

## Editorial Ecozon@ 5.2

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Welcome to Issue 5.2 of *Ecozon@*. The subject of the themed part of this number is “Northern Nature”: we are pleased to present five essays, introduced and edited by Werner Bigell. These are followed by three further essays in the General Section, the usual Arts and Creative Writing Section, and book reviews.

In his introduction to “Northern Nature,” Werner Bigell, who lectures at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, writes of two different approaches to the subject: the first is analysis of the aspirations and anxieties projected onto Northern landscapes by visitors, while the other investigates representations and conceptions of nature in the literature and art of the Arctic peoples—whose way of life and culture are currently facing unprecedented climatic, economic and political challenges. The task of the researcher, he argues, lies in either critically analysing outsiders’ notions of Nordic purity, simplicity and inhospitableness, or complicating and challenging such projections by exploring the region’s history, economy, and changing environment.

In the first essay, Sophie Dietrich discusses the representation of Northern forests in the work of the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, showing how eighteenth-century notions of the sublime shaped public perceptions of the North. In the second, Nicole Merola writes of tensions between different symbolic framings of the North, showing how its perception as a pastoral sphere is undermined by gothic horror elements in Michelle Paver’s novel *Dark Matter*, which is read as an allegory of contemporary resource exploitation. The essay by Allison Athens which follows contrasts contemporary Western animal rights activists’ understanding of animals and our relationship with them with that of the Inuit, as reflected in the depiction of seal hunting in Inuit films. Julia Feuer-Cotter’s essay on contemporary writing about Alaska shows how regional authors such as Velma Wallis and Sheila Nickerson counter external perspectives of a mythical land central to US national identity in their work. Finally, Sigfrid Kjeldaas discusses Barry Lopez’s representation of the North American Arctic, arguing that his 30-year-old text, *Arctic Dreams* has lost none of its relevance: it demonstrates the inherent limitations of common framings of the land, and offers a particularised, ecological understanding in their place.

The General Section opens with an intriguing essay by Ellen Arnold which demonstrates the potential of consideration of premodern sources to contribute to discussions of environmental imagination. Examining the depiction of rivers in the work of three Latin poets from 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>-century Gaul, she shows how these were used to validate Christian cultural experience, confirm cultural identity, and voice concern over political and social integration. This essay is nicely complemented by the review of her book, *Negotiating the Landscape* (2013) on the landscape of medieval monasteries in the

Ardennes, found in the review section of this issue. The other two essays in the section are concerned with works of contemporary literature: Enrico Cesaretti's article with Silvia Avallone's novel *Acciaio* (2010) and Pippa Marland's essay with the German-British writer W.G. Sebald's travel narrative *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). Cesaretti shows how Avallone's coming-of-age novel depicting the lives of teenage girls growing up in an Italian industrial port foregrounds the interactions between their bodies, the machines used to produce steel, and the plants and shells the girls find on a beach on the site. Drawing on arguments about the mutual connections between the human, the organic, and inorganic matter in the 'material turn' which ecocriticism has taken in recent years, Cesaretti shows how Avallone's novel not only presents a radically different vision of Tuscany's famed "Etruscan Coast," but also hints at the sort of posthuman ecology that regulates this and other industrial places. In her discussion of the "traces of destruction" which Sebald encounters all around in the East Anglian landscape, culminating in his visit to Orford Ness, Marland grapples with a question which has begun to arouse considerable interest, namely the shortcomings of posthumanism and the possible need for a 'new humanism'. She argues convincingly that whereas the material turn in ecocriticism has contributed valuable theoretical tools to the posthumanist project of decentring the human, it has deflected attention too far from the human, and we need a "tentative ongoing humanism" within the posthumanist project, interrogating the specificities of the human animal. An earlier version of this article was awarded the 2014 EASLCE award for the best graduate student essay at the conference in Tartü.

The theme of Northern Nature is taken up again in the Art and Creative Writing section. It opens with an introduction by Serenella Iovino to the plurality of presences, colours and substances (endless winters, obstinate ice, unprecedented postcolonial expansion, painfully melting glaciers, and "gleefully spectral" auroras) which make up the eco-cultural imagery of the North and have inspired the artistic contributions to this issue of *Ecozon@*. There follow 8 striking photographs of the Icelandic landscape by Thorvardur Arnason (one of which we have adopted as cover image for the issue), a short prose piece about the same country in Italian by Luca Bugnone, "Elska", and two poems. The first of these, "Cedevole al tatto" by Paola Loreto, is translated into English as "To Be in Any Form", and the second, Jacob Price's "Space Junk" is accompanied by a Spanish version, "Basura espacial".

The Reviews section which rounds off the issue opens with an essay by Charles Whitney reviewing three of the more important recent publications on the economics of climate change. Climate economics is "too important to be left to the economists", Whitney argues, and the form as well as the content of books such as these, which shape public debates and policy, deserve to be scrutinized, not least by rhetorical and literary scholars. In the reviews which follow, Esther Rey Torrijos, Terry Gifford, Kevin Trumpeter, Nicole Seymour, Reinhard Hennig, Noelia Malla García and Chad Weidner present publications on feminist ecocriticism, ecogothic, waste and contamination in U.S. ethnic literatures, ecological othering in American culture, environment and monastic identity in the medieval Ardennes, Wordsworth and the post-apocalyptic novel.

We are delighted to announce that Serenella Iovino joins the *Ecozon@* editorial team from this issue as Arts Editor. She will of course be familiar to many readers from her publications, and as a former EASLCE President (2008-10). We are grateful to Serenella for placing her wide-ranging contacts and experience in judging the work of writers and artists at the disposal of the journal. As always, the *Ecozon@* editors hope readers will enjoy and profit from this issue. We would be delighted to hear from you.