is already done" (Lunde 2019a, 381–2)]. He doesn't feel any remorse for his behavior. Signe and Magnus are tied to each other by a lifelong love-hate relationship, fighting each other partly openly, partly through subtle taunts or underhand actions. For Signe, Magnus is the human incarnation of her otherwise abstract enemy, the Anthropocene.

Although Magnus is drawn rather unsympathetically in contrast to Signe, Signe's self also didn't change. Admittedly, she never pursued anthropogenic, profit-oriented exploitation, but she became an uncompromising environmental activist and misanthropist, unable to bridge the gap of the Cartesian dichotomy herself, and she recognizes that as well (Lunde 2017, 357). Signe offers no alternative to anthropocentrism and its Anthropocene results, no nurturing, sustainable attitude to live with. At least she is able to transform her ecological mourning into "justified anger" "about the oppression of non-human others" (Kretz 2017, 275, 276). In contrast to Gabriel in *The Back of the Turtle*, she is not able to transform it into "justified hope" (Kretz 2017, 277) and effective actions because of her lack of emotional solidarity with other people. Emotional solidarity would be crucial for turning justified anger into positivity (Kretz 2017, 283–4). Aloofness makes Signe lead a lonely life, bitterly fighting anyone and anything connected with or related to the Anthropocene. This way of life does not work out, as readers learn in the subsequent story of David and Lou. Two and a half decades later, David is still convinced that new desalination technologies like the one used in his workplace, could help prevent more crises by making freshwater out of the ocean in large amounts, despite drought, heat, and water shortages caused by irreversible climate change (Lunde 2017, 87–9, 245). Even in his hopeless situation, with death by dehydration a daily companion, David is incorrigible in his technological fantasies, naïvely "trusting in a kind of glorious high-tech absolution" (Beyer 2014, 197) and still adhering to the belief in an anthropocentric way of life prevalent in the Anthropocene.[14] Although

14. Olsen argues that Lunde in *Bienes Historie* and *Przewalskis hest* is open to critically reflected discourse by negotiating two opposing notions: On the one hand, the notion

readers might feel compassion because of his sufferings as a climate refugee, he is depicted as pursuing a mistaken line of thought.

Beyer notes about our current anthropocentric life that "we like to think of ourselves as being somehow higher up in the order of things, as a special case in the universe. . . . We have been granted dominion over nature, our task: to dominate and control it, to subordinate it, and to otherwise feel free to use it for our own purposes" (Beyer 2014, 199). In *The Back of the Turtle*, the agribusiness's name, Domidion, is a fusion of the words "dominion" meaning "rulership" and the Ancient Greek ἴδιον (idion, neuter nominative), meaning "something private, strange, peculiar, and pertaining to oneself." Domidion encapsulates the meaning of the Anthropocene in a single neologism. However, the Anthropocene holds a multitude of sufferings: People with an anthropocentric attitude as well as an egoic and isolated identity unconsciously strive for distraction from their isolation: "We consume addictively—food, drink, drugs, things, fame, status, and power—seeking comfort from the wells that can never really satisfy us" (Beyer 2014, 130). Domidion's CEO, Dorian Asher, suffers from Anthropocene torments and takes his mind off the continuous toxic spills and ecological disasters caused by his business by numbing himself. He considers buying luxurious homes (King 2014, 12, 77–8), enjoys meals at expensive restaurants (King 2014, 78–82, 213–5), buys himself to a costly watch (King 2014, 193), and convinces himself that accidental releases of biochemical mutated organisms, bacteria, and viruses sold by Domidion to other companies are "certainly not the corporation's responsibility" (King 2014, 18). Dorian is heavily occupied with "the development of the habitual egoic self and its way of functioning and defending itself . . . caught up in what" he takes "to be a serious game of psychological survival" (Beyer 2014, 128). Unimpressed, Dorian matter-of-factly insists that climate change "wasn't a surprise. It had been predicted, the matter studied until the public had gotten tired of being told what was

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that "human stewardship, control and knowledge provide ways of averting ecological collapse," on the other hand that "human mastery and environmental stewardship" are undermined by "animal bio-resistance and human vulnerability in the face of ecological collapse" (Olsen 2022, 157). Furuseth does not criticize the failures of Western education and science or the sufferings these paradigms have caused but says that Lunde's texts "formidler både eksplisitt og implisitt stor tiltro til opplysning og vitenskap" (Furuseth 2019) [convey both explicitly and implicitly strong confidence in enlightenment and science]. I argue that Lunde's novels demonstrate how uncritical adherence to science, progress, profit, and the linear mode of Western thinking that goes with them lead to relationships between humans and more-than-humans that are marked by imbalance. In Lunde's novels, humans remain hierarchically higher than more-than-humans by virtue of scientific knowledge.

going to happen. Yet now that it was happening, everyone was indignant and annoyed" (King 2014, 11). When establishing a public-private collaboration with the humanities of a Toronto university, Dorian waves off any environmental protests and academic concerns about agribusiness (King 2014, 75, 79–81). What is more, the human-nature separation caused by "our predominantly anthropocentric identity . . . promotes an antagonism with the rest of nature and engenders paranoid fearfulness, and it inclines us toward an often-misguided posture of insensitive domination and control" (Beyer 2014, 131). Dorian's paranoid fearfulness becomes obvious: Suffering from stress and anxiety, he hypochondriacally observes his health and anxiously monitors Domidion's media reputation and its influence on the share price and the stock market to the letter because the media continue to prominently highlight the company's ongoing massive toxic spills and environmental disasters (King 2014, 16, 39–40, 43, 86, 112–5, 128–35, 174–7, 283–90, 370–1, 383–5, 395–400, 410). He tries to get control over every aspect of his personal, private, and professional life, thereby acting in a highly technocratic, abstract business environment far from nature, bereaving himself of his natural human existence and relationships with humans and more-than-humans. As environments and human consciousness shape each other, human-created Anthropocene environments generate a human consciousness steadily more restricted to a "feedback system [that] is closing in on itself" (Puhakka 2014, 14) and therefore very different from a human consciousness open to and engaged with other-than-human created natural environments. Finnish American philosopher Kaisa Puhakka also points out that the developments in the twenty-first century go far beyond self-conscious suffering of alienation: They reach a chronic state of distractedness, desensitization, and sensory shutdown referred to as dullardism (Puhakka 2014, 15, referring for the term "dullardism" to Berman 2000). In *The Back of the Turtle*, Dorian suffers from not only dullardism but also "hyper-reflexivity,"

> the tendency of consciousness to reflect upon itself and again reflect upon the reflecting self, thus generating an endless hall of mirrors. When hyper-reflexivity is exercised in a high-tech environment of human-made, often intelligent, devices, the hall of mirrors is greatly aggravated by the ever-tightening mutual feedback loop between mind and environment that allows little room for a relationship with a genuine "other." (Puhakka 2014, 15)

