

EASLCE Conference 2026

Abstracts & Bios



Session 1 3

Session 1.a Against Extinction	3
Session 1.b Archipelagic Thinking.....	6
Session 1.c Violence and Resistance in the Slaughterhouse.....	9
Session 1.d Elemental Resistance I	13
Session 1.e Vegetal Vengeance [performed panel].....	16
Session 1.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginaris I	20
Session 1.g Speculative Fiction I.....	23
Session 1.h Gender(ed) Resistance I.....	26
Session 1.i Nature Bites Back I	29
Session 1.j Undrowned Resistance: Hydropoetics	32
Session 1.k Imagining Narratives of Struggle Against Extractivism in Human-Nonhuman Relationships (pre-formed panel).....	35
Session 1.l Mythology and Magic.....	37

Session 2 40

Session 2.a The Poetics and Politics of More-than-Human Coexistence in Contemporary Cinema (performed panel).....	40
Session 2.b Blue Perspectives on Multispecies (In)justices (performed panel).....	43
Session 2.c Patricia Highsmith’s Beastly Murders (performed panel)	46
Session 2.d Elemental Resistance II	49
Session 2.e Writing Uprising with Plants and Animals (performed panel)	52
Session 2.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginaris II	54
Session 2.g Speculative Fiction II.....	56
Session 2.h Critical Infrastructures I	58
Session 2.i Creature Features.....	61
Session 2.j Undrowned Resistance: Aquatic Alliances Across Planetary Waters (performed panel).....	64
2.k From Landlocked Imaginaris to the Cloud and Back Again: On Learning to Re-Compose without Rebuilding [roundtable].....	66
Session 2.l Ambiguous Encounters and Uncanny Intimacies I	67

Session 3 70

Session 3.a Ecoviolence and Multispecies Justice: Rethinking Responsibility [Roundtable]	70
Session 3.b Aquatic Assemblages of/as Resistance and Coexistence [preformed panel]	72
Session 3.c Multispecies Malice: Rethinking Murder beyond the Human [Roundtable]	75
Session 3.d Forms of Resistance	76
Session 3.e Vegetal Agency	79
Session 3.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginaris III	83
Session 3.g Pedagogy and Children’s Literature	86
Session 3.h Critical Infrastructures II	89
Session 3.i Sacrifice in the Name of the Modern: The Sacrificed Beings and Territories Strike Back! [preformed panel]	92
Session 3.j Artistic Practices I: Writing the Nonhuman	95
Session 3.k Canine Configurations	99
Session 3.l Ambiguous Encounters and Uncanny Intimacies II	102
4.a Invasive Species I	106
4.b From Below: Subsurface Disruptions [preformed panel]	109
4.c Artistic Practices I	113
4.d Gardens and Gardening	116
4.e Speculative Fiction III	120
4.f Creaturely Poetics I	124
4.g Convivial Communities I	127
4.h Indigenous Ecologies	130
4.j Nature Bites Back — Paper Jam I	133

Session 5 134

5.a Simone Weil and “Soft” Resistance: Rootedness, Attention, and Sacredness [preformed panel]	134
5.b Material Agency in Aquatic Ecologies	136
5.c Captivity and Escape	139
Session 5.d Of Stone and Mineral Existences and Resistances: Aesthetics, Extractivism, and More-than-Human Communities (preformed panel)	141
5.e Speculative Fiction IV	144
5.f Creaturely Poetics II	146

5.g Multispecies Entanglements.....	149
5.h Imagining More-than-Human Communities through Migration [preformed panel]	152
5.i Nature Bites Back — Paper Jam II	155

Session 6 155

6.a Some We Love, Some We Hate: Why It’s So Hard to Care for Invasive Species [preformed panel]	155
6.b Post-/Decolonial Ecofiction.....	158
6.c Animal Advocacy	161
6.d Resistant Trees and Unruly Landscapes.....	165
6.e Urban Infrastructures of Hope [preformed panel]	168
6.f Convivial Communities III	171
6.g Theorizing Water Resistance [Roundtable]	174
6.h Embodied Performance and Wounded Landscapes	176

Session 1

Session 1.a Against Extinction

Room: JK2–3 0.17

Chair: Deborah Schrijvers

Speakers:

- Anisha Gamblin (University of Leeds), “Storytelling Wars: Authoritarian Regimes and the Language of Extinction in Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* (2013)”
- Alice Sundman (Stockholm University) , “Resisting Extinction: Sea Birds, Fish, and Seeds in Climate Change Novels by Charlotte McConaghy”
- Linda Williams (RMIT University), “Animals and Extinction: Reassessing Theoretical Concepts of the Lifeworld”

Anisha Gamblin (University of Leeds), “Storytelling Wars: Authoritarian Regimes and the Language of Extinction in Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* (2013)”

Abstract: Set against a speculative, eco-dystopian world of climate refugees, Indigenous Australian author Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* (2013) brings together concerns of ongoing settler colonialism, the practices of storytelling, and inter-creaturely coexistence in an eclectic exploration of extinction. In its depictions of ecosystem breakdown, authoritarian politics, and creaturely migrations, the novel can be read, in one sense at least, as a meditation on the multiple crises unfolding around us. But, as I will argue in this paper, its most compelling conviction has to do with narrative agency: where storytelling, from both human and more-than-human

agents, stimulates a rethinking of the ways in which crises are told and understood in the Anthropocene.

Influenced by recent developments in extinction studies, I will position the novel as a “near-extinction” narrative – one which shifts its discourse of ecological crisis from loss and endings to renewal and regeneration. Examining the creaturely migrations of human and more-than-human characters alike, this paper will frame *The Swan Book* as a novel that elevates solidarity-oriented alternatives to the exploitative, authoritarian regimes depicted in Australia’s Northern Territory. Ultimately, this paper will conclude by suggesting how a “storytelling sovereignty” might help facilitate human/more-than-human coexistence and thus survival in the context of global ecological crises.

Bio: Anisha Gamblin is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Leeds, working in Postcolonial Studies and the Environmental Humanities. She is based in the School of English, but her research navigates multiple subject areas, including philosophy, Indigenous Studies, and human-animal relations. Her PhD project, which examines near-extinction narratives in Indigenous literatures of the Pacific region, is part of the Leverhulme-funded Extinction Studies Doctoral Training Programme at Leeds.

Alice Sundman (Stockholm University), “Resisting Extinction: Sea Birds, Fish, and Seeds in Climate Change Novels by Charlotte McConaghy”

Abstract: Charlotte McConaghy’s novels *Migrations* (2020) and *Wild Dark Shore* (2025) both display ways of responding to the threat of extinction of species in a world facing large-scale changes of the climate. In *Migrations*, responses include human efforts such as scientific experiments aiming to breed “more resistance into some ... creatures” (207), thus intending to adapt the behaviour of chosen species to a climate-changed world. Such active attempts to transform and control nature are contrasted with a view proposing a more open-ended study of animal behaviour based on respect for the creatures’ innate nature and suggesting a potential for coexistence between humans and nonhumans. In *Wild Dark Shore*, a seed vault on a subantarctic island is threatened by warming temperatures and rising sea levels. Efforts to move the seeds to a safer place save only a fraction of the stored variants. Yet some seeds hold an inherent capacity to resist destruction and spread despite harsh conditions. Here, too, the novel suggests a conflict between active control exerted by humans and nature’s inherent capacity to survive. Inspired by and building on Edmund Husserl’s (2001) notions of *activity*—involving “the accomplishment of the ego who in the strict sense makes judgments, makes decisions, and who actively appropriates and establishes its acquisition of knowledge” (106)—and *passivity*—a pre-reflective state in which “[the ego] simply perceives, when it is merely aware, apprehending what is there and what, of itself, is presented in experience by itself” (93)—I explore the novels’ portrayals of resistance to extinction in the form of human actions as well as animal behaviour and vegetal capacity. I will argue that both novels point to the significance of a kind of resistance that refutes human control and domination, and—instead—holds an openness to, an acceptance of, and a confidence in nature’s intrinsic life and capacities.

Bio: Alice Sundman holds a PhD in English literature from Stockholm University. Her research interests include ecocriticism, Blue Humanities, place and space studies,

genetic criticism, phenomenology, and the intersections between literature and philosophy. Her current research focuses on literary imaginings of water in climate-changed future worlds. She recently completed a postdoctoral project in which she explored literary portrayals of places of and between water and land in relation to the Anthropocene. Her monograph *Toni Morrison and the Writing of Place* (Routledge, 2022), which is based on her doctoral dissertation, explores the creation and presentation of Toni Morrison's literary places.

Linda Williams (RMIT University), "Animals and Extinction: Reassessing Theoretical Concepts of the Lifeworld"

Abstract: As the sixth global extinction event unfolds, this paper gauges the extent to which the changing theoretical concept of the *lifeworld* provides an effective means of understanding the current crisis in human-animal relations. The paper traces the history of the idea of the lifeworld in three main theoretical domains: philosophy, biology and social theory. Husserl's humanist philosophy of intersubjective perceptions of the world is considered in contrast with the model of the lifeworld as it was conceived in early 20th century biology, particularly in von Uexkull's biosemiotics. The paper then turns to considering the concept's development in later 20th century theory, not only in the philosophical anthropology of Merleau-Ponty, but also in how it was recalibrated as political thought in the social theory of Schütz and Habermas. This historiographical approach to the concept reveals the conceptual flaws in how the idea of the lifeworld developed in distinct theoretical fields and its consequences for understanding human-animal relations. By turning to a selective recombination of the relative strengths of each of the three domains, the paper concludes with how a politicised multispecies model of the lifeworld could provide a more robust approach germane to the crisis in human relations with nonhuman animals.

Bio: Linda Williams is a Professor Emerita of cultural history at RMIT University, where she leads a research project *Extinction Imaginaries: Mapping affective visual cultures in Australasia*, funded by the Australia Research Council, Saffron Aid and Greenpeace Australia Pacific <<https://circlesofextinction.org>>. Forthcoming publications include a co-edited book *The Anthropocene and Visual Culture in Australia* (Routledge, 2026) and a chapter: 'Animal domestication, genealogies of exile, and the Long Anthropocene' in *Unsettling Extinction* (2025/2026) Edited by Kate Rigby, Ursula Heise & Roman Bartosh, London: Bloomsbury.

Emily McLaughlin (University of Oxford), "Addressing Long-extinct Animal Kin: The Lyric Poems of Marie-Claire Bancquart"

Abstract: This paper will investigate how the recent French poet, Marie-Claire Bancquart (1932-2019), explores the human body's evolutionary relationship to now-extinct animals. It will analyse how she uses the lyric act of address to interrogate the access that she has to the now-absent animals that contributed to the formation of her DNA. It will explore how talking to a human body *that is not actually there* allows her to explore the way that the human body emerges from a diverse range of animal processes are both perceptible and imperceptible. Drawing on Culler and de Man's writings on the lyric, as well as the work of speculative materialist thinkers like Bennett and Alaimo, it will examine how Bancquart uses the complex enunciative

structure of the lyric to develop a conception of human embodiment as inherently spectral, as haunted by a host of prehistoric animal-kin that hover between presence and absence. It will analyse how her lyric poems work at the boundary between imaginative and affective experience in order to experiment with possible ways of entering into contact with these animal predecessors.

The key questions that this paper poses are: how does the human subject's relationship to its own body impact its treatment of animal bodies? Could the exploitative and extractivist treatment of animals that we see on a mass-scale today be linked to human unease with the strangely multi-species, multi-faceted and multi-scalar nature of the evolutionary body? Could confronting the radical heterogeneity of the human body help human subjects to be more accepting of animal life and to be more equitable in the treatment of animal bodies?

Bio: Emily McLaughlin is Associate Professor of French at Wadham College, Oxford. She works on the relationship between recent French and Francophone poetry and ecological thought. Her first book *Yves Bonnefoy: Ontological Performance* (2020) investigates how Bonnefoy's poetry experiments with poetic form in order to resist the conceptual structures of language and articulate the interconnectedness of existence. She is currently working on two new projects: one on how the lyric form facilitates embodied speculation about nonhuman lives in French and Francophone poetry; and one on life writing and biosemiotics.

Session 1.b Archipelagic Thinking

Room: JK2–3 0.19

Chair: José Manuel Marrero Henríquez

Speakers:

- Estelle Krewiss (University of Münster), “They can disappear just like that:’ Contact by the Shore from Rachel Carson’s *The Edge of the Sea* to Eva Saulitis’ *Into Great Silence*”
- Mohammed Afsal (Jamia Millia Islamia), “Archipelagic Assemblages: Decolonial Ecologies and Multispecies Resistance in Contemporary Fiction”
- Belén González Morales (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), “Breathing, Poetizing, and Archipelagic Thinking”
- Irene Pessot, “From Feminist Margins to the Ocean: Envisioning More-than-Human Solidarity with *Le Nemesiache* (1970-1980s)”

Estelle Krewiss (University of Münster), “They can disappear just like that:’ Contact by the Shore from Rachel Carson’s *The Edge of the Sea* to Eva Saulitis’ *Into Great Silence*”

Abstract: The shoreline is a contact zone, where ecosystems and species encounter one another. However, it is also a place of instability, increasingly shaped by the ecological crisis where human and nonhuman vulnerabilities intersect. This presentation examines two works of nonfiction by marine biologists—Rachel Carson’s *The Edge of the Sea* (1951) and Eva Saulitis’ memoir *Into Great Silence* (2013)—to explore how each author engages with the shore and its nonhuman inhabitants and, through Saulitis’ later example, environmental instability. Integrating the Blue Humanities with Affective Ecocriticism, this presentation draws on Mary

Louise Pratt's theorization of contact zones as places of meeting and transformation, and Donna Haraway's *staying with the trouble*, to reframe shorelines as places that present forms of nonhuman resistance. While Affective Ecocriticism often centers on relations that only come to light when lost—or are on the verge of being lost—such a focus risks overlooking what *is* alive. Through an analysis of Carson's early example of attentiveness to intertidal life, to Saulitis' recounting the lasting impact of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill on a local orca population—the Chugach transients—I ask: What forms of contact emerge by the shore, and how do they challenge human ways of knowing? In this shifting space, both authors present nonhumans as active presences grounded in the shore's complex dynamics. Their work models an epistemic humility and ethics of attentiveness—a way of being-with that recognizes the limits of human knowledge as well as the possibilities emerging from staying present to what is alive. The shore they write of offers a vision of relationality marked by presence, estrangement, and open-endedness.

Bio: Estelle E. E. Krewiss is a PhD student in American Studies at the University of Münster. Her dissertation, titled: *Feeling Blue? Environmental Change and Emotional Responses by the Shore in Contemporary U.S. Literature*, investigates the cultural significance of shorelines as complex sites of encounters and affective diversity—beyond grief—in the context of ecological crises. Drawing from the blue humanities and affective ecocriticism, it highlights how the shore offers fresh perspectives on ecological resilience and relationality.

Mohammed Afsal (Jamia Millia Islamia), “Archipelagic Assemblages: Decolonial Ecologies and Multispecies Resistance in Contemporary Fiction”

Abstract: Building on Édouard Glissant's notion of Relation, archipelagic studies emerge as an interdisciplinary framework for spatializing connections across scales and dimensions. For Philip Schwyzer and Simon Meador, its key strength lies in challenging fixed boundaries, (2004) Philip Schwyzer and Simon Meador (2004) emphasize its challenge to fixed boundaries, while Jenny R. Isaacs characterizes the archipelago as at once a geographical formation, a site of multispecies encounter, a metaphor of interconnection, a topology of power, a socioecological assemblage, and a spatial ontology—altogether a “multiscalar, multispecies, multidimensional assemblage” (2020). Drawing on posthumanism, new materialism, environmental philosophy, multispecies studies, and political ecology, recent scholarship foregrounds the archipelago as an analytic lens for studying multispecies entanglements, decolonial ecologies, and planetary interdependence, underscoring its vitality for reimagining histories, confronting present socioenvironmental crises, and envisioning just futures.

Examining contemporary fictions such as Richard Powers' *Playground* (2024), Rivers Solomon's *The Deep* (2019), Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), J. M. Ledgard's *Submergence* (2011), Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* (2008), Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005), and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987), where marine flora and fauna—from plankton to cetaceans—emerge as agential and expressive forces, this paper looks how the potential of archipelagic thinking is materialised across literary studies. Through these narratives that depict oceans and oceanic beings as agential and expressive, intervening in, disrupting, or resisting human projects such as extractive capitalism and colonial violence, this paper will foreground the ocean as a site of insurgency, where multispecies collectivities challenge human

exceptionalism and enact visions of coexistence grounded in care, reciprocity, and resilience.

By situating these literary works within the intersecting fields of critical posthumanism, archipelagic/blue humanities, and decolonial/postcolonial ecology, I show how they mobilize the archipelago as both metaphor and material assemblage to not only critique ecological injustice and imagining alternative futures, but also to extend the scope of the “orca uprising” beyond singular spectacles of nonhuman resistance, toward a broader ethic of solidarity and survival across scales, histories, and species.

Bio: Mohammed Afsal holds a Master’s Degree in English from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, along with a Junior Research Fellowship certification. He is currently in search for a prospective PhD position and is independent researcher in Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Environmental Humanities, Anthropocene and Climate Change, New Materialisms and Posthumanisms, Blue (Oceanic) Imaginaries, Contemporary Anglophone Literature, World Ecologies and Literatures.

**Belén González Morales (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria),
“Breathing, Poetizing, and Archipelagic Thinking”**

Abstract: The Poetics of breathing explores relationships among diverse literary manifestations, recognizing that all artistic expressions –from those inspired by indigenous oral cultures to those rooted in Western technologized literate cultures– breathe in unison with the Earth and its temporal-spatial regularities. This poetics, privileging collaboration over confrontation, constitutes Marrero Henríquez’s ecologically-rooted general theory of literature, finding resonance in various currents addressing insular literatures.

This paper hypothesizes that Édouard Glissant’s judgments on literature and insularity within archipelagic thinking and the Poetics of Relation have generated interpretative frameworks of nature and culture that challenge the homogenizing, hegemonic paradigms of European colonization. Within these centuries-forged archipelagic expressions, a shared eco-poetics emerges.

The objective of this article is to identify ecosystemic interpretative sources that form part of the Poetics of Breathing. Three specific objectives are addressed: first, to explain the Poetics of Breathing and the place that Glissant’s thought holds within it; second, to examine two relevant concepts of the Martinican author: archipelagic thinking and the poetics of Relation; third, to analyze how this framework contributes to the post-anthropocentric solidarity promoted by the Poetics of Breathing.

The methodology employs documentary and literary analysis, beginning with the review of theoretical sources to deepen understanding of the interpretative resources that archipelagic thinking offers to the Poetics of Breathing.

The results contribute to defining the ecosystemic interpretative sources for the Poetics of Breathing, revealing how archipelagic solidarity extends beyond human boundaries to encompass interspecies and ecological relationships. This approach demonstrates literature’s capacity to generate alternative epistemologies that challenge colonial hierarchies while fostering collaborative coexistence models. The research illuminates how insular literary expressions serve as laboratories for developing post-anthropocentric thought, offering vital contributions to contemporary ecocritical discourse and environmental humanities.

Bio: Belén González Morales is professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Las Palmas Gran Canaria. PhD in Literature and Theory of Literature, currently teaching at the Bachelor's Degree in Hispanic Language and Literature and the Master's Degree in Audiovisual and Literary Culture. Her doctoral thesis focused on insular Modernism in Spain. Research lines include contemporary Spanish literature and its relationship with cinema, and the poetics of insularity, topics she has explored in congresses and publications.

Irene Pessot, “From Feminist Margins to the Ocean: Envisioning More-than-Human Solidarity with Le Nemesiache (1970-1980s)”

Abstract: From the depths of the sea, its inhabitants rise together, calling strikes and assemblies, rebelling against extractivism and pollution. Confronted with the ocean's crisis, all its creatures gather to hold a referendum, seeking a way to confront the immense challenge. So speaks the voice that guides the viewer in the film *Il mare ci ha chiamato* (*The sea has called us*), created in 1978 by the Neapolitan feminist grassroots collective Le Nemesiache. This paper explores how the collective envisioned the sea and its inhabitants as part of a reciprocal, non-hierarchical relational paradigm, anticipating debates on multispecies justice and more-than-human solidarity.

Active since 1970, Le Nemesiache employed art and performance as instruments of social intervention in marginalized contexts. Their feminism, rooted at the margins, linked the oppression of women, trans people and those confined in prisons or psychiatric institutions to the violence perpetrated against the planet, all traced back to a common matrix of male violence. Thus, they aligned themselves with nonhuman beings, conceived not as objects but as active interlocutors with agency and political relevance. They reject the concept of nature as historically constructed like the category of woman—linked for centuries to nature to legitimize women's subjugation. They conceive the land and their own body as a collective corporeality, a vision that resonates with the notion of *cuerpo-territorio* theorized by non-Western feminisms. Existing scholarship has largely focused on their artistic output, leaving the philosophical and political dimensions less explored. This paper addresses that gap, drawing on the 2022 archive at the National Library of Naples and planned oral interviews with former members. The aim is to investigate the originality and ongoing resonance of their political thought, offering ways to rethink our relationship with the world and its nonhuman inhabitants.

Bio: Irene Pessot (Bologna, 1998) recently completed her Master's degree in Historical Studies at the University of Bologna. Her research focuses on feminist movements and oral history, with particular attention to the intersections between feminist activism and anti-psychiatry. She is also engaged in feminist approaches to animal studies and recently published “*Becoming a Seal: Narratives of Eco-Transfeminist Resistance*” in the antispeciesist feminist journal *Seeds*, examining interspecies metamorphosis in folklore.

Session 1.c Violence and Resistance in the Slaughterhouse

Room: JK2–3 1.09

Chair: Robert McKay

Speakers:

- Camilla Hougaard (Aarhus University), “‘A pig transport is on fire on the E45 highway’: An Industrial Slaughter Pig’s Ambiguous Revolt in Nath Krause’s *Trilogi* (2025)”
- Ben Lomas (University of Sheffield), “Carnotroping and Creaturely Resistance in *Okja* (2017)”
- Anna Dijkstra (Indep Scholar/University of Cambridge), “Eating Brains as Food for Thought: An Argument for Ethico-Linguistic Transformation towards Cows in the Aftermath of the BSE Outbreak”
- Wouter Capitain (University of Göttingen), “Revolutionary Song and Speciesism in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*”

Camilla Hougaard (Aarhus University), “‘A pig transport is on fire on the E45 highway’: An Industrial Slaughter Pig’s Ambiguous Revolt in Nath Krause’s *Trilogi* (2025)”

Abstract: In recent years, Danish literature has become increasingly entangled with agriculture: a publisher has turned farmer, and a growing body of nature writing and fiction now places farming at its thematic center. This literary turn does not merely document rural life as endangered, as the tradition often has, but instead portrays agriculture as a site of imaginative potential.

Contemporary Danish literature continues the literary negotiation of agriculture initiated by Rachel Carson’s depiction of “man’s war against nature,” situating it within today’s political struggles over soil, food production, and the futures of shared land. This paper explores Nath Krause’s poetry collection *Trilogi* (2025), in which an industrial pig flees into a field from a transport truck en route to slaughter. Yet contrary to the expectations of a classic escape narrative, the pig’s free life proves impossible. Here, caught in “this short time between ripening and harvest” (25), she longs for her mother in the industrial production and for the artificial soy feed she was raised on.

I will investigate how Krause collapses conventional distinctions between nature/agriculture, human mother/pig mother and care/industry and instead foregrounds their entangled interdependencies through a semantic ambiguity. Furthermore, I will examine how this strategy – considered alongside the pig’s complex emotional apparatus – may serve to nuance the idea of animals as “poor in world” (Heidegger 1929/1930).

Drawing on Jane Bennett’s call to establish new “[...] regimes of perception that enable us to consult nonhumans more closely, or to listen and respond more carefully to their outbreaks, objections, testimonies, and propositions” (Bennett 2010, 108), this paper will emphasize how *Trilogi* weaves industrial animal farming and poetic sensibility together, offering new (piggy) perspectives on modern, industrialized Danish agriculture.

Bio: Camilla Hougaard is a PhD student at Aarhus University, where she researches contemporary Danish agricultural literature through an ecocritical lens. Her project investigates how literary texts reconfigure the entanglements between soil, animals, and humans, and she explores how these works might foster a more nuanced debate

on sustainable land use. Alongside her academic work, she is a writer and co-editor in the Scandinavian literary magazine *Vagant*.

Ben Lomas (University of Sheffield), “Carnotroping and Creaturely Resistance in *Okja* (2017)”

Abstract: In this paper I will introduce a new concept for understanding the human-animal relationship: carnotroping. Drawing on the concept of pornotroping, coined by Hortense Spillers and developed by Alexander Weheliye, which denotes the biopolitical transformation of black bodies into flesh under the regime of white supremacy, carnotroping names the material-discursive processes that render nonhuman animals edible and transform their bodies into meat. Reading carnotropes allows us to attend to the ways that ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ agencies are constructed and represented, as well as the species-political power dynamics that govern their interactions. Because the horror genre is especially concerned with monsters, violence, and edibility, interpreting its use of carnotropes can help draw out an underlying species politics.

Ecohorror often trades in carnotropes subversively by reversing the hierarchical human/animal dichotomy (and the corresponding eater/eaten dichotomy), particularly in animal vengeance narratives, imagining the human as meat and the animal as more-than-meat. However, Val Plumwood has demonstrated that strategies of reversal can actually reaffirm dualistic thinking.¹ Addressing this problem with ecohorror, I will analyse Bong Joon Ho’s *Okja* (2017), a film that deploys carnotropes comically and horrifically to deconstruct the notion that animals are food. My paper will explore how *Okja* plays with the tropes of ecohorror, producing a cinematic nonhuman resistance that complicates, rather than simply reverses, the human/animal binary. *Okja* isn’t a horror film, but it is a monster movie; the titular monster being a large pig-like creature bred for meat. *Okja* herself is produced by the carnotropic animal agriculture industry, but the narrative is driven by creaturely resistance and her claim to subjectivity. I will explore how, through the ethical and empathic possibilities of the cinematic medium, *Okja* resists the violence done through the human/animal binary and offers instead a compelling vision of multispecies care and solidarity.

