Editorial

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Ecostylistics: texts, methodologies and approaches

This Special Issue of the *Journal of World Languages* has the specific aim and objective to further the state of research in the cutting-edge field of ecostylistics. More precisely, this Special Issue features research contributions by scholars whose work falls within the aims and scope of stylistics, and who apply the theoretical framework of this discipline and its diverse methodologies to the examination of several literary and non-literary texts with ecological and environmental concerns.

The first scholar to have deployed the term "ecostylistics" and to have promoted an ecological turn in stylistic practice was the ecolinguist and stylistician Andrew Goatly. At the 30th International Conference of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA), "2010 PALA Conference: The Language of Landscapes", held in Genoa, Italy, in July 2010, he delivered a plenary speech titled "Edward Thomas, the Landscape of Nature, and Ecostylistics"; a written version of it subsequently appeared as Goatly (2017). The research question of his spoken and written contributions was whether ecological criticism and the philosophy of Romantic Ecology as studied by Jonathan Bate (1991) could be expanded so as to become more linguistic in nature and focus, namely whether ecological criticism and Romantic Ecology could move towards an ecostylistics. In the concluding paragraph of his written contribution, Goatly (2017: 121) states: "the concept of this relatively new discipline [ecostylistics] can be extended further both in analysis of poetry, novels […] and other media".

Since Andrew Goatly's plenary speech at the 2010 PALA Conference, the area of ecostylistics has indeed been extended further in the investigation of literary and non-literary media and text types. Scholarly interest in ecostylistic perspectives on text and discourse has been rising internationally, and ecostylistics is growing into a recognized field in its own right. In new conference presentations and academic publications, depictions of natural scenery and discourses about the environment

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are more and more often being scrutinized by adopting stylistic paradigms and methods, rather than ecolinguistic, ecocritical, or discourse analytical theories and approaches. Scholars engaging and advancing research in ecostylistics work at various institutions around the world; the authors most actively involved in the field are members of or collaborate with LAND-SIG,[1] a PALA Special Interest Group on the stylistics of landscape, place and environment coordinated by Ernestine Lahey (University College Roosevelt), Daniela Francesca Virdis (University of Cagliari), and Elisabetta Zurru (University of Genoa) (for a more detailed overview of ecostylistics, see Virdis 2022: Section 2.3).

Moving from this background, this Special Issue on ecostylistics includes contributions complying with methodologies and approaches which are purely stylistic and, as such, different from those employed in, for instance, ecolinguistics, ecocriticism, or discourse analysis. A number of these methodologies and approaches have traditions of their own which are not necessarily stylistic; nevertheless, they have long been utilized in stylistic analysis, as recent work in the area has clearly shown and confirmed (among other examples, see the articles collected in Burke 2014; Sotirova 2016; Stockwell and Whiteley 2014). These methodologies and approaches are as varied as Systemic Functional Grammar, figuration and tropology, opposition, Text World Theory, conceptual metaphor theory, conceptual blending theory, frame semantics, and cognitive grammar. Equally varied are the text types under investigation in the Special Issue contributions: poems, novels, website posts and Facebook posts, non-fictional prose, the Bible, and travel writing. These contributions share an overall research purpose: to prove that stylistics can fruitfully be adopted to study literary and non-literary texts celebrating nature, the environment and the ecological and emotional interconnectedness of all human animal, non-human animal, and vegetable species on the planet.

The Special Issue is fully relevant to the fields and topics that the *Journal of World Languages* gives special attention to. Firstly, the Special Issue and its contributions all focus on ecological and environmental questions of current interest, as required by this type of academic publication. Secondly, the Special Issue is devoted to ecostylistics, which is one of the neighboring disciplines of ecolinguistics in its Hallidayan Tradition (Fill 2018: 4–5). Thirdly, the Special Issue covers several areas which have been adopted and adapted within the interdisciplinary field of stylistics, such as Systemic Functional Grammar, cognitive linguistics, and the relations between language, ecology (in its literal meaning), and (an unecological) society.

The features and contents of the Special Issue as outlined above are its main strengths; that is to say, a variety of stylistic methodologies is applied to a variety of texts with ecological and environmental priorities. This is undertaken in order to

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1 https://www.pala.ac.uk/land-sig.html (accessed 10 December 2022).

advance research in the area of ecostylistics moving from the results achieved in, for example, Douthwaite et al. (2017), Virdis (2022), and Virdis et al. (2021). A number of these methodologies (e.g. opposition) and a number of these text types (e.g. travel writing) are deployed in ecostylistics and scrutinized from this disciplinary perspective for the first time.