Gregory Bateson states that nonhuman others and ecosystems always are a part of humans' wider eco-mental system. Therefore, if nature, Earth, or any ecosystem is polluted or destroyed, that is, "driven insane," this "insanity is incorporated in the larger system of *your* [humans'] thought

and experience" (Bateson 2000 [1972], 492, emphasis in original). Or, as Norbert Jung puts it: "Außenweltzerstörung schafft Innenweltzerstörung" (Jung 2011b, 21, referring to youth psychologist Petri 1992) [Destruction of the external physical world creates destruction of the internal psychic world]. In an environment like this, "the self . . . objectifies itself and becomes 'other' to itself, . . . removed . . . from the original 'other' that was nature" (Puhakka 2014, 15). The alienated, fragmented, and confused self does not have a genuine concern for itself, nature, anyone, or anything else (Puhakka 2014, 19). This applies directly to Dorian, who is mainly interacting with computers, technical equipment, cars, and costly items. Caught in a vicious circle of growing fear, increasing alienation from nature, and progressive careless exploitation (Beyer 2014, 203–4), Dorian deprives himself "of communion with the nonhuman transcendent and the humility that such an encounter entails" (Tucker 2014, 90). Strangely enough, his suffering not only functions as an Anthropocene stage set but also evokes the readers' sympathy. Dorian is not entirely static: He is lured out of his self-produced anthropocentric isolation, again and again, be it through uncontrolled, spontaneous, and funny associative verbal utterances, the surprising encounter with a homeless fortune teller one night on a Toronto street, or the turtle that suddenly disappeared from the aquarium in the Domidion entrance hall (King 2014, 12, 25, 111, 115, 179, 469–71). When he finds himself caught up in a café among environmentalists, he even demonstrates against Domidion to stay incognito. Afterward, he is not recognized by the young woman at the counter of the Domidion entrance (King 2014, 274–7, 285). These experiences deeply shake Dorian's enormous need for security and total control. Readers might even wish for more of these moments for him. By contrast, the grace of deep shock and the subsequent small steps of self-reflection is never granted to any of the characters in *Blå*.

King installs one anthropocenic fixed point: The only entirely static character in *The Back of the Turtle* is Dorian's assistant, Winter Lee. "Ready to go to work" at any time (King 2014, 15), she leads an existence beyond any emotional involvement and ethical concern for humans and more-than-human others. Winter awaits orders unquestioningly, for example, organizing the dumping of Domidion-made toxic waste by either monitoring its secretive, deliberate release into the ocean or arranging payment for poor countries to take it (King 2014, 18–9). Even Dorian "imagined that Winter could well be the prototype for artificial intelligence" (King 2014, 21), equipped with the "ability to move through the physical world as though it didn't exist" (King 2014, 40). Emotionally detached from her environment, she functions properly, trained in polite conversation, seemingly without any need for socializing or real dialogues, a perfectly styled and at any occasion

appropriately clothed container for a monologic, cold, objective master self (for this attitude, see also Brown 2014, 151, referring to Plumwood 1993 and Brown 2010, 92). Serving as a static prop, Winter sparks even Dorian's bemusement and sparse self-reflection. In contrast to the Anthropocene characters in *Blå* who act on their own decisions, Winter does not act by herself but receives instructions and carries out commands. King does not tell Winter's story but lays out the vague possibility of change even for her: If her manager's attitude and his orders change, Winter's actions might, too.

As already hinted at earlier, the three related paradigms of ecophilosophy, ecophenomenology, and ecopsychology also challenge the Anthropocene and anthropocentric worldviews. "Ecological philosophers . . . argue that dualist constructions of nature not only mischaracterize our experience but also lead to a value-free conception of nature that offers the easy justification of treating the natural world as nothing more than mere resources for human beings" (Brown 2014, 146). In Western ecophilosophical tradition, returning to Husserlian things themselves (Brown 2003, 5) as well as subjectively experiencing nature by literally coming to our senses are regarded as key points of ecophenomenology (Castrillón 2014, 3; see also Tucker 2014, 91–2). Setting aside theories, assumptions, traditions, discourses, and interpretations, phenomenology is interested in "prereflective experiences" and the "lifeworld of direct and immediate experience that we may begin to find an experiential grounding of an ecological ethics [within]" (Brown 2003, 10–1, 6). Ecopsychology examines the fractured human-nature relationship, humans' separation from nature, and aims at "elucidating, describing and deepening the relationship between humans and nature" (Castrillón 2014, 2) because "nature is seen as a source of psychic sustenance" (Puhakka 2014, 21). As the experience of nature through our bodily senses is central to ecopsychology, an ecophenomenological orientation underlies many ecopsychological approaches (Castrillón 2014, 1–2). Ecopsychology supports relationality that honors and values humans, nature, and human-nature reciprocity and informs an ecophilosophical perspective, from which a new ethics can arise. In the following, I show the extent to which ideas of ecophilosophy, ecophenomenology, and ecopsychology can be found in the two novels.

From her earliest years, Signe is interested in the phenomenology of nature, the detailed functioning of ecosystems, and the mutual relations of various species in a habitat (Lunde 2017, 78–9). Her phenomenological experience and her relation to nature are rough from the start. Without any questions, she accepts the forces of nature as laws humans are subjected to, denying human hierarchy over nature: "Naturen før eller siden ødelegger alt menneskelig" (Lunde 2017, 106) ["nature sooner or later destroys everything

man-made" (Lunde 2019a, 110)]. When there is a heavy storm, Signe simply accepts its life-threatening forces, experiencing it with all her senses wide awake (Lunde 2017, 129–37). However, because she identifies anyone and anything that threatens the balance between the forces of nature as hostile and evil, she misanthropically and mistrustfully refuses to send out a mayday: "jeg trenger faen ikke hjelp av en oljerigg, av bevisstløse oljearbeidere, . . . jeg trenger ikke hjelp av dem, ikke av noen" (Lunde 136–7) ["I don't need help from any damn oil rig, from unwoke oilworkers, . . . I don't need their help, don't need anyone's help" (Lunde 2019a, 143)]. From her early years on Signe actively provoked arguments between her parents: She hates them because her mother took the side of the power plant, and in her opinion, her father was too weak to prevent it from being built. She maintains a kind of connection to the more-than-human world and talks about the melting glacier as if it were a terminally ill and dying friend (Lunde 2017, 13). Her ecopsychological insight into human-nature relations is deep and she gives nature a similar status of freedom as humans claim for themselves:

> Men vi sørger jo egentlig bare for oss selv . . . og våre barn. I høyden barnebarn. De som kommer etter, glemmer vi. Samtidig er vi i stand til å gjøre endringer som påvirker hundre generasjonsledd fremover, som ødelegger for alle som kommer etter oss. . . . Vi eier ikke naturen . . . Akkurat som den ikke eier oss. (Lunde 2017, 214–5)

> But we are really only providing for ourselves . . . and our children. At the very most, our grandchildren. We forget about those who will come after them. While we are also capable of making changes that will have an impact on hundreds of future generations, that will destroy things for everyone who comes after us . . . We don't own nature . . . Just like it doesn't own us. (Lunde 2019a, 226–7)

A resentful nonconformist, Signe often judges human character. "Sånne som Magnus, de tror alt er enkelt, at bare man kjøper stort nok plaster, vil såret gro, men det hjelper ikke så lenge det ikke er renset" (Lunde 2017, 135–6) ["People like Magnus, they think everything is simple, that if you just buy a big enough Band-Aid, the wound will heal, but if it hasn't been cleaned it's no use" (Lunde 2019a, 142)]. Comprehending the ecopsychological consequences of the Anthropocene, she says: "barnebarna . . . det er deres fremtid han [i.e., Magnus] stjeler, det er deres fremtid hele hans generasjon stjeler . . . hele min generasjon har stjålet" (Lunde 2017, 193) ["grandchildren . . . it's their future he [i.e., Magnus] is stealing. It is their future his entire generation is stealing . . . my entire generation has stolen" (Lunde 2019a, 202–3)]. But she never admits guilt by confessing "I have stolen" (see Rugg 2017 and my explanations about guilt above). Signe is

proud, a free spirit. Her freedom, which she bitterly and egoistically defends, is the most valuable thing to her and seems to prevent her from engaging more deeply in an ecophilosophical ethics based on ecophenomenology and ecopsychology. She maintains the division of the world into good and evil, perceiving herself as being on the good side and fighting the evil rest. From the foregoing analyses, it has already become clear that she never succeeds in seeing through this illusion.

