

How to account for what is loved, and what is lost, in contemporary life? How to describe that which we witness disappearing in real time, from the thousands of species on their way to extinction which we haven't even yet described nor named, to the ways of knowing and being in the world which are being forced into smaller and smaller spaces of exception, till they will be no longer? Knowing how to share space used to be a skill we were able, as a species, to practice, if only imperfectly, and this is within my own, living memory.

I find myself struggling to report on this particular state of the world, this world we call 'the contemporary', in real time. When I try, I end up balancing on the flimsiest of logics, in order to make sense of the immense paradox that characterises the present. A vortex of increasing speed; a saturated landscape of attention; emotional extremes on the one hand, utter dissociative numbness on the other. I spend my days reading about mourning, death, endings. I talk to peers and colleagues about ends of the world, about intimacy in shared spaces, about conviviality. We make and share food.

Paradoxically, the term 'more-than-human', which has been a steady conceptual island in the ocean of my research over the last years, becomes more and more opaque and unhelpful. Because we – this human species – appears to lose pieces of its own humanity by the day, apathetic in the face of horror. Rather than de-anthropocenter everything with no care for consequence, I find myself increasingly trying to describe what it would be like to be humane, again (or newly), in a more-than-human world. Balancing things that appeared contradictory and now are more than blatantly interconnected.

The question of how to take account for agency or potentiality in an increasingly automated world rests within the permanence and distribution of today's many 'crises'. Crisis, from the Greek *krisis*, simply means: decision. A decision must be made – but what decision can be made, when we've lost the grasp on the 'how' even as we may still be able to point at the 'which'?

Of late, I have been asking myself what the end of a particular world must feel like when it is happening in real time. When we study, we learn of the rise and fall of magnificent civilisations, or the wreckages of colonial incursion. That which once was and of which remain only ruins. Melancholy poetry extols the beauty of such ruins, while with meticulous attention, anthropologists and archaeologists piece together what is left into incomplete yet vivid pictures of vanishing or vanished worlds. The silences, in these stories, are as fundamental and constitutive as the what remains. Much is told by the absences of forms of knowing and making worlds that have been erased by time, by power or by catastrophe. These are – these must have been, we say, filling in the gaps – medicinal, astronomical, navigational, metaphysical, and imaginational libraries of ways of being otherwise, which we can only approximate in fragments, through the distant whispers reaching us from times and spaces now muddled, troubled.

On the other hand, when we experience a world from within it, its end may fall outside of the realm of the thinkable. It may be impossible to imagine our world, this one around us, ending altogether. This is in spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, in spite of the pervasiveness of loss, and in spite also of what we know about the inevitability of endings. Near and far geographies have experienced the upheavals that go with radical political or existential shifts in the extremely recent past. Elsewhere, entire populations lost their homes to the shifting landscapes of a climate-devastated present; we record the last living story once known by many; we draw the last individual in a species now extinct or extinguishing.

We note the aporia that befalls the scientific community when species extinction, or climate transformation, outpaces the language available to describe it, in other words, the real outpaces its symbolic scaffolding. Simultaneously, in the political arena, the so-called 'culture wars' appear to manifest the disentanglement of semantics, definitions and languages from the political realities and struggles of lived life.

Despite all of this, it appears a near-impossible challenge, in this dulled-out, alienated and technologically-drugged urban present, to imagine ourselves – us here, the lucky ones, sharing this quiet moment – as belonging to one such ending world. The certainties that hold our world together appear to have remained stable for a long time. Correction: the distribution of power and ideology that holds this world together cloaks itself in an illusion of timeless stability. How do we account, then, for

planetary and social breakdown, for the kinds of transformations that are happening right before our eyes?

What stories should we begin to learn how to tell, so that they may not be forgotten, so that there may be seeds to plant when things begin again? What kinds of emotional and epistemological landscapes should we begin to make space for? If we take a metabolic view of such processes, and consider human culture to be one of many emergences out of a larger, planetary whole (which includes persons, human and non-; landscapes; ideas) – then to finally come to face that which is ending may be a necessary prerequisite to be able to notice, witness and support that which will come to be. In *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira Andreotti reminds us of just that: facing the end of modernity as we know it (around us, but also inside of ourselves) may be done mindfully, with discernment and with an enormous amount of grace – and then maybe, just maybe, we may learn to hold with tenderness that which is germinating.

The films in the festival, *Sunsets: Cosmogonies and Ends of Worlds* articulate themselves across four programmes, subtitled 'How We Ended', 'How We Began', 'How We Ended' and again 'How We Began'. The repetitions here, as well as the choice to start with the end, are intentional in the context of the festival concept's overall proposition. They speak of the Earth's metabolic process of transformation and renewal, and of the human and more-than-human epistemological projects that make sense of these transformations. Over the course of four screenings, the films observe and understand a world as an organisation of forms, lives, spaces and knowledges – all emergences which are nevertheless always and necessarily temporary. What would taking a metabolic view of today's multiple crises look, feel and sound like? A view that accounts for endings as just one step in a longer cycle of transformation, intertwined, both constant and constantly changing? The films by the collective Selva-gem, spearheaded by Indigenous activist and philosopher Ailton Krenak, offer the conceptual infrastructure for this question, demonstrating that Indigenous cosmologies and insights from Western philosophical and scientific traditions share deep truths about the nature of being and the cosmos. Alongside these educational/artistic films, we encounter a field of international perspectives, laments, cosmogonies and prophetic visions, from the most intimate expression of grief to the most ambitious perspectives on this more-than-human planet's rhythms.

The concept of 8Albe 2025 is inspired by the thought and work of Federico Campagna, Ernesto de Martino and Vanessa Machado de Oliveira Andreotti.

Additional reading:

Federico Campagna, *Prophetic Culture: Recreation for Adolescents* (Bloomsbury, 2021)

Ernesto de Martino, *The End of the World: Cultural Apocalypse and Transcendence* (University of Chicago Press, 2023 / Einaudi, 2019)

Vanessa Machado de Oliveira Andreotti, *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (2021)

Lucia Pietroiusti, *All that Remains of the Changing Seasons*, SUM Journal #23: Otherselves (February 2025)

Lucia Pietroiusti & Filipa Ramos (Eds.), *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish* (Hatje Cantz/Serpentine, 2025)

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