Another main strength of the Special Issue is the strong coherence between its contributions. From a methodological viewpoint, all of them are entirely composed of or feature major sections which are cognitive in nature. To name just the seemingly least obvious contributions, Andrew Goatly's article places ecostylistics within a cognitive linguistic framework; Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska's approach to figuration and tropology is cognitive at its core; Daniela Francesca Virdis' contribution defines and identifies canonical conceptual oppositions. Furthermore, Andrew Goatly's, Salvador Alarcón-Hermosilla's, and Maria-Eirini Panagiotidou's articles comply with diverse aspects of cognitive linguistics and cognitive grammar; Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska's and Daniela Francesca Virdis' contributions deploy different theoretical and analytical approaches to antithesis and opposition; both Esterino Adami and Karolien Vermeulen utilize Text World Theory; figuration and tropology in general and conceptual metaphor theory in particular are explored and adopted by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, Karolien Vermeulen, and Salvador Alarcón-Hermosilla. From a text type viewpoint, Andrew Goatly's, Karolien Vermeulen's, and Maria-Eirini Panagiotidou's contributions analyze poetry; Andrew Goatly, Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, and Esterino Adami examine fictional prose; non-fictional texts and materials are studied in Daniela Francesca Virdis' and Salvador Alarcón-Hermosilla's articles and in part of Esterino Adami's. Therefore, as emerges from the brief introduction to the seven contributions below, all of them are neatly linked to the Special Issue theme and specific aim in their stylistic theoretical and analytical orientations, in the ecologically- and environmentally-oriented data they investigate, and in the methodologies they employ.

The Special Issue opens with Andrew Goatly's article "Five Themes for Ecostylistics". This is a programmatic contribution providing a comprehensive and elaborate description of five themes for the field of ecostylistics from several theoretical perspectives and analytical approaches. The overall framework integrating these various perspectives and approaches is the theory of the two dimensions of meaning, namely similarity/paradigm/metaphor versus contiguity/syntagm/metonymy, in relation to Wernicke's area and Broca's area respectively, which are the two areas of the brain primarily responsible for language processing (Jakobson 1987). Modern culture tends to overemphasize Wernicke's area's similarity dimension over Broca's area's contiguity dimension; therefore, Goatly proposes that ecostylistics oppose this tendency by examining and celebrating the main topics and stylistic

patterns characterizing a number of representative poems and novels, i.e. texts by Gerard Manley Hopkins, Edward Thomas, Alice Oswald, and William Golding. In his detailed study, the author utilizes the systemic functional model of transitivity analysis (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) and forges links to quantum physics, Daoism, and other process philosophies, in order to explain these topics and patterns and how the ecological value system they convey can contribute to preventing a long-term environmental crisis.

The contribution "Lost Landscapes of Childhood: An Ecostylistic Analysis of *The Issa Valley*", by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, investigates Czesław Miłosz's text as an existential treatise and an ecological novel. It depicts a Polish gentry boy's early years and adolescence in the eponymous Issa Valley in Lithuania, thereby paying tribute to both childhood memories and Lithuanian nature. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska scrutinizes the English translation of the text by adapting Leech and Short's (2007) taxonomy of stylistic features to be explored in fiction, like context, lexicon, syntax, and figuration. Moreover, the author complies with the analytical methodology she developed (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013) to thoroughly examine figuration and its function in portraying the Issa natural scenery. Her ecostylistic study demonstrates the following points: (1) Master tropes (simile, metaphor, synecdoche, irony, and antithesis) work at three different textual levels (micro-, macro-, and megatropical); (2) The master trope of antithesis is the prevailing stylistic characteristic making the text an example of what the author defines as "existential ecology"; (3) The primary role of figuration in the text is to relay the young protagonist's profoundly physical experience of the natural world.

In her article "Opposition in Ecological Discourse: An Ecostylistic Scrutiny of SpeakGreen Ecological Posts", Daniela Francesca Virdis also investigates antithesis in text and discourse, but from another theoretical and analytical standpoint. Her contribution examines the ecological priorities in a sample of posts appearing on the website and Facebook page of the community organization speakGreen. Virdis' ecostylistic investigation adheres to Jeffries' (2010) stylistic model of opposition; via a close systematic reading and interpretation of the text of each post, the author pinpoints the stylistic devices championing beneficial stories and those resisting destructive stories (Stibbe 2021). Her investigation proves that: (1) Conventional opposites are less fruitful in communicating beneficial stories than unconventional opposites, which are textually-generated and based on canonical conceptual oppositions; this is due to the predictable contrasts expressed by the former and the surprising antitheses signaled by the latter; (2) The environmentally-concerned text type of the speakGreen post can effectively be studied through the stylistic model of opposition. As a result, the article could contribute to our knowledge of the way unconventional opposites are employed for rhetorical and ideological purposes.