Gabriel in *The Back of the Turtle* takes his point of departure in challenging the Anthropocene and developing an ecophenomenological relationship to humans as well as more-than-humans when getting a letter from an anonymous sender with a photograph of his sister Lilly and his nephew (King 2014, 401; as it turns out, the letter was sent by Nicholas Crisp, settler inhabitant of Samaritan Bay). As a teenager and a brilliant student, Gabriel moved to Minnesota, together with his father, an Anishinaabe and Canadian police officer who took part in an international police exchange program. Gabriel's mother and his younger sister, Lilly, stayed in Lethbridge, Alberta. With his father, Gabriel went on the powwow trail, learning traditional Indigenous songs and drumming, establishing relationships with other Indigenous people (King 2014, 117–21). When his father was fatally shot in an operation, Gabriel did not join his mother and sister in Canada but headed for Stanford University (King 2014, 194, 214–7). With growing academic skills, he became increasingly socially isolated. Equipped with an old leather jacket he got somewhere along the powwow trail and a hand drum, he remembers his Indigenous identity after the Ruin and begins to sing traditional songs again. While Gabriel, like Signe, leads a lonely life, he does not displace guilt by blaming anyone else except himself, trying to end his own life several times (King 2014, 474–5). Instead, he perceives himself as being on the side of evil, desperately trying to leave this terrible path, knowing that in life or death "I'm still responsible" (King 2014, 501). The more Gabriel builds a phenomenological relation to nature and the few people who returned to the Smoke River Reserve and Samaritan Bay, the deeper he goes into the process of self-reflection and mourning, resulting in several suicide attempts and culminating in comparing himself and his acute scientific knowledge to nuclear weapons, the intertextual reference serving as one of many signs in the direction of action-guiding myths:

> "Now I am become Death, . . . the destroyer of worlds. . . . Oppenheimer," said Gabriel, "I know the phrase because of Robert Oppenheimer. . . . July 16, 1945, August 6, 1945, and August 9, 1945. . . . Years later, Oppenheimer was asked how he felt about the tests, and he quoted that passage from the Bhagavad-Gita." (King 2014, 62)

Step by step, Gabriel tentatively develops caring relationships and thereby enters a process of transformation. He summons the desperate courage of facing his "outlaw emotions" (Kretz 2017, 260) and becomes an outlaw himself: the scientist, the Oppenheimer who is conscious of his intellectual capacity to completely destroy Earth. Musing about "life as a circle," he admits "that his life had [not] had any such shape. . . . Not a circle. Not a straight line. Something less precise. Something broken" (King 2014, 472). He confesses to Mara that his invention of GreenSweep caused numerous deaths (King 2014, 454). He marginalizes himself in addition to living at the margins his whole life, without any sustaining social relations. Very different from Signe, he is utterly sensitized and self-reflective concerning his faults. First, Gabriel searches for his mistakes and any vague possibility to become a better human being. In his biographical reflections, he becomes mindfully aware of British Columbia's coastal nature and other beings, humans and more-than-humans: when he sits naked on the beach after a failed attempt to end his life; when he wanders down to Kali Creek and finds twin children's skulls; when he watches thousands of turtles come back to the beach to lay their eggs and thinks he recognizes the turtle from the Domidion aquarium among them (King 2014, 31–32, 402–6; 487, 492–3). Whereas Signe's behavior reminds one of the displacement strategies mentioned above (Rugg 2017) which makes it impossible for her to engage in deeper self-reflection and thus a more intimate and mindful relationship with more-than-humans, Gabriel slowly finds an approach to the perception of all-relatedness.

To sum up: While Lunde plays against the Anthropocene, King plays with it. In King's novel, the Anthropocene is a vibrant flowerbed for action-guiding myths to flourish. Characters like Magnus, David, and Winter, as well as the narratives they are embedded in, function as the Anthropocene stage set in front of which the ecophilosophical, ecophenomenological, and ecopsychological drama of the ecological elegy unfolds. With Signe and Magnus, Lunde creates two characters that promote the idea that the Anthropocene is a morally bad, evil choice and has to be fought until its mode of operation, as well as the underlying world views and attitudes, are dissolved. King rejects the idea of categorical good and evil as opposite principles. Dorian adheres to the Anthropocene and its mindset but longs for something he is not able to name. He is in the process of transition, an insight that also applies to Gabriel, although Gabriel is more conscious about being guilty and consequently pursues this path more actively than Dorian. Lunde uses the Anthropocene for warning and shocking didacticism, raising a fairly black-and-white issue. With the help of Signe, *Blå* conveys the message of fighting the Anthropocene and its supporters. The characters' ecophenomenological

interactions and ecopsychological insights in *Blå* are not deep enough to bring about long-term change by fostering a new ecophilosophy, a new attitude, and a new ethics. For King, the Anthropocene and its human personifications are animate beings to involve, respectfully interact with, learn from, compassionately recognize their needs and weaknesses, and encourage them to become better beings. In *The Back of the Turtle*, the Anthropocene is given a chance to transform. In much the same way, King's characters have more profound, ecophenomenological experiences, reflect (or, in Dorian's case, are forced to reflect) more deeply on ecopsychological issues and on being separate from other humans and more-than-humans. Therefore, the characters in *The Back of the Turtle* are led toward a new ecophilosophy, a new ethics, and new ecological thought.

Resolving the Dualism: Symbiocene and All-Relatedness

Timothy Morton defines "ecological thought" as "the thinking of the interconnectedness of all beings, in the most profound possible way" (Morton 2010, 257). Aiming in the same direction, Brown points out that "the core identity of an ecological self is not anchored by some single atemporal essence but is an ongoing flux. . . . The ecological self is a dialogical self" (Brown 2014, 152). Consequently, Gabriel and the other characters in *The Back of the Turtle* are dynamic and seem to be on a journey to becoming an ecological self (except for Winter Lee who only has the vague prospect of starting the journey of becoming one).

