

Editorial Ecozon@ 6.1

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Welcome to Issue 6.1 of *Ecozon@*. The subject of the themed part of this issue is “European New Nature Writing”: we are pleased to present five essays and two interviews, introduced and edited by Anna Stenning and Terry Gifford. These are followed by three further essays in the General Section, a selection of Visual Art and Creative Writing, and book reviews.

In their introduction to “European New Nature Writing,” Anna Stenning and Terry Gifford, who have recently edited a collection of essays on British and Irish nature writing in the twentieth century for *Green Letters* (the organ of ASLE-UKI), ask if the revival and transformation which the genre has experienced in the British Isles in the last twenty years (pioneered by Richard Mabey, with books by Roger Deakin, Robert Macfarlane, Kathleen Jamie, Simon Armitage, Helen Macdonald, Richard Kerridge and others enjoying unprecedented popularity), is also present on the continent. Nature writing – a form of non-fictional prose rooted in amateur naturalism, which describes landscapes, animals and plants while attending to the observing subject’s relationship with and response to them, and frequently embraces elements of travel writing, autobiography and essay – has played a significant role as a minor genre in Anglo-American culture over the last two and a half centuries.

However, there is no term for it in most European languages, and no comparable literary tradition, despite the existence of individual works since Rousseau and Humboldt which might be regarded as classics of nature writing. To the extent that such nature-oriented writing (including poetry) existed in continental Europe in the first half of the twentieth century (often associated with particular regions and landscapes), much of it shared the escapist, conservative, masculine-gendered tendencies of British nature writers of the time. Are the ‘new’ developments in British nature writing since the turn of the twenty-first century distinguishing it from this provenance, such as depiction of the experience of wildness in urban and marginal settings, populated landscapes and everyday life, notions of transnational eco-citizenship and transient, dynamic dwelling in a changing world rather than timeless, exclusively national forms of inhabitation, and postmodern formal innovations, then to be found in contemporary European writing?

Stenning and Gifford present essays and interviews by Pippa Marland, Simone Schröder, Maris Sörmus, Alberto García Teresa, Maria Arpioni (in Italian), Deborah Lilley and Ellen Skowronski, presenting work by Tim Robinson, W.G. Sebald, Peter Handke, Andrus Kivirähk, Jorge Riechmann, Giovanni Pasinato, Julian Hoffman and José Manuel Marrero Henríquez, and examining the distillation into language and image of encounters with places in the west of Ireland, the south of France, Estonia, the northeast of Italy, northern Greece and the Canary Islands.

The General Section opens with an essay on the ‘intra-action’ (Karen Barad) between human and non-human agencies as reflected in works ranging the cult novel which made Goethe famous, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1787) to Karen Duve’s postmodern feminist variation on a Romantic theme, *Rain* (1999), via depictions of mountains by the nineteenth-century essayists John Ruskin and Leslie Stephen, and Alexander Döblin’s sprawling epic, *Mountains, Oceans and Giants* (1924). Gabriele Dürbeck, Caroline Schaumann and Heather Sullivan show that for all their differences, all these “scrape away the illusions of power that allow us to function day to day” by placing our notion of human agency in the larger context of weather, landscape and other material circumstances.

In the essay which follows, Kamil Michta reads J.M. Coetzee’s reflections on the human-animal relationship in the novel *Disgrace* (1999) in the light of Kantian ethics. Kant has generally been dismissed by animal studies scholars as a proponent of speciesism, for his denial that we have a moral duty to beings other than humankind, and his assertion that we should only practise kindness towards animals because cruelty harden us towards men. Michta nevertheless argues that Kantian ethics constitute a basis for behaviour towards animals, and shows that it corresponds to the position eventually adopted by David Lurie, Coetzee’s protagonist in *Disgrace*.

The final item in the General Section, an essay in Spanish by Elena Sánchez Vizcaíno, examines the use of theatre as a medium for promoting awareness of the dangers of forest fires. It assesses the success of a campaign of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture which took a theatrical production to small towns in endangered regions between 2009 and 2011.

The Art and Creative Writing section is also concerned with nature writing in the wider sense, as a kind of visual art as well as writing which, as Arts Editor Serenella Iovino notes, seeks to mediate between humans and the natural world. It opens with half a dozen striking pictures of ‘Animal Behaviour’ by the prize-winning Estonian nature photographer Remo Savisaar (who has kindly permitted us to use a further image of his for the cover of this issue of *Ecozon@*), and a further three images by the Austrian Peter Bergthaller, which “tell the silent stories of a terraqueous world where minerals, plants, and ancient life forms gather in slow co-habitation”. These are followed by short prose pieces by Richard Kerridge and Tiziano Fratus reflecting on their respective practices of writing nature, and an ‘eco-poem’ (in English and Italian) capturing an epiphanic moment walking in the woods, by Ivana Trevisani Bach.

The Reviews section, which rounds off the issue, opens with two expanded review essays. The first, by Nicole Seymour, compares a couple of very different recent publications on the relationship between war and the natural environment. The second, written by Christopher Schliephake, examines a collection of essays on American literary ecology and a German study of American texts rehearsing ecocriticism’s trajectory from initial concern with wilderness and place to today’s preoccupation with eco-cosmopolitanism and urban dystopias. Ryan Hediger reviews Kylie Crane’s *Myths of Wilderness in Contemporary Narratives* (on environmental postcolonialism in Australia and Canada); Anna Svensson presents Randy Laist’s anthology of essays on *Plants and*

Literature, the first publication in a new series edited by Michael Marder devoted to Critical Plant Studies (as opposed to Animal Studies); Chad Weidner assesses a collection of essays on *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, Daniela Kato draws attention to a new volume co-edited by the anthropologist Tim Ingold analysing the parallels between *Making and Growing*; and Hanna Straß reviews Stephanie LeMenager's ground-breaking cultural-historical study of the importance of petroleum for twentieth-century America, *Living Oil*.

As always, the *Ecozon@* editors hope readers will enjoy and profit from this issue.