

INTRODUCTION

Following the 5th EASLCE conference held in Tenerife on “*Natura Loquens: Eruptive Dialogues, Disruptive Discourses*” a CFP was launched to bring together a series of articles that closely focused on the communicative/dialogical relationship between humans and Nature, and the agency of Nature. The issue examines old and new understandings of the agency of Nature/matter, and of what counts as speech. The issue also juxtaposes the premodern idea of a ‘language of nature’ as featured in aesthetics and literature in the 18th and 19th centuries with the new understandings of the concept in the context of ecocritical debates on nature’s agency. The human ability to speak was a key factor making it possible to detach *Homo sapiens* from other animal species, establishing a hierarchy that has been working until present day. The Aristotelian conception of human “loquacity” is based on the assumption of a “great chain of being,” but places this *Homo loquens/Homo agens* in a superior position, by virtue of its ability to structure and articulate the universe. Deconstructing this idea and recognizing Nature’s ability to speak out, as Christopher Manes, David Abrams, Gernot Böhme and others have done, enables multiple, creative conversations to be acknowledged, and the natural order of things to be reconstructed. The main purpose of this issue, using contemporary theories of panpsychism, affect theory, or new materialisms, is then to reenact, re-think and fluidize the dialogic balance between Nature and human knowledge as illustrated in literary and cultural texts, engaging in intellectually fairer and more empathetic communication.

This special issue should attract ecocritical audiences throughout the world. Its timeliness is clear as the recent organization of other conferences relating to the living and communicative dimension of nature illustrate, such as the June 2016 conference on Ecopoetics in Perpignan, the upcoming EASLCE conference in Brussels, the increasing work on biosemiotics, material ecocriticism and so forth. Moreover, there are numerous research projects engaging in the importance of stories to effect change and the role of fiction to enable human animals to perceive the world as another actor and to engage in interactive, albeit often silent, dialogues with earth others.

Finally, this special issue is part of the results produced under the umbrella of the research project HUAMECO: “Humanidades ambientales. Estrategias para la empatía ecológica y la transición hacia sociedades sostenibles” (sub-project “Stories for Change”), granted by MINECO/FEDER (HAR2015-67472-C2-2-R), in the period 2016-2018, to which we express acknowledgement.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2018.77.01>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 77; november 2018, p. 9; ISSN: e-2530-8335