Glenn Albrecht emphasizes that literature and film, functioning as "sensitive barometers of a society's deep anxieties . . . portray . . . an apocalyptic turn in human-nature relationships" (Albrecht 2016, 12–3). In his view, the longer the Anthropocene lasts, the more likely it is that we humans "suffer catastrophic failure as a species here on earth . . . [and] take thousands, perhaps millions, of other species down with us" (Albrecht 2016, 12). He identifies negative trends in the Anthropocene that corrupted originally positively connoted concepts like sustainability and resilience and even turned democracy into an oligarchy and plutocracy. From this he concludes that "capitalism is now run by what can be technically called corruption," a state he calls "corrumpalism" (Albrecht 2016, 13), examples of which we can also see in Magnus, Winter Lee, and Dorian. Similar to the initially quoted Lutz (2018), Albrecht thoroughly questions our givens and works on building a "new foundation . . . around a new meme" in "an act of positive creation" (Albrecht 2016, 13), part of which is the cut with current concepts and systems and the creation of unencumbered neologisms that can be connoted with entirely new content. Albrecht ushers humankind to enter a new era

called the Symbiocene, that "affirms the interconnectedness of life and all living things" (Albrecht 2016, 13) and is

> characterized by human intelligence that replicates the symbiotic and mutually reinforcing life-reproducing forms and processes found in living systems . . . [including] full recyclability of all inputs and outputs, the elimination of toxic waste in all aspects of human enterprise, safe and socially just renewable energy, and full and harmonious integration of human industry and technology with physical and living systems at all scale. (Albrecht 2016, 14)

Building on the Western world's "sophisticated understanding of how the natural world works," Albrecht envisions even a new political system he calls sumbiocracy, derived from "the Greek *sumbiosis*, from *sumbioun*, to live together, from *sumbios*, living together" and defines it as "political rule or governance committed to the types and totality of mutually beneficial or benign relationships in a given socio-biological system at all scales" (Albrecht 2016, 15). To capture the deeper sense of the fluidity of an ecological self and human-nature relationships and to emphasize the likewise fluid interactions between all beings, Albrecht suggests that humans live in the symbionment (rather than in the environment) where "ecosystem health and ethical goodness can be seen as mutually supportive" (Albrecht 2017, 303; see also Albrecht 2001).

Albrecht's globally applicable suggestion that the "awareness of human culpability at a global scale is . . . a relatively new experience in the history of human mourning" (Albrecht 2017, 296) again supports my view that displacement of guilt in ecological disasters is a common but outdating feature of Western societies, rather than a particular one of Scandinavia or Scandinavian eco-crime fiction (Rugg 2017). Understanding that we as humans "often [are] the primary agents of our own disasters" (Albrecht 2017, 296) requires a new mindset and a novel attitude, although it has not yet arrived equally in planetary literatures dealing with ecocide and climate change, let alone in the real world. However, if one compares Albrecht's highly theoretical and new concept of the Symbiocene with the traditional worldviews of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, particularly the Anishinaabeg cosmogonic narrative of Skywoman landing on the back of a turtle in a vast ocean, and with the concept of all-my-relations, one discovers striking parallels. Then one becomes aware of why the motif of self-confessing guilt and striving to become a better human is more likely found in Indigenous than in Western-inspired literature.

With reference to other Indigenous scholars, Opaskwayak Cree researcher Shawn Wilson emphasizes the importance of relationships and relationality

in an Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology as well as the inseparability of identity, that is, the act of defining oneself, and relationality.

> Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of. (Wilson 2008, 80, emphasis in original)

In Western ecopsychological terms, a relational self becomes aware of "the nature out there being me" (Beyer 2014, 136). Even Western paradigms (like the one of the Symbiocene) that seem to be close to Indigenous ones have a "common thread of thinking" opposed to Indigenous worldviews. They see "knowledge . . . as being *individual* in nature. This is vastly different from the Indigenous paradigm, where knowledge is seen as belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge" (Wilson 2008, 38, emphasis in original). That is, living reciprocal relationality means being it, not only knowing about it, feeling it, or wishing for it.

In Lunde's novel, Signe and Magnus adhere to a Western paradigm because they both see their knowledge as individual, their own unchangeable way of thinking—and they both claim to be right.[15] None of them learned from the surrounding nature or defined themselves as being nature's relations, with all dynamic and fluent consequences. They lack the humility to do so. Signe is not able to experience all-relatedness. Instead, she is caught in a centrism opposed to but eventually as centric and dangerous as anthropocentrism:

> Whereas anthropocentric and egocentric orientations tend to support manipulative and exploitative actions of humans toward the environment, non-anthropocentric orientations such as eco- and biocentrism can harbor misanthropy and social irresponsibility, marginalizing the struggles of humans who face problems like poverty, sexism, racism, disenfranchisement, and displacement. (Mickey 2014, 160)

Following a strict rational protocol, Signe shrugs off intimate, caring, identifying, and spiritual relationships with humans, more-than-humans, and Earth itself as weak and sentimental (Lunde 2017, 195). In an insatiable

15. In all four books of the climate tetralogy, Lunde emphasizes the paramount importance of scientific knowledge acquisition and science and even portrays scientific discourses in past and future centuries. This indicates that the texts are strongly oriented and situated in Western paradigms and cultural values.

hunger for freedom under the law of nature, she refuses any reciprocal relationships. In this, she is unable to resolve the human/more-than-human dualism and does not engage in dialogue to overcome her anthropocentric attitude. David fails to establish an intimate relationship with nature in time. In his weakened and life-threatening state as a climate refugee, he can no longer invest emotional or intellectual energy to establish new, deep relationships. The first-person internal focalizations of Lunde's novel underscore this.

In King's novel, Nicholas Crisp is the character to open up new ways of learning and reciprocal engagement between humans and more-than-humans. He never succumbs to adversities but looks for the knowledge the cosmos, history, story, and situational context offer to all beings involved. In contrast to Lunde, King opens the narrative to cosmic knowledge. Multifocalized perspectives, recurring sentences spoken by different characters in various situations, and drama-like scenes dynamize the novel and stress the perception of all-relatedness. Magic-realistic and surreal happenings—as the *Anguis* and its crew, the turtle from the Domidion aquarium in Toronto suddenly showing up at the Pacific coast, whose mysterious riddles readers cannot entirely resolve—give an idea of the unfathomable dimensions of cosmic knowledge and the relationship between humans and more-than-humans.

Gabriel can develop a new self-identity because he gets into a dialogue with the land and the creatures he destroyed as well as with the people deeply affected by the Ruin. He is open to the spirits of the people he killed. All characters, even Dorian, are coaxed into dialogue to the extent that they can tolerate. Norbert Jung underpins the necessity of relationship building with his statement about a self-reflective attitude: "Wissen und Erfahrung sind nicht Selbstzweck, sondern führen über kritische Selbstreflexion zu Weisheit, wenn sie in den Dienst von Mitgefühl, verstehender Kommunikation und Gemeinschaftlichkeit gestellt werden . . . Weisheit bedarf . . . kollektiver sozialer Erfahrung . . . im direkten Dialog" (Jung 2011b, 12) [Knowledge and experience are not ends in themselves, but lead via critical self-reflection to wisdom, if they serve compassion, understanding communication, and community . . . wisdom requires . . . collective social experience . . . in direct dialogue].

