

Editorial *Ecozon@* Issue 10.2

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The language question is one which has troubled the editors of *Ecozon@* from the start. Linguistic and cultural diversity are central to the journal's ethos. Seeking to work against the hegemony of English, we publish in five languages (the maximum number which the Open Journal System platform provides for), and actively encourage contributors to submit non-Anglophone contributions. We are, however, in a double bind. For the reality is that ecocritical scholars seeking to reach an audience beyond readers of their language of origin have a strong incentive to publish in the lingua franca of English. English is the language of the vast majority of submissions we receive, and of the academic essays published in the themed and general sections of the journal's last eighteen issues, 129 have been in English, and only 37 in other languages. The unfortunate consequence is that authors are led to engage with Anglophone concepts and debates, and readers are deprived of opportunities to encounter alternative ways of seeing and thinking. As editors, we are convinced that European cultural and linguistic inflections of ecocriticism have much to offer for international debates. But for the scholars concerned, there is an undeniable tension between the wish to address readers of non-Anglophone texts and the desire to communicate findings with speakers of other languages.

We are therefore delighted to present an issue in which the usual linguistic (im)balance is reversed, at least partially countering the predominance of English. The guest editors of this issue, whose themed section is devoted to 'Ecological In(ter)ventions in the Francophone World', have also come up with a novel solution to the language problem in their Introduction. Anne-Rachel Hermetet and Stephanie Posthumus introduce in French the two essays written in English, and outline in English the content of the five essays written in French. They recognise that this experiment is not without shortcomings, writing: "The goal of the article summaries is to bridge the language gap between ecocriticism and *écocritique*. At the same time, the lack of translation means that only a bilingual French-English reader can understand the entire introduction. To some extent, this approach constructs obstacles to meaning that can only be overcome by the creation of multilingual communities." They apologise in advance for the frustration their efforts to mediate between the linguistic communities may cause for eco-minded readers who only understand one of the two languages.

France has its own traditions in the study of literature and culture, just as it has its own intellectual debates and academic institutions. Ecocriticism arrived later than in Germany, Spain, or Scandinavia, but it is spreading from departments of English, American Studies and Comparative Literature, and developing distinctive approaches and theories. The essays presented here reflect the diversity of themes and approaches in the

'Francophone world', a sphere broadly defined either by use of the French language, or by references to Francophone literary traditions and culture. It would be misleading to speak of a single 'French' or 'Francophone' form of *écocritique* or *écopoétique*. The contributors and topics under examination here work in and relate principally to France, French Canada and Francophone Africa, but are not limited to these parts of the world. The works addressed range from novels and nonfiction to films and the sewers of Paris. Vincent Lecomte demonstrates through examination of a 2014 film directed by Pierre Huyghe how we define human identity through our difference from animals. Pilar Andrade addresses a subject of particular importance in France, where 75% of the country's energy needs are met by nuclear power, in her essay on the nuclear imaginary in fiction and nonfiction texts written over the last thirty years. In an essay on two novels by the avant-garde science fiction author, Antoine Volodine, Gina Stamm considers ways in which writers can speak for plants and other non-human agents. Francophone Africa is represented by Kenneth Toah Nsah's study of a recent play on deforestation by two writers from the Congo Basin. Mariève Isabel analyses an alternative magazine rethinking nature-human relations in Quebec in the 1970s, demonstrating the influence of the countercultural movement on environmentalism today. Edith Liégey examines works of art situated in museums, celebrating the beauty of nature and simultaneously recording its vulnerability, and develop a theory of 'Ecomorphism' as an artistic practice. Finally, the anthropologist Marine Legrand contributes to the field of waste studies by exploring the symbolic and material intersections of the human digestive tract and the earth, in depictions of Paris's subterranean networks.

The General Section of the issue comprises three articles. In the first, 'The Dog-Fabulist: Glimpses of the Posthuman in *A Dog's Heart* (1925) by Mikhail Bulgakov', Luigi Gussago argues that most critics have interpreted Bulgakov's science-fiction novella, an account of an experiment to graft human organs onto the body of a dog, as a satire on man under socialism. However, viewed from an animal studies perspective, it can be read as an invitation to discover new narratives of the "intra-action" (Barad) between different kinds of agent, and an enactment of what Joseph Meeker describes as "play ethic", where more-than-human and human beings participate on equal terms in the game of survival and co-evolution. The second essay, 'Toxic Chemicals in Samanta Schweblin's *Distancia de rescate* (Fever Dream)', examines an Argentinean novel published in 2014, which depicts the physical and emotional impact on ordinary families of a nightmarish change in the environment, in the context of the current compromising of ecosystems by toxic waste from industry and agriculture. Drawing on previous studies of the presence of toxic chemicals in the environment from historical, anthropological, and literary studies perspectives, Óscar Pérez considers the possibilities that literature offers to depict and understand the effects of the spread of toxic chemicals on a global scale. The third essay, 'El Capitan as a Site for Male Healing from Trauma in Jeff Long's *The Wall* and Tommy Caldwell's *The Push*', the Finnish scholars Harri Salovaara and Marinella Rodi-Risberg examine two 21st-century novels depicting a notoriously difficult rock climb in Yosemite National Park. Nature and mountains are often represented as places of healing in literature and the media, especially for white middle-class men, and much has been

written about this. However, studies of nature and gender rarely discuss their relation to trauma. The article places ecofeminist and ecological masculinities scholarship in dialogue with trauma studies, and shows how the representations of nature, trauma, and masculinity in the two texts converge and reflect a plurality of gendered responses to trauma and healing in nature.

In the Creative Writing and Arts section, Damiano Benvegnù picks up on the theme of Francophone interventions in environmental debate with images by the French artist Dominique Weber (who has kindly also provided the cover image for this issue), which address the “divorce” between humans and nature, and poems by Catherine Diamond. Further contributions are Clayton Miles Lehmann’s English translation of a poem by the Greek poet Nikos Gatsos, ‘Persephone’s Nightmare’, and a section of a long poem by the Irish ecofeminist, Rosemarie Rowley, ‘The Wake of Wonder’.

Our new team of Book Review Editors, Astrid Bracke and María Isabel Pérez Ramos, have secured reviews of recent ecocritical publications on the Anthropocene, climate change fiction, Scandinavian, North American and South American writing, and a comparative literature study of texts about the North Sea Lowlands. Luis Prádanos’s (English-language) study of contemporary Spanish ecoculture is also reviewed for Spanish readers.