Bio: Ben Lomas is an AHRC-funded PhD researcher in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. His work examines representations of anthropophagy in Gothic literature, horror cinema, and popular culture, with a particular focus on their subversive relationship to the discourse of anthropocentrism. His project aims to problematise the notion of edibility that governs much of our relationship with nonhuman animals, drawing from the Gothic a posthuman ethics that recognises our messy, fleshy entanglement with the more-than-human world.

Anna Dijkstra (Indep Scholar/University of Cambridge?), “Eating Brains as Food for Thought: An Argument for Ethico-Linguistic Transformation towards Cows in the Aftermath of the BSE Outbreak”

Abstract: The “Mad Cow Disease” crisis that surged through the United Kingdom in the 1990s is primarily thought of as a political scandal of human suffering. And while there were 178 human victims of vCJD, an oversight in our collective memory of the epidemic is striking: over 183,000 non-human animals, primarily cows, had their lives

cut short by the disease in the United Kingdom alone – a count that does not include the millions murdered in anticipation of their illnesses. The cause of this epidemic was putting leftover meat, including parts of the central nervous system, into both cow and human food. In response, an almost metaphysical appeal was made to a universal immorality of cannibalism – after all, the cows’ infected food consisted of members of their own species. But apart from a non-committal sentiment about BSE being “nature’s revenge” for feeding flesh to herbivores, the fate of the majority of victims – the cows – has been ignored. Might we repurpose the metaphysical appeal to ethics entrenched in BSE discourse for good?

By considering the food-related transformation of these cows underlying this outbreak as a technological interference, my aim with this essay is, analysing various BSE broadcasts, to diagnose a transference of the suffering of cows that is simultaneously bodily and signficatory, reconceptualising the cannibalistic sin as a semiotic curse. By invoking the Heideggerean concept of poetic revealing, Cornips’s cow linguistics, and interspecies phenomenology, I seek to emphasise how the material language we apply to non-human animals can be mapped onto the atrocities we subject them to. The harmful rhetoric of BSE might help us find a way out, too.

Bio: Anna Dijkstra is a literary researcher whose work focuses on the epistemological entanglements of modernist literature, with particular interests in non-human consciousness, the early Wittgenstein, H.D., and formal logic. She recently completed an MPhil in English Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her work has previously appeared in publications including the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, *Echinox Journal*, and *The Modernist Review*, and she works as a researcher on the ERC-advanced funded *Moral Residue (MORE)* project.

Wouter Capitain (University of Göttingen), “Revolutionary Song and Speciesism in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*”

Abstract: In George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), the song ‘Beasts of England’ incites the rebellion of the animals, who run the farm collectively after overthrowing their human oppressors. Later in the novel, the song again functions as a form of resistance against the tyranny of the pigs, who dominate the other species through their superior ability to read and write. While literacy is unevenly distributed among the farm’s inhabitants, the revolutionary song offers a realm where all animals are equal, at least momentarily. But how can interspecies equality be enacted through song? What does the animal revolution sound like?

In this paper, I offer a close reading of the composition and political resonances of ‘Beasts of England’ in order to contemplate the song’s resistance to *speciesism* (the belief, analogous to racism, that some species are naturally superior to others). I argue that, although music in *Animal Farm* provides a counterforce to the oppressive uses of language, ‘Beasts of England’ simultaneously questions whether the dictum that “all animals are equal” would also encompass creatures beyond the domesticated livestock, such as insects. Thus, the song champions interspecies equality while also suggesting that this ideal remains exclusionary.

My interpretation builds on previous analyses by literary scholars like Susan McHugh, Naama Harel, Stewart Cole, and John Drew who move beyond conventional readings of the novel as an anthropomorphized allegory of the Russian Revolution and instead highlight *Animal Farm*’s critique of animal exploitation. Yet, by drawing

attention specifically to the sonic dimension of *Animal Farm*, I argue that the book suggests that, in order to successfully fight injustice and achieve proper equality, we ought to move beyond language as the predominant form of political discourse. Instead, Orwell implies, we ought to envision the animal revolution musically.

Bio: Wouter Capitain is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Musicology at the University of Göttingen. He investigates the performative social function of music in shaping discourses about human-animal distinctions, focusing on twentieth-century popular artworks such as Disney films and George Orwell's novels. In 2021, he completed his doctoral dissertation on Edward Said and the intersections of music and postcolonialism. He edited Said's posthumous book *Said on Opera* (2024) and is currently writing a monograph on Said's music-related work.

Session 1.d Elemental Resistance I

Room: JK2–3 1.10

Chair: Celandine Fleur Seuren

Speakers:

- Lúcia Bentes, "Conflict, Domination, and Resistance: The Wind as a Nonhuman Force in Sarah Hall's *Helm*"
- Christian Schmitt-Kilb (University of Rostock), "If It Happens, Helm Isn't Sorry: Climate Breakdown as Transhistorical Human–Nonhuman Relationship in Sarah Hall's *Helm* (2025)"
- Hyang Jo (Seoul National University), "The Revolt of the Four Elements in *Faust*"
- Marina Messeri (University of Cambridge), "'Looking forward from the past': The Lament of the Elements in the 12th-Century Cosmology of Hildegard of Bingen"

Lúcia Bentes, "Conflict, Domination, and Resistance: The Wind as a Nonhuman Force in Sarah Hall's *Helm*"

In light of current ecological and climate changes, and considering that the relationship between humans and nature has long been defined by "conflict and antagonism since Antiquity" (CFP), this paper examines how the wind, as a nonhuman element, is imagined in *Helm* by Sarah Hall (August 2025). Specifically, it explores how the wind perceives itself—or himself, when personified—and its shifting role in relation to human beings. The analysis focuses on two dimensions:

- a) the wind as a male force, both dominating and destructive: "*Helm enjoys the feeling of agency, of urgency, playing with Helmsself to arouse desire for great, wreaking, havoc-making release, surging from a sky orifice, down the mountain, flooding the valley with noise and velocity*" (Hall 2025, 6).
- b) the wind as furious and vengeful: "*Hurricane Helm (the hand of God). Wind speed 73–83, phenomenal damage and wide-scale loss of life, Eden reconfigured biblically*" (Hall 2025, 157).

Through these perspectives, the paper highlights how symbolic personifications of the wind reflect broader cultural imaginaries of power, gender, and the human–nature relationship. I argue that this anthropomorphism expresses the wind’s agency and forms of political and social resistance against humans. *Helm* gives voice to a nonhuman force, presenting it as an intelligent being that has generally remained invisible, effectively conveying an awareness of humanity’s destructive impact on nature.

Bio: Born and raised in Germany, Lúcia Bentes has a bachelor degree in German, English and Portuguese and completed her traineeship as a secondary school teacher. She earned her doctoral degree (Ph.D) at the New University of Lisbon (2017). She has published on interdisciplinary topics. Her research interests include Children's and Youth Literature, Contemporary Literature, Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities. She is an independent researcher and a German and English teacher in Lisbon (Portugal).

Christian Schmitt-Kilb (University of Rostock), “If It Happens, Helm Isn’t Sorry: Climate Breakdown as Transhistorical Human–Nonhuman Relationship in Sarah Hall’s *Helm* (2025)”

Abstract: Amongst the catastrophes that are part and characteristic of the climate breakdown in recent British fiction (flood, drought, heat, cold, viruses, plastic pollution, rising sea levels, erosion...), destructive wind is not top of the list. Sarah Hall is an exception. Her 2017 short story "Later, His Ghost" is set in a dystopian world in which feeling human is only a memory because "whatever had been kept in check by the gulfstream was now able to push back and lash around". Intertextually entangled with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the story employs the motif of the storm to build a bridge between the beginning of the modern dream of human emancipation from the fateful forces of nature, and the catastrophic transformation of this dream into an aggressive, hubristic belief in technological progress and total human mastery of the earth. In her most recent novel, Hall gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name: *Helm* (2025), title and gravitational centre of the novel, is the only named wind in the UK. The novel tells the story of its eponymous hero from the time before time and names, when all was "serious planetary business", via a period of mutual fascination between wind and humans, to Anthropocene England where Dr. Selima Sutar researches the wind and the anthropogenic effects on it while Helm must realize that "human time is Helm's time after all". In narrative back-and-forth movements between transhistorical human perspectives and Helm's take on them, between human agency and agency of the more-than-human world, deep history, natural history and human history form a matrix on which Dipesh Chakrabarty's claim that the Anthropocene spells the collapse of the age-old humanist distinction between these histories is thrown into sharp relief. While Hall's short story is set in a dystopian world and fleshes out the struggle for survival in the face of an avenging nature, Helm's tone is almost elegiac in the end. The romantic relationship between world and "busy, careless humans" has failed. They "probably didn't mean to hurt", but they did. Now, divorce is imminent. The two texts thus probe the limits of different genres – short story and novel, dystopian fiction and transhistorical realism – to capture the essence of human-nonhuman relations in the context of climate crisis scenarios.

Bio: Christian Schmitt-Kilb is professor of English literature at the University of Rostock, Germany. In recent years, his research has focused on the field of literature and the environment, including New Nature Writing/Landscape Writing, Ecopoetics and Ecopoetry, ecology and literature of the British left (with a special focus on the work of John Berger), and fiction, environment, and place in the context of Brexit.

Hyang Jo (Seoul National University), “The Revolt of the Four Elements in *Faust*”

Abstract: Water, fire, earth, air: these four elements each play a significant role in *Faust*. Moreover, Faust battles the element of water (the sea), particularly in Part Two. He attempts to reclaim tidal flats to create reclaimed land, but Faust’s endeavour to dominate nature fails, and in the final scene of the work, he is lifted up by the element of air. Moreover, the four elements are purified. Might this work be viewed from the perspective of inhuman resistance? The four elements are not dominated by Faust; they transcend him. This presentation attempts to read *Faust* not by focusing on Faust as an individual and his drama, but by focusing on the four elements. Viewed in this way, existing interpretations of *Faust* – particularly the debates surrounding Faust’s salvation and the debate over whether this work is a tragedy or not – can be seen in an entirely different light. Illuminating the human-inhuman relationship in *Faust* allows the paradoxes and contradictions within the work to be reinterpreted. In this drama, the four elements not only resist humanity but are elevated beyond it to a cosmic dimension.

Bio: Hyang Jo is Assistant Professor in the Department of German Literature and Language and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Gender Studies at Seoul National University. She is also a member of their Environmental Reading Group. Her research interests include ecocriticism, Environmental Humanities, anthropocene discourses, posthumanism, Goethe and Weimar Classicism, Translation Theories, literature and science, intercultural literature, and gender studies.

Marina Messeri (University of Cambridge), “‘Looking forward from the past’: The Lament of the Elements in the 12th-Century Cosmology of Hildegard of Bingen”

Abstract: In her cosmological visions, Hildegard of Bingen – 12th-century benedictine nun and *magistra* – sees a universe saturated with vitality, or viridity/greenness (*viriditas*) where the elements are not inert matter but animate, affective forces that express pain, longing, and resistance. This paper presents passages in Hildegard’s texts, such as the *Liber Divinorum Operum* and the *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, as early articulations of what might today be framed as a proto-ecological worldview. Central to this reading is the lament of the elements, a striking motif in which earth, air, fire, and water grieve their degradation by human sin. These laments offer a medieval precedent for the narrative of “nature’s revenge” that animates some strands of contemporary discourse on nonhuman resistance and the agency of the other-than-human. Although Hildegard’s cosmology remains fundamentally Christian (a Platonising Catholicism), and retains elements of anthropocentrism, it gestures toward a vision of deep interdependence between human and non/other-than-human. In her framework, both the material and spiritual economies of humanity and the natural world are inextricably entangled.

The paper suggests that alternative futures may be found by listening to voices from the premodern era, as suggested by Rebecca Solnit's expression "looking forward from the past." Hildegard's elemental lament, I argue, is not only a critique of human distorted, immoderate (*moderatio* being a vital element in Hildegard's worldview) relation with the environment, but also a call for reparative alliances across species and substances; a medieval mode to foster harmony and balance between humans and other-than-human entities.

Bio: Marina Messeri is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity. She holds a BA and MA in Philosophy (Università Cattolica di Milano), and an MPhil in Theology, Philosophy of Religion, and Religious Studies (University of Cambridge). Her research interests include medieval philosophy and theology, eco-theology and environmental ethics, aesthetics and aesthetic education. At present, she is working on an ecological reading of Hildegard of Bingen's cosmic anthropology.

Session 1.e Vegetal Vengeance [performed panel]

Room: JK2–3 1.15

Chair: Gabriele Dürbeck

Speaker:

- Solvejg Nitzke (Ruhr-University), "The Trees Are Out to Get Us': Arboreal Vengeance in Eco-Horror Comics"
- Heather I. Sullivan (Trinity University), "Vegetal Vengeance in Cli-Fi: A Spectacle of Co-Species Collaborative Destruction"
- Gabriele Dürbeck (University of Vechta), "Plant Revenge, Resistance and Revenants in Contemporary Environmental Poetry"
- Catherin Persing (Ruhr University), "Out of Control: Unruly Plants and the Ambivalence of More-Than-Human Care in Little Joe and Little Otik"

Panel Abstract: Violent, collaborative, communicative, slowly spreading, and monstrous plants enact various forms of "Vegetal Vengeance" in the plant narratives that we discuss in this critical plant studies panel. In that all large multicellular beings depend on unceasing vegetal activities to exist, and since they preceded our own existence by eons but seem to fade away into a dusty green backdrop for industrialized humans fascinated more by our mirror images in AI or other tech, we may be foolishly taking plant lives for granted. Even as we are now (re-)learning ever more about the intra-species collaborations and communication that plants use to thrive, those interactions enabled by a kind of green intelligence are not only supportive of other beings; no, they can also be aggressive and even dangerous. Indeed, plants resist, especially now, in the Anthropocene, when human activities are changing so many ecosystems across the planet. The stories that we address reflect our plant dependence and the elaborate collaborations that result, but they also play with possible vegetal actions responding to human violence in kind. In this panel, we address a full array of genres portraying vegetal vengeance including eco-horror comics, cli fi novels, eco-poetry, and horror film. Collaboration continues in each genre, but often with less helpful outcomes for the human actants. Some stories raise the issue of whether the use of anthropomorphized forms of vegetal agency most appropriately features the plant-human relationships that industrial activity is currently

damaging. And yet, we find that such wildly creative tales only begin to reveal the reality of plant power for our lives and that restricting the imaginative entanglements often lessens our appreciation of the vegetal. Through the study of radical vegetal vengeance, this panel works to expand our attention to the essential relationships with green lives upon which we all depend.

Solvejg Nitzke (Ruhr-University), “The Trees Are Out to Get Us’: Arboreal Vengeance in Eco-Horror Comics”

Abstract: The history of human-tree relationships is as much a history of care as it is one of violence, though the latter might actually dominate the grand scheme of things (see for example Jared Farmer: *Elderflora* (2022) and John Miller’s *The Heart of the Wood. Why Trees Matter*, 2022). Given the increasingly popular view of trees as agential beings capable of forming interspecies relationships, of communicating and collaborating (see Nitzke 2025), Dawn Keetley’s fifth thesis on plant horror comes to mind: If plants keep track of human violence, one has to assume that “plants will get their revenge” (2016). Consequently, a growing number of texts revive the idea of trees striking back, yet, as I will show in this talk, the dialogue with changing ideas of what plants in general, and trees in particular, are capable of, also transform the scope of arboreal vengeance narratives. The paper will give a short overview about forms of arboreal vengeance – ghost trees, arboreal judges and executioners (recently revived e.g. in novels by Elif Shafak, Andrew Michael Hurley and Percival Everett) – in order to focus on a new scale of tree revenge prevalent in comic books. Jeff Lemire and Phil Hester’s series *Family Tree* (2020-2021), Waren Ellis and Jason Howard’s *The Trees* (2015-2020) and Zep’s *The End* (2020) combine scientific novels and eco-horror narratives to model the ideas of arboreal vengeance on a global scale, i.e. they narrate how trees conspire to get rid of humans once and for all. Exploring these comics as dialogues between environmentalist narratives, scientific theses and generic forms of horror, this paper follows the cultural poetics of arboreal vengeance and the dark pleasure of imagining the end of the human species at the branches of trees.

Bio: Solvejg Nitzke is interim professor of comparative literature at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. She researches the production of knowledge under precarious circumstances in science fiction, literary and philosophical texts. She has worked on a wide array of topics ranging from the Tunguska-Event (a paradigmatically unexplained explosion in Siberia, 1908) to global warming, village ecologies and the literary and cultural lives of trees. She is the author of *Making Kin with Trees. A Cultural Poetics of Interspecies Care* (Palgrave 2025).

Heather I. Sullivan (Trinity University), “Vegetal Vengeance in Cli-Fi: A Spectacle of Co-Species Collaborative Destruction”

Abstract: With this study of “Vegetal Vengeance” in two contemporary climate-change novels, plants react aggressively with varying forms of “agency” in response to anthropogenic crises. Most significantly, plant agency involves forms of collaborative revenge with other species; in other words, vegetal vengeance is no individualized action of an individual subject. Instead, they join forces with fungi, birds and other pollinators, animals including occasionally humans, and other plants. Plant action is collaborative and embodies distributed agency, much like Anna Tsing and

her co-editors describe broadly in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* and Donna Haraway discusses in *Staying with the Trouble*. For example, Bernhard Kegel's 2024 novel, *Gras*, presents genetically modified grass slowly taking over Berlin, empowered both by genetic modification undertaken by eco-terrorists but also the plants' fungal co-species to become an apocalyptically powerful force that drives the humans out of the area. In Jasmin Schreiber's 2024 futuristic, ecofeminist novel, *Endling*, climate change and the return of fascism drives women into the deep forests of Italy and Sweden where ancient, prehistoric vegetation exists in secret areas where only females survive due to what might be a magical vegetal influence interacting with all the species in the area. Plant dominance, a power which rules our planet's ecosystems with its production of oxygen, transformation of water, nitrogen, and carbon cycles, and its creation of food and matter to support most large-bodied beings, becomes "vegetal vengeance" in both these contemporary novels of climate and social crises where plants must take on new forms and new kinds of collaborations in the wake of human ecological destruction. We all live in co-species collaborations, of course, with our gut biome or fungal-root-pollinator interactions; plants cooperate in these two novels to undermine the non-cooperative human cultures with livid green vengeance.

Bio: Heather I. Sullivan is Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Trinity University, USA. She has published widely on ecocriticism and the Anthropocene, Goethe, German Romanticism, petro-texts, the "dark green," fairy tales, and critical plant studies, and is currently working on a manuscript "The Dark Green: Plants, People, Power." Sullivan is past President of the North American Goethe Society, Associate Editor of the European Ecocriticism Journal *Ecozon@*, and Co-editor of the De Gruyter series, "Ecocriticism Unbound."

Gabriele Dürbeck (University of Vechta), "Plant Revenge, Resistance and Revenants in Contemporary Environmental Poetry"

Abstract: Attributing intentions such as revenge, anger, greed, or other strong emotions to plants is not without its problems. The accusation of an undue anthropomorphizing quickly follows. However, in recent environmental literature, and especially in environmental poetry, anthropomorphizing is justified as a strategic means not only of appropriating the non-human world, but also of granting it a form of agency. This agency can consist, for example, of plants quickly overgrowing human dwellings and infrastructures, their seed pods being thrown into the air 'with fury', or the fact that they cannot be eradicated even with great effort. Indeed, many new studies in botany, philosophy, and critical plant work indicate that plants have their own kind of agency and intelligence that may be slower than human timeframes but includes communication, supportive reactions to relatives, aggression towards other species, and resistance to (human) interventions. Textually, we find many examples in the current environmental poetry collections, including Marion Poschmann's *Geistersehen [Ghost-Seeing]* (2010), Jan Wagner's award-winning *Regentonnenvariationen [Rain-barrel Variations]* (2014), Oswald Egger's *Val Di Non* (2017), Daniela Danz's *Wildniß [Wildernis]* (2020). In selected poems from these and probably further poetry collections, the talk wants to examine the significance of the representation of affective forms of articulation, the extent to which the plant world is adequately represented, and whether these are suitable for

rethinking the deeply disturbed relationship between humans and nature in new and creative ways.

Bio: Gabriele Duerbeck is a Professor for Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Vechta. She has widely published in the fields of ecocriticism, narratives of the Anthropocene, German-language nature writing, postcolonial studies, dystopian world literature, travel literature on the South Pacific, and the history of anthropology and aesthetics. She is conducting the research project "Natural-cultural memory in the Anthropocene. Archives, Media and Literatures of Earth History" (2024-2026, funded by the German Research Foundation). Gabriele is editor-in-chief of the open-access journal *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*.

Catherin Persing (Ruhr University) , “Out of Control: Unruly Plants and the Ambivalence of More-Than-Human Care in Little Joe and Little Otik”

Abstract: Monstrous plants that strike back recur in ecological imaginations. This talk examines two audiovisual examples of such ‘vegetal vengeance’: *Little Joe* (Hausner, 2019) and *Little Otik* (*Otesánek*, Švankmajer and Švankmajerová, 2000). In both films, the monstrous plants do not appear as ‘wild’ creatures; instead, they emerge from the entanglement of more-than-human entities with human-made infrastructures: the laboratory and the garden. Following Tsing et al. (2021), they can be considered ‘feral entities’ resulting from the unintended, uncontrollable and unforeseeable consequences of human transformation processes.

In *Little Joe*, this dynamic manifests in a genetically engineered plant designed to make people happy, but which instead manipulates human cognition to establish an affective regime of control. *Little Otik*, by contrast, translates the fairytale motif of the artificial child into an allegory of reproductive desire and socio-ecological catastrophe through the figure of an all-devouring vegetal offspring whose care literally consumes his parents. In both films, plants manipulate humans into devoting themselves entirely to vegetal well-being, revealing a world in which hierarchies have changed, and humans seem to exist merely as resources for plant life. This kind of ‘vegetal vengeance’ not merely functions as a narrative threat but unsettles anthropocentric notions of care and generativity. By binding humans in relations of excessive and ambivalent care, the monstrous plants highlight tensions of responsibility, dependency, and domination that characterize more-than-human entanglements. Drawing on theorists such as Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), Barnett (2023), or Silberzahn (2024), the talk examines how the vengeful plants in *Little Joe* and *Little Otik* emphasize the conflictual, unruly dimensions of care and reveal the necessity of a rearticulation, particularly in the face of neoliberal exploitation logics affecting human and more-than-human worlds.

Bio: Catherin Persing is a research associate at the DFG Research Training Group “Documentary Practices. Excess and Privation” at Ruhr University Bochum. She works at the intersection of Performance Studies and the Environmental Humanities, focusing on ecocriticism, decolonial theory, and cultural plant studies. Her doctoral project “Performing Plants: From the Anthropocene to Scenes of the More-than-Human” explores artistic practices that foreground plant perspectives and aesthetics as a way of addressing ecological crises, histories of violence, and cross-species relationality.

Session 1.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginarities I

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Claudia Alonso Recarte

Speakers:

- Monika Class (Lund University), “Grievable Monsters: Adaptations of Melville’s Whale”
- Candice Allmark-Kent (Independent Scholar), “Inscrutable Malice: Rewriting the White Whale through ‘Mocha Dick’, Moby Dick, and White as the Waves”
- Miryam Bernadette Danielsson (Université de Pau et des Pays de l’Adour), “Orca Sinking! The Beautiful Soul’s Hollow Victory in Jaws”
- Irene Sanz Alonso (University of Alcalá), “Tales from the Deep: Ecogothic Readings of Sharks”

Monika Class (Lund University), “Grievable Monsters: Adaptations of Melville’s Whale”

Abstract: This paper examines representations of baleen whales and sperm whales as victims, protectors, agents of bloody retribution and other semiotic roles in selected works of literature, focusing on Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick: or, the Whale* (1851), Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1869-1870), Daniel Kraus’s *Whalefall* (2023) and Elizabeth O’Connor’s *Whale Fall* (2024). These four whale novels have not been compared yet although they are intertextually connected (irrespective of the question of influence). The investigation is guided by two interrelated questions: How do the texts mix pastoral and ecohorror and how do they evoke the whales variously as horrible sea monsters, vulnerable sea creatures or powerful planetary saviours among other roles? The paper hypothesizes that, while the sperm whales’ biological capacity to swallow a human being impacts on the representations, the novels ultimately accentuate that both whales’ grievability (Butler), casting the animals as mysterious, monstrous, weird, eerie or grotesque creatures. The paper builds on the notion of “storying extinction” as an anthropomorphising strategy that “draw[s] readers into imaginative encounters with embodied, specific, and lively creatures to support situated ethical responses” (Bastian 2020 455; see Rose, Van Dooren and Chrulaw; Haraway). Central to the paper is Melville’s chapter “Grand Armada”, which juxtaposes in the space of only a few pages the whale pod’s pastoral and Ishmael’s wonder, the birth of a whale and “Madame Leviathan’s umbilical cord” with the excessive human slaughter of the whales, and the final chapters when Moby Dick reverses the hunt and sinks the Pequod and its crew except for the first-person narrator Ishmael. The rest of the paper examines the adaptations of Melville’s imagery in Verne’s, Kraus’s, and O’Connor’s work alongside ecohorror films such as *Jaws*, *Tentacles*, or *The Swarm*.