Gabriel is not excluded from relationships and community, not marked as the evil one because of the mass extinction he caused. Rather, the other characters encourage him to hold himself accountable and do something about his responsibilities. They understand him being a part of the cosmic relational web, part of all-relatedness, and part of everyone's identity (King 2014, 501). In Samaritan Bay, Gabriel finds a community. Unified in their

sorrow and their outlaw emotions, the people of Samaritan Bay—the place name being a further allusion to an action-guiding myth in a polymythological universe, where biblical legends also get their proper place—gain strength for action because "outlaw emotions can be epistemically fruitful in that they help develop a perspective that is critical of dominant [i.e., Western, anthropocentric] perspectives" (Kretz 2017, 270). Finding a new ethical way for human-Earth relations is not about finding the culprit and excluding the real evil; rather, death, mourning, guilt, joy, and happiness are all part of all-one's-relations, that is, one's identity. Everything plays a role in one's story of becoming a human being on Earth. In this lies an important difference to the characters in *Blå* as well as to Scandinavian ecocrime fiction at large, and it resonates with Lutz's (2018) initially quoted statement that the entire Western world is in dire need to learn from Indigenous knowledges about all-relatedness.

Action-Guiding Myths: Zero-Mythological versus Polymythological Universe

Jung defines culture as "Weisheit der Gemeinschaft" (Jung 2011b, 9) [wisdom of community]: All individual members of a community communicate their experiences and knowledge so that gradually a grand narrative evolves. This grand narrative functions as an action-guiding myth of a communicative community, a culture that creates collective wisdom including nature, all aspects of life, and all individuals, rather than excluding some of them (Jung 2011b, 12–3). All individuals—human as well as more-than-human—through their actions, needs, behavior, stories, and so on are invited to contribute to this creative process. It is probably the most challenging task of our time to create such an action-guiding myth regarding human-Earth relations and foster a self-reflexive, dynamic grand narrative of the emergence of a novel planetary, eco-cosmopolitan community that is transculturally inspired by the ethics of human-Earth reciprocity and survival. According to Jung, there are no comprehensive, grand narratives in modern Western culture (Jung 2011b, referring to Postman 1999). Instead, substitutes like objectivity, linear progress, and individual autonomy function as modern Western societies' myths. Moreover, humanity as a whole seems to lack action-guiding, planetary narratives to meet environmental disasters, ecological grief, and climate change (Jung 2011b, 22–4). A narrative is the most important thing before humans move to action. Because environmental disasters and climate change are planetary issues, an action-guiding myth cannot originate from one culture; instead, it needs to be a transculturally created, eco-cosmopolitan, grand narrative with contributions from a wide

variety (or even all) possible cultures, a planetary creation, that leads humanity not only in a theorized Symbiocene but also into real-life all-relatedness. An action-guiding myth can only be told and realized together. It is a never-ending story, fluid, evolving, and dynamic, created by the relational activities of all humans and more-than-humans. In what follows, I discuss the question of whether the two novels provide such a grand narrative and an action-guiding myth.

In Lunde's novel, paradoxically the absence of an action-guiding myth makes the need for it painfully present in both storylines. While in the first storyline the environmental protesters and Signe as a misanthropic outsider fail to create a strong community narrative from the start, the second storyline does have a distant reminiscence of a grand narrative, but it also fails. As the novel draws to a close, David makes a weak attempt to tell a rain story and play a rain game with his daughter, Lou.

> "Det er morgen, og du ligger liksom og sover", sa jeg. . . . "Duskregn bare ligger i lufta. . . . Du våkner helt av deg selv. . . . Så går du ned til meg. . . . Der ute kjenner vi hvordan duskregnet ligger i lufta. . . . Vi ser hvordan det perler på bladene. . . . Etter hvert blir det tettere . . . Dråpene blir tyngre. Og vi kan høre dem. . . . Husker du lyden av regn?" . . . Jeg trommet med fingrene mot nattbordet, en forsiktig tapping. . . . "Tungt øsregn. . . . Dråpene faller tettere og tettere. Blir tyngre og større. . . . Det plasker. Spruter. Drypper. Renner." (Lunde 2017, 363–4)

> "It's morning and you're in bed and asleep," I [i.e., David] said. . . . "Drizzle just hangs in the air. . . . You wake up all on your own. . . . Then you go downstairs to see me. . . . Outside we can feel how there is a drizzle in the air. . . . We see how droplets of moisture form on the leaves. . . . Gradually it rains harder. . . . The drops get bigger. And we can hear them. . . . Do you remember the sound of rain?" . . . I drummed my fingertips against the night table, a gentle tapping. . . . "A heavy downpour. . . . The rain pours down harder and harder. The drops become larger and heavier. . . . It splashes. Gushes. Drips. Pours." (Lunde 2019a, 387–9)

David and Lou desperately long for a healing moment, a turning point, a guiding story, and an action plan. Instead of reaching out in time to all of humanity and getting others involved in an action-guiding myth, telling this fictional rain story becomes their lonely, imaginary escape from real life. Lunde's novel ends with the empty hope of an escapist rain story that David and Lou invent to comfort themselves. In their fantasy, they imagine a world where rain is back. But it is uncertain if this story has the power of coming true, as it does not even have the power of motivating them, let alone that of a grand narrative to guide their next steps. Lunde demonstrates the

isolation and helplessness of Western societies' individuals who have lost their sense of relationality in a desperate search for an ethical way of living and failed to reach out to each other in time beyond cultural, social, racial, ethnic, species, or any other boundaries. They are about to miss the last possible turning point for creating a planetary action-guiding myth. Lunde's novel presents a zero-mythological universe that is thought-provoking and unsparingly confronts readers rooted in Western-oriented systems with the hopelessness of previous thoughts and actions.[16]

In contrast, King creates a transcultural story and a polymythological universe from which new action-guiding myths are dawning. The multifocalized stories braid around the Anishinaabeg creation story of the Woman Who Fell from the Sky, in short also known as Skywoman. Already with the title *The Back of the Turtle*, King evokes an association with this creation story. According to this story, Skywoman lived in the Land of Happy Spirits far above the Earth which was then entirely covered with water. She was pregnant. Her father pulled out the giant tree, leaving a hole in the sky. When she leaned too far, she fell through the hole. Birds helped her land gently on a giant turtle's back in the waters. The animals dived to get some mud to place on turtle's back to make it a place suitable for living, but only muskrat was successful: Muskrat dived deeper than all the other animals and when her dead body floated on the water, she had mud in her paws. The animals placed the mud on turtle's back, and Skywoman lived on Turtle Island, later called North America by Western settlers. Skywoman gave birth to twins, the Good Spirit and the Evil Spirit, one right-handed and one left-handed. From them, all humankind originated (Tehanetorens 1976, 15–22; see also Kimmerer 2013, 3–10).

> The right-handed twin makes the mountains nice and low with easy slopes, so the walking about is pleasant, and he smooths out valleys, so all are broad and flat. The left-handed twin comes along and grabs those mountains with his hands and pulls them into the sky, chips off the sides, makes them craggy and inhospitable. He stomps on the valleys, so some be deep and narrow and trapped by the terrain. . . . The right-handed twin makes medicinal plants what will cure all manner of malady. The left-handed twin fixes it so some of those plants will cure while some will kill. . . . And on they went. The right-handed twin creating a world of ease and convenience, the left-handed twin complicating the parts, until the world were complete and perfect. (King 2014, 236)

16. For a different, more positive reading of the rain fantasy in the framework of conflict dialogues, sustainability dilemmas, and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, see Furuseth (2021).

