

Editorial, Vol 4, No. 1

Axel Goodbody
University of Bath

Carmen Flys Junquera
University of Alcalá

Welcome to Issue 4.1 of *Ecozon@*. In the themed section of this number, Peter Mortensen introduces and presents three essays on the subject of 'Green Countercultures'. These are followed by three further essays in the General Section, creative writing and artistic contributions, and book reviews.

In his introduction to 'Green Countercultures', Peter Mortensen (who works in British and American Studies at Aarhus University's Department of Aesthetics and Communication in Denmark) stresses the ambiguities and ideological delusions as well the utopian aspirations of the nineteen-sixties and seventies countercultural movement. He presents a concise overview of the environmental dimension of this movement, whose importance may be gauged by the fact that in the early seventies three quarters of a million people in the United States alone lived in rural communes, with similar 'alternative' living experiments in cities and the countryside across Europe. Mortensen identifies the aims of contemporary, second generation research into sixties counterculture. Historicised readings can, he argues, render little-regarded aspects of this culturally creative and politically tumultuous period newly meaningful. Countercultural appropriate technologists, for instance, adumbrated a humanity- and modernity-centred post-wilderness model of environmentalism that resonates with the dilemmas we face in our increasingly resource-impoverished, rapidly warming and densely populated world.

Mortensen presents essays on the work of a British poet, an American novelist, and a mainstream popular music group. Susanna Lidström examines Ted Hughes's *Crow* as an example of countercultural eco-mythologisation, using historical, literary and philosophical elements to counter western modernity's desecralisation of the natural world. Jill Anderson writes on the invocation of nature and wilderness as redeeming antitheses to a hopelessly commercialised and mechanised present in the Californian anti-establishment novelist Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, arguing that Brautigan manifests an unusually complex, ironic pastoral consciousness. Dale Carter illustrates the role played by music in environmental protest and advocacy, not by examining environmental protest songs, but by showing how a band synonymous with cars, surfing and consumerism can also be read environmentally.

The General Section opens with an essay in which Christopher Schliephake demonstrates the benefits of using the theory of Material Ecocriticism to describe the achievement of two classical texts on the atom bomb, John Hersey's journalistic account, *Hiroshima*, and Alain Resnais's film, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. The story of the bombing of Hiroshima, he argues, cannot be told without taking into account the diverse material entanglements between human bodies and the environment which have generated configurations of meaning and discourses, in an ever-changing renegotiation of meaning.

Christopher Schliephake, with this essay, was the recipient of the 2012 EASLCE Graduate Student Award.

In the second essay, Daniela Fargione writes (in Italian), taking as her point of departure the diametrically opposed positions in a recent essay by the semiologist Gianfranco Marrone and an American novella by David Vann. While the former argues that the only effective way of solving our environmental problems is to take leave of nature, the latter's protagonists seek respite in the wilderness of a natural world devoid of human presence. Fargione pleads for 'ContaminAction' as a search for solutions facing them from a multiplicity of perspectives and involving the active participation of both human and non-human agents.

This is followed by an introduction to German climate change fiction by Axel Goodbody. Goodbody outlines the political, philosophical and ethical challenges which global warming presents, the aesthetic problems facing the writers of climate change fiction, and the strategies commonly adopted. Ilija Trojanow's novel *Melting Ice* serves as a basis for evaluation of efforts to inform the public and motivate them to take action while acknowledging the problems associated with a doom-and-gloom apocalyptic approach.

In the Creative Writing and Art Section, Isabel Hoving introduces the American artist, Michael Markwick, who currently works in Berlin and The Hague. Markwick's huge canvases, one of which features on the cover of this issue, shock the viewer into experiencing nature's materiality. Abstract in form, they nevertheless evoke both environmental destruction and nature's uncontrollable growth, prompting us to mourn the destroyed environment while simultaneously challenging our sense of efficacy. Hoving also introduces poetry by Brian Glaser, Florian Auerochs and Matthew Griffiths.

The issue is rounded off by seven book reviews. Jill Anderson assesses Robert Azzarello's challenge to notions of essential heterosexuality in *Queer Environmentalism*, and his application of a synthesis of queer theory and ecocriticism in readings of American writing. Jonathan Butler reviews a collection of 'geopoetic' work published by Don McKay under the title *The Shell of the Tortoise*, which resist distinction between criticism and poetry. Simon Estok presents Karen Thornbur's encyclopaedic work on Environmental Writing in East Asia, *Ecoambiguity*, as a 'must read', despite certain reservations, for the task it performs in carrying across issues in Asian environmental humanities to Western readers. John Farnsworth considers Peter Quigley's achievement in *Housing the Environmental Imagination*, his study of the 'cabin' as a nexus between nature and culture in American nature writing, and Reinhard Hennig recommends *Arctic Voices*, an important anthology of writing on the Arctic edited by Subhankar Banerjee. Chad Weidner recommends the volume *Local Natures, Global Responsibilities*, which emerged from a German conference, as evidence of the contributions to ecocriticism now originating from outside English-language cultures. Finally, Charles Whitney and Amy Woodward read Molly Scott Cato's review of the five current schools of environmental economics in *Environment and Economy*, and conclude that it is heartening that novel, planet-friendly economic initiatives are currently making headway.

Ecozon@ 4.1 also marks our fourth year and the editorial team would like to thank contributors, reviewers and readers for their support. The editorial team has been busy in recent months introducing significant changes so as to improve the visibility and quality of the journal. Most of these are now in place. Firstly, we have significantly broadened the Advisory Board, now comprised of major ecocritics and specialists in related disciplines from many different countries who have been willing to support the

journal and lend us their valuable advice. The journal is now completely open access and a login is not necessary in order to read the articles. We have introduced metatags on the cover as well as a keyword cloud in order to increase visibility. You will see that articles can now be easily found with different search engines.

We have also added a button for letters to the editor in the side bar, so we hope you will send us your comments and suggestions. Another sign of the journal's health is the fact that we now have special thematic sections planned two years ahead. We have enabled a button on the menu for future issues, so readers and potential authors can know of the upcoming themes. Our Table of Contents now contains the translation of the titles, a further effort in internationalizing and giving visibility to ecocritical publications in other languages. We have also incorporated the abstracts into the article pdfs in order to facilitate both download and printing by reducing the number of files. The Autumn issue of each year will contain the names of the reviewers that have helped us throughout the whole year as well as statistics of the journal. We are currently in the process of including more detailed guidelines for reviewers and authors as well as instructions, which should make it more easy to use the platform. These steps are important for visibility and accessibility but also for quality criteria, and we hope that *Ecozon@* will be indexed in more databases in the near future.

The *Ecozon@* editorial team hopes readers will enjoy and profit from this issue, and would like to remind you that we would be delighted to hear from you.