Bio: Monika Class is Associate Professor in English Literature. She holds a doctoral degree in English Literature from the University of Oxford (awarded 2009). As a member of The Lund Environmental Humanities Hub, she currently researches contemporary water elegies. Her recent publications include the special issue ‘Embodied Approaches to the Novel in English in the journal *English Studies* (2023) and her forthcoming article “‘Every water has its own rules and offering’: An

Amphibious Interpretation of Anne Carson's Blue-Green Short Story '1 = 1' in *The Journal of the Short Story in English*.

Candice Allmark-Kent (Independent Scholar), "Inscrutable Malice: Rewriting the White Whale through 'Mocha Dick', Moby Dick, and White as the Waves"

Abstract: In *Sperm Whales: Social Evolution in the Ocean* (2003), the whale biologist Hal Whitehead described Alison Baird's *White as the Waves* (1999) as a "remarkable" novel. For him, Baird's descriptions of complex sperm whale societies with language and culture "ring true." They "may well come closer to the nature of these animals than the coarse numerical abstractions" of his "own scientific observations." Uniquely, Whitehead proposed that the communication between science and literature should be "reciprocal," with scientists using novels like *White as the Waves* as "hypotheses to guide our work." For Baird's novel, however, this potential remains unfulfilled. *White as the Waves* went out of print and had little impact on the environmental humanities or the study of sperm whales.

As a retelling of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), *White as the Waves* uses a biographical structure to explore the white whale's perspective, experiences, and motivations. However, this zoocentric speculation is complicated by Melville's own rewriting of Mocha Dick's story, as reported by J. N. Reynolds for *Knickerbocker* magazine in 1839. Beneath these layers of authorship, there was once a real individual white sperm whale. Whether named Mocha Dick by Reynolds, Moby Dick by Melville, or Whitewave by Baird, the white whale's actions have been reinterpreted and rewritten according to our changing attitudes. Throughout the centuries, however, the idea that the white whale was intentionally attacking ships has remained consistent.

Today, as we attempt to understand recent orca encounters with boats, the same interpretation continues to dominate headlines: orcas are attacking yachts. Yet, we still do not know the real motivations of Mocha Dick and other sperm whales who allegedly attacked ships in the nineteenth century, nor of White Gladis the orca and her companions currently accused of doing the same in the twenty-first.

Bio: Dr. Candice Allmark-Kent is the author of *Literature, Science, and Animal Advocacy in Canada: Practical Zoocriticism* (2023). She is the Associate Editor for Literature for *Sloth: A Journal Emerging Voices in Human-Animal Studies*, an interdisciplinary peer reviewer for *Society & Animals*, and a writer for *NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment*. She also runs *Compassionate Canon*, a Twitch and YouTube channel about animals in games. She is currently an independent scholar, having previously taught at the University of Exeter.

Miryam Bernadette Danielsson (Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour), "Orca Sinking! The Beautiful Soul's Hollow Victory in Jaws"

Abstract: This paper argues that Peter Benchley's 1974 novel *Jaws* concludes with a phenomenology of emotional emptiness that serves as a powerful parable for the modern environmental imagination. Using a framework synthesizing Kate Rigby's concept of the "disaster imagination" and Timothy Morton's critique of the "Beautiful Soul," I trace the novel's trajectory from a sublime encounter with the nonhuman to a

narrative displacement that produces a consumable, and ultimately shallow, eco-horror. The infamous final sequence, in which the shark is drowning with Quint in its tow and Brody mechanically kicks shoreward, is not a narrative failure but a strategic one. The text effectively achieves Burkean sublimation of the ecological crisis, transforming it into a safely distanced terror. This process ensures cultural continuity by preserving the reader's illusion of separateness. By analyzing the novel's mechanical sympathy structure, its rendering of Quint as an unsympathetic eco-villain, and its refusal of reflection, I demonstrate how *Jaws* models a "disaster imagination" that gravitates toward resolutions that protect us from the true, messy entanglement of the Mesh. The "Orca" does not just sink in the narrative; our capacity for meaningful ecological responsibility sinks with it, leaving us afloat on the flimsy cushion of a resolved plot, yet adrift in the unresolved reality of our environmental condition.

Bio: Miryam Danielsson is a third-year PhD researcher examining how popular fiction translates environmental anxiety into narrative. Originally from Germany, her academic trajectory has been shaped by living in Austria, Sweden and now France. Her current work investigates how bestselling American novels of the 1970s, often masquerading as simple thrillers, processed burgeoning ecological crises, creating cultural narratives that continue to shape our perception of nature decades later.

Irene Sanz Alonso (University of Alcalá), "Tales from the Deep: Ecogothic Readings of Sharks"

Abstract: Fifty years have passed since Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (based on Peter Benchley's homonymous novel) was released and sharks are still present in popular culture as representatives of our fear towards what the depths of the ocean hide. Even though water covers most of the surface of our planet, the marine ecosystem remains an inhospitable environment that both scares and fascinates humans. One of the reasons why these two feelings mix is that, in spite of human efforts being directed towards conquering the universe, oceans are home to countless species that are unknown to us. Using an ecogothic lens, this presentation aims at looking at Gothic landscapes and elements in films in which sharks, or their ancestor the megalodon, function as improvised—and man-made/forced—environmental activists. My proposal is to analyze *Deep Blue Sea* (1999), *The Meg* (2018), and *Meg 2: The Trench* (2023), exploring their settings and how they portray the relationship between humans and sharks/megalodons. Furthermore, I will look at how these non-human creatures rebel against humans forcing us to reflect on the dangers of humans' attempts to control and manipulate nature and the nonhuman creatures we share this planet with.

Bio: Irene Sanz Alonso is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Philology of the University of Alcalá. Since 2008 she is a member of GIECO, a Spanish research group on ecocriticism, and since 2010 she has been a member of the editorial team of *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*. Her main research interests are ecofeminism, science fiction, and fantasy, focusing on literature and on audiovisual products.

Session 1.g Speculative Fiction I

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Laura op de Beke

Speakers:

- Sevda Ayva (İğdır University), “More-Than-Human Minds: Extended Cognition and Nonhuman Resistance in Brian Aldiss’s *Hothouse*”
- Richard Kerridge (Bath Spa University), “Information Overload as Resistance: A Creative and Critical Paper”
- Jacqueline Barner-Bauer (TU Braunschweig), “Nonhuman Player Avatars and Choices of Multispecies Solidarity in Worlds Abandoned by Humans”
- Gabriela Kozakiewicz (University of Warsaw), “From Orca Uprising to Vegetal Democracy: More-than-human Politics in Speculative Fiction”

Sevda Ayva (İğdır University), “More-Than-Human Minds: Extended Cognition and Nonhuman Resistance in Brian Aldiss’s *Hothouse*”

Abstract: In the wake of escalating ecological crises, speculative narratives of “Nature’s revenge” often reinforce rather than dismantle the human-nature binary. Even as they dramatize humanity’s extinction or displacement, such imaginaries frequently reaffirm human exceptionalism. Brian Aldiss’s *Hothouse* (1962), however, offers a striking alternative. The narrative envisions a far-future Earth where humans, on the verge of extinction, struggle to survive in an alien world dominated by carnivorous, predatory plants. In this transformed ecosystem, plants are no longer inert matter, but possess cognitive capacity that challenge anthropocentric paradigms.

Drawing on the extended mind theory and critical plant studies, this paper argues that *Hothouse* challenges human-nonhuman binary by imagining cognition as a distributed, relational process that surpasses the traditional, anthropocentric boundaries of the skin and skull. The figure of the Morel—“a brain-like fungus”—extends its cognitive capacities through both human and more-than-human hosts, particularly Gren (human) and Sodal-Ye (an intelligent dolphin); thereby, gaining access to their memories and boosting their decision-making processes. This complementarity system—that is made up of Gren and Sodal-Ye—becomes integrated into the Morel’s mind, thus forming a distributed neural network that enables them to navigate this predatory vegetal world. To put it differently, the integrated cognitive system demonstrates that cognition is not a solitary, brain-bound phenomenon, but a shared, interspecies process that rethinks traditional notions of autonomy and agency. By foregrounding plant cognition and the porousness of cognitive boundaries, Aldiss’s narrative conceptualizes modes of nonhuman resistance and retribution that do not simply resist entrenched dualisms but propose alternative alliances and co-configurations. Instead of reproducing fantasies of a “world without us,” *Hothouse* models more entangled and multispecies forms of survival in which resistance emerges through the emphasis on interrelatedness rather than antagonism.

Bio: Sevda Ayva is an Assistant Professor at İğdır University. She received her PhD in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University in 2022. In addition to her academic work, she is actively involved in social responsibility projects that advocate for nonhuman and dishuman lives.

Her current research interests include cognitive neuroscience, critical plant studies, blue humanities, econarratology, graphic and multimedia narratives, posthumanism, animal studies, and disability studies.

Richard Kerridge (Bath Spa University), “Information Overload as Resistance: A Creative and Critical Paper”

Abstract: The creative part of this twenty-minute paper will be a reading from a new speculative short story that imagines an app-drone package able to detect and identify all the wildlife present in the operator’s immediate surroundings. This system is imagined as an upgraded version of the real ‘Merlin’ app used by birdwatchers. ‘Merlin’ ‘hears’ birdsong and identifies the bird. In the story, the imaginary app-drone uses technology that imitates the organs with which snakes and lepidoptera receive chemical signals from the air. As the reader might guess, there are unexpected consequences. What starts, for the user of the device, as a reassuring and enriching experience of wild abundance becomes something else, and the story offers a re-examination of the complex mixture of delights and anxieties involved in the love of wild nature.

To introduce this reading, I will offer a brief analysis of the paradoxical construction of natural abundance as both delightful sensation and threatening sensory overload in the weird fiction of Jeff Vandermeer, Samanta Schweblin, and Martin MaInnes, whose novel *Infinite Ground* (2016) imagines a world in which it is possible for forensic experts to deduce the intimate personal life story of an individual from a swab taken from their laptop keyboard. This conflict between the desire to know and the desire for mystery and privacy – for things to remain unknown or only possible – is at the heart of the Anthropocene love of nature as explored in these works and my story. I will connect this conflict with the biosemiotics of Wendy Wheeler, and with the paradox identified by Hannes Bergthaller and Eva Horn, who argue that the Anthropocene idea casts humanity as both more and less powerful than previously imagined. The more the power is revealed, the more the helplessness emerges. These stories explore that queasily sliding perception.

Bio: Richard leads BSU’s Creative Writing MA and has published many ecocritical essays. His nature-memoir *Cold Blood* (‘minor classic’ - *Sunday Times*) was dramatized for BBC national radio. Fiction and non-fiction have appeared in *Speculative Nature Writing*, *BBC Wildlife* (winning two awards), *Poetry Review* and *Granta*. Richard received the 2012 Roger Deakin Prize. He reviews nature writing for *The Guardian*, was founding Chair of ASLE-UKI, has served on the ASLE Executive Council and is co- editor of Bloomsbury’s ‘Environmental Cultures’ series.

Jacqueline Barner-Bauer (TU Braunschweig), “Nonhuman Player Avatars and Choices of Multispecies Solidarity in Worlds Abandoned by Humans”

Abstract: In games such as *Stray* or *Tokyo Jungle*, the player takes on the role of a nonhuman avatar and experiences a world where humans themselves may be absent, but the environment and its nonhuman inhabitants have nonetheless been shaped by their influence. I argue that it is within these game worlds that players receive a unique opportunity to explore, experience, and make choices between resistance and solidarity between species.

Video game players' avatars can be seen as a "reflexive extension" (Günzel et al.) of the player, presenting them with a tool which functions as a diegetic part of the game world itself while also acting as an interlink between player and game. Concepts of cyborgian consciousness as Donna Haraway has brought forward are often extended to this special relationship between the player and their avatar, which "encourages players to think themselves differently through nonhuman characters, and in this way, offers experiences that may subvert or challenge ideas about humans and nonhumans" (Bianchi).

In *Stray*, the player's avatar is a stray cat trying to escape a walled-in city built by humans but inhabited by robots which help the player along. Meanwhile, in *Tokyo Jungle*, the player instead follows a series of animals which have to fend their ways around a Tokyo which has been abandoned by humans. Where species mainly work together on a set path towards the common goal of escaping in *Stray*, *Tokyo Jungle* focuses on the fight for and against the top of the food chain – until the final story chapter introduces a choice between anti-human resistance and animals prevailing, or multispecies solidarity which leads to a return of the anthropocene. Yet, in both games cooperation and what Kunkel refers to as solidary sympoiesis become important parts of the players' experience and engagement with a posthuman world.

Bio: Jacqueline Barner-Bauer is a research assistant and PhD candidate at English and American Studies, Technische Universität Braunschweig. While her Master's thesis focused on pastiche and parody in postmodern fantasy novels, she is expanding her understanding of the pastiche concept towards a metamodern setting of video game studies for her PhD.

Gabriela Kozakiewicz (University of Warsaw), "From Orca Uprising to Vegetal Democracy: More-than-human Politics in Speculative Fiction"

Abstract: How would a rebellion led by orcas look? What sort of leadership could we expect from a sentient bamboo? These questions may seem absurd at first, yet this paper seeks to celebrate speculative fiction for offering invigorating scenarios for our political imagination. Such stimuli are particularly relevant now, when real-life leaders cling to the old, dysfunctional patterns, proving incapable of meeting the challenges of the Anthropocene.

This paper examines two speculative narratives that push the boundaries of political imagination by granting nonhumans a seat at the table: Sam J. Miller's *Blackfish City* (2018) and Sue Burke's *Semiosis* trilogy (2018–2022). Both present animals and plants as political actors, envisioning forms of interspecies governance that move beyond the reductive paradigms of "man's war against nature" or "Gaia's revenge." Miller's novel offers a striking fabulation of an orca-led uprising. It revolves around the character of an "orcancer" (i.e. a woman bound to an orca via nanotechnology), who embodies the dual force of more-than-human solidarity—capable of tearing down oppressive systems and nurturing possibilities for collective survival. Burke's trilogy, by contrast, unfolds as a slow, uneasy negotiation between human colonists and Steveland, an intelligent bamboo. The series charts a progression from pragmatic symbiosis to recognition of nonhuman leadership. Its rendition of "vegetal democracy" (Marder) makes tangible the complexities of extending political legitimacy beyond the human.

Engaging with frameworks from posthumanities and environmental humanities, including Ursula Heise’s conceptualization of multispecies justice and Eva Haifa Giraud’s critical reexamination of kinship, I argue that these texts artfully envision sociality grounded in interspecies respect and care. They invite us to consider how politics might look if nonhuman wellbeing and interests were taken seriously, becoming speculative rehearsals for urgently needed environmental policies. In short, they imagine alternative social orders built on more-than-human solidarity: friction-laden, yet opening prospects of survival in hostile social, political and ecological environments.

Bio: PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw, where she researches ‘phytospeculations’—speculative fictions envisioning plant perspectives. She holds an Erasmus Mundus Master’s degree in ‘Crossways in Cultural Narratives,’ completed at the University of St Andrews, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, and Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Literary and Cultural Studies researcher by training, philosopher at heart, and a proud alumna of “Artes Liberales” College at the University of Warsaw. Her wide-ranging interests include literature, dance studies, totalitarian architecture, and wine.

Session 1.h Gender(ed) Resistance I

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Mace Bielderman

Speakers:

- Per Esben Svelstad (Norwegian University of Science of Technology), “The Queerness of Pig Farming: Sexuality, and Multispecies Tragedies in Anne B. Ragde’s *Neshov* series and Jean-Baptiste Del Amo’s *Règne animal*”
- Clara Louise Søndergaard (Aarhus University), “‘You probably ought to be small enough to notice’: The Potential of Transspecies Solidarity in *Performing Transgender Rage* (2022) by Gry Stokkendahl Dalgas”
- Valerie Tollhopf (Leuphana University), “Contextualizing Multispecies Struggles: Trans and Animal Bodies, Capitalism, and the State”
- Rebecca Jordan (Bowdoin College), “Queer Resistance in the Age of Man: Animal Cyborgs in Contemporary Austrian Literature”

Per Esben Svelstad (Norwegian University of Science of Technology), “The Queerness of Pig Farming: Sexuality, and Multispecies Tragedies in Anne B. Ragde’s *Neshov* series and Jean-Baptiste Del Amo’s *Règne animal*”

Abstract: This paper proposes a comparative reading of Anne B. Ragde’s *Neshov* series (six volumes, 2004–2019) and Jean-Baptiste Del Amo’s novel *Règne animal* (2016), which traces the evolution of a southern French farm during the 20th century. Both narratives unfold on pig farms haunted by the presence of a matriarch. In Ragde’s books, the youngest son Erlend escapes his narrow-minded rural upbringing to work as a window display designer in Copenhagen, where he shares a luxurious flat with his male partner and cherishes his collection of animal glass figurines. In *Règne animal*, the closeted homosexual son must deal with an outbreak of catastrophic disease among pigs—this culminating event appearing as an allegory of the looming AIDS crisis.

By placing queer characters in fraught relationships of care with the more-than-human, these novels critically probe the stigmatization of nonheteronormative sexuality as “against nature.” Both texts also function as polyphonic narratives, shifting focalization across a collective of characters, arguably positioning the socio-ecological environment—rather than individual humans—as protagonist. At the same time, while both authors explore the limits of human individuality amid ecological transformation, these narratives are characterized by vastly different formal strategies to depict both rapid transformations and the insidious effects of “slow violence” (Rob Nixon). Where Ragde’s books patiently dwell on the span of a few years, Del Amo portrays the destinies of humans and other animals spanning the years from 1898 to 1981, perhaps mimicking the acceleration of late modernity. Inspired by ecocritical narratology (Erin James), posthumanist theory (Rosi Braidotti, Astrida Neimanis), and the idea of our need for resonance with the strange and disharmonious (Timothy Morton, Hartmut Rosa), this talk explores how these novels can be read as multispecies tragedies of the Anthropocene, a time when humans face the cumulative consequences of their treatment of other creatures.

Bio: Per Esben Svelstad is Professor of Norwegian at the Department of Teacher Education, NTNU in Trondheim. His current research focuses on ways to integrate Environmental and Sustainability Education in the literary classroom. Another research interest is gender and sexuality in Scandinavian and European fiction, with an emphasis on contemporary and interwar literature. In 2024, he published the monograph *Same-Sex Desire and the Environment in Norwegian Literature 1908—1979* (Palgrave).

Clara Louise Søndergaard (Aarhus University), “‘You probably ought to be small enough to notice’: The Potential of Transspecies Solidarity in *Performing Transgender Rage* (2022) by Gry Stokkendahl Dalgas”

Abstract: Since 2019 several literary works published in Danish literature have combined themes of transness and nature. Together, they form what I call a “transecological breakthrough.” Exploring the pleasure-filled as well as unsettling and shadowy connections between transness and nature, this breakthrough represents a challenge to the binary logic that dominates Western culture and rethinks the paradoxical position of trans people between nature and naturalness.

This paper presents Gry Stokkendahl Dalgas’ *Performing Transgender Rage*, a work that explores the experience of being transgender within the highly regulated process of obtaining approval for gender-affirming care in Denmark. The text engages with transgender rage as both a deeply personal affect and a politically charged response to systemic gatekeeping, medical control, and societal marginalization. At the same time, “[a]ll that cows and corn make happen” represents moments of beauty and interspecies care. My reading of the work highlights how it generates a particular form of sensitivity and solidarity that moves beyond the human; for instance, a little wren ends up in the helpful hands of a big creature.

By centering trans-experiences of medical bureaucracy and marginalization, the work exemplifies what it means to care for “unloved others” — those whose lives and struggles are often rendered unintelligible or undesirable within dominant frameworks. I argue that Dalgas’ text offers a vision of justice that is both trans-specific and expansive, proposing forms of solidarity that cut across species boundaries and established categories of the political. In doing so, *Performing*

Transgender Rage not only documents transgender rage but also performs an ethics of care and interconnection that points toward more livable futures.

Bio: Clara Louise Søndergaard, PhD student at the Scandinavian Department, Aarhus University, Denmark. I work in the intersection between gender studies (more specifically transstudies) and ecocriticism. In my project, I explore what I call a “transecological breakthrough” in Danish literature beginning in 2019. The literary works I examine combine themes of transness and nature, and this combination is investigated through the theoretical framework offered by the emerging field of transecology.

Valerie Tollhopf (Leuphana University), “Contextualizing Multispecies Struggles: Trans and Animal Bodies, Capitalism, and the State”

Abstract: In this paper, I trace historical links between the governance of nonhuman animals and the regulation of trans bodies through the US-based agricultural youth organisation 4-H. Engaging with the ascendent field of trans* new materialism (TNM), which has sought to connect animal studies and trans studies, I propose that a historical materialist perspective offers a sharper framework for understanding multispecies justice and resistance. Critics argue that TNM risks downplaying antagonism and power asymmetries in favour of more optimistic visions of entanglement (Amin; Ison; Wadiwel). My intervention responds by situating trans-animal connections in specific histories of violence and struggle.

Drawing on Gabriel Rosenberg’s account of 4-H, I show how the twentieth-century elimination of transness from rural youth bodies was inseparable from the capital-intensification of agriculture, which simultaneously escalated animal domination. The family farm functioned as a reproductive apparatus in which cisheteronormativity was naturalised alongside eugenic ideals of “healthy” white bodies, while animals were subjected to parallel processes of standardisation, commodification, and reproductive control. Yet these projects of biopolitical governance also reveal sites of friction and resistance, where both trans and animal bodies exceeded or disrupted their prescribed functions.

This case study demonstrates the value of historical materialist analysis for reimagining trans-animal connections not as abstract and innocent entanglements but as shared terrains of struggle shaped by capitalism, state power, and eugenics. It suggests possibilities for multispecies solidarity attentive to both care and conflict, enriching ongoing debates about nonhuman resistance and more-than-human justice. If we are to imagine avenues for multispecies revolution, a crucial step is to embed animals within Marxist frameworks that foreground the potential for shared struggles. This paper contributes to that project by developing the first historical materialist account of trans-animal connections.

Bio: Valerie Sofie Tollhopf is a graduate student of cultural theory at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany. Her research focuses on materialist approaches to trans studies and critical animal studies with a particular emphasis on connections between the fields. Holding a BA in Environmental Studies and Philosophy, she is committed to bridging various social movements from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Rebecca Jordan (Bowdoin College), “Queer Resistance in the Age of Man: Animal Cyborgs in Contemporary Austrian Literature”

Abstract: This paper considers the depiction of animal/human hybrids in the contemporary German literature. Specifically, I examine the two works Jana Volkmann’s *Der beste Tag seit langem* (2024) and Elisabeth Klar’s *Es gibt uns* (2023). My project locates itself among current ecocritical and queer scholarship that contends the term “Anthropocene” has ignored the complexities of social, economic, racial, and gender inequalities in environmental discourse. Though this paper cannot manage a discussion of these inequalities on an individual level, as a starting point, I consider how distinctions of “animal” and “human” have blurred due, in part, to emerging technologies and problematic scientific rhetoric of the Anthropocene. I argue that in exploring these blurred distinctions, as humans in a globalized world must question conventional understanding of animal bodies, identities, even species. What might these literary works reveal about animals’ place in an ever-changing environment and their relationships with technologies? The animal cyborg in the Anthropocene thus serves as a framework to understand human mortality, the fragility of human identity, and animal survival in the face of extinction.

Bio: Dr. Rebecca Jordan, Visiting Assistant Professor at Bowdoin College, is a scholar of German literature, environmental, queer, and animal studies from the 20th to 21st centuries. Her current research focuses on animal interaction with technologies in the Holocene. She examines the representations of animal interaction and bodily immersion with technologies in changing climates and landscapes. Dr. Jordan holds a Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis.

Session 1.i Nature Bites Back I

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Sara Bédard-Goulet

Speakers:

- Marie Cazaban-Mazerolles (University of Paris 8), “When ‘Historicized Nature’ Strikes Back: Haunted Ecohorror in the Anthropocene”
- Dace Bula (University of Latvia), “Sand versus People: Contested Agencies in Aberts Bels’ *People in Boats*”
- Susan Meyer (North-West University), “Forces of Nature versus Those of Man in *Bundu* (Chris Barnard)”
- Helene E. Heuser (University of Siegen), “‘She will take it back’: The Rise of the Revengeful Gaia in 1990s Popular Music”

Marie Cazaban-Mazerolles (University of Paris 8), “When ‘Historicized Nature’ Strikes Back: Haunted Ecohorror in the Anthropocene”

Abstract: In his 2017 essay entitled *The Progress of This Storm*, Swedish social geographer Andreas Malm describes the contemporary climate crisis in the following terms :

The nature that is knocking on the door of the postmodern condition (...) is something of a spectral creature, for it is carried forward by a human past.

[M]ore than the revenge of nature, this is the revenge of historicity *dressed* in nature. The larger the cumulative emissions of CO₂, the more uncontrollable the storm; the more society has intruded and intrudes on nature, *the more nature invades society* with a haunted army whose early incursions are now felt. (77)

Two years earlier, Indian novelist and essayist Amitav Ghosh reflected on “the freakish events weather of today” with a strikingly similar metaphor: “They are the mysterious work of our own hands returning to haunt us in unthinkable shapes and forms.” (*The Great Derangement*, 32). Drawing on a range of literary and cinematographic fictions — including Rachel Carson’s “Fable for tomorrow” (1962), Helon Habila’s *Oil on water* (2010), Barry Levinson’s *The Bay* (2012), Samantha Schweblin’s *Distancia de Rescate* (2014) and Mariana Enríquez “Bajo el agua negra” (2016) — I seek to foreground a mode of ecohorror in which the natural antagonists striking back are explicitly framed as what Malm calls “historicized nature”.