The Anishinaabeg creation story suggests that the world is only complete and perfect when there are action and reaction, creation and re-creation, making and re-making. There is no absolute, paradisiacal perfection but continuous co-creative work and transformation. A perfect Garden of Eden would not be a paradise but a standstill that would eliminate any need for interaction. "The purpose of this legend . . . was to point out to the listener that there is something good in the worst of us, and something evil in the best of us—no person is perfect. No man [*sic*] has the right to judge another—that right is for the Great Spirit alone," Tehanetorens states (1976, 22). Anishinaabe scholar James Niigonwedom Sinclair (Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair) refers to the story of the Great Flood as an "Anishinaabeg story of the re-creation of the earth" (Sinclair 2013, 132). According to one version of the story, the Great Spirit decided to remake the world after "human beings," often in complicity with the trickster Nanabush, had become "unable to ethically and responsibly handle the gifts . . . of Gizhe Manido" (Sinclair 2013, 132; see also 131–5).[17]

17. A European-trained literary scholar rooted in Western academic systems and well versed in Christian doctrine may find an association of a boat in the novel with Noah's Ark of the Old Testament (Genesis 6–9) legitimate. However, it does not transcend the literary scholar's or critic's cultural embeddedness toward eco-cosmopolitanism or provide plausible evidence that Lunde activates a biblical narrative and relies on the essentiality of religious myths. For example, the story of the Skywoman has also been compared to the one of the Creation of man and woman and the Fall in the biblical story of creation (Genesis 1–3). Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer summarizes the comparison of the descendants of Skywoman and the children of Eve from her perspective: "On one side of the world were people whose relationship with the living world was shaped by Skywoman, who created a garden for the well-being of all. On the other side was another woman with a garden and a tree. But for tasting its fruit, she was banished from the garden and the gates clanged shut behind her. . . . In order to eat, she was instructed to subdue the wilderness into which she was cast. Same species, same earth, different stories. . . . Cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are. . . . One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven. And then they met—the offspring of Skywoman and the children of Eve—and the land around us bears the scars of that meeting" (Kimmerer 2013, 6–7). Two opposing concepts, stewardship versus subjugation, met each other. Reading the two creation stories in this way stimulates reflection, because it shows how exploitation based on a hierarchy of humans and more-than-humans is strongly connected to a Christian worldview. King contrasts the creation stories when Gabriel suggests that the Skywoman story is similar to the story of the Garden of Eden: "'Nothing like it,' roared Crisp. 'For in that story we starts with a gated estate and are thrown into suburbia, because we preferred knowledge to ignorance. In

As I have already alluded to, Furuseth (2019) counters the allegation that Scandinavian climate fiction is predominantly hopeless and dystopian. She interprets David and Lou's discovery of the boat *Blå* and the water containers as an intergenerational gift, claiming that every action can have an unexpected and hopeful meaning in the future. However, the presumed gift only prolongs David and Lou's hopeless lives; it neither helps them maintain a balanced, reciprocal, and respectful relationship with the more-than-human world in any equal and sustainable way. Furuseth also tries to make an association with an Old Testament story and claims "romanen aktiverer den bibelske fortellingen om Noas ark. Hos Lunde kommer riktignok ikke regnet som en straff for menneskenes ondskap, slik det gjør i 1. Mosebok, men som en potensiell redning" (Furuseth 2019) [the novel activates the biblical story of Noah's Ark. In Lunde's novel, however, rain does not come as a punishment to humanity's malice like in the first book of Moses, but as a potential rescue]. This potential rescue—in the sense of reciprocal balance—neither happens nor is fulfilled in the novel. The sequels reveal that only Lou survived and led a restless life. Furuseth's wish is that a rescue takes place, and this probably expresses a Western-oriented literary scholar's yearning for salvation and paradise as it is present in Judeo-Christian cultures. While Furuseth tries to wave off dystopia with the help of a European-trained Judeo-Christian concept, a transcultural comparison with Indigenous literatures offers possibilities for widening the horizons of Scandinavian and Western-oriented literary studies. As scholars trained in Western paradigms, we can become aware that we and our literature are stuck in a certain horizon of thought and in limited interpretative paradigms. I argue that analyses such as Furuseth's support the view that the Western world is in dire need of Indigenous knowledges, also in literary criticism. It is transcultural, comparative, eco-cosmopolitan reading and analyzing that inspires self-reflection and encourages scholars to question interpretations that seem sufficient and logical in Western paradigms.

The Anishinaabeg Skywoman story is about working hard to keep balance rather than overcoming all evil forever and striving for paradise. As Darrell Addison Posey pointed out, equilibrium is a central concept in most Indigenous cosmogonies and he calls the "link between life, land and society the 'Sacred Balance'" (Posey 1998, 93, with reference to Suzuki 1999). David Suzuki appeals for "finding a new story" (Suzuki 1999, 72) that includes us

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our story, we begins with an empty acreage, and, together, the woman, the animals, and the twins creates a paradise what gets pissed away'" (2014, 236). The incorrect grammar is a distinctive feature of Crisp's way of speaking.

all. The Skywoman story is for all to share and be part of, regardless of who they are and what they did.

For those who want to work on keeping the balance, *The Back of the Turtle* gives guidelines for how to collectively create a new guiding story. The novel is an example of a guiding story itself.

In one of the key scenes, Nicholas Crisp celebrates his birthday at Beatrice Hot Springs and summons the other characters to join him in bathing and enjoying food. Splashing in the wells, he tells the story of Skywoman and successfully invites everyone to contribute a part to the narrative, sparking a lively conversation (King 2014, 219–27, 231–7). When asked what the group had to do as survivors, Crisp answers, "finish our story . . . There ain't nothing to do but finish our story"—the story of Skywoman (King 2014, 227). In an internal focalized metatextual self-reflection, Crisp realizes his own and the other characters' place in the narrative as co-creators, convinced that everyone will fulfill the roles attributed to them in the narrative (see also Rhoads 2019, 129). It becomes clear that the Skywoman story grows to a grand narration and fuses with the novel. As Sean Rhoads (2019) has already mentioned, Crisp is much of a provocative trickster, similar to the Anishinaabe Nanabush or the Taos Pueblo Chiffoneti, and despite being a white man, has traits of a humorous and wise guiding Indigenous elder (Egerer 2020a). Compared to Sámi scholar Harald Gaski's definition, Crisp indeed embodies an Indigenous elder: He is very old and appears immortal or, according to his own statement, endures eternally (King 2014, 246). He approaches the problem of environmental disaster, ecological trauma, and rebuilding a new, better community methodologically by telling a story (that becomes the core part of a continuously spreading action-guiding myth), leaving the final interpretation of this story to his listeners (Gaski 2019, 259–60), and King leaves it to readers. It dawns on the characters that they are all (like Crisp), in fact, part of this narrative. Gaski proposes that the Indigenous elder's perspective be an Indigenous research method or a source of insights (Gaski 2019, 260). With the story of Skywoman, the character Crisp, using Indigenous methodologies like an elder to reach out beyond his or her own culture, offers "traditional knowledge, which is experience-based, and often holistic in its approach to Life, Land, and Spirituality" and thereby creates "a bridge between two different knowledge systems, where respect, reciprocity, and accountability are required from both sides in order to bring our common world forward" (Gaski 2019, 261).

