

## Editorial *Ecozon@* Issue 8.2

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Welcome to Issue 8.2 of *Ecozon@*. The themed section of this issue is devoted to 'Green Computer and Video Games.' Literature has been the focus of our journal, apart from special numbers on religious discourse (2.2), environmental history (4.1), translation (5.1), eco-art (6.2), and occasional essays in the themed and general sections on film, popular music and philosophy. However, the world of virtual reality has not been entirely ignored: our most recent issue ('South Atlantic Ecocriticism') contained an article by Palmar Alvarez-Blanco on video-activism as a medium of cultural emancipation and political change. And Stuart Mugridge wrote in Number 6.2 ('Artistic Ways of Understanding and Interacting with Nature') about the potential of the digitalised landscapes in computer games and the 'gaming' of encounters with the natural environment to unite intelligent comprehension of nature with sensory experience. Gaming has become a hugely popular global leisure activity. Green gaming is emerging as a new field of enquiry, sharing questions and methodologies with research into popular culture, environmental communication and green media. A number of articles on virtual reality and the environment have appeared in *ISLE*, and our sister journal, *Green Letters*, published a special number on 'Digital Environments' in November 2014. It was therefore a logical step to seek to delve deeper into the subject of green video and computer games in a special issue of *Ecozon@*, and we are grateful to Alenda Chang and John Parham for taking on the task of editors.

On the one hand, computer games can be read as environmental texts: as a form of contemporary culture with enormous popular appeal and a major global industry, they can give unique insights into regionally differing and shifting environmental attitudes. On the other, although there has been a tendency to regard with alarm the huge amount of time spent playing computer games by contemporaries young and old, as an activity diminishing opportunities for experiencing the real world, these games have become ever more immersive and their environments ever more 'real' over the last four decades. This calls out for an unbiased ecocritical assessment of their potential to foster environmental awareness, and reconcile nature with culture. In their introduction, Chang and Parham give a helpful overview of relevant research in environmental communication, sustainability studies, eco-media and green popular culture, reviewing key arguments and findings. They discuss the environmental issues, positions and communicative and aesthetic strategies which characterise the different types of green game (mainstream and countercultural, independent and corporate, ludic and meditative, online, console and mobile), indicating how these expand the range of existing green media and cultural studies. They go on to contextualise the essays collected here by Josef Nguyen, Hans-Joachim Backe, Alexander Lehner, Kyle Bohunicky,

Lauren Woolbright, Bradon Smith, Adena Rivera-Dundas and Melissa Bianchi, drawing out their original contribution to green games studies.

The General Section of this issue consists of two articles, by Anna Chiafele and Marta Wójcik-Czerwińska. Chiafele offers a reading of Elisabetta Bucciarelli's noir novel *Corpi di scarto* which is grounded in Material Ecocriticism. She shows how Bucciarelli's account of the life of a landfill site goes beyond the catastrophic imagination frequently associated with toxic discourse, by endowing refuse with a degree of agency, and depicting the interaction of the inhabitants of the site with it as a form of transformation and rehabilitation. Wójcik-Czerwińska's article, 'Plotting Against Oil in American and Canadian Non-fiction,' compares a recent American essay on an oil pipeline with a Canadian one. Drawing on Stephanie LeMenager's notion of 'plotting against oil,' she analyses means by which the presence of oil in today's world is revealed and its impact on the landscape and the lives of people whose livelihoods and cultures have been shaped by the natural world is exposed.

The power of artwork, prose writing and poetry relating to virtual reality and video games to influence attitudes towards the environment both cognitively and emotionally, and be important allies of the environmental imagination, is demonstrated by five contributions in the Creative Writing and Art section of the issue. We are delighted to have obtained permission to reproduce a series of striking Augmented Reality images (including one on the cover of the issue) by the distinguished American media artist, Tamiko Thiel. Her *Gardens of the Anthropocene*, originally commissioned by the Seattle Art Museum Olympic Sculpture Park, imagine a science fiction future in which flora and fauna have adapted to a climate-changed world. They are followed by an intriguing installation by the Chilean-born artist and architect Pia Galvez Lindegaard which is based on the QR code – the barcode originally designed for the automotive industry in Japan, which has become a universal way of communicating information about the item to which it is attached. Anthony Lioi, Director of the Writing and Communication Center at the Juilliard School, New York and author of an academic article in an earlier number of *Ecozon@*, contributes an account of his fascination since childhood with the robot R2-D2 from *Star Wars*, which is as funny as it is thoughtful. Poems by the Chilean Luis Correa-Diaz integrate the digital sphere in the world of the poet's physical being and emotions through insertion of Youtube links. And finally, the Costa Rican poet Ronald Campos López demonstrates different ways of combining bodily with virtual encounters in 'Two Homoerotic Ecopoems and Other Voices.' As Serenella Iovino comments in her introduction, López gives voice to natural entities traditionally considered inert, while combating homophobia.

The issue ends with reviews of recent publications. It opens with a review essay by Karsten Levihn-Kutzler responding to two recent books on risk, a volume of essays on *The Anticipation of Catastrophe: Environmental Risk in North American Literature and Culture* edited by Sylvia Mayer and Alexa Weik von Mossner, and Molly Wallace's *Risk Criticism: Precautionary Reading in an Age of Environmental Uncertainty*. Lenka Filipova reads Robert Tally and Christine Battista's book on *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism*. Abele Longo reviews Serenella Iovino's groundbreaking study, *Ecocriticism and Italy*; Connor

Pitetti reads a monograph by Chris Pak on environmental concerns in Science Fiction; Heather Sullivan assesses Reinhard Hennig's German study of environmental literature in Iceland and Norway; and Veronica Fibisan explores Kate Rigby's *Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times*.

We are sorry to announce that Paloma Villamil Agraso is leaving the editorial team. We thank her for her hard work on the journal as Editorial Assistant over the last seven years, and wish her all the best for the future. In her place, we welcome Beatriz Lindo Mañas and Alejandro Rivero Vadillo, who join us as new editorial assistants with effect from issue 9.1.