I will first argue that these works, which update the gothic motif of haunting through their depictions of nature’s upheavals, unsettle the human/nature dualism. They achieve this not only by staging threats that prove to be natural-cultural hybrids, but also by foregrounding ecological vulnerabilities that cut across species boundaries. In contrast to Simon C. Estok’s contention that ecophobic cultural representations foster hatred and hostility toward nature, I will demonstrate that these works convey both fear *of* and fear *for* nature — whereas the insistence on highlighting unequal states of exposure among humans themselves enables them to further shift the traditional battle lines of “man versus nature”.

Finally, I will conclude with some remarks on the generic diversity of this corpus — most notably the evolution from Carson’s speculative fiction in 1962’s to Barry Levinson’s mockumentary sixty years later — which I read as symptomatic of the contemporary rise of horror as a realist mode in the Gothic Anthropocene.

Bio: Marie Cazaban-Mazerolles is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Paris 8. She earned her PhD in 2018 with a dissertation on the emergence of a non-anthropocentric narrative poetics within the Western literary tradition since the late 19th century. Her current research investigates the theoretical, poetic and political intersections between literature and ecological knowledge and imaginaries, with a particular focus on ecohorror and phobic representations of nature.

Dace Bula (University of Latvia), “Sand versus People: Contested Agencies in Aberts Bels’ *People in Boats*”

Abstract: The paper examines a novel that belongs to the Latvian literary eco-awakening of the 1970s and 1980s, which involved creative endeavors to speak for nature, challenge the human-centered worldview, and represent nonhuman subjectivities. Alberts Bel’s *People in Boats* (1987), in this context, stands out as an early work to draw on bidirectional agency across the culture—nature border. It is a fictional history of an imagined village on the Curonian Spit in the territory of contemporary Lithuania, inhabited by a Latvian ethnic group known as *Kursenieki*. The novel’s events take place in the mid-19th century and are grounded in the historical reality of the *Kursenieki* assimilation into Lithuanians and Germans. The novel also draws on the geographical fact that Curonian Spit is known as the longest mobile dune chain in Europe. The backbone of its storyline is the agency of an

unstoppable, massive dune, initially threatening and ultimately burying the village under sand. However, the author has not intended to demonize nature, as these are people who are responsible for setting the dune in motion by hewing down the forest that secures the sand. The community ceases to exist as people get scattered in their search for new homes. Warning about the ecological dangers of losing knowledge of how to coexist with nature, Bel's novel is counted as "one of the most beautiful and at the same time saddest books" in Latvian literature. Published in the late 1980s, it rode the rising wave of not only national (or rather, *glasnost*-inspired anticolonial) but also an ecological awakening and caused a heated reaction in which environmental issues at times took precedence over other aspects.

Bio: I am a leading researcher in environmental humanities and ecocriticism at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art (University of Latvia). I focus on human—environment relationships as represented in both oral and written culture. My recent research activities have included studying environmental experience stories and solastalgia in industrial suburbs, which have resulted in an edited volume titled *Living Next to the Port* (2022). In 2024, I published a monograph, *Literary Naturecultures: An Ecocritical Reading of Regina Ezera Zoo-prose*.

Susan Meyer (North-West University), "Forces of Nature versus Those of Man in *Bundu* (Chris Barnard)"

Abstract: In a place near Mozambique where no one knows the boundary, drought is changing everything. Tens, then hundreds of people seek refuge in a forgotten outpost where a clinic is run by lonely souls of uncertain training, nuns staunchly determined to serve. But the inundation soon becomes too much for them, and there is no help from outside. Within the small community of outcasts a plan takes shape that is as outrageous as it is inspiring.

In the South African author Chris Barnard's Afrikaans novel *Boendoe*, originally published in 1999 and translated by Michiel Heyns, the relationship between man and nature is framed in terms of conflict and antagonism. This paper investigates the depiction of the intensity of the characters' reaction to environmental crises and nature forces in Barnard's novel. Evidence of the traumatic effects of nature disaster on man's body and mind are found: the loss of all certainties, compassion fatigue, the degradation of social and communication skills and disillusionment regarding the inability to create and maintain meaningful relationships. When nature rises up to take revenge on humanity events lead to physical as well as psychological exhaustion in the characters in *Bundu*.

Theories from the field of psychology are applied in this paper to conjoin the experiences of characters and individual narratives with the general, human inclination to indicate relevance within the reader's life. Theoretical perspectives of Figly, Ehrenreich and Huggard on PTSS (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome) as well as on social and emotional alienation in ordinary life contribute to meaningful interpretations of aspects in *Bundu*. Barnard's novel demonstrates the struggle between man and nature raging on by means of destructive processes and leading to some new perspectives on man-human-coexistence. *My research of Bundu* focusses on the people and the animals of Africa at the height of their beauty and the depth of their despair. It is a meditation on the mystery of our powers and the limitations that we share with our brothers, the animals

Bio: Susan Meyer is Associate Professor in Afrikaans at the North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. She forms part of the Research Unit *Languages and Literature in the South African context* in the Faculty Humanities.

Her aims are the development of the Afrikaans ecocritical discourse in South Africa, ecocritical analysis of Afrikaans literature, and a contribution to the expansion of ecocritical studies to the eco-oriented world wider than the one dominated by Anglophone literatures. Her research highlights the diverse and convincing contributions of Afrikaans ecocriticism to the predominant ecocritical voice of English South-African ecocritics.

Helene E. Heuser (University of Siegen), “‘She will take it back’: The Rise of the Revengeful Gaia in 1990s Popular Music”

Abstract: She could, she might, she can, she will! What starts off as an eventuality in Pink Floyd’s hit single *Take It Back* from 1994 turns into certainty over the course of the song: She will take revenge. For the casual listener, this “she” could be anyone; she is being mistreated, lied to, she is being pushed to her limits. Whereas the lyrics might leave some room for the imagination, the accompanying music video makes it clear: this “she” is the Earth, and she is living, she has agency, she has power. While the (revengeful) Earth as Mother Nature has become a popcultural trope in counter-culture music since the 1970s, this song presents one of popular music’s many iterations of a Gaia-like personified Earth that reached Western mainstream media in the 1990s.

Taking a historical approach to popular-music ecocriticism, this paper first tracks the mainstreaming of Gaia in popular music during a time that is marked by the broadening media and political attention to climate change as an unprecedented global threat. Secondly, this paper examines popular music’s multimodal and cross-referential imaginations of the vengeful Gaia, and through a close reading of *Take It Back*, it aims to show how the song’s composition, lyrics and music video create a complex and at times contrasting sounding of the revengeful Earth. Lastly, this paper asks when and why ‘we’ can imagine the Earth/Nature/Nonhuman as revengeful. From today’s perspective, the revengeful Earth of the late-20th-century popular music carried the promise of justice and hope, whereas in current popmusical soundings of Gaia, it seems, she has stopped fighting, and we have started lamenting.

Bio: Helene E. Heuser (she/her) is a PhD candidate and research assistant at the Department of Popular Music and Gender Studies at the University of Siegen. Her dissertation traces the mainstreaming of ecological imaginations in Western European popular music in the long 1990s at the intersection of popular music studies and environmental humanities. Her further research and teaching interests include music and politics, social inequalities, ethnomusicology, and the history and aesthetics of popular music.

Session 1.j Undrowned Resistance: Hydropoetics

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Merve Tabur

Speakers:

- Marta Werbanowska (University of Vienna), “Undrowning, Together: Black Hydropoetics and More-Than-Human Liberation”
- Noémie Mil-Homens Cavaco (UCLouvain), “‘Flow’ and ‘Après nous, les animaux’: One Flood, Two Arks, and No Noah”
- Reeta Holopainen (University of Helsinki), “The Question of Water in Nordic Climate Change Poetics”

Marta Werbanowska (University of Vienna), “Undrowning, Together: Black Hydropoetics and More-Than-Human Liberation”

Abstract: When I recommend Alexis Pauline Gumbs’s 2020 *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* to students or colleagues, I am often met with surprise at the ‘original’ or ‘singular’ pairing of concepts in the book’s title. However, a deeper dive into African American, Afro-Caribbean, and other Afro-diasporic literary traditions finds various forms of marine life – from plankton and coral, whales and sharks, to merfolk and aquatic deities – populating the Black ecological imagination. Given the violent maritime origins of Black diasporic presence in the so-called ‘New World’ with the transatlantic slave trade, it comes as no surprise that Black thinkers and writers would (re)turn to oceanic histories, materialities, and metaphors in search of wisdom and inspiration. More specifically, contemporary Black poetry abounds in lyrical and experimental visions of kinship and solidarity with various aquatic life forms, often presenting such entanglements as pathways to more-than-human liberation from what Gumbs describes as “the chokehold of racial gendered ableist capitalism” (2). This presentation will be an invitation to explore the seascapes of recent Black hydropoetics while dipping our feet into the intersecting currents of Black Studies and Blue Humanities. With poems by Gumbs, Rajiv Mohabir, Marilyn Nelson, Camille Dungy, and Toi Dericotte, among others, we will take a swim with whales, octopuses, jellyfish, and other marine creature-teachers of transspecies kinship. Finally, we will dive into Samantha Thornhill’s “Ode to a Killer Whale” – a 2010 poem in which animal liberation meets the Black radical tradition, and whose incendiary call for liberatory solidarity resonates with new urgency in the wake of recent “orca uprisings.”

Bio: Dr. Marta Werbanowska is a Postdoctoral Associate in American Literature and Culture at the University of Vienna, Austria. She obtained her Ph.D. from Howard University in 2019, and was a Fulbright Scholar at UNC Charlotte in 2014-15. Her research and teaching interests include contemporary African American and Caribbean poetry, literatures of social and environmental justice, Black Studies, and Environmental Humanities. Her scholarship has been published in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE)*, the *College Language Association Journal (CLAJ)*, and the *James Baldwin Review*, among others. She is currently working on her first book manuscript, tentatively titled *Vital Necessity: Ecological Thinking in Contemporary Black Poetry*.

Noémie Mil-Homens Cavaco (UCLouvain), “‘Flow’ and ‘Après nous, les animaux’: One Flood, Two Arks, and No Noah”

Abstract: On the one hand, over the last fifty years, the most widespread literary strategy for exploring climate change has been the flood (Trexler 2015:82): it has become “a convenient shorthand for climate crisis” (Bracke, 2019:281). Kluwick

(2020:66) notes that floods no longer have a predominantly symbolic function in recent fiction, while also acknowledging an important use of “diluvian imaginary and aquatic language” – words and phrases associated with water and flood but referring to “non-aquatic contexts” – in contemporary literature to refer to climate change and its consequences (Kluwick, 2020:65). Therefore, the Flood which is explicitly or covertly haunting the contemporary imaginary (and possibly mirroring an “Anthropocene Anxiety” (Mundler, 2022:6) or an “Anthropocene unconscious” (Bould, 2021)) seems to be both literal and metaphorical. On the other hand, Noah’s Ark has been widely used as an inspiring political philosophical metaphor in the context of the ecological crisis, with Michel Serres’s natural contract (1990) or with Michel Lacroix calling for a shift from Prometheus (excessive modernization) to Noah (ethics of preservation) (1997). However, Malcom Ferdinand (2019) has recently warned against the dangers of such a metaphor and its violent “politics of boarding”. In this paper, two selected fictions, namely “Flow” (Zilbalodis 2024) and “Après nous, les animaux” (Brunel 2020), are analyzed with a specific attention given to the motives of the Flood and the Ark. It will be studied how, in both cases, the blurry limits between the outside (Flood) and the inside (Ark) of the always-evolving community tend to offer a powerful political metaphor, based on multispeciesism and collaboration, reminiscent of Haraway’s “oddkin” (2016). The paper will focus on the anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic representations of the animals, which, half-wild, half-domesticated, are left on a planet without any Noah figure, but are still haunted by humanity’s remains, both in the external world and within themselves.

Bio: Noémie Mil-Homens Cavaco has started a PhD in literary studies at UCLouvain (Belgium). In 2023, she graduated with summa cum laude after writing her Master’s thesis on the apocalyptic imaginaries in *Democracia* (Gutiérrez 2012) and *Weather* (Offill 2020). In 2024, she did a Fulbright research stay under the supervision of Professor Iñaki Prádanos with whom she learned more about decolonial thinking and posthumanism. Her thesis project focuses on rewritings of the Flood in the context of the global climate emergency.

Reeta Holopainen (University of Helsinki), “The Question of Water in Nordic Climate Change Poetics”

Abstract: In this paper, I examine the role of water in Nordic climate change poetics by focusing on two Finnish poetry collections, Paula Sankelo’s *Katoava jää* (‘Vanishing Ice’), published in 2024, and Nina Rantala’s *Merenalaiset hulmuavat osat* (‘The Fluttering Parts of the Underwater’), published in 2022, as representatives of Nordic climate change poetry. The climate crisis and ecological phenomena related to it, such as the loss of snow, Arctic Sea ice decline, heat waves and cold waves, are common topics in the field of Finnish contemporary poetry. In Finnish climate change poetry, the theme of the climate crisis is often closely connected to the depiction of water, with its different states serving as crucial environmental motifs. Sankelo’s *Katoava jää* addresses the climate crisis by depicting the melting of glaciers and the rising sea levels in the Arctic environment, whereas Rantala’s *Merenalaiset hulmuavat osat* portrays the sea burdened by the plastic and explores the complex phenomenological dimensions of the sea. In my paper, I examine the environmental motif of water as an essential component of Nordic climate change poetics and discuss the agency of water in light of Sankelo’s and Rantala’s literary works. I propose that Sankelo’s and Rantala’s poetry collections address water both

as a finite resource and as a non-human agent that transcends human power, challenging the anthropocentric worldview. The aim of my paper is to provide perspectives on the relationship between aquapoetics and climate change poetics and contribute to ongoing discussion of climate change poetry as a subgenre of ecopoetry. The theoretical framework of my paper is based on ecocriticism and the blue humanities.

Bio: Reeta Holopainen is a postdoctoral researcher of Finnish literature at the University of Helsinki. She has specialized in ecocriticism, ecolinguistics, and the study of poetry. Her current research focuses on the Finnish climate change poetry and Nordic climate change poetics.

Session 1.k Imagining Narratives of Struggle Against Extractivism in Human-Nonhuman Relationships (pre-formed panel)

Room: JK2–3 2.19

Chair: Jordi Serrano-Muñoz

Speakers:

- Gabriele D'Amato (University of L'Aquila and Ghent University), "Material and Epistemic Extraction in Rachel Kushner's *Creation Lake*."
- Shannon Lambert (Ghent University), "Forms of Resistance: Sea Stars, Stories, and Endless Regeneration in Loren Eiseley's "Star Thrower" (1964)."
- Jordi Serrano-Muñoz (Ghent University), "Extractivist Form: Narrative Strategies and Distorted Care in Robbie Arnott's *The Rain Heron*."
- Chiara Xausa (University of Bologna, University of Idaho, Ghent University), "From Comparison to Coalition: Intersectional Forms of Multispecies Resistance in Nnedi Okorafor's Lagoon."

Abstract: Extractivism refers to the system of large scale removal and processing of natural resources that prioritizes profit maximization over environmental and social consequences. It functions hierarchically, first assuming a right for humans to exploit the environment and then following a model where a so-called developed center takes advantage of its periphery. While portrayals of barren lands, contaminated rivers, or broken communities can convey the damage provoked by extractivism, they also rely on an incomplete paradigm that assumes only humans have agency in this relationship as aggressors, leaving the nonhuman as passive victims. This roundtable explores the potential of narratives, particularly fictional narratives, in depicting the relationship between humans and nonhumans through the critique against extractivist industries. In particular, we ask: what can we learn from stories depicting the nonhuman reacting and rebelling against extractivism?

Literature makes manifest the invisibility of extractivism and the violence that lies behind this process (Szeman et al. 2017). Patricia Yaeger, for instance, has proposed taking the term "energy unconscious" as a parallel to Jameson's "political unconscious" in order to identify the repressed nature of our relationship with fuel sources (2011, 310). Following this line, Imre Szeman identifies that extractivism occupies four axes: 1) acting as an invisible and pervasive force that happens outside the direct attention of those who benefit most from it; 2) operating through its

dilating nature, which started with natural resources but has grown to include data, attention, and even care; 3) expanding to become the main mode of late capitalism; and 4) occupying and supplanting the relationship that modern humans have towards the environment (2017, 443-445). While this framework illuminates extractivism's pervasive influence, scholars have been mainly focused on the literary representation of extractivist industries' impact on territories and their communities. In our presentations, we want to shift the focus towards the depiction of nonhuman species, and in particular, how nonhuman agents exercise agency to react and resist this system.

Through an econarratological lens, we suggest that resistance to extractivism happens beyond the themes of the stories to also include narrative form. The presentations move from critique of extractivism – both at the material and the epistemological level – to alternatives that arise from narratives of nonhuman resistance. **Jordi Serrano-Muñoz** uses Robbie Arnott's *The Rain Heron* (2020) to address how questions of care and dynamics of extraction, presented as flawed attempts to address the climate crisis, are tied together in contemporary narratives' imaginings of human-nonhuman relations. **Gabriele D'Amato** analyzes Rachel Kushner's novel *Creation Lake* (2024) to reveal how contemporary narratives frame extractivism as both a material and epistemic practice that reshapes human-nonhuman relations by unsettling a linear espionage narrative through essayistic sections. **Chiara Xausa**'s presentation examines Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014) as a narrative of resistance, enacted also in the novel's structure, to extractivism in Nigeria's oil-driven economy. Drawing on Black feminist environmental thought and critical animal studies, this paper argues that *Lagoon* advances decolonial imaginaries in which interspecies agency and practices of care challenge the material and epistemic logics underpinning extractivist exploitation. **Simona Adinolfi** will offer a reading of George Saunders' novella "Fox 8" (2013), which explores how practices of extractivism have direct consequences on nonhuman migration. Drawing on narrative theory, migration studies, and critical posthumanism, she examines how the narrative form of the novella can be considered as a form of epistemological resistance towards the extractivism performed on the forest. **Shannon Lambert** examines Loren Eiseley's "Star Thrower" (1964) to argue that reading narrative and biological forms of adaptation and evolution alongside one another suggests a regenerative, rather than extractivist, approach to literary production and reception.

Bios:

Simona Adinolfi is a postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University and at the University of Giessen, where she is part of the project MeDiMi – Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies. Her PhD dissertation examined contemporary novels of migration using a critical posthumanities framework, to show how canonical themes usually associated to narratives of migration are being subverted and complicated on a formal level. Her research focuses on contemporary literary representations of human and nonhuman migration and on the effects of digital technologies on classical narratological concepts.

Gabriele D'Amato is completing his Joint PhD program in Literary Studies between the University of L'Aquila (Italy) and Ghent University (Belgium). He obtained his MA in Italian Studies at the University of Bologna (Italy), with a thesis in literary theory. His PhD project, supervised by Prof. Federico Bertoni and Prof. Marco Caracciolo, examines multiperspective narratives across media, with a specific focus on their

experiential effects and ethical implications. He is particularly interested in narrative theory, comparative literature, and the environmental humanities.

Shannon Lambert is a postdoctoral researcher in the department of Literary Studies at Ghent University. Her work focuses on intersections between literature and science, with a particular interest in topics like narrative and emotion in (citizen) science, and representations of the environment and nonhuman animals in literature. She is the author of *Science and Affect in Contemporary Literature: Bodies of Knowledge* (Bloomsbury, 2025), a book which explores how, in contemporary literature, emotions like desire, suffering, anxiety, and joy shape scientific persons, practices, and products. Beyond this, she is interested in questions of epistemic justice, scientific communication, and creative ways of engaging with science.

Jordi Serrano-Muñoz is a Maria Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University, where he is conducting research on the representation of violent disasters in fiction. His research explores the relationship between literature, the climate crisis, and disasters in contemporary narratives, particularly from Japan, Latin America, and Australia. His approach challenges the tendency to portray disasters in climate fiction as isolated events and includes an exploration of ecofeminist concerns, particularly structures of interpersonal and interspecies care.

Chiara Xausa is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the University of Bologna (IT), the University of Idaho (US), and Ghent University (BE), where she leads a project exploring YA climate fiction, econarratology, and both empirical and affective approaches to ecocriticism. She was previously a postdoctoral fellow in Anglophone literature at the University of Bologna (2022–2024). Her first monograph, *Intersectional Futures in Climate Fiction: Undoing the Anthropocene Master Narrative*, was published by Peter Lang in 2025.

Session 1.I Mythology and Magic

Room: JK2–3 2.20

Chair: Mia You

Speakers:

- Reinhard Henning (University of Hagder), “The Last Troll: Fantastic Species as Threatened and Threatening Nature in Contemporary Norwegian Literature and Film”
- Guðrun í Jákupsstovu (University of the Faroe Islands), “Materiality and Mythology as Nonhuman Resistance in Contemporary Nordic Literature”
- Hanna Hoorenman (Utrecht University), “Animal Attraction: Shapeshifting Romance and Animal Bride Mythology”
- Shibaji Mridha (American International University-Bangladesh), “From Revenge to Romance: Re-visiting Ponyo and The Shape of Water in the Age of Orca Uprising”

Reinhard Henning (University of Hagder), “The Last Troll: Fantastic Species as Threatened and Threatening Nature in Contemporary Norwegian Literature and Film”

Abstract: In Old Norse literature as well as in Norwegian folk tales, trolls figure as creatures living outside humanly populated areas and threatening humans whenever encounters between the two species take place. These trolls, despite their anthropomorphic appearance, function as combined representations of various dangers emanating from nonhuman nature. However, in recent Norwegian literature, such as Tor Åge Bringsværd's children's book series about the young troll Tambar (2010-2019), relations are reversed: trolls are here likeable creatures, standing for an originally harmonic, friendly nature that is constantly reduced and threatened by humans. Recent debates about biodiversity loss and human pressure on Norway's natural areas also form the background to director Roar Uthaug's immensely successful Netflix movie *Troll* (2022). Here, tunnel construction in the Dovrefjell area awakens an enormous troll that eventually threatens the Norwegian capital with destruction. This troll can be understood as a synecdochic representation of nonhuman nature, reacting against its increasing anthropogenic degradation, and conveying implicit views and norms on area transformation and its socioecological consequences also for Norwegian national identity. However, while the film plays on widespread narratives of species extinction, including elegiac representation of the troll as "the last of its kind", the troll, despite the compassion felt for it by the human main characters, is in the end eliminated by these same characters to protect human civilization – which arguably portrays further anthropogenic degradation of natural areas as inevitable. In this talk, I will critically discuss how such popular representations of the fantastic species of the troll as both nature under threat and threatening nature in contemporary literature and film can be understood in a wider context of disagreements within Norwegian society about environmental risks and exploitation of natural resources.

Bio: Reinhard Hennig is professor of Nordic literature at the University of Agder, Norway. He is former president of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment (EASLCE) and co-founder and coordinator of the Ecocritical Network for Scandinavian Studies (ENSCAN). He is currently involved in the multidisciplinary research project *Translatability of Oil* (TOIL; funded by the Research Council of Norway, 2023–27).

Guðrun í Jákupsstovu (University of the Faroe Islands), "Materiality and Mythology as Nonhuman Resistance in Contemporary Nordic Literature"

Abstract: This contribution centres its inquiry around three works of Nordic literature: Siri Ranva Jacobsen's *The Sea Letters* (2018), Andri Snær Magnason's *On Time and Water* (2019) and Morten Strøksnes' *Shark Drunk* (2015). These works have in common that they all draw on various forms of mythological and epic narratives to convey and problematise themes of ecological decline and human exceptionalism. This paper considers the use of mythological stories to contextualise Anthropocene scales as well as to articulate ecological decline as a form of moral retribution and judgment. Furthermore, it asks how a focus on materiality can productively raise the stakes for an engagement with the usefulness of myths in environmental narratives.

In *The Sea Letters*, the Atlantic and Mediterranean oceans are anthropomorphised as letter-writing sisters, who conspire in a plan to flood the world as retribution for humanity's destructive impact on the planet. The text thus draws on the well-known flood myth to thematise the very material threat of rising sea levels. Similarly, *Shark Drunk* follows two men's pursuit to catch the elusive Greenland

shark, cast as an ultimate “monster of the deep”, whose species’ age allows it to be read as an embodiment of deep, Anthropocene time, and the men’s pursuit of catching it as an enactment of geological agency. Considering these two texts together with Magnason’s claim that climate change is happening at “mythological speed”, this paper asks how the material agencies of animals and natural environments contribute to the potency of mythological narratives, and how these raise the stakes for our understanding of nonhuman resistance in the Anthropocene.

Bio: Guðrun í Jákupsstovu is Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of the Faroe Islands. Her research explores literary representations of islands, coastlines and oceans and focuses particularly on how these settings produce experiences of time in relation to climate change and the Anthropocene. She has published on Anthropocene temporalities in the journal *Nordeuropaforum* and is currently working on the manuscript for her first monograph. In the coming time, she will be turning her attention towards Faroese oceanic literature and how these can be read together with contemporary geopolitical tensions in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Hanna Hoorenman (Utrecht University), “Animal Attraction: Shapeshifting Romance and Animal Bride Mythology”

Abstract: Shapeshifters have been enjoying massive popularity in the field of paranormal popular romance in the past twenty years. Shifter romance is a relatively recent subgenre, coming to prominence after 2001, but stories of humans mating with animals and shifting into animals are indeed as old, perhaps not as time itself, then certainly as old as humans are. As a mixed-genre phenomenon, shifter romance combines the world-building strategies of fantasy fiction with the promise of emotional justice and fantasy-fulfilment of the romance genre. Taking a literary deep-time approach to the *longue durée* of shapeshifting narratives, this paper follows two central lines of inquiry: how do these stories mean, and what sort of cultural work within our specific historical situation.