Heise (2013) refers to a similar process when she introduces the idea of a transculturally open eco-cosmopolitanism. Paying due respect to Indigenous elders means not just seeing the stories they tell as mere tales but recognizing and embracing them as teachings from wise knowledge-bearers

(Gaski 2019, 263–4). Crisp functions as this wise knowledge-bearer, wielding powers that get the other characters into the circle of telling (and living) an action-guiding myth. He represents the turning point when transcultural, eco-cosmopolitan humanity—regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, and so on—become aware of their guilt, accountability, and responsibility toward Earth. Knowing his own role in shaping the future, Crisp makes sure that everyone else strives to fulfill their roles and contribute their share.

While a dramatically performed renarration of the Skywoman creation story is at the core of The Back of the Turtle, Rhoads draws up the full picture of the novel's polymythological universe and points out how "King alludes to a wide variety of mythological and supernatural characters, including a range of figures from Judeo-Christian teachings, Islam, Nordic lore, literature, East Asian traditions, Hinduism, and classical Greek and Roman mythology" (Rhoads 2019, 122). King fuses knowledge, beliefs, and experiences from many different cultures and "weaves an elaborate tapestry of a diverse yet unified community that must work together to confront an ecological catastrophe" (Rhoads 2019, 122). According to Rhoads, Crisp also has aspects of the Greek-Roman water god Neptune, the Judeo-Christian Adam, and the left-handed twin of the Skywoman story, incessantly disrupting the world order with a good dose of jovial humor, which resonates with Pan, a satyr, or a faun as well as Santa Claus and Satan (Rhoads 2019, 123, 126–7). Similarly, the Indigenous character Gabriel is related to Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions (Rhoads 2019, 127) by his name, as well as intensely engaged in the Skywoman story throughout the novel, realizing the evil inside him that caused the Ruin, convinced that "there was no salvation, no forgiveness, no hope for redemption" (King 2014, 138). He is desperately looking for the left-handed twin, the Evil Spirit inside himself and around him to confront this spirit, to get in dialogue with it, to get it included and tamed in his new community. To come closer to this, he visits Kali Creek, the site of the GreenSweep disaster, and is shocked by the piles of bones he finds in the canyon: "He hadn't intended this. Yet this is what he had done" (King 2014, 404). His discovery of two children's skulls at the polluted creek (King 2014, 404, 406) can be read as an allusion to the Skywoman twins. New hope might be drawn that both the Good and the Evil Spirits have perished, making space for something yet unknown, beyond dualism, neither entirely evil nor entirely good, something to be perpetually generated and created anew in a continuing act of balancing. Eventually, he finds the courage to confess his guilt in the death of Mara's family, his sister and nephew, and many others, hoping that Mara "might have found a reason to forgive him. Okay. Not forgive him. That would have been too much to expect. To understand. Maybe if he could take her through the intricacies of the story, she might understand.

Maybe the telling would allow *him* to understand" (King 2014, 455, emphasis in original). Mara asks him to leave, pointing out the low tide to climb the Apostles and wait for the spring tide to end his life. However, she reflects on her sending Gabriel to die. "He had destroyed a community, devastated an ecosystem, and what had been his reason? Science. . . . He hadn't wanted forgiveness, wasn't seeking absolution. He had wanted confirmation of his transgressions. He had sought out condemnation. Well, it wasn't going to be as easy as all that" (King 2014, 464–5). When the spring tide arrives, Mara rescues Gabriel from his suicide attempt: "You don't get to kill yourself. . . . I have questions. . . . And I want answers," she argues (King 2014, 474). In a short, crucial dialogue, King focuses on the reciprocity and responsibility for other living beings that each person's actions entail:

> "This is crazy," Gabriel wiped the salt spray out of his eyes. "I killed your mother. I killed your grandmother."
> "I know."
> "I killed my sister and my nephew." Gabriel's voice was a whisper now. "I killed them all."
> "Yes," said Mara. "You did."
> "I couldn't save any of them."
> "Maybe you can save yourself."
> "I don't want to save myself." . . .
> "All right," she said. "Then you can save me." (King 2014, 474–5)

In his overall argument, Rhoads suggests that King opens up transcultural understanding by quoting and evoking numerous legends and traditions, blending them into a new openness (Rhoads 2019). Even in light of environmental disasters, King seems to suggest that there are no culprits except every single one of us. Consequently, we are all equally responsible, we are equally good and equally evil. From this, a new planetary action-guiding myth and an eco-cosmopolitan community can arise—probably the only way to deal with the planetary dimension of ecological crises: as co-creative transcultural eco-cosmopolitans, we can face the task ahead and save each other (Heise 2013, 29; Rhoads 2019, 123–4).

In this sense, King's story offers an opportunity to completely rethink humans' attitude toward one another, toward all possible cultures, and toward all more-than-humans and Earth. This turn of an era, however, needs not only the novelistic characters' but all real humans' effort and careful attentiveness for the powerful defeat of lurking catastrophes like the *Anguis* (the ship loaded with toxic waste from Domidion, sighted at the most unlikely and farthest points on the world seas, forever sailing the oceans like the Flying Dutchman; its name means "snake" in Latin, also reminiscent of

the Old Norse *miðgarðsormr*). When Crisp reveals that he is a central part of this never-ending discourse by exclaiming "I endure eternal! [sic]" (King 2014, 246) at a liminal, otherworldly place in coastal British Columbia, the numinous powers underlying an action-guiding myth are disclosed. They seem to be key in the endeavor of changing the world for the better, in rescuing ourselves and Planet Earth.

Different from *Blå*, *The Back of the Turtle* gives readers guidelines for how to create action-guiding myths and is an example of a diversified and inclusive grand narrative:

> Although we live in a varied and contradictory global system of beliefs and traditions, King demonstrates that humanity must strive to reconcile our differences and come together to prevent the planet's environmental degradation. If the diverse people of the world can do so, like the heterogeneous community of Samaritan Bay in their shared efforts against 'The Ruin' and the *Anguis*, then there is yet hope. (Rhoads 2019, 139)

Conclusion: The Western World's Dire Need for Indigenous Knowledges

Ours is a time of lived erasure. We deal with transboundary pollution and planetary ecocide. Although the term "ecocide" is still not legally defined on a planetary scale and not yet accepted as the fifth crime against peace by the United Nations, we understand its scope and meaning very well.[18] Still, many of us are hesitant, we continue the displacement of collective guilt and fail to address planetary problems by accepting ecological grief and turning it into resistant mourning. Numerous opportunities for action go by idly. To create change, the Western world direly needs Indigenous knowledges.

