

## Editorial Ecozon@ Issue 9.2

Axel Goodbody



Welcome to the Autumn 2018 issue of *Ecozon@*. The themed section of this number, 'Mythology and Ecocriticism: A Natural Encounter,' explores the hitherto only sporadically and unsystematically addressed area of intersection between two vibrant fields of research, examining ancient myths of human transformation of the natural environment and interspecies relations, and their adaptation in modern literary narratives. The Guest Editors, Imelda Martín Junquera and Francisco Molina-Moreno, argue in their introduction that myths have a unique role to play today in facilitating a rebalancing of the species and promoting a more sustainable relationship with the natural environment. Myths, which simultaneously enlighten and obscure the truth, have historically been frequently used in such a way as to advocate human exceptionalism and reinforce male domination. However, the nine articles presented here show that they are capable of fruitful literary adaptation in ways which interrogate and challenge these positions. After an initial essay by Esther Valdés Tejera exploring how the shifting perceptions of the land in the western world have been encapsulated in myths, five authors (Michaela Keck, Charles Krieg, Shiao Bo Liang, Sławomir Studiarz, and Maricel Oró-Piqueras together with Nuria Mina-Riera) examine the reworking of myths in twentieth and twenty-first-century novels. Two essays, by Qurratulaen Liaqat and Luca Bugnone, are concerned with plays. The principal works discussed are by the US, Canadian and Caribbean writers Paul Auster and Rajiv Joseph, Margaret Atwood and Lorna Crozier, and Monique Roffey, the Peruvian José María Arguedas, Britain's Angela Carter, and Euripides. In the final contribution to the section, Ohihane Germandia reads Plato's version of the myth of Prometheus as a debate on the relative justification for environmental intervention and laissez-faire. Five of the essays are in English, but two in Spanish and two in Italian reflect *Ecozon@*'s plurilingual ethos.

The first of the two essays in the General Section, Peter Mortensen's "'We're Going In for Natural Training": Athletics and Agriculture in Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon*', examines the advocacy of athleticism and pro-environmental behaviour in the work of one of America's most popular and influential early twentieth-century authors, and argues that London anticipated contemporary thinkers such as Peter Sloterdijk in combining environmental concern with concern for public health, and modelling types of *askesis*, or exercise, that modern humans must perform to establish a more sustainable relationship with the natural world.

The second essay, Susan Marie Divine's 'The Nature of Anxiety: Precarious City Lives in *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* shows how two Spanish novels written fifty years apart, which share a common location in working-class neighbourhoods on the southern periphery of Madrid, depict the process of urban development and its impact on the

inhabitants by superimposing the external on the internal, and blending cityscapes with the bodies and minds of women. The basis of communal and individual identity is increasingly eroded as the metaphors from the natural environment in which these are anchored become progressively divorced from reality. The precarious lives of the female protagonists mirror the exploitation of the natural environment.

In the Art and Creative Writing Section, Damiano Benvegnù has selected images and writing relating to the theme of the issue. The section opens with fascinating images from Thomas Feuerstein's installation 'Prometheus Delivered' (the source of the issue's cover image), which depicts Prometheus's entrapment by the technology he gave to humans, and, if we recall the actions of Prometheus's brother Epimetheus, simultaneously hints at the agencies of the nonhuman. These images are followed by a poem, 'Venus and Jupiter' by Deborah Fleming, a short play 'My Tempest' by Catherine Lord, an essay on spiders by Allyson Whipple, and a short story concerned with appreciation of the natural environment by Norbert Kovacs.

The issue concludes with book reviews by Jill E. Anderson and Simon Probst. Jill E. Anderson explores how Chad Weidner's *The Green Ghost: William Burroughs and the Ecological Mind*, the first ecocritical study of this provocative experimental representative of the Beat Generation, invites us to read Burroughs as a writer "immersed in a conservationist, ecological ecocritical, and a biocentric/ deep ecological ethos". Simon Probst's review focuses on the book *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture*, edited by Gabriele Dürbeck, Urte Stobbe, Hubert Zapf and Evi Zemanek.

We note with considerable regret that Hannes Bergthaller is stepping down as Book Reviews Editor due to pressure of other work, and take this opportunity to thank him very warmly, not only for serving as Reviews Editor since the journal was founded, but also for his unfailing support of the work of the *Ecozon@* editorial team. A call for expressions of interest in the position of Book Reviews Editor will shortly be posted on the journal's platform, and we invite enquiries, either to Hannes himself (he is happy to work alongside the new Editor for a transition period), or to our Editor in Chief, Carmen Flys Junquera.