Drawing on Dominic Pettman’s *Creaturely Love: How Desire Makes Us More and Less Than Human* and Boria Sax’ *The Serpent and the Swan: Animal Brides in Literature and Folklore*, my paper explores the question of animality in shapeshifting romance novels in which either the FMC or both FMC and MMC are (part) were-animals, with particular attention to Nalini Singh’s long-running cult-favourite Psy/Changeling series. Since heterosexual shape-shifter romance typically situates the male hero as the shifter, and the female as the human, I discuss the gendered implications of shifting, the species-considerations of transformation and the dynamics of predation and physiological difference in inter-species were-relationships. Primarily, I ask what form of animality is explored in these paranormal romance novels, in which ways these fantasies of ‘becoming-animal’ speak to the *humanimal* that we are, and what fantasies of more-than-human communities they imagine.

Bio: Hanna Hoorenman is Assistant Professor in American literature at Utrecht University. She has published on the role of animals in American poetry as well as on historical romance fiction and cultural memory. She is currently guest editing the special issue “Romancing the Posthuman” for the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. Her work on posthumanism in Anglophone fiction interrogates the way in

which humans investigate or imaginatively transcend the boundaries of their humanity through stories of love with non-human others.

Shibaji Mridha (American International University-Bangladesh), “From Revenge to Romance: Re-visiting *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* in the Age of Orca Uprising”

Abstract: The recent “Orca Uprising” has prompted environmental thinkers and enthusiasts worldwide to re-evaluate humanity’s attitude towards non-human multispecies. One challenge in developing multispecies care and recognition in a human-dominated world lies in the lack of visibility of the non-humans in the mainstream cultural imaginaries. Ecocinema’s powerful visual narratives can make humans more sensitive to reciprocal, non-hierarchical human/non-human relationships, initiating a contact zone between species. This paper examines two films, *Ponyo* by Hayao Miyazaki and *The Shape of Water* by Guillermo del Toro, which foreground both multispecies injustice and care. Challenging species hierarchy, *Ponyo* explores an intra-species friendship between a human boy Sosuke and a goldfish Ponyo, and *The Shape of Water* showcases an intra-species affair between a mute woman Elisa and an anonymous amphibian creature. Drawing on animal studies, post-humanist discourse, and recent developments in environmental ethics, this study highlights how these visual stories subvert the idea of human subjectivity, allowing non-human species to take over the traditional role of human protagonists. Instead of creating an entrenched dualism pitting one against the other, both the films find alternative spaces for reconciliation and commonality amid initial resistance and chaos. Undermining our taken-for-granted human experience, the narratives allow us to witness new dimensions of ethical entanglements in more-than-human ways. The films’ odyssey from reluctance to acceptance and indifference to care frames these films as tales of revenge and romance, advancing the idea of interspecies recognition, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Bio: Shibaji Mridha is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at American International University-Bangladesh. He obtained his second MA in literature and writing at Kent State University, Ohio, USA. His thesis is titled “Ecocinema, Slow Violence, and Environmental Ethics: Tales of Water.” He completed an MA in English Literature and a BA in English from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. His areas of interest are environmental humanities, material ecocriticism, water studies, and postcolonialism. Currently, he is a member of ASLE and ASLE-ASEAN.

Session 2

Session 2.a The Poetics and Politics of More-than-Human Coexistence in Contemporary Cinema (preformed panel)

Room: JK2–3 0.17

Chair: Katarzyna Paszkiewicz

Speakers:

- Stephanie Rincón Ramos (University of the Balearic Islands), “Imagining Otherwise: Multispecies Alliances in *Flow* and *The Wild Robot*”
- Laura Del Vecchio (University of the Balearic Islands), ““All That You Change Changes You”: Mutability and Presence in Raven Jackson’s *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (2023)”
- Katarzyna Paszkiewicz (University of the Balearic Islands), “Animal Cinematic *Poet(h)ics*: Multispecies Resilience in the Edgelands”

Panel description: This panel is concerned with exploring non- or more-than-human relationalities on screen, posing questions about how cinema can challenge the anthropocentric ways of seeing the world. Each paper will address these questions through a variety of perspectives – including ecocriticism, critical animal studies, decolonial thought and indigenous cosmologies – and with different answers, spanning issues of multispecies alliances, mutability, “zoopoetics” and care. We will analyse a range of contemporary texts, including recent animated films *Flow* (2024) and *The Wild Robot* (2024), Raven Jackson’s *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (2023), as well as Andrea Arnold’s *Bird* (2024). This panel is part of the research project “Cinema and Environment 2: Ways of seeing beyond the Anthropocene”, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, and the European Union (Grant PID2023-152989NB-I00 funded by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/FEDER, UE). Principal Investigator: Katarzyna Paszkiewicz.

Stephanie Rincón Ramos (University of the Balearic Islands), “Imagining Otherwise: Multispecies Alliances in *Flow* and *The Wild Robot*”

Abstract: Fantasy scholar Brian Attebery argues that fantasy’s primary cultural significance rests in its “capacity for mythopoiesis: the making of narratives that reshape the world” (2014, 4). This world-building is further elevated by animation, as it “*facilitates* fantasy because its normative conditions *enable* ‘magic’” (Wells 2018, 27); therefore, fantasy animation can create worlds that defy the anthropocentric myopia of ecocidal narratives (Oziewicz 2022) and bring forth more-than-human voices and multispecies narratives. Moreover, both Ursula Heise (2014) and Paul Wells (2018) highlight animation’s propensity to bring into relief the agency of the material world, and its refusal to render it inert. This “aliveness”, as it were, is a narrative and aesthetic affordance of the genre that allows it to give visual and narrative agency to nonhuman animals and more-than-human beings, and through that, build eco-conscious storyworlds.

This paper addresses two contemporary animated films, *Flow* (2024) and *The Wild Robot* (2024), to argue that animation’s “plasmatic nature” (Heise 2014) opens up space for narratives that explore the lives and experiences of nonhuman agents beyond the sphere of human influence, namely animals and A.I. robots. Rooted in the fantastic, these films enable speculative reimaginations of ecological entanglements and multispecies alliances, making use of anthropomorphism (Wells 2009) and speculative ways of being otherwise. Drawing on indigenous cosmologies (Kimmerer 2013), eco-fantasy studies (Oziewicz 2022, Attebery 2022) and animation

theory (Wells 2009, Heise 2014), this paper examines how these films dramatize more-than-human relationalities not by mimicking reality, but by constructing storyworlds and narratives where kinship and care are central to achieving harmony and overcoming the adversities of a changing planet.

Bio: Stephanie Rincón is a third year PhD student at the University of the Balearic Islands, a recipient of the FPUCAIB 2023 grant and a member of the research project “Cinema and Environment 2: Ways of Seeing beyond the Anthropocene”. Her current research is situated at the intersection of studies of fantasy media, postcolonial theory and animation, examining how recent children’s animated series represent the more-than-human world, oftentimes challenging the binaries that typically underlie anthropocentric narratives.

Laura Del Vecchio (University of the Balearic Islands), ““All That You Change Changes You”: Mutability and Presence in Raven Jackson’s *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (2023)”

Abstract: The title of this paper comes from an epigraph in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993). In the novel, the protagonist, Lauren, lives in a dystopian—although disturbingly current—world undone by religious fanaticism, racial violence, and ecological catastrophe. Through writing, Lauren transforms despair into resilience, shaping Earthseed, a philosophy crystallized in its central verse: “All that you touch You Change. All that you Change Changes you. The only lasting truth Is Change” (Butler 1993, 14).

Raven Jackson’s film *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (2023) also explores notions of change, though in a different register from Butler’s novel. Through the non-linear unfolding of time, the film shows the main character’s encounters with others, where forms continually shift while retaining traces of what they once were. Whereas Butler dramatizes survival through the struggles of oppressed people who, fleeing violence, forge alliances with other refugees and envision a future sustained by the principle of becoming a seed that multiplies “From one, many; from many, one; Forever uniting, growing, dissolving—forever Changing” (Butler 1993, 342), Jackson turns to living and dying, lingering on the porousness of existence, showing how human life loses its fixed form and joins with the other, whether human or otherwise.

Drawing on Donna Haraway’s (2016) concept of “becoming-with” and Jane Bennet’s (2010) notion of “vibrant matter”, as well as decolonial thinking attentive to material existences that resist narrations of historical erasure and the myth of “empty territories” (Nixon 2018, Tavares 2024), this paper meditates on multispecies “mutability” and “presence” through the comparative reading of Jackson’s film and Butler’s novel. Here, I argue that presence and mutability “compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time” (Haraway 2016, 97), delineating that, through the mutation of matter itself, presence is not bound to the human alone; it is distributed, multispecies, and enduring.

Bio: Laura Del Vecchio is a PhD candidate at the University of the Balearic Islands and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). Her research focuses on the analysis of sonic elements in cinema to understand the listener’s positionality and the agency of sound. She integrates contributions from sound studies with ecocinema, decolonial and posthumanist thought to challenge

anthropocentric perspectives and explore cosmologies of thinking among different species.

Katarzyna Paszkiewicz (University of the Balearic Islands), “Animal Cinematic Poet(h)ics: Multispecies Resilience in the Edgelands”

Abstract: The cinema of Andrea Arnold has been described as particularly responsive to the nonhuman (Lawrence 2016; Thornham 2016; Paszkiewicz 2023). Building on ecocinematic approaches to screening nonhuman animals (Pick and Narraway 2013, Cahill 2019) and Kári Driscoll’s and Eva Hoffmann’s conceptualization of “zoopoetics” (2018), this paper will address the relationship between animality and Arnold’s cinematic *poet(h)ics*, with a particular focus on *Fish Tank* (2009) and her latest film, *Bird* (2024). Both films offer a richly poetic engagement with the multispecies relationality through their depiction of “edgelands”, a term coined by Marion Shoard (2002) to refer to the liminal, often neglected, territories where the urban and the rural intersect. Considering multispecies *poet(h)ics* through the cinematic rendering of the edgelands, inhabited or traversed by human and nonhuman animals, this paper will reflect on the ethico-political challenges of representing more-than-human relationalities on screen. I contend that the attention to these liminal spaces of precarity and resilience helps blur the conventional divides between nature and culture, questioning the hierarchical distinction and anthropocentric violence that tend to organize the human/animal encounters on film. Yet, it also highlights how different beings are exposed to death in unequal ways. Ultimately, Arnold’s figurative and, at the same time, phenomenological treatment of animality opens up questions about the historical legacy of screening the nonhuman, showing how aesthetic forms, including cinema, are closely intertwined with ethical and political injustices.

Bio: Associate Professor in English and Film Studies. Her articles on ecocinema, affect theory and eco-aesthetics, as well as the aesthetics of petroleum appear in journals such as *Studies in European Cinema*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, and *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, among others. She has co-edited, with Andrea Ruthven, *Cinema of/for the Anthropocene* (2025) for Routledge Advances in Film Studies and is completing her book on de-anthropocentric visualities (under contract with Routledge). Her video essays appeared in *Feminist Encounters* and *Teknokultura*.

Session 2.b Blue Perspectives on Multispecies (In)justices (performed panel)

Room: JK2–3 0.19

Chair: Bénédicte Meillon

Speakers:

- Andrea Cabezas-Vargas (University of Angers), ““A Cry for Justice, from Water to Land: The Rebellion of the Frogs in Jayro Bustamante’s *La Llorona* (2019)”

- Caroline Durand-Rous (University of Nîmes), “Liquid Survivance: Construing Post-chaos Co-living in Waubgeshig Rice’s Novels”
- Bénédicte Meillon (University of Angers), “Tracking the Eco(poet(h)ical Evolution of Cephalopod (Mis)representations in Blue Literature and Art”

Andrea Cabezas-Vargas (University of Angers), ““A Cry for Justice, from Water to Land: The Rebellion of the Frogs in Jayro Bustamante’s *La Llorona* (2019)”

Abstract: In the cosmogony of the Maya peoples, animals hold a very important place within their worldview and are a fundamental part of the lives of men and women. For the Maya, amphibians had a close connection to aquatic deities and the underworld. Frogs and toads were animals closely linked to water and rain, as they were found near bodies of water, and their croaking was considered an omen of rainfall. In the film *La Llorona* by Guatemalan director Jayro Bustamante, the past and the present merge, giving these freshwater animals a symbolic significance typical of the indigenous peoples of the Central American continent, thus updating the Mesoamerican indigenous cosmogony while denouncing the horror of the historical reality of the Mayan peoples.

My presentation aims to analyze the aesthetic representations and socio-political symbolism of the frog in the film *La Llorona*. From a poetic-political perspective, I will first address the role of frog croaking within the film's narrative to demonstrate that, rather than a simple naturalistic illustration, it functions as a silent form of denunciation. Secondly, I will analyze how the aquatic aesthetics associated with frogs allow the depth of Mayan thought to crystallize, giving the aquatic element, and with it the frog, a poetic and political value. Finally, I will show how, albeit in a subtle way, the metaphor of the passage from water to land and then from land to water reveals a world in symbiosis between human beings and the Mayan peoples, reminding us that the genocide of the Mayan people is also an ecocide of the Guatemalan jungle.

Bio: Andrea Cabezas Vargas holds a PhD in Arts (History, Theory, and Practices of the Arts) and is Associate Professor in Latin American Cinema at the Department of Hispanic and Hispanic-American Studies at the University of Angers. Her research focuses primarily on the relationship between cinema and history and the collective memory of a nation. She is a member of the 3LAM research team at the University of Angers, as well as a member of RedISCA (European Research Network on Central America), a member of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary scientific program on the Greater Caribbean “Horizons Caribéens” and a member of the CompArte (Compromisos y Arte en el siglo XX y XXI) research group. She is co-author of the book *Libertad de expresión y libertad de creación en el istmo centroamericano, siglos XIX-XXI (Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Creation in the Central American Isthmus, 19th-21st Centuries)* (2022).

Caroline Durand-Rous (University of Nîmes), “Liquid Survivance: Construing Post-chaos Co-living in Waubgeshig Rice’s Novels”

Abstract: *Moon of the Crusted Snow* and *Moon of the Turning Leaves* are two dystopian novels by Anishinaabe author Waubgeshig Rice, set twenty years apart and depicting the ordeals and searing moments of intensity experienced by a band of First Nation Canadians after the apocalyptic collapse of Western civilization. Set in Northern Ontario, a liminal territory marked by a myriad of rivers, lakes, and

interconnected wetlands, which are cyclically metamorphosed by snow and thaw, both works explore and question the human ability to adapt to powerful natural agencies once humans find themselves deprived of their technological apparatus. In that regard, Rice offers the reader two “sustainable texts”, to borrow Hubert Zapf’s terminology, in that they stand as challenging narratives aiming to disrupt the biased belief in a permanent progress of humankind and its subsequent mastery over a compliant and servile nature. Noticeably, water in all its shapes and literary utterances plays the key role in this process as it induces the rediscovery of the so-called “old ways”: Gradually reinstating a totemic link to the territory, the surviving protagonists succeed in rekindling ancestral covenants with wildlife, thus restoring a crucial multi-species solidarity. Tapping into Paula Gunn Allen’s concept of “separation trauma” and Joni Adamson’s notion of “contested landscapes,” this talk will analyze the subtle superimposition of social and environmental injustice operated by both texts. I will then examine the multidimensional significance of the liquid element as it infuses the narratives and triggers the transformation of the characters. Lastly, I will delve into the proposed remedy to our current alienation from the natural realm.

Bio: Dr. Caroline Durand-Rous is Associate Professor at the University of Nîmes, France. She specializes in Native Studies and Environmental Humanities. She explores reinvented totemism in contemporary Indigenous fiction, analyzing how ambivalent tutelary figures offer guidance to characters in disarray on the path to discovering hybrid identities and congruence in contested landscapes. Her latest research focuses on the polysemic value of water in North America, specifically in coastal wetlands (lagoons, marshes, and deltas) and freshwater systems (rivers and lakes). She has co-directed a volume titled *Weaving Words into Worlds* (Vernon Press, 2023), which brings together articles that hone in on the entangled agencies of the human and more-than-human realms.

Bénédicte Meillon (University of Angers), “Tracking the Eco(poet(h)ical Evolution of Cephalopod (Mis)representations in Blue Literature and Art”

Abstract: Our capacity to integrate blue imagination, knowledge, representations, and affects in our dealings with Planet Aqua is inextricable from the influence of literature and the arts. Conversely, eco-poetic art can translate the attitude of a certain epoch toward the more-than-human world, usually reflecting the scientific understanding and beliefs of a given time and culture. As they represent Ocean creatures that seem alien to us, writers and artists may endow them with either monstrous or marvelous qualities that trickle down into the feelings we form in relationship to those creatures and to the worlds they inhabit. Focusing on the evolution of cephalopod representations in myths, arts, and literature, this paper will explore multispecies oceanic entanglements from a new materialistic and eco-poetic perspective. I will first focus on representations of cephalopods as sea monsters in ancient mythology or in classical texts by Victor Hugo, *Les travailleurs de la mer*, or Jules Verne’s *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers*. I will explore the ecophobic and misogynistic underpinnings of such representations which I will moreover read through the lens of Julia Kristeva’s notion of the “abject” and George Bataille’s of the “formless.” I will then go over other pieces of literature and art that reveal a better grip on cephalopod’s amazing natures while translating and encouraging positive affects and ethics toward those Ocean critters. I will develop my contention that cephalopod

literature and art provides a litmus test for the degree of ecophobia or biophilia that permeates our rapport with the Ocean and its many lifeforms. As recent literature and art specifically involving octopuses have contributed to a recent octopus craze and reenchantment of the Ocean, this paper gives a glimpse of my larger work on blue eco-poetics where I read literary and artistic octopuses as metonymies for the Ocean which shed light onto our own trans-corporeal and aquatic naturcultures.

Bio: Béné Meillon is *Professeure des Universités* (Full Professor) affiliated with the 3 L.A.M at the Université d'Angers. She ran OIKOS, the eco-poetics research group in Perpignan from 2015 to 2023 and has created an Internet platform dedicated to eco-poetics and ecocriticism in France (<https://ecopoetique.hypotheses.org>). She is currently serving as President of EASCLE (2024-2026) and leads the cross-disciplinary Sea More Blue research program on blue eco-poetics and blue humanities based at the Université d'Angers. Initially a short story specialist, her research specifically explores ecocritical readings and the notion of reenchantment, focusing on magical realism and liminal realism, mythopoeia, and ecofeminism, while paying close attention to the eco-poetic intra-actions between nature and language. She has published papers dealing with ecocritical and eco-poetic readings of environmental fiction by Barbara Kingsolver, Annie Proulx, Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake, Ron Rash, Anne Sibrán, as well as on contemporary dance performances choreographed by Maguy Marin. She has also written papers on fiction by Russell Banks, Roald Dahl, and Paul Auster. Her monograph *Eco-poetics of Reenchantment: Liminal Realism and Poetic Echoes of the Earth*, published by Lexington Books (Rowman & Littlefield), came out in 2022. She has organized many events to advance eco-poetics and has edited several publications in the field. She has also been engaged in creative projects that seek to restore ecological attention and is currently working on a multimedia project titled *Dancing Bodies of Water*.

Session 2.c Patricia Highsmith's Beastly Murders (preformed panel)

Room: JK2-3 1.09

Chair: Emelia Quinn

Speakers:

- Robert McKay (University of Sheffield), "Patricia Highsmith's Dark Multispecies Mutualism"
- Emelia Quinn (University of Ottawa), "Patricia Highsmith, John Waters, and Misanthropic Camp"
- Chloë Taylor (University of Alberta), "Patricia Highsmith's Cats and the Pathologization of Feline Misanthropy"

Panel description: The American novelist and short story writer Patricia Highsmith (1921-1995) is perhaps best known for her psychological thrillers, most notably *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) and its sequels. In recent years, her significance to the history of queer literature, in the form of *The Price of Salt* (1952), has also received renewed attention thanks to the success of Todd Haynes' film adaptation *Carol* (2015). However, her status as one of the pre-eminent authors of animal revenge fantasies has yet to receive its critical due, despite Highsmith's oeuvre containing

numerous narratives of animals revolting against humans: from her 1957 novel *Deep Water*, in which the protagonist (or, perhaps more fittingly, antagonist) is consumed by snails, to her 1975 collection of short stories, *The Animal-Lover's Book of Beastly Murder*, composed of a series of tales featuring the violent revenge of a range of animals (from hamsters to elephants) against the tyranny of humans. Infamously misanthropic by nature, the violence enacted by nonhumans against their human captors in the latter text invoked for Highsmith a profound sense of hilarity: "Every time she re-read one of her stories, she had to admit that the experience left her doubled up, with tears of laughter rolling down her face" (Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow* 331). However, such tales represent not simply a masochistic pleasure in human pain, nor an easy joke at the expense of animals. The animal-loving author instead described the scenes depicted as the acting out of "righteous instinct" (331) on the part of her animal heroes.

This three-person panel focuses in-depth on Highsmith's narratives of animal revenge: their comedy and camp, their sincerity and indignation, their misanthropy and animal-loving. In an age in which ruminations on nonhuman resistance are at an all time high, as testified by the thematic focus of this conference, this panel seeks to deepen our understanding of the recent history out of which contemporary depictions of animal revolt have emerged through close attention to this key figure from the mid-twentieth century.

Robert McKay (University of Sheffield), "Patricia Highsmith's Dark Multispecies Mutualism"

Abstract: The contemporary moment is one in which the environmental, public health, social, and psychological benefits of partnerships between humans and animals are widely celebrated. We see this in arenas like green social prescribing, ethical dairy production, animal-assisted therapy, and petkeeping—and it often recurs in "more-than-human" creativity and scholarship across the arts, humanities, and social sciences. But as the recent controversy around Raynor Winn's *The Salt Path* suggests, the positive appeal to such multispecies mutualism cannot avoid its more troubling aspects—where the reality and fantasy of more-than-human connection are intermixed, its benefits commodified, and its unequally-borne costs and harms obscured.

To consider the profound ambivalence at work in ideals of interspecies relationality, I turn to Patricia Highsmith's portrayal of what we might call "dark multispecies mutualism" in *The Animal-Lover's Book of Beastly Murder*. This collection largely comprises stories that imagine animals' intentional acts of revenge against the people and systems that abuse them. But my paper focuses on the three stories—"The Day of Reckoning", "Hamsters vs Websters", and "Harry: A Ferret"—that centre narratives of violent allegiance between humans and animals. I am especially interested in the scope their highly stylized form affords Highsmith to satirise and besmirch ideals about the beneficence of human–animal relations, and the privilege of human–human ones. As she started work on the collection, Highsmith wrote that "the fortitude to live comes from the realization that life is not composed of realities [and] one doesn't even have to worry about this fact" (*Her Diaries and Notebooks*, 849). These insouciantly histrionic, emotionally intense, psychically untethered, and morally excessive stories of dark multispecies mutualism reveal Highsmith's commitment to animals and a particular kind of misanthropic dissidence from humanity.

Bio: Robert McKay is Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of Sheffield where he co-directs the Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre. His book *Anthropofugal Fictions: Literature, Species Politics & Flight from Humanity* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press, and he has co-edited several volumes, including *Animal Satire* (Palgrave, 2023) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Animals and Literature* (Palgrave, 2021). From 2025-2030 he will be working with Alasdair Cochrane, Rosaleen Duffy and Eva Haifa Giraud on *Multispecies Mutualisms*, a project funded by the Wellcome Trust.

Emelia Quinn (University of Ottawa), “Patricia Highsmith, John Waters, and Misanthropic Camp”

Abstract: For Ron Broglio, animal revenge is always comic, with animal revolution presented as “a good joke” whereby “The idiocy of the position makes us laugh” (*Animal Revolution*, 51). In this paper I further probe this seeming inability to take narratives of animal resistance seriously by looking at the role of camp aesthetics in Patricia Highsmith’s tales of animal revenge.

This paper places the camp aesthetics to be found in Highsmith’s 1975 short story collection *The Animal-Lover’s Book of Beastly Murder* alongside John Waters’ early independent feature film from 1970, *Multiple Maniacs*. Highsmith and Waters, while not previously studied in conjunction, share striking similarities. Temporally and geographically proximate, both built their reputations on an embrace of the low and base: Waters quickly earned the moniker “the pope of trash,” while Highsmith has been described as the “high priestess of the nasty.” Investing a sense of camp frivolity in this love of the trashy and nasty, both also share a deep fascination with criminality and murder, the deviant and abnormal. They also share a distinctly misanthropic disdain for the human that sits in complex tension with their black humour, designed as it is to draw together a collective of ostensibly misanthropic consumers.

This paper reads together the animal murders of Highsmith’s work and the infamous lobster rape scene from *Multiple Maniacs* in order to reflect on the queer and camp aesthetics of animal vengeance fantasies. Such campy humour is tied inextricably to the misanthropy of both works, and allows for an exploration of the limits and possibilities of a form of misanthropic camp, or camp misanthropy.

Bio: Emelia Quinn is Assistant Professor of Environmental Literatures and Animal Studies at the University of Ottawa. She is author of *Reading Veganism: The Monstrous Vegan, 1818 to Present* (Oxford University Press, 2021) and co-editor of *The Edinburgh Companion to Vegan Literary Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022) and *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). She has published widely at the intersections of animal studies and queer theory in journals including *PMLA* and *GLQ*.

Chloë Taylor (University of Alberta), “Patricia Highsmith’s Cats and the Pathologization of Feline Misanthropy”

Abstract: Cats appear in many of Patricia Highsmith’s writings, including the kitten victims in “Engine Horse” and “The Day of Reckoning,” both squashed by humans;

Portland Bill of “Something the Cat Dragged in,” whose discovery of a severed human hand launches an amateur murder investigation; and PussPuss of “The Empty Birdhouse,” who is used by humans for her killing services but is otherwise unwanted and knows it. This presentation, however, will focus on the misanthropic cat character Ming, who, at the outset of “Ming’s Biggest Prey” is described thinking “*People!* Ming detested people. In all the world he liked only Elaine” (66). Ultimately Ming will kill the person he “detests” the most, Elaine’s lover Teddie, who has made multiple attempts on Ming’s life while Elaine wasn’t looking. While most small animals in Highsmith’s tales of “bestly murder” succeed in killing humans through strength in numbers, Ming works alone, jumping onto Teddie’s shoulder as he descends a flight of stairs, hanging on so that the man falls and fatally strikes his head. Ming is then left alone with Elaine, who has realized what kind of man Teddie was and expresses her love for Ming.

While Highsmith’s 1975 story presents Ming’s attack on Teddie as a justifiable and indeed satisfactory act, cat psychiatrist Claude Béata’s 2022 book, *La Folie des chats*, diagnoses a “pretty calico” named Lisbeth, who has similarly attacked her companion human’s lover, as “mad” (150). Béata observes that more humans are sent to hospital by cats than dogs, and views such feline aggression as psychopathological. In defending the reality of psychopathology in other-than-human animals, Béata moreover diagnoses the captive orca Tilikum with bipolar disorder, and refers to orca’s kills as “accidents” (148). Juxtaposing Highsmith’s accounts of animal murder with medicalizing interpretations such as Béata’s, this presentation will insist on the intentionality and rationality of actions such as Ming’s, Lisbeth’s, and Tilikum’s.

Bio: Chloë Taylor is Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Alberta. She is the author of three monographs on the philosopher Michel Foucault, and has edited or co-edited five books in critical animal studies, most recently *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Animals* (2024). With Jessie Beier and Dylan Hall, she has recently completed the co-authored book, *Anthropocene ABCs: An Epochalypsic Primer*, forthcoming with Fordham University Press in Fall 2026.

Session 2.d Elemental Resistance II

Room: JK2–3 1.10

Chair: Kylie Crane

Speakers:

- Isabel Pérez-Ramos (University of Oviedo), “Narrative Strategies and Multispecies (In)justice: Performative *Rasquachismo* and Double Dialectic”
- Katharina Karcher (University of Birmingham), “Living and Dying with Ammonium Nitrate”
- Emrys Liam Karlas (Vrije Universitat Amsterdam), “Rehabilitation through the Rewilding of the Mine? Human-nonhuman Coexistence in the Kiruna and TECMINE Post-industrial Landscapes”

Isabel Pérez-Ramos (University of Oviedo), “Narrative Strategies and Multispecies (In)justice: Performative *Rasquachismo* and Double Dialectic”

Abstract: When power goes out of hand, we need to rethink our social, political, economic and environmental circumstances. That is the main argument in the novel *Luz at Midnight* (2020), written by Chicana author Marisol Cortez. Power in her novel is understood not just as political strength (and abuse) and the act of having control over others, but as electrical energy produced from fossil fuels. Cortez raises those questions through a series of accidents (an explosion at a closed-down refinery resulting in a fuel spill, and a blackout caused by a storm and coinciding with a planned electric rate hike). These accidents in turn expose socio-environmental struggles such as energy poverty and health issues derived from or worsened by environmental pollution and climate change.

Her argument is supported by her narrative structure. Cortez achieves this by presenting the perspective of energy itself, as well as the perspective of other more-than-human actants through a double dialectic and what I would call performative *rasquachismo* (inspired by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto’s work). Through embedded narratives and an omniscient narrator that communicates the thoughts and even feelings of an electric storm and the local river, the reader is moreover invited to experience the world from an alternative perspective.

Luz at Midnight is a formally innovative novel that expands the often human-centered focus of socio-environmental justice struggles. A decolonial & eco-narratological study analyzes and dissects the narrative strategies put to use in this unusual and complex narrative.

Bio: Isabel Pérez-Ramos is a “Ramón y Cajal” research fellow at the University of Oviedo, Spain. Her research focuses on cultural representations of environmental injustices in Chicana, Southwestern, and border literature, as well as in cli-fi narratives. She is a member of the multidisciplinary research groups GIECO- Instituto Franklin (UAH) and Intersections: Contemporary Literatures, Cultures and Theories (University of Oviedo). She is Book Review Editor of *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*.

Katharina Karcher (University of Birmingham), “Living and Dying with Ammonium Nitrate”

Abstract: In 1913, the world’s first synthetic nitrogen factory began producing ammonium sulphate near the small town of Oppau in Southwest Germany using the newly developed Haber-Bosch process. The Haber-Bosch method made it possible to combine nitrogen from the atmosphere with hydrogen on an industrial scale. The process is now used worldwide, and it is estimated that the life of billions of people depends on synthetic fertilizers. At the same time, it has become impossible to ignore that there is a dark side to the rise of synthetic fertilizers. The devastating impact of their extensive use in agriculture on entire ecosystems is well documented. The same can be said about the use of ammonium in the production of bombs, and the move from ‘from farming to arming’ in the German Chemical industry in the advent of WWI (Hager 2008: 146). In this paper, I zoom in on another aspect of this dark history: accidental explosions. Using the example of three unintended ammonium nitrate explosions, I show how the complex interplay of human and nonhuman agencies caused explosions with disastrous consequences. I will start with an analysis of the first documented industrial accident caused by ammonium nitrate in Oppau in 1921, then discuss two of the world’s largest non-nuclear explosions: the

1947 Texas City disaster and the 2020 Beirut port blast. All three events were violent explosions with devastating consequences, yet there was no individual human perpetrator 'behind' them. How has this impacted the allocation of blame and responsibility? And can and should these explosions be understood as a form of nonhuman resistance?

Bio: Katharina Karcher is Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham, UK. Katharina's research focuses on political protest and violence in the 20th and 21st centuries. In this context, she is particularly interested in questions of gender, race, class, dis/ability, and political ideology. Katharina has published widely on feminist activism, the global 1968, and urban terrorism in contemporary Europe. Her new book 'The Terror of Things: Rethinking Security through the Agency of Everyday Objects' will be published by Bloomsbury in 2026.

Emrys Liam Karlas (Vrije Universitat Amsterdam), [Title TBA]

Abstract

If the European Union successfully stimulates an increase in raw material extraction from European soil as it states as its goal in the 2023 Critical Raw Materials Act, the continent will boast a wide variety of post-industrial landscapes related to mineral and metal extraction in the near future. In raw material mining, the closure phase of a mine presents an opportunity to rehabilitate the post-industrial landscape through environmental remediation measures. These remediation activities in turn, open up the possibility to reconfigure and rehabilitate the relationship between humans and the landscape. The European focus on sustainability goals, including net biodiversity gain, means the intentional and active rewilding of former mine-sites is becoming commonplace. Geomorphological and ecological remediation practices centre the mimicry of so-called "natural end-forms" and local ecosystems by harnessing geological, vegetal, hydrological, and faunal powers in its rehabilitation of former mine-sites. In this paper I examine this form of active rewilding by analysing the (planned) closure phase of two European raw material mines – one in Spain, one in Sweden. I look at the creation of an intentional industrial nature, and the praxis of palliative care in a conservation context in a highly politicized and complex landscape type. I compare the TECMINE and Kiruna post-industrial landscapes to provide insight into the potential for human and more-than-human coexistence in rewilded former mines where geology and nonhuman life are key political actors. The first part of the paper explicates the political agency of geology and nonhuman life in post-industrial mining landscapes. In the second part, I provide an overview of the rewilding actions shaping the landscapes before using the concepts of industrial nature and palliative care to critique the hyperculturality of landscapes often perceived as natural, and to discuss the potential and limitations of this subcategory of rewilding.

Bio: Emrys Karlas recently graduated cum laude from the ReMA Environmental Humanities at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. In his transdisciplinary master's thesis "Rewilding the Mine: The Geology and Politics of the TECMINE and Kiruna (Post-)Industrial Landscapes" he explores the past, present and future of Europe's raw material mines through the methodological tools obtained during his bachelor's degrees in literary studies and geology. His main research interests are mining, human-landscape relations in times of climate change, science communication, and (eco)narratology.

Session 2.e Writing Uprising with Plants and Animals (preformed panel)

Room: JK2–3 1.15

Chair: José Manuel Marrero Henríquez

Speakers:

- Juan Ignacio Oliva (Universidad de La Laguna), “‘Feel Like an Island’: Environmental Mediumship in Craig Santos Perez’s Docupoetry”
- Imelda Martín Junquera (Universidad de León), “The ‘Weeds’ Strike Back: Decolonizing American Landscapes”
- José Manuel Marrero Henríquez (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), “Uprising Texts”

Panel description: The symbolic interpretations of actions carried out by living beings (non-human animals, plants, bacteria) that bring to light the intense toxicity spread by the ever-growing system of production and consumption over life on the planet stem from a desire to see and to make others see that nature as a whole is capable of responding to the aggressions inflicted upon it by human beings. In this panel, that includes both, academic and literary interventions, the participants read their critical and creative texts to put into words messages akin to those expressed by orcas attacking sailboats, trees wilting under pollution, zoo animals banging against the glass that cages them, fish gasping in polluted rivers, beautiful landscapes in decline, human animals affected by toxic food and those microplastics they themselves release into the oceans.

Juan Ignacio Oliva (Universidad de La Laguna), “‘Feel Like an Island’: Environmental Mediumship in Craig Santos Perez’s Docupoetry”

Abstract: In an interview (Wilson Colorado Review 2015), Craig Santos (Guam 1980-) spoke of his lyrical work as “docupoetry,” “foregrounding my own voice (thoughts, emotions, and perceptions) on a given topic.” As a starting point, the author situates himself in the terrain of confessional, “feel-thinking,” holistic literature with an environmentally activist vein. Born on the island of Guam in the Pacific Ocean and living and working in Hawaii, insularity necessarily marks his position as a human animal in a particular context, which implies a strong paradox between individuation and isolation, on the one hand, and the close connection between biotic and abiotic bodies, on the other. However, if one reads his work, a progressive focalization on nature uprising against its own destruction can be found. Thus, in “Good Fossil Fuels,” for example, he warns of the destruction of the earth and of human animals within it (“For every green garden / there’s a toxin that would poison you”); or in “Love in a Time of Climate Change,” he associates humans’ and the environment’s bodies with each other (“I love you as one loves the most vulnerable / species // “I love you organically, without pesticides.”); or in “One fish, Two fish, Plastics, Dead fish,” he consubstantiates the uniqueness of all the bodies that inhabit Earth (“Who will survive? I can’t say. / Say! Look at its tumors!”). Little by little, we become aware of how the poet’s voice is heard as if a moribund earth were taking possession of the medium and complaining about the evil that has been committed (like a ghost

needing to denounce its murderer). This paper will thus analyze all these natural uprisings uttered by the human channel in a material symbioethical world imbued by solastalgia and the psychoterratic (Albrecht Earth Emotions 2019).

Bio: Juan Ignacio Oliva is Professor of Postcolonial Anglophone Literatures at U. La Laguna (Tenerife, Canaries, Spain). He edited *The Painful Chrysalis. Essays on Contemporary Cultural and Literary Identity* (Peter Lang 2011), *Realidad y simbología de la montaña* (U. Alcalá 2012) and coedited *Revolving Around India(s)* (CSP 2020). He is currently president of the Spanish James Joyce Association (2019-) and vicepresident of the Spanish Association for American Studies (2023-). He forms part of GIECO (Ecocriticism-Franklin Institute-U. Alcalá) and Ratnakara (Indian Ocean-U. Lleida) research groups.

Imelda Martín Junquera (Universidad de León), “The ‘Weeds’ Strike Back: Decolonizing American Landscapes”

Abstract: This paper engages with narratives which support the idea of American plant species reclaiming territory and ecological function, taking revenge against the introduction of foreign invasive plant species that asphyxiate and exterminate them. Colonial interventions or botanical imperialism have become the norm producing a significant loss of biodiversity in American landscapes. This is often metaphorical of the dispossession of indigenous peoples of their lands. The term weeds refers to unwanted plants which grow to a point to risk the success of crops from a time when cultivated lands turned crucial for survival. Those discarded plants, usually valuable for natives in America, as they served as food or shelter to wildlife, constantly offered resistance to disappearing and are eventually being rescued and restored to their original habitats. Ecohorror narratives have served to illustrate this process of return of the natives as a battle against the colonizing forces exerted by means of monocultures and the ecogothic proves as a valid theoretical framework to analyze this phenomenon. A good example appears in *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno García, a novel that explores the invasion of fungi brought from England to Mexico. Apparently, the mold possesses curative functions but the effect it causes on the locals is to suppress their will and agency. Balance will be restored by the intervention of a local healer who, with her natural remedies, helps the heroine stay away from the pernicious influx of the fungi. This presentation also discusses the TV series *The Last of Us* developed from a videogame and turned into a graphic narrative which presents a similar scenario of infection from fungi original from South America.

Bio: Imelda Martín Junquera is Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Languages. Her fields of research and interest are Chicano and Native American Literature and Culture, Border Studies, Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism. Member of GIECO (Research group in ecocriticism from the Universidad de Alcalá - Franklin Institute), coeditor with Dr. Carmen Flys Junquera of *Ecocríticas2: evolución y nuevos enfoques* (Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2025). She is currently co-editing *Hay otra voz: The Life and Works of Tino Villanueva* with Dr. Norma E. Cantú (Trinity University Press, 2026)

José Manuel Marrero Henríquez (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), “Uprising Texts”

Abstract: Uprising texts are frequently made of uprising messages. Nonetheless, linguistic beauty incarnated in innovative metaphors, delicate rhythms, and temperate images also invite to social mobilization and involvement in favor of planet Earth.

Literature does not belong to a binary conception of the arts, and multiple approaches to creative writing may serve to that world we are all part of. Explicit activism, formal care, empathy with the oppressed, even humor, sarcasm and irony contribute to the creation of texts that resonate along with nature for the benefit of landscapes, ways of living, professions, feelings, thoughts, animals, and plants in peril of extinction.

Bio: Poet, writer, essayist, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez is Professor of Literary Theory at the ULPGC. Currently vice-president of EASLCE, he has edited *Hispanic Ecocriticism* (Peter Lang) and published his poetry in *Landscapes with Donkey / Paisajes con burro* (Green writers Press). *Escritos antiviricos* (Baile del Sol) [*Antiviral Writings*] is his most recent collection of short stories. The ecocritical theory of literature that he calls “poetics of breathing” finds expression in his creative writing and in his academic engagement with environmental issues of artistic significance.

Session 2.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginaries II

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Celandine Fleur Seuren

Speakers:

- Marie Comuzzo (Brandeis University), “Listening with Comrade Orca: Becoming Better Animals Through Multispecies Solidarity”
- Wer Ziemann (Nicolaus Copernicus University), “Marine Mammal Alliances: Affirmative and Affective Forms of Co-Creating Solidarity Through Conviviality”
- Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth), “Lines Cast Otherwise: Poetic Countercurrents in Capitalocene Oceans”

Marie Comuzzo (Brandeis University.), “Listening with Comrade Orca: Becoming Better Animals Through Multispecies Solidarity”

Abstract: Following the viral news that orcas are sinking yachts off the coast of Spain, social media platforms have been flooded since May 2023 with memes celebrating comrade orcas. Human fans cheer them on for their anticapitalistic courage in moving against billionaires. Memes featuring images of orcas accompanied by text such as “become ungovernable” or “the earth will shed the virus of capitalism | join the orca uprising.” Centering nonhuman agency in resisting colonial-capitalism highlights the insurrectionary multispecies resistances has always accompanied the death march of capitalism “development.” What does it mean to be comrade with an orca? And how can we learn from whales to oppose a system that is taking away our shared future? I argue that to establish true comradeship with whales one needs to listen to and feel *with* them the reality of our *shared concerns*. Then, as comrades, seeking political change together. Indeed, legislations to protect orcas, whales in general, and the ocean have countless benefits for humans as well, as less glamorous but equally important members of the ecosystem are able to regenerate. In 2024, in a historical treaty led forward by Māori legislations, whales obtained legal personhood in Polynesia. This is a culmination of intergenerational work seeking to grant legal rights to nonhumans. In this example, the sought-after legislative reforms are not just rules to reduce boat speeds or create “sanctuaries,”

but rather epistemic challenges to the whole legal framework that understands personhood as exclusive to humans. Indeed, it reflects a commitment to animism, perspectivism, and the more-than-human, all of which are at the core of kinship and reciprocity. Ultimately, becoming comrades with orcas would require us to develop our own concrete actions to support them while striving to become better animals, as we imagine and create a radically different future.

Bio: Marie Comuzzo is an ACLS/Mellon Innovative Dissertation Fellow and a Ph.D. Candidate at Brandeis University. Marie's research examines how sound mediates the relationship between humans and whales and the political power that recognizing whales' vocalization as music had in ecological conservation and multispecies kinship within and beyond Western imaginaries.

Wer Zieman (Nicolaus Copernicus University), "Marine Mammal Alliances: Affirmative and Affective Forms of Co-Creating Solidarity Through Conviviality"

Abstract: While dominant narratives of "Nature's revenge" are creative and essential in drawing attention to the consequences of human actions, they often reify the human-nature binary and reaffirm human exceptionalism. This presentation, aiming to deepen the dialogue on nonhuman agency, proposes a complementary exploration of nonhuman resistance through the lens of feminist revolutionary theories, emphasizing the creative value of affirmative affect, cooperation, and the vitality of body and matter.

I focus on the concepts of "becoming-with" and multispecies alliances, rejecting speciesism and hierarchical divisions that often define conflict. Acknowledging the significant challenges of considering human-nonhuman relations given profound power imbalances and far-reaching anthropogenic impacts on the marine environment (including climate change, pollution, hunting, and captivity), I center on cases of interspecies relationships among marine mammals based on conviviality and shared play. The aim is to investigate how these collective practices, driven by affirmative affect, can offer alternative forms of resistance and survival in spaces touched by oppression. I argue that this approach, drawing on concepts of transversal evolution, is particularly useful for considering diverse positionings within networks of agency and uncovering their transformative potentials, promoting conceptions of multispecies justice and coexistence. This presentation seeks to deepen critical dialogue within the environmental humanities, fostering solidarity between ecocriticism and animal studies, and inspiring collective action towards a future where human and more-than-human worlds can thrive together.

Bio: Doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Humanities, Theology and Arts at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Their research interests lie at the intersection of feminist new materialisms, blue humanities, and posthumanism. They are particularly engaged with questions of knowledge production within science and technology studies (STS) and explores alternative research methodologies, including diffractive approaches. Their work addresses contemporary challenges related to the environmental crisis, emphasizing the need for ethically responsive, situated, and materially engaged academic practices.

Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth), "Lines Cast Otherwise: Poetic Countercurrents in Capitalocene Oceans"

Abstract: This paper considers poetic engagements with histories and practices of fishing. Industrial-scale fishing materially and imaginatively constructs oceans as sites of extraction and sacrifice zones where marine ecologies – and in many cases human rights – are decimated in pursuit of profit. I’ll examine how post-war poets situated in different geographies critique the ecological injustices of industrial fishing but also conjure alternative relations with oceans and their inhabitants. Charles Olson’s depictions of his hometown of Gloucester, Massachusetts in his epic *Maximus Poems* traces long, entwined histories of fishing, colonisation and the extractive imperatives of market capitalism. Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* depicts the struggles of subsistence fisherman Achille in a contemporary Caribbean amid waters dominated by the “voracious, insatiable nets” of industrial trawlers. Craig Santos Perez’s recent poetry laments the effects of military-industrial practices on marine ecologies and Indigenous relations with the more-than-human oceans in the Pacific. Jorie Graham’s “Deep Water Trawling,” meanwhile, imagines industrial bottom-trawling from the perspective of a personified ocean bed. While critiquing the dominant extractivist and polluting currents of industrial fishing in Capitalocene oceans, these poets also draw on practices of fishing to figure alternative ocean imaginaries and modes of ecological relation.

Bio: Mandy Bloomfield is Associate Professor in Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of Plymouth, where she teaches literary studies and environmental humanities. The author of *Archaeopoetics: Word, Image, History* (University of Alabama Press, 2016) she has published numerous essays on contemporary ecopoetics in journals such as *ISLE*, *Contemporary Literature*, *Green Letters*, *Configurations* and *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene*. She is currently working on a monograph on oceanic ecopoetics.

Session 2.g Speculative Fiction II

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Mace Bielderman

Speakers:

- Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu (Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University), “‘Mother Nature is a psychopath’: Super-Natures and Vegetal Monstrosity in Ali Shaw’s *The Trees*”
- Moira J. Deicke (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), “Weird Ecologies. Queering Nature and the (Non) Human in Speculative Fiction”
- Alperen Yedekçi (University of Ankara), “The Uncanny Green and Nonhuman Resistance: Ecohorror and Posthuman Ecology in Alan Moore’s *Swamp Thing*”

Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu (Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University), “‘Mother Nature is a psychopath’: Super-Natures and Vegetal Monstrosity in Ali Shaw’s *The Trees*”

Abstract: Instead of evoking a sense of pastoral beauty of nature, Ali Shaw reverses the relationship between the human and the nonhuman realms, the ‘Anthropos’ and dendrological world through ‘treepocalypse’ in his ecothriller, *The Trees* (2016). The protagonist, Adrien Thomas, a self-loathing anti-hero, wakes to find out that the trees

coming from ancient and deep history have destructively reclaimed the anthropocentric world. In this post-apocalyptic, environmental dystopian scenario, the Anthropocene and the Anthropos are haunted first by the ‘monstrous’ trees which have erupted through the buildings, cars, and roads, obliterating towns, destroying the human-made world, and killing humans, and second, by the idea that the Anthropos is not at all masters of the earth but the dendrological realm is. In this context, drawing on posthumanism and vegetal ecocriticism, this study argues that Shaw construes a post-anthropocentric point of contact with the ecological world through articulating trees as agentic and avenging forces, as super-natures that transgress into the world of humans. What *The Trees* suggests in this sense is that the mistake is to believe that nature is inert and predictable, and that the environment is vibrant, alive, feral, darker, and sublime. As this presentation shows, the figure of monstrous trees in the novel is positioned both as posthuman entity and as positive agent for the human’s re-identification with the environment. At the end of the novel, after embarking on an eco-quest with Hannah, a tree-hugger gardener, her son Seb, and Hiroko, a survivalist, for a search for Hannah’s woodman brother and his wife Michelle in Ireland, Adrien becomes part of a supernatural tree-entity and uncannily recognizes the tree, Other, as an inseparable property of himself. The presentation concludes by looking at the ecocritical implication of whether self-annihilation becomes a way out for humans from the global ecological crises.

Bio: Kerim Can YAZGÜNOĞLU is Associate Professor of English literature at Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, specializing in the environmental humanities, posthumanities, and gender studies. He obtained his PhD in English Literature from Hacettepe University, Turkey in 2018. He has written on such topics as ecogender, posthuman bodies, animals, climate change, postnatural environments, ecofeminism. Recently, he has contributed to the edited volumes, *Turkish Ecocriticism: From Neolithic to Contemporary Timescapes*, *Posthuman Pathogenesis: Contagion in Literature, Arts, and Media*, and *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*.

Moira J. Deicke (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), “Weird Ecologies. Queering Nature and the (Non) Human in Speculative Fiction”

Abstract: In the summer term of 2025, I led a tutorial (“Weird Ecologies. Queering Nature and the (Non) Human in Speculative Fiction”) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin that introduced students from various disciplines and degree levels to ecocritical theory and speculative fiction. Among the texts we read were Gregory Maguire’s *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995) and Henry Hoke’s *Open Throat* (2023), two works nearly thirty years apart that both challenge the binary between human and nonhuman narrative by presenting readers with complex and unsettling protagonists. In *Wicked*, the Wicked Witch – known from Baum’s 1900 novel and its Technicolor film adaptation – is given a name, Elphaba, and a political identity as she fights for equal rights for Animals. Through shifting narrative perspectives and devices, her gender and even species remain ambiguous, producing a layered story of kinship and diversity. Hoke’s novel, by contrast, seems at first more straightforward: its protagonist is a nonbinary cougar whose reflections on shrinking habitat unfold in close proximity to human life. Yet the homodiegetic narration simultaneously recalls a human voice while experimenting with language and epistemologies that blur species boundaries. Paired with theoretical texts by Donna Haraway on kinship and Aph and Syl Ko on speciesism, these novels opened

discussions of climate change, animal rights, identity, and interspecies relations. The tutorial culminated in a collaboratively produced creative zine, which will be published, documenting the students' critical and artistic responses.

Bio: Moira (preferred name) Johanna Deicke is an MA student in English Literatures at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where she also obtained a BA in German Literature and English. Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Anne Enderwitz and Prof. Dr. André Otto, she is currently finalising her thesis on Romantic Medieval Ecologies within J. R. R. Tolkien's creation myth *The Silmarillion*.

Alperen Yedekçi (University of Ankara), “The Uncanny Green and Nonhuman Resistance: Ecohorror and Posthuman Ecology in Alan Moore’s Swamp Thing”

Abstract: This paper argues that Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* (1984–1987) reframes horror not as an encounter with the unnatural, but as an exposure to the irreducible vitality of the natural. Swamp Thing emerges not as a superhero but as a vegetal assemblage, a being whose hybrid body makes visible the entanglements of plant, stone, dust, soil, fungi, and memory. The graphic novel's swamps and ruins are not settings but actants: landscapes of rot, contagion, and renewal that participate in what the conference calls “Nature biting back.” Horror here functions less as spectacle than as method. It unsettles anthropocentric stability by revealing the permeability of bodies and the unruliness of ecological systems. Unlike apocalyptic fantasies of ecological revenge, *Swamp Thing* stages a more complex drama where monstrosity becomes a mode of survival and intimacy. One of the most important characters in the series, Abigail Arcane's transgressive relationship with Swamp Thing foregrounds a multispecies ethics of care, one that unsettles taboos yet insists on coexistence. In this way, Moore's narrative resists the binary of nature as enemy or victim and instead imagines the swamp as a threshold zone where decay and creation, horror and desire, collapse into one another. Ultimately, this paper proposes that *Swamp Thing* offers an ecohorror poetics that is simultaneously terrifying and generative. By positioning “monstrous” flora as a symbol of resistance, the graphic novel demonstrates how graphic narratives can materialize theoretical discourses of posthuman ecology. The swamp does not simply host the story but it becomes “the storied matter”, a protagonist whose agency demands that we rethink justice, alliance, and survival beyond the human.

Bio: Alperen Yedekçi is an English Language and Literature MA student at Social Sciences University of Ankara, and he is a part-time English instructor at OSTİM Technical University. His academic interests include fantasy and science fiction literature, comic book and graphic novel studies, manga and anime studies, theatre and ecocritical studies. In addition to his academic pursuits, he also contributes to the performing arts as a playwright and actor.

Session 2.h Critical Infrastructures I

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Ifor Duncan

Speakers:

- Manon Raffard (University of Manchester), “Something in the Water: Smell Experience and Aquatic Ecohorror in Octave Mirbeau’s *La 628-E8* (1907)”
- Kate Huber (Tilburg University), “Developing Differently: An Exploration of How Art Imagines Multispecies Modernization”
- David Alexandre Silva Revés (Nova University of Lisbon), “Post-Anthropocentric Testimonies of the Rhine River: Material Agency and Eco-Narrativity in the Face of Collapse and Extinction”

Manon Raffard (University of Manchester), “Something in the Water: Smell Experience and Aquatic Ecohorror in Octave Mirbeau’s *La 628-E8* (1907)”

Abstract: The presentation¹ will explore the literary and ideological issues raised by threatening olfactory representations of water in Octave Mirbeau’s *La 628-E8* (1907). This semi-autofictional text² focuses on celebrating the automobile as the pinnacle of human ingenuity; industrial modernity; and hygienic living according to the latest scientific discoveries. However, while the second half of the nineteenth century saw the birth and subsequent diffusion of Pasteurian germ theory in France and in Europe, enduring beliefs in the potency and danger of malodorous miasmas were surprisingly pervasive³. In the context of hygienic efforts to reduce the circulation of pathogens⁴, stagnant water was a special source of epidemic anxieties and horrific cultural representations as early as the early-modern period and up until the mid-twentieth-century⁵. In Mirbeau’s text, still water embodies various epidemiological and civilizational fears, especially in the context of globalization, industrialization and colonization. Focusing my enquiry on Mirbeau’s depictions of the Amsterdam canals in *La 628-E8*, I will demonstrate how enduring collective beliefs in the threat posed by malodours influenced his perception of water bodies as equally fascinating, fearful and horrifying. Mirbeau’s waters are indeed given agency over their environment, both through their active propagation of toxic miasma; and through their mythographical anthropomorphization as hostile supernatural beings, bent on revenge against humanity. In this regard, the problematic form of *La 628-E8*—concurrently travelogue, journal, essay, novel and autofiction—allows for a dialectical approach, in comparison with non-literary sources. I will therefore contextualize Mirbeau’s depiction of the smelly and threatening Amsterdam canals with nineteenth-century scientific and historical texts displaying comparable ecohorrific collective beliefs regarding the toxic influence of still water.

Bio: Manon Raffard holds PhD in French Studies from the *Université de Bourgogne Europe*. Her doctoral research (to be published) explored literary and cultural interactions between olfaction and knowledge in France (1857-1914). She currently teaches secondary school students and carries out independent research on smell; the environment; and class violence in nineteenth-century France. Her work has been extensively published in journals and edited collections (<https://cv.hal.science/manon-raffard>). Starting autumn 2025, she will pursue her research as a Hallsworth Fellow at the University of Manchester.

Kate Huber (Tilburg University), “Developing Differently: An Exploration of How Art Imagines Multispecies Modernization”

Abstract: To solve everything from the climate crisis to persistent pollutants, people often turn to new technologies. Especially in the Netherlands, where ‘nature’ is so

often anthropogenically engineered, technologies regularly reflect, rather than challenge, nature-culture binaries. Seawalls attempt to impose a barrier between land and water amid rising sea levels. Yet these logics of enclosure can, as Stefan Helmreich has shown, exacerbate climate-induced flooding in riparian environments. While people may look to more modernization projects to ‘fix’ problems arising from earlier developments, including carbon emissions causing the climate crisis, new technologies from salmon ladders to wildlife crossings persistently recycle older models of development that consistently prioritize anthropocentric wants and needs. Wildlife crossings, for example, do not fully address how human roads cut off multispecies migration and reduce habitat through light and sound pollution, as science writer Ben Goldfarb explains. New forms of modernization are clearly needed to cultivate methods of adaptation in and with dynamic multispecies environments. Yet what do these methods look, feel, smell, sound, and taste like? This paper examines the experimental methods artists like Neal White and Tina O’Connell and collectives such as Loom develop and deploy. White and O’Connell brought “perpetual daylight” to humans in Amstelpark, for example, pointedly reproducing the experiences of birds and insects living with pervasive light pollution. Their study ends with a call to action to change lights throughout the Netherlands to a red spectrum that does not kill other species. The Rhine River Rehearsal project by Loom, a practice-based collective for cultural transformation, explores multisensory methods to trace and reflect upon changing human and more-than-human relationships with the River Rhine. By examining diverse projects like these, this paper considers what technologies, relationships, and senses humans in the Netherlands might need to collectively work toward multispecies futures in a changing world.

Bio: Kate Huber is an assistant professor in the Department of Culture Studies at Tilburg University. She specializes in multimedia cultural analysis, postcolonial ecocriticism, eco-media studies, and transnational environmental justice, with a focus on Dutch and anglophone literatures and cultures. Kate is author of *Irish Ecomedia: Empire and Environmental Justice in the Modernization of Postcolonial Ireland*, which explores the ongoing connections between colonialism and the environment across a range of twentieth and twenty-first century photography, literature, broadcast, and film media

David Alexandre Silva Revés (Nova University of Lisbon), “Post-Anthropocentric Testimonies of the Rhine River: Material Agency and Eco-Narrativity in the Face of Collapse and Extinction”

Abstract: This paper examines the testimonial operativity of South-African artist James Webb’s sound art by focusing on the Rhine River as a more-than-human witness to ecological collapse and multispecies extinction. At the centre is Webb’s installation *A Series of Personal Questions Addressed to River Rhine* (2023), where a disembodied voice poses intimate questions that activate the river not as backdrop but as interlocutor: a memory-bearing and narratively expressive entity. Drawing on material ecocriticism, object-oriented ontologies, testimony studies, and speculative storytelling, the analysis shows how Webb troubles anthropocentric paradigms. Marked by centuries of warfare, industrial exploitation, and, more recently, climate-induced drought, the Rhine expresses not as a symbol but as “storied matter” (Iovino & Opperman), “materially agential” (Barad), and a witness across human and nonhuman timescales. Against spectacle-driven apocalyptic imaginaries, Webb mobilises what I call (after Grusin’s “premediation”) as *retro-premediation*: it retrieves

unresolved material histories and suppressed contingencies to illuminate present crises and latent futures. In this framework, extinction is not a discrete rupture or redemptive closure, but an ongoing material condition inscribed in ecological and cultural flows alike, aligning with Derrida's understanding of the apocalyptic as an unveiling process.

In Web's work, listening emerges as an ethical mode of attunement and attention, creating a "sympathetic space" (Ballard) as a form of relationality between human and nonhuman ecologies, also resonating with Julia Emberly's notion of "testimonial uncanny," whereby historically marginalized voices reclaim presence. The Rhine's historical entanglement with Utrecht, as the Kromme Rijn branch, shaping the city's Roman foundations and canal infrastructures, further highlights how rivers inscribe both urban memory and eco-vulnerability. Webb's eco-acoustic practice then offers a post-anthropocentric poetics and new politics of testimony, positioning the Rhine simultaneously as past witness and potent-future voice, reframing extinction and collapse as a continual process of exposure, responsibility, and resistance.

Bio: David Revés lives and works between Lisbon and Brussels. PhD candidate at NOVA University of Lisbon and visiting researcher fellow at Linköping University, 2026-28. He is co-artistic director of SALTO (Lisbon) and founder of METANOIA, a nomadic project focused on narratives of extinction, collapse, and decay. David has developed artist residencies and exhibitions internationally in institutions such as Färgfabriken Konsthall (SE), Cité des Arts (FR), SOL (Nexø, DK), Frappant (DE), DIDAC Foundation (ES), and Culturgest, CIAJG, Leal Rios Foundation, Municipal Galleries of Lisbon (PT), among others.

Session 2.i Creature Features

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Trisha Bhaya

Speakers:

- Christian Lenz (TU Dortmund University), "Predators and Protectors: Rethinking the Jungle in *Anaconda* and *Kong: Skull Island*"
- Berit Huntebrinker (University of Agder), "There goes Tokyo again. Posthuman entanglements in *Shin Godzilla*"
- Christian Hummelsund Voie (University of Southeast Norway), "Invasive Alien Ecologies: Troubling Tribbles and Cannibal Space Worms"

Christian Lenz (TU Dortmund University), "Predators and Protectors: Rethinking the Jungle in *Anaconda* and *Kong: Skull Island*"

Abstract: The jungle is generally considered to be a perilous place of oppressive climate, mystery and danger: one can get lost and the number of venomous animals and poisonous plants appears limitless. However, people still venture into rainforests either to explore or to exploit nature and sometimes they find more than they bargained for – animals which are larger and cleverer than expected.

In my talk I will consider two horror movies, *Anaconda* (1997) and *Kong: Skull Island* (2017). Despite their twenty-year age gap, both movies are similarly constructed as each narrative follows a mainly American crew that has to fight against an animal

which is more dangerous than anybody anticipated. I approach these films from an eco-critical perspective that contests the idea of the anaconda and King Kong as merely bizarre creatures that threaten humans. My argument is therefore twofold and addresses both sides in the conflict:

First, the Americans depicted in these films display a persistent desire to dominate or even colonise the jungle so as to harvest its riches. Therefore, their actions invite retribution, as both the anaconda and the gorilla enact revenge, punishing human transgressions. In doing so, the films simultaneously reinforce and subvert the fundamental divide between humans and animals.

Second, standing in for other movies with similar tropes, these two filmic examples show that the jungle is a construction that is far from docile and passive – it is a network of agents that sends out the eponymous two animals to protect its realm against intruders. My talk challenges traditional readings of the rainforest as merely an exotic backdrop and demonstrates that the jungle and its protectors both fuel and maintain the idea of a lush Garden of Eden that can turn dark very quickly.

Bio: Christian Lenz is an associate professor of British Literary and Cultural Studies at TU Dortmund University (Germany). He has written his first book about the geographical implications of romantic relationships in chick and lad lit and has been interested in (cultural) geography ever since. He is currently writing his second book on the spatial implications of representations of the jungle. His research interests include – apart from cultural geography – erotic texts and horror literature, as well as youth culture.

Berit Huntebrinker (University of Agder), “There goes Tokyo again. Posthuman entanglements in Shin Godzilla”

Abstract: Environmental themes are central to *kaijū eiga*, Japanese monster movies. Godzilla, the first and most famous of these monsters, is a central figure in the genre of ecohorror. Ever since he emerged in Japan in 1954 as a reaction to the atomic bomb, he has been understood as the embodiment of humanity’s hubris and environmental irresponsibility. In my paper, I will discuss the complicated entanglements between Godzilla and the humans, which can be called a precarious coexistence. My focus will lie on the 2016 film *Shin Godzilla*, a stand-alone production where the monster has been read as a metaphor for the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster and the tsunami that preceded it. In *Shin Godzilla*, the monster appears as an evolving force of nature compared to more anthropomorphic depictions of him in earlier instalments. Rather, Godzilla can here more clearly be understood as a representation of nonhuman resistance.

I argue that *Shin Godzilla* depicts the monster as a posthuman figure that scrutinises narratives about human control over the environment, and our role in the Anthropocene. My discussion centres around the ecohorror and how Godzilla installs fear in humans, while also being a result of their doing. Aspects of Stacy Alaimo’s concept of transcorporeality also come into play. Being a result of nuclear waste dumping, Godzilla’s body is deeply entangled with his environment, which humans have impacted heavily. The film’s ending takes this another step further, showing skeletons with both human and monstrous features emerging from Godzilla’s tail. I will also go into the film’s critique of the Japanese government in light of the catastrophe that Godzilla embodies. Godzilla’s entanglements with humans and natural disasters connects discourses of the environmental humanities and popular

culture. In this way, mainstream cinema can contribute as a site for environmental discourses.

Bio: Berit Huntebrinker is associate professor of didactics at the University of Agder, Norway, where she defended her PhD thesis on environmental citizenship in comics and picturebooks in January 2023. Her background is in Comparative Literature, Scandinavian Studies, and Latin American Studies with an M.A. from Goethe-University in Frankfurt (Main). Her research areas and areas of interest are ecocriticism and econarratology, comic book studies, children's and young adult literature, and popular culture.

Christian Hummelsund Voie (University of Southeast Norway), “Invasive Alien Ecologies: Troubling Tribbles and Cannibal Space Worms”

Abstract: In “Reduced Ecologies: Science Fiction and the Meanings of Biological Scarcity” (2012) Ursula K. Heise maintains that “Science fiction novels ... have set their plots on planets with limited or no biodiversity so as to explore to what extent environmental conditions shape human cultures and codes of ethics, and to what extent humans themselves shape these conditions” (99). The four novels published so far in David Gerrold's unfinished *The War against the Chtorr* do exactly the opposite for the same purpose, setting its story against the encounter between earth's ecology and an unlimited and overwhelmingly aggressive alien biodiversity, to explore human culture and ethics when pushed to their uttermost ecological limit. Published 30 years ago, *The War against the Chtorr* has the frame and appearance of a science fiction pulp story, a low-budget B movie premise within which carnivorous space worms square off against men and women armed with flamethrowers. Yet within that rather preposterous frame, readers and reviewers of the series find that a surprisingly sophisticated thought experiment with uncontrollable ecological change, and its potential social and human ramifications, takes precedence over the occasional spectacular showdown with giant killer worms. In this series of novels, humanity, in an alternate version of our current time period, finds itself poised on the threshold, not of the Anthropocene, but of what one might call the Chtorrocene, an era in which aliens, not humans, become the primary agents of change in the surface systems of the earth.

The series opens in the dystopian aftermath of a sequence of sudden global pandemics that have precipitated a catastrophic global population crash, followed by the almost complete disintegration of all non-military infrastructure. Gradually, the remnants of humanity come to realize that the plagues were just the vanguard of an unusual invasion – the infestation of the entire biosphere by an exotic alien ecology, widely recognized as one of the most complexly realized ecologies in modern science fiction. As the deeply traumatized survivors begin to take stock, the conclusion seems inescapable that the infestation represents a deliberate act of terraforming – or chtorraforming – of earth to suit the needs of absent extraterrestrial invaders, colonizers whose orchestration of events is inferred, but never confirmed. These creatures, known as the Chtorr, thus assume the place of the anthropos in the Anthropocene, as the primary ecologically hostile architects of the current era, while humanity, already fractured and badly divided over the old wounds of imperialism, colonialism, and the uneven distribution of wealth and resources, races towards systemic tipping points beyond which the chtorraforming processes are expected to

become irreversible. This paper will argue that the four volumes of *The War against the Chtorr* explore and reframe pressing real world issues of ecological decline and environmental injustice, in terms of how we might perceive these issues very differently if they were not the results of our own behavior, but the actions of an outside agency.

Bio: Christian Hummelsund Voie is an associate professor of English at the University of Southeast Norway. His teaching subjects include academic writing, American literature, Anglophone literature, the environmental humanities, and literature and the environment in America. He defended his dissertation *Nature Writing of the Anthropocene* at Mid Sweden University in 2017 with Scott Slovic as his opponent. He has published various articles on literature and the environment, and the title of his dissertation reflects many of his current research interests. They include nature writing, the Anthropocene, ecocriticism, material ecocriticism, ecofeminism, environmental justice, postcolonial ecocriticism, the environmental humanities, environmental literature, environmental memory, environmental generational amnesia, blue ecocriticism, science fiction and the environment, Norwegian black metal and the environment and Louisiana and the environment. He is also the co-chair of the research group for environmental aesthetics at the University of South-East Norway, which organizes several minor and major research events, such as seminars, symposia and conferences, at USN each

Session 2.j Undrowned Resistance: Aquatic Alliances Across Planetary Waters (preformed panel)

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Laura Löslein

Speakers:

- Laura Löslein (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main), “Animal Allies in the Arctic. From Hunting Seals to Healing Trauma with Jellyfish in Bernd Späth’s Novel *Is There Ice in Oklahoma?*”
- Simon Probst (University of Vechta), “Coral Collaborations. A Short History of Reef Building as a Practice of Multispecies Justice”

Panel description: “If there was ever a time to humbly submit to the mentorship of marine mammals it is now”, recommends Alexis Pauline Gumbs in her book *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (2020:7), as a way of dealing with the challenges of an escalating climate crisis. Following thinkers such as Gumbs, this panel addresses critical engagements with representations of multispecies injustices in aquatic environments across literature, film, and visual art. Doing so, we focus on an exploration of alliances between land dwellers and critters of planetary waters. The panel therefore asks, how practices of cross-species resistance against multispecies injustices are fabricated in and through narration, critically examining the employed modes of storytelling: How do non-/fictional texts reproduce extractivist logics, rendering aquatic life as resource, spectacle, or absence? How might narration trace contemporary

manifestations of systemic racism, colonial injustice, and global power imbalances across planetary waters? And how might storytelling contribute to practices of multispecies resistance, where swordfishes, jellyfish, sea turtles, seals, corals and humans meet in their fight against aquatic suffering and systemic injustice?

Laura Löslein (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main), “Animal Allies in the Arctic. From Hunting Seals to Healing Trauma with Jellyfish in Bernd Späth’s Novel *Is There Ice in Oklahoma?*”

Abstract: The Arctic’s extreme climate conditions and distinct ecosystem demand resilience from its inhabitants. The region now faces several significant threats such as the loss of sea ice. Its melting reflects the breakdown in the relationship between humans and planetary waters. Ice is both vulnerable and powerful, embodying strength and fragility. From a hydrofeminist perspective, ice is not merely considered to be frozen water, but rather an active and relational entity.

In Bernd Späth’s novel *Gibt es Eis in Oklahoma?* (2012) (Engl.: *Is There Ice in Oklahoma?*), we follow the story of Hagen, an Arctic hunter and cold-hearted father to his sensitive son, Halvard. They encounter various types of wildlife during their hunt. While Halvard reacts with hesitation and compassion, Hagen embodies the archetypal Arctic hunter. As Hagen aggressively kills a seal, a part of the ice sheet has broken off, leaving them adrift on an erosive ice sheet in the Tempelfjord, Svalbard.

Being confronted with death, Hagen comes to rethink his relationship with his sun and with other more-than-human beings. In his final moments, he drifts imaginatively through the Arctic Ocean, surrounded by jellyfish. In Rachel Carson’s *The Sea Around Us* (1951), Jellyfish are described as delicate yet resilient creatures, symbolising the unfamiliar, the uncanny, death, fragility and the ocean’s timeless cycles. Immersed in the Arctic environment, Hagen’s uncompromising character dissolves into an interconnected state with marine life. The jellyfish become his allies, helping him to process his experiences of violence, loss, and trauma.

This paper examines how the novel transforms the binary narratives of human/non-human relationships, nature/culture, masculinity/femininity and ice/water, and turns them into narratives of connection and care. To conduct a thorough analysis, I will consider the links between sea ice and the materiality of the Arctic and its non-/human inhabitants through the lens of hydrofeminist theories.

Bio: Laura Löslein is a PhD candidate at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. Her project is focused on the Arctic and Antarctic ocean in contemporary literature from a Blue Humanities’ perspective. Laura has studied German Literature and philosophy in Kassel and Frankfurt am Main, where she works as a guide at the Senckenberg Museum of natural history.

Simon Probst (University of Vechta), “Coral Collaborations. A Short History of Reef Building as a Practice of Multispecies Justice”

Abstract: Coral reefs emerge from interspecies collaborations. They grow through the symbiotic metabolisms of tiny polyps and photosynthesizing zooxanthellae

producing carbonate rocks. Today, threatened by climate change and ocean acidification, reefs form new alliances with members of the very same species responsible for their precarious situation. Drawn into the coral's spell, scientists, activists, artists, and divers are building artificial reefs, using old tram waggons, ships, recycled plastic or yarn, joining the interspecies collaboration between polyps and zooxanthellae to build reefs.

Two hundred years before these alliances between reef building sea critters and humans in the face of planetary crisis, political movements already called to corals as symbols of political justice. As humans learned in the 18th and 19th century how tiny polyps create coral reefs in an intergenerational and collective effort, corals became a powerful metaphor for political life (Navakas 2023). At first, corals were used rhetorically as a legitimization of mass labour, serving the greater good of nation or empire building, but soon the collective way of coral life became an inspiration for feminist and black movements who saw in corals not only symbols for their own invisibilized contribution but found in them a vision to fight back for a just and equal society, already realized in the ocean but yet to be achieved in human life.

The paper draws on the history of these material-semiotic alliances, where humans and animals meet in reef building efforts, and brings them into dialogue with contemporary positions: E.J. Swift's climate fiction novel *The Coral Bones* (2024), Indigenous reef knowledge, and reef-building artworks (*Crochet Coral Reef project*). Thinking reef-building as a practice of multispecies justice, the paper explores the alliances between humans and corals in academic thought, activist struggles, and artistic work, fighting against extinction and injustice on land and in the seas.

Bio: Simon Probst works as a postdoctoral scholar in the DFG-project „Natural-cultural Memory in the Anthropocene. Archives, Media, and Literatures of Earth History“ (2024-2026, University of Vechta), which addresses cultural dimensions of planetary crises such as climate change or the sixth mass extinction from the perspective of interdisciplinary memory studies. He is also conducting a smaller project in citizen humanities on natural-cultural transformation in Lower Saxony collecting individual climate stories by citizens.

2.k From Landlocked Imaginaries to the Cloud and Back Again: On Learning to Re-Compose without Rebuilding [roundtable]

Room: JK2–3 2.19

Chair: Christina Diamant

Speakers:

- Megen de Bruin-Molé (University of Southampton)
- Cristina Diamant
- Francis Gene-Rowe

Roundtable Abstract: In this roundtable, the co-directors of the London Science Fiction Research Community (LSFRC) address solastalgia (Glenn Albrecht) not by emphasizing human fragility or culpability for ecocide, but by proposing an antifragile (Nassim Nicholas Taleb) mesh of multispecies configurations in resonance (Harmut Rosa), as opposed to an accelerationist vision which devalues the agency of nonhuman actants. This conversation takes place against the backdrop of the

LSFRC creative and critical zine *Compost Futures* to be published in 2026, which looks past the cruel optimism (Lauren Berlant) of dual-use technology, instead using compost as a theoretical framework to sketch a future beyond extractivist fantasies of domination. In doing so, we propose a critical orientation towards more-than-human intersubjectivity, rooting around and rooting for each other as kin in the Cthulucene (Donna J. Haraway). We will examine several “killer stories” (Ursula K. Le Guin) and poke holes in them, revealing the matter otherwise presumed to be inert and readily commodified. The past may be a foreign country, eroded and fleeting, but the pile of wreckage is hot and writhing with potential, disturbing neat temporalities and boundaries by extending its soft tendrils into alternative futures of symbiotic posthumanist ecologies (Karpouzoi and Zampaki). There is an appetite not for a world without us, but beyond us and through us.

Bios:

Megen de Bruin-Molé is Associate Professor of Digital Media Practice with the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, and co-director of the Critical Infrastructures and Image Politics research group. She specialises in ‘monstrous’ adaptation and contemporary remix culture, in particular the digital afterlives and appropriations of historical archives, ephemera, and memory in popular culture.

Cristina Diamant is the President of the all-Ireland Independent Workers’ Union, a Public Relations Subcommittee Volunteer for Women in Research Ireland, and a member of the Irish Network for Gothic and Horror Studies. Her research interests include speculative fiction, monster studies, materialist feminism, medical humanities, industrial relations, and popular culture, especially in the context of investigating various representations of the future from the margins.

Francis Gene-Rowe plays games, understands them, and teaches other people to make them. This helps with imagining things we need and especially things we’re told we don’t need. They also make oracles that don’t tell you about your success and write depressing and horrible poetry. This methodology allows the darkness to be safely transferred onto the page and the light to remain.

Session 2.1 Ambiguous Encounters and Uncanny Intimacies I

Room: JK2–3 2.20

Chair: Sara Bédard-Goulet

Speakers:

- Rūta Šlapkauskaitė (Vilnius University), “Coming to Their Senses: Genre Trouble in Robbie Arnott’s *Dusk*”
- Olivia Vázquez-Medina (University of Oxford), “Uncanny Intimacies: Larval Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Fiction”
- Ceren Özgüler (Hacettepe University), “Animals, Ecologies, and Colonial Legacies: Rethinking Nature in Le Clézio’s Novels”

Rūta Šlapkauskaitė (Vilnius University), “Coming to Their Senses: Genre Trouble in Robbie Arnott’s *Dusk*”

Abstract: In contrast to the crisis of imagination in contemporary geo- and ecopolitics, the literary responses to the ongoing “biosocial upheaval” (Haraway

2016) have been delivering a rich crop of genres and poetic forms which capture the scene of duress and offer new ecologies of the possible. This paper examines the use of the Western and the dark pastoral in Tasmanian author Robbie Arnott's novel *Dusk* as a means to reflect on the conceptual links between the logics and legacies of settler colonialism and species extinction. By focusing on the chiasmic (Merleau-Ponty 1968) threads of sensory engagement and the transcorporeal flows of human-nonhuman intimacies in the novel, the paper calls attention to the ethical aporias of *human/nonhuman*, *hunter/hunted*, and *care/cruelty*, in which *Dusk* anchors the genres' concern for looking at "current problems through the lens of past dilemmas" (White 2019). Embedded in the affective load of Arnott's postcolonial inquiry, I argue, is an attempt to flesh out a relationship between social and planetary temporalities, measured by the dialectic of love and loss in the troping of loyalty, on the one hand, and fossilization, on the other. Given how the work of the senses in the novel scaffolds the acts of both tracking and remembering, tying its central narrative arc – the hunt for a puma called Dusk – to questions about *kin* and *kind*, it does well to trouble the conceptual boundaries of care, reframing interspecies antagonism into an uneasy sense of "entangled shared living and dying" (Haraway 2016), which problematizes not only the ethical parameters of genre, but also the labour of its critical reception by the reader.

Bio: Rūta Šlapkauskaitė is Associate Professor of English literature at Vilnius University, Lithuania. Her research interests include Canadian and Australian literature, neo-Victorianism, and environmental humanities. Among her recent publications are articles on the works of Emma Donoghue, Richard Flanagan, and Fred Stenson. Rūta is currently researching the conceptual relevance of genre in narrating the climate emergency in contemporary Anglophone literature.

Olivia Vázquez-Medina (University of Oxford), "Uncanny Intimacies: Larval Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Fiction"

Abstract: Latin American literature and thought have long been concerned with the material entanglements between humans and the natural world. In recent decades, writers have probed these categories in narratives largely centred on extractivism, toxicity, pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change. These themes have been explored through a wide range of aesthetic and literary forms, from eco-horror and dystopia to innovative versions of realism and the fantastic. This presentation focuses on selected stories from the collection *Larvas (Larvae, 2025)*, by Uruguayan writer Tamara Silva Bernaschina, tracing both continuities and discontinuities with other approaches to the nonhuman in contemporary Latin American fiction. On the one hand, the collection continues the critical interrogation of the human-nature binary, emphasizing material interconnectedness as a fundamental condition of existence. On the other, unlike many recent texts, Silva Bernaschina's narratives avoid tropes of ecological contamination and environmental catastrophe. Instead, they focus on eerie depictions of rural and semi-rural landscapes, exploring the agency of 'vibrant matter' (Bennett 2010) through unsettling material interactions rooted in deeply intimate experiences. While focusing on human stories and emotions, Silva Bernaschina's aesthetics attend to the animal, vegetal, and geological/mineral forms of the nonhuman world, emphasizing the material entanglements of the human and the nonhuman, and presenting them in highly charged affective scenarios. The presentation examines the ontological and affective

dimensions of what I call Silva Bernarschina's 'larval' aesthetics—a term that denotes potentiality, metamorphosis, and latency—through which the nonhuman exerts a disruptive force that challenges binary notions of 'human' and 'nature', undermines human exceptionalism, and proposes an alternative fabric of the world.

Bio: I am an Associate Professor in Spanish at the University of Oxford, and a Fellow of Wadham College. I specialise in modern and contemporary Latin American literature, with a particular interest in the environmental humanities, gender, and affect. Centring on the dynamics between affect and literary form, my current research project investigates how contemporary women writers from Latin America grapple with major problems faced by the region in the twenty-first century—including environmental degradation and violence against women—through innovative aesthetics and experimental modes of storytelling.

Ceren Özgüler (Hacettepe University), "Animals, Ecologies, and Colonial Legacies: Rethinking Nature in Le Clézio's Novels"

Abstract: J. M. G. Le Clézio, Nobel Prize-winning French author, is widely recognized for his literary engagement with colonial histories, cross-cultural encounters, and the search for alternative ways of inhabiting the world. This paper explores the ecological imagination in his novels, focusing on the ways in which his narratives articulate what can be termed "multispecies resilience" within a (de)colonial ecological framework. In Le Clézio's works, the relationship between humans and nature is never one-directional; rather, nature emerges as a living presence in its own right: animals, the wind, the stones, and even silence acquire subject-like agency, revealing an ecological multiplicity that challenges anthropocentric perspectives. In *Désert* (1980); animals appear in the relationship between the nomads of the Sahara and their environment. Herds, camels, and desert birds embody a vital continuity between humans and non-human life. Animals are not merely decorative: they symbolize a way of surviving in harmony with a harsh landscape. In *La Guerre* (1970); although this novel is more violent and experimental, Le Clézio stages images of wounded or hunted animals, functioning as metaphors for the vulnerability of all living beings in a modern world saturated with violence. Overall, animals in Le Clézio's work are not just background figures: they express an ecological cosmology, a way of inhabiting the world where humans are only one species among others. Le Clézio often associates them with childhood, innocence, and a lost connection to the living world, which situates his novels within an ecofictional perspective. Equally important is Le Clézio's engagement with Indigenous ecologies, where nature is conceived not as a resource but as a shared living environment for humans, animals, and plants alike. By foregrounding this interconnected worldview, Le Clézio idealizes an alternative model of ecological coexistence, resisting the destructive and homogenizing forces of modernity and colonial exploitation.

Bio: In 2007, I began working as a Research Assistant at the Department of French Language and Literature at Hacettepe University. In 2009, I completed my master's thesis titled "City Writing in Louis Aragon's Parisian Peasant and İlhan Berk's Galata and Pera" at the same department. In 2016, I completed my doctoral thesis titled "Interculturalism in the Novels of J.-M.G. Le Clézio" at the Department of French Language and Literature. I was appointed as an assistant professor.

Session 3

Session 3.a Ecoviolence and Multispecies Justice: Rethinking Responsibility [Roundtable]

Room: JK2–3 0.17

Chair: Susanne C. Knittel

Speakers:

- Susanne C. Knittel (Utrecht University)
- Salomé Lopes Coelho (Utrecht University)
- Ifor Duncan (Utrecht University)
- Tom van Bunnik (Utrecht University)
- Sofia Lovegrove (Utrecht University)

Abstract: This panel takes the notion of “ecologies of violence (ecoviolence)” as a generative framework for understanding interconnected harms across historical, geographical, and species lines, exploring how notions such as victimhood, responsibility, justice, and solidarity shift when the human–nature divide is unsettled.

Taking an ecological approach to violence and its representation and memory, the panel examines what aesthetic and political strategies emerge through cultural practices that can counteract both the violence itself and the discursive repression or “forgetting” of the connections between these histories of violence, a repression which itself forms part of an ecology of violence.

Focusing on documentary forms in poetry, theater, film, art, and curatorial practices, the papers examine how violence against ecosystems and nonhuman life is remembered, represented, and resisted, while also attending to the ways humans are implicated in these ecologies of harm. The notion of Ecoviolence foregrounds vulnerability as a shared condition, challenging narratives of nature’s “revenge” that risk reinscribing binaries between humans and the more-than-human world. Instead, we explore forms of interspecies solidarity, resistance, and care that emerge through cultural production.

The five papers map aesthetic and political strategies that both bear witness to environmental degradation as violence and reframe “violence” itself through an ecological lens. We ask: How do literature, documentary film, visual art, poetry, and museums mediate the entanglement of human and nonhuman histories of harm? What responsibilities and forms of response-ability arise from acknowledging ecological violence as a continuum rather than a rupture? By reading across disciplines and creative practices, we highlight the role of the cultural imagination in shaping ethical relationships with the more-than-human world. **Susanne Knittel** will focus on tribunal theatre as an ecodramaturgical form for exploring the limitations of the Western courtroom and the possibilities of multispecies justice, focusing on metatheatrical strategies that foreground the problem of excluded human and

nonhuman voices. **Ifor Duncan** will consider river sediment as a dynamic and contested political materiality. Taking examples from research cases, I will consider how sediments are shaped into both islands where oppression takes place and spaces that disrupt its extractive and violent manipulation. **Salomé Lopes Coelho** will discuss how cinema constructs the memory of resource extraction as ecological violence with multispecies victims and distributes responsibility and guilt, taking as a case study the ongoing resistance in Covas do Barroso, Portugal, to the implementation of what is being called Europe's largest lithium mine. **Tom van Bunnik** will reflect on ecopoetry's capacity to articulate and cultivate multispecies forms of resistance, exploring the formal and tactical practices of sabotage at the interstices of human and more-than-human injustice. **Sofia Lovegrove** will examine recent changes in museological practices and narratives that place greater emphasis on implication in and accountability for violent colonial histories and ongoing social injustice, to reflect on the possibilities and the challenges of bringing an ecological perspective into reparative museology.

Bios:

Susanne C. Knittel is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Utrecht University. Her current research revolves around the figure of the perpetrator in cultural memory and the cultural representation of the genocide-ecocide nexus. She is the principal investigator of the ERC-funded project Ecologies of Violence: Crimes against Nature in the Contemporary Cultural Imagination, which explores how cultural representations can make visible the links between eco-violence and other histories of violence, especially colonialism and genocide.

Ifor Duncan is a Postdoctoral Researcher on the EcoViolence ERC project at Utrecht University. His interdisciplinary research and art practice focuses on political violence in the contexts of devastated river systems and dispossessed communities. He approaches the weaponisation of rivers as borders, mega-dams, and as the mediums and dynamic archives of genocide through cultural memory and an audio-visual practice that involves submerged methods. Ifor has a PhD from the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, where he was also Lecturer, and has been Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities at NICHE, Ca' Foscari, University of Venice.

Salomé Lopes Coelho is a researcher in film and art studies, working at the intersections of cinema, aesthetics, and the environmental humanities. She is a Postdoctoral Researcher on the ERC project EcoViolence at Utrecht University, examining how contemporary cinema constructs the memory of large-scale mining as a form of ecological violence, foregrounds responsibility within extractive economies, and traces their entanglements with other histories of violence. Salomé holds a PhD in Artistic Studies from NOVA University Lisbon, where she was a visiting assistant professor and postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Communication Sciences.

Tom van Bunnik is a PhD candidate at Utrecht University on the ERC-funded EcoViolence project. His research focuses on the ways in which environmental degradation is framed as violence in contemporary ecopoetry and ecopoetics, and how representations of such eco-violence reflect on questions of guilt, implication, and responsibility. His work is situated within the fields of ecopoetics, ecocriticism, and cultural memory studies.

Sofia Lovegrove is a PhD candidate in the EcoViolence project and a cultural heritage practitioner working at the intersection of cultural memory, museums and critical heritage studies and decolonial critique and practices. For this project, Sofia examines how museums frame and remember past and present environmental degradation as violence and how they engage with their entanglements with violent colonial histories and their afterlives in the present.

Session 3.b Aquatic Assemblages of/as Resistance and Coexistence [performed panel]

Room: JK2–3 0.19

Chair: Sylvia Mayer

Speakers:

- Katharina Fackler (University of Bonn), “Making Kin, Mapping Abundance: Multispecies Relations in Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry”
- Paula von Gleich (University of Bremen), “Fugitive Currents: Rethinking Water as a Site of Captivity and Flight in Early Black Autobiography”
- Anna-Lena Oldehus (University of Freiburg), “Coexisting in Marshlands: Proximity and Relationality in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s and Pauline Johnson’s (Tekahionwake) Writing”
- Linda Hess (University of Augsburg), “Voracious Matter: Watery Intimacies in Shonni Enelow’s *Carla and Lewis* (2014) and Genevieve Simon’s Bloom Bloom Pow (2022)”

Panel Description: This panel traces how thinking, feeling, and being with water has spawned resistant, multispecies forms of being-in-common since the 19th century. Water, Astrida Neimanis has pointed out, dissolves modern myths of discrete individualism and self-determined humanness. As “a watery body sloshes and leaks, excretes and perspires,” it creates “other assemblages” (*Bodies of Water* 46) that transcend boundaries of species, race, and gender. What assemblages and forms of dwelling, mobility, and being with water enable resistance? What relations and intimacies are necessary in order to resist and to coexist? Combining theories from the Blue Humanities with Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Queer Theory, our four papers trace aquatic assemblages of resistance to slavery, settler colonialism, and straight ecologies that eschew binaries between the human and the non-human. The respective contributions will consider a variety of texts (autobiography, poetry, play) from different centuries to bring into conversation the continuities and changes that resistance and coexistence in aquatic environments require.

Katharina Fackler (University of Bonn), “Making Kin, Mapping Abundance: Multispecies Relations in Contemporary Hawaiian Poetry”

Abstract: This presentation contemplates how resistant formations of multispecies kinship are registered, enacted, and rendered (il-)legible in contemporary (Indigenous) Hawaiian poetry. In *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future* (2021), Candace Fujikane argues that “the demise of capital” will “make[...] way for

Indigenous lifeways that center familial relationships with the earth and elemental forms” (3). These familial relations are based on practices of care, belonging, and reciprocity that far exceed colonial notions of the human, settler temporalities, and settler liberalism’s “geontopower” (Povinelli 2016). They emerge from traditional stories and storied practices that center sustained considerations of “elemental forms,” including hydrological cycles that link land and sea, as well as all forms of beings. Kanaka’Ōiwi/Native Hawaiian poets such as Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, Brandy Nālani McDougall, D. Keali’i Mackenzie, and No’u Revilla draw on and adapt such traditional stories. While their styles and poetic voices differ, they all evoke watery forms of connection and affection that interlink human and more-than-human beings across generations. Combining English with Native Hawaiian linguistic and literary traditions, they raise crucial questions about audiences, subject positions, and the (il-)legibility of Indigenous social formations in different contexts. Engaging notions of a “settler aloha ‘āina” (Fujikane 2021) and “insurgent Indigeneity” (Ikaika Ramones 2024), this presentation will also ponder how readers emplaced in non-Hawaiian contexts and knowledge systems may (and may not) enter into relation with and through the aquatic currents of Hawaiian poetry.

Bio: Katharina Fackler is a lecturer and postdoctoral researcher in the North American Studies Program at the University of Bonn. She is the author of *Picturing the Poor: Photography and the Politics of Poverty* (forthcoming Penn State UP 2026) and co-editor, with Silvia Schultermandl, of the special issue *Kinship as Critical Idiom in Oceanic Studies* (*Atlantic Studies* 2023). Together with Nathalie Aghoro, she leads a DFG-funded research group on “The Cultural Politics of Reconciliation.”

Paula von Gleich (University of Bremen), “Fugitive Currents: Rethinking Water as a Site of Captivity and Flight in Early Black Autobiography”

Abstract: While ecocritical scholarship on nineteenth-century African American literature has often focused on land-based geographies of slavery and resistance, this paper foregrounds bodies of water as key sites. Focusing on pre-bellum autobiographies of formerly enslaved abolitionist writers, such as Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs, Mary Prince, and Frederick Douglass, the paper challenges the terracentric and anthropocentric paradigms of much critical theory as it rethinks the relation of water, fugitivity, and the history of slavery in this Black abolitionist writing tradition. By drawing on Black Atlantic theory and Black feminist thought (Gilroy, Gumbs, Hartman, Sharpe, Tinsley) as well as the blue humanities (Mentz, Oppermann), this paper examines water and terraqueous environments not only as a conduit of the death, loss, and violence of the Middle Passage. It also studies them as sites of resistance against structures of antiblack oppression. At these sites, death is not only imagined as a form of escape. Death and flight as well as other forms of dwelling in water and movement through, within, and across water also become imaginative practices of fugitive freedom. By placing autobiographical narratives in dialogue with contemporary critical theory at the intersection of Black Studies and blue humanities, or what Jonathan Howard pointedly describes as the “Black and Blue Humanities,” the paper positions rivers and lakes as well as the liminal spaces in-between water and dry land, such as swamps and tidal/coastal areas as both key physical and historical as well as cultural and conceptual sites of fugitivity and freedom seeking.

Bio: Paula von Gleich is lecturer with senior track at the department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, University of Bremen, where she teaches and researches English-Speaking cultures and the blue humanities with a focus on North America, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic. She is founding member of the Bremen Blue Humanities Research Group. Her monograph *The Black Border and Fugitive Narration in Black American Literature* analyzes concepts of fugitivity and captivity in Black North American and Black Atlantic narratives and Afro-pessimist and Black feminist theory.

Anna-Lena Oldehus (University of Freiburg), “Coexisting in Marshlands: Proximity and Relationality in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s and Pauline Johnson’s (Tekahionwake) Writing”

Abstract: This paper will respond to the conference’ interest in forms and representations of coexistence. By close reading the poem “Marshlands” written by Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) in the late 19th century and by bringing my discussion into conversation with Leanne Simpson’s recent work *Theory of Water* (2025) and her elaboration of shorelands, I will explore notions of distance and proximity that appear to be necessary for consensual forms of coexistence in these liminal spaces between land and water. Simpson states that shorelines “where land and water meet, where birds, fish and mammals meet, are zones of overlapping worlds, often teeming with diversity and mino-bimaadiziwin” (85-86).

What kinds of attentiveness, proximity, and relationality does Simpson observe and describe in her engagement with nonhuman creatures along the shorelines of the Great Lakes? How is this engagement reflected in Pauline Johnson’s poetic form and imagery? And what role do nonhuman beings play in the vital environmental spaces of the marshland and shoreline of the Great Lakes, from which both Johnson and Simpson write across different centuries? Departing from the poetic and essayistic texts of these two First Nations writers, this presentation will address these questions in order to explore different forms of coexistence that the Great Lakes shoreline makes possible.

Bio: Anna-Lena Oldehus is a postdoctoral researcher in the English Department at the University of Freiburg and a member of the Young Academy for Cultures and Societies Research at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS). She has completed her doctoral studies at the University of Hannover in 2024. In her current research project “Floating, Drifting, Enduring – Writing with the Great Lakes in the Long 19th Century,” she builds on her research interest in the Blue Humanities, Environmental Humanities, 19th-century literature, and Indigenous Studies.

Linda Hess (University of Augsburg), “Voracious Matter: Watery Intimacies in Shonni Enelow’s *Carla and Lewis* (2014) and Genevieve Simon’s *Bloom Bloom Pow* (2022)”

Abstract: This paper will focus on two climate-change plays: Shonni Enelow’s *Carla and Lewis* (2011) and Genevieve Simon’s *Bloom Bloom Pow* (2022). Considering these two plays jointly is particularly productive, since they not only decenter their human characters, but moreover use watery intimacies – encounters with lakes, algae, mud – to emphasize humanity’s indissoluble bonds with non-human matter. At

a time when, as Browyn Bailey-Chateris states, “with the acceleration of the climate crisis, water has [...] become a central material and metaphor for the times” (1), both plays tackle the representational difficulties of the climate crisis by pursuing modes that, “rather than use research to make theatre,“ use theatre “to do research” (Chaudhuri 1) in terms of water-related crises. Enelow and Simon present human and non-human matter not only as equally “vibrant,” to say it with Jane Bennett, but also as intimately entangled. Non-human agents and characters in each of the plays (mud, algae, punk butterflies, a dead horse...) challenge human characters and audiences alike to recognize their own intimate relations with what they most want safely out of sight: sewage, waste, and toxicity. Intimacy here resists notions of romance and safety: it is “prying, needling, and uncanny” (Hoglund 63).

I will use lenses of queer ecology and new materialism to examine how both plays express these uncomfortable intimacies via themes of voraciousness and porosity, and how they serve not only to challenge notions of human primacy but also to acknowledge difference while resisting ideas of separateness. Lastly, I consider how both plays leave their audiences with transformations that can be read as productive means to re-consider, not only the categorical boundaries between human and non-human, but also the “world-without-us” trope, proposing that humans “won’t cease to exist“ but they will “just take a different form” (Simon 80).

Bio: Linda Hess is a senior lecturer and postdoctoral researcher in American Studies at the University of Augsburg, Germany. She is author of *Queer Aging in North American Fiction* (2019) and co-editor of *Life Writing in the Posthuman Anthropocene* (2021). Her current research project on “Comic Modes in Environmental Narratives: Humor as a Lens for Climate Catastrophe, Environmental Justice, and Human Follies” is situated at the intersection of the environmental humanities and humor studies.

Session 3.c Multispecies Malice: Rethinking Murder beyond the Human [Roundtable]

Room: JK2–3 1.09

Chair: Chloë Taylor

Speakers:

- Naisargi N. Davé (University of Toronto)
- Elen Abrell (Wesleyan University)
- Deborah Hardt (University of Wollongong)

Roundtable description: In 1386 France, a sow stood trial for killing a child. Found guilty of murder, she was sentenced to die in the public square. Although this scene may appear absurd today, European animal trials were common throughout the Middle Ages, highlighting how radically attitudes about animal moral capacities have shifted. Whereas medieval courts assumed animals could act with intent, malice, even premeditation, contemporary legal systems deny animals legal personhood, casting their acts as instinct rather than deliberation.

Animals are routinely victims of murder at human hands, and most animals are certainly capable of taking the lives of others. Outside the legal realm, however, it is

not at all clear that animals cannot kill with malice intent or even premeditation. This roundtable thus asks, **can animals commit murder?** And what does this possibility reveal about how humans imagine responsibility, justice, and violence across species lines? The anthropologists and animal studies scholars on this panel will examine cases ranging from the scapegoating of “killer dogs” and “killer bulls” in right-wing India, reptiles taking human lives in captive environments, and big cats lashing out against their tormentors.

We will place our ethnographic research in dialogue with cultural, philosophical, and media representations of animal perpetrated homicide. From *Moby-Dick*, with its vengeful whale antagonist, to Herzog’s documentary *Grizzly Man*, which frames a fatal bear attack as potentially purposeful, cultural texts have long wrestled with animal intent. *The Ghost and the Darkness* dramatize lions as deliberate killers, while Tokarczuk’s *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* and Patricia Highsmith’s unsettling animal stories raise the specter of animal revenge as justice.

By drawing these diverse cases into conversation, our roundtable seeks to spark debate by asking whether animals can commit murder. We aim to rethink crime, resistance, and injustice beyond the human.

Bios: Naisargi N. Davé is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. Davé is the author of two award-winning books, *Indifference: On the Praxis of Interspecies Being* (2023) and *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics* (2012), both from Duke University Press. She is currently working on a third book, *Murder: The Social Life of Violent Death in 21st Century India*.

Elan Abrell is an assistant professor of Science and Technology Studies at Wesleyan University. He is also the coordinator of Wesleyan’s Animal Studies minor. He is the author of *Saving Animals: Multispecies Ecologies of Rescue and Care* (2021, University of Minnesota Press), which was awarded the 2022 Gregory Bateson Book Prize from the Society for Cultural Anthropology.

Deborah Hardt is an Assistant Professor in the Media Department at the University of Wollongong in Dubai. She is the author of “Dangerous Play: Orcas, Mêtis, and the Global Lockdown” (*Humanimalia*, 2024) and the book chapter “Animal Agency and Animal Subjectivities in *Roar*” in *Animality and Horror Cinema: Creaturely Fear on Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). She is currently completing her monograph, *Animal Revolt*, forthcoming with Sydney University Press.

Session 3.d Forms of Resistance

Room: JK2–3 1.10

Chair: Rebecca Jordan

Speakers:

- Jaya Sarkar (Mahindra University), “When the Water Revolts: Representation of Nonhuman Resistance in Netflix’s *Kaala Paani*”
- Dominik Ohrem (University of Cologne), “Willfulness: On Human Sovereignty’s Wayward Animals”
- Piotr Piekutowski (University of Silesia in Katowice), “Why Look at Rabbits? Narrative Representations of More-than-Human Resistance”
- David Ingram, “Violence and Revenge in Ecohorror”

Jaya Sarkar (Mahindra University), “When the Water Revolts: Representation of Nonhuman Resistance in Netflix’s *Kaala Paani*”

Abstract: The proposed paper will demonstrate how the 2023 Indian survival drama thriller television series *Kaala Paani* (Black Water) critiques the ‘human’ condition and focuses on a symbiotic relationship configured between humans, non-humans, and the ecology. By engaging with Timothy Morton’s theories on posthuman ecology and Stacy Alaimo’s theory of trans-corporeality, among others, this article will argue that the posthumans in *Kaala Paani* strive to integrate into the environment, resulting in a radical openness to the world. The proposed article will conceptually outline the posthumanist and ecocritical theories to arrive at posthuman ecology, with which *Kaala Paani* will be analyzed in order to get a critical reflection on the emerging reconceptualization of connectedness, entanglements, and belonging through scientific, literary, and cultural interfaces. The paper will further demonstrate how the creator, Sameer Saxena, deftly portrays characters who forge new connections with the world in a time when a mysterious water-borne disease comes down upon the Andaman and Nicobar Islands due to human fallacies. The proposed paper will explore how human responsibility figures as an integral part of the series by evoking the way humanist ways of thinking and being are required to be replaced by interlinked posthuman and ecocritical viewpoints in order to survive in an apocalyptic world where interconnections with nature and non-humans are the only way for survival. The co-constitution of different species and non-humans through mutual connections in *Kaala Paani* forges a posthuman reality that blurs the human/non-human, disability/ability, and nature/culture distinctions. The posthumans become entangled with the non-humans and the elements of the planet and open up a passage for a praxis of care and response. The proposed article will conclude with the significance of a posthuman ecological approach, which proposes a value system that is integral to understanding the ecology and to emphasizing the accountability of humans and knowledge practices towards the environment.

Bio: Dr. Jaya Sarkar