In Lunde's apocalyptic and dystopian climate tetralogy, there is no prospect of lasting, bearing, mutually caring relationships and mindful interactions of all living beings. The novels promote Western paradigms and definitions of science and technology and present knowledge as created, acquired, and possessed by individuals. Inexorable laws of nature triumph over cultural, social, and ethical values. The human-nature duality is upheld. Lunde chooses to display the Western world's exclusionary,

18. For research on the history, meaning, and suggested future of the term "ecocide," see Gauger et al. (2013). For recent developments, see Independent Expert Panel (2021). On April 30, 2024, the European Union adopted the Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law, the world's hitherto strongest environmental law including ecocide (Official Journal of the European Union 2024). It applies to European Union member states.

self-centered attitude and its dire need for Indigenous knowledges by the absence of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. The climate tetralogy urges people in Western-oriented systems to engage in self-critical reflection. Hopelessness and despair of Western views, epistemologies, and ontologies in the books provide food for profound thought. Because of the absence of transculturality and eco-cosmopolitanism, I read the climate tetralogy as an implicit but urgent call to consider transcultural, eco-cosmopolitan, and real comparative discourses. *Blå* is a deeply disturbing, painful reading and provokes outcries to stop the things going on unless we want to destroy Earth and ourselves. Displaying the Western world's struggles, fights, helplessness, and vulnerability, the novel does not provide an action plan, and the characters seem to have reached a point of no return. They live without any future-oriented interaction and have no ideas of how to creatively deal with the situation to prevent the worst or bring about relieving change for a better future. With *Blå*—as well as the other three novels of the climate tetralogy—Lunde demands immediate attention and delivers a deterrent panorama of the long-term life-ruining results of humankind's current actions. Lunde's books represent the Western world and a desperate call to action in the face of looming environmental and climate catastrophes.

In contrast, King, the "self-proclaimed pessimist, disillusioned about humanity's potential to create a moral world . . . still writes and works in the fundamental hope of changing the world for the better, and his texts betray this underlying optimism" (Gruber 2012, 4). Created as a paradox that profoundly questions the supremacy of science over cultural traditions such as narrative creation and storytelling, *The Back of the Turtle* is built around the "Post hoc . . . ergo propter hoc" (King 2014, 4) logical fallacy, in which a causal connection is deduced from the chronological sequence of two events. Paradoxically, we are the causes of environmental disasters, but we are at least as much the causes of living and lived all-relatedness. *The Back of the Turtle* is a story of fulfillable hope, fostering relationship and reciprocity between humans and more-than-humans, as well as including nature and culture, natural and cultural environment. The unreservedly (self-)confident Crisp serves as an inspiring motivator to create an action-guiding myth. Even Gabriel and Dorian, people who are or were blinded by techno-capitalism and guided by profit, are thrown off their fixed course and start getting ideas on how to contribute to a planetary, action-guiding myth when they start self-reflection and walking the path of ecological grief and resistant mourning.

To develop a new ethics regarding the relationships between humans and more-than-humans first and foremost means to change our Western attitudes and mindsets. By listening carefully to all our relations, by mindfully

acknowledging their ways of living and their needs, we—Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike—should set out to create a grand narrative with new philosophies, new attitudes, new habits, new social, political, and spiritual capacities. From this source, new transcultural, eco-cosmopolitan, and interspecies communities can rise. Referring to Basil Johnston (2010), Sinclair points out that in an Anishinaabeg view, Earth is a constant teacher: "Beings around us . . . are not only inviting us to listen to, feel, read, smell, and touch their expressions but live alongside them in a relationship of mutual responsibility and reciprocity. They are inviting us into a living relationship through the stories we share with them" (Sinclair 2013,10). In the Western world, we are bound to retell these stories of relations if we are to survive, because "the truth about stories . . . is that that's all we are," as King puts it (quoted in Gruber 2012, 5). We create ourselves and the (cultural, social, political, environmental, etc.) world we live in with the help of stories that envision our futures. An "'ecological self-in-relation'" (Plumwood 1998, quoted in Brown 2014, 143) fosters a relational, reciprocal ethics of care and connection. Indigenous knowledges can help us develop a relational self, as Puhakka argues:

> Indigenous peoples who took their natural environment to be their sustaining mother and themselves of the same flesh as her showed the same care and concern for their environment as they did for themselves and their families. . . . By contrast, when separation is experienced, such a spontaneous action does not take place even when it may be held as a moral, ethical, or rational ideal. When there is loss of a direct palpable connection between self and other, neither moral ideals nor rational arguments or scientific evidence have the power to persuade one to care for the other but there remains a fateful gap between how individuals, corporations, and governments may think they 'should' act and how they, in fact, act with respect to nature. (Puhakka 2014, 11)

On the one hand, comparing the novels makes humans of the Western world aware of the fact that the absence of a "millennial trans-generational collective relationship with the land" (Lutz 2018, 77) in non-Indigenous communities is closely associated with the absence of developing an identity and accountability inclusive of all beings and Earth (Lutz 2018, 74–80). On the other hand, "comparative ecocriticism" can "point out the conceptual mechanisms that underlie any assembly of global humanness and of species agency" (Heise 2013, 29–30). We humans of the Western world need to become eco-cosmopolitan creatives and immerse ourselves into a trans-cultural polymythological universe from which to create an action-guiding myth, as well as practice our human ability to use stories as powerful tools for

imagining and implementing visions of a new future in which all-relatedness is reality.

In a 2010 symposium at the University for Sustainable Development Eberswalde, Germany, scientists and scholars tried to formulate what a transcultural exchange with Indigenous people can teach us:

> Die westliche Kultur ist eine Krisenkultur geworden. Umweltzerstörung und Ressourcenverbrauch schreiten scheinbar ungebremst fort, Krisen erschüttern Wirtschaft und Finanzwelt. . . . Nicht Reformen, sondern ein Kulturwandel steht dringend an, wenn eine nachhaltige Entwicklung als einzige Chance zukünftiger Zivilisation erreicht werden soll. (Jung 2011a, 7)
>
> (Western culture has become a crisis culture. Environmental destruction and the consumption of resources seem to continue unabated, crises are shaking the economy and the financial world. . . . It is not reforms but a cultural change that is urgently needed if sustainable development is to be achieved as the only chance of future civilization.)

Critical self-reflection on our Western European literary interpretative practices could lead us down a worthwhile path of looking at Scandinavian literatures transculturally and comparatively in a more diverse, balanced, and an eco-cosmopolitan way, thereby decolonizing Scandinavian literary and cultural studies and placing it in a larger planetary context of understanding. It is important to engage with Indigenous literatures, cultures, and interpretative practices. We should question our Western epistemologies, ontologies, ethics, and economic and social ideologies, as well as the knowledge systems of our literature and literary scholarship, especially when we engage with texts that address issues relevant to a planetary human and more-than-human community.

The Western world needs to become open to worldviews, knowledges, ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies different from but enriching the ones known and practiced up to now. We need to become transcultural, planetary, ecological cosmopolitans—we need to become all-our-relations.

What we can learn from comparing these novels from different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic contexts that deal with a subject concerning all of us: It is our planetary responsibility to transculturally realize shared values and acknowledge our shared basis of existence; to continuously and dynamically create and recreate action-guiding myths as a fluent, all-relating transcultural basis for an eco-cosmopolitan, planetary community. We can seize the chance to stop behaving like irresponsible suicide attackers. This means working together in every aspect of life with all-our-relations to create a livable future for humans and more-than-humans alike.

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