Esterino Adami, in his contribution "PLACE IS TEXT: Representing the Architecture of Landscape, the Human and Non-human in Arundhati Roy's Prose", undertakes a careful and in-depth scrutiny of the writer and activist Arundhati Roy's use and construction of place in her literary and non-literary prose, especially in her novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Place is meant and stylistically built both literally and figuratively, as a metaphor for Roy's political, social, and ecological message. Inspired by ecocriticism (Garrard 2004), this ecostylistic analysis is conducted by means of Text World Theory (Gavins 2007); Adami also examines the practices of point of view, figurative language, and defamiliarization. His key research purpose is to study the text-worlds revolving around the physical environment and how language indexes social and political issues of precarity. The conceptualization of place as text emerging from this investigation highlights the diverse and dynamic character not only of the Indian city of Delhi, but of the entire Indian subcontinent, and emphasizes how its environmental, geographical, cultural, human, and more-than-human components interact in a broader biosphere.

The article "Growing the Green City: A Cognitive Ecostylistic Analysis of Third Isaiah's Jerusalem (Isaiah 55–66)", by Karolien Vermeulen, also applies Text World Theory. In this case, the author scrutinizes a text from the Hebrew Bible by describing how different text-worlds are created and contrasted. Text World Theory is complemented by conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) and conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). This cognitive approach is combined with the ecostylistic interest in the linguistic techniques deployed to depict the green city of Jerusalem. This methodological combination works effectively to examine how city and nature are conceptualized in the text, as well as the stylistic and cognitive mechanisms utilized to represent them. A new text-world is created by urban and natural world-builders which, employed together, portray an apparently inconsistent space blending utopian and real traits. The thorough study carried out by Vermeulen yields a new reading of the text, distinct from those offered by mainstream biblical and eschatological scholarship. In addition, this interpretation encourages contemporary readers to reappraise biblical Jerusalem in particular, and urban spaces and their connections with nature in general.

In his contribution "Ambience and Nature in Travel Writing: An Ecostylistic Study of *The Old Patagonian Express* and *Eastward to Tartary*", Salvador Alarcón-Hermosilla also utilizes conceptual metaphor theory as a theoretical and analytical framework (Kövecses 2002), combined with frame semantics (Sullivan 2013). The aim of his article is to investigate the travel writing of two American authors, Paul Theroux and Robert D. Kaplan. More precisely, Alarcón-Hermosilla's contribution scrutinizes how their lexical choices, especially the adjectives they select, concur in shaping the ambience, and the related notions of tone and atmosphere, of

sequences describing landscapes. Consequently, the contribution is of special interest, since little has been written so far in the cognitive stylistics literature about how these notions have relevance for nature depictions. This ecostylistic analysis shows that the metaphors in the sequences suggest the authorial texture and the ideological attitude of the two writers: on the one hand, Theroux adopts a more benevolent stance on the natural sceneries and the peoples he visits; on the other hand, Kaplan takes a more analytical and detached position on them.

Maria-Eirini Panagiotidou, in her article "Paradise Lost: Cognitive Grammar, Nature, and the Self in Diane Seuss's Ekphrastic Poetry", also complies with a cognitive linguistic methodology and approach. The author supplies an additional application of the cognitive grammatical model for stylistic examination, and her cognitive poetic study of ekphrasis is an illustrative example of the affordances of the model. She discusses the first poem in Seuss's collection *Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl* to scrutinize the relationship between the poetic persona and her physical environment. Panagiotidou draws on the idea of construal (Langacker 2008) to explore the perspective and the level of specificity of the natural descriptions, and on the concept of image schema (Johnson 1987) to identify the several realizations of the CONTAINER image schema underpinning the semantics of the poem. From an ecostylistic viewpoint, the author detects the linguistic manifestations of the poetic persona's anthropocentric perspective, thus pinpointing the textual aspects of an anthropocentric discourse. This examination proves that this anthropocentric portrayal of nature is conveyed by highly granular lexical choices and figurative expressions, and that a sense of confinement is evoked by the CONTAINER image schema.

To sum up, the seven articles in this Special Issue show that the various stylistic methodologies and approaches adopted in them can be productively applied to investigate texts considering ecological questions, representing the natural world, and constructing the physical environment we humans are a part of. Furthermore, the rigorous study characterizing stylistics enables the analyst to distinguish the linguistic strategies and patterns treating and conceptualizing nature from the micro-level of the individual word and phrase to the macro-level of the entire discourse. Hence, thanks to these accurate stylistic methodologies and approaches, the analyst is enabled to determine whether the linguistic strategies and patterns they distinguish are ecocentric practices celebrating the natural world and our human connection with more-than-human life (which should accordingly be promoted), or whether they are anthropocentric practices depicting our alienation from the other animal and vegetable organisms and our estrangement from the environment embracing us (which should therefore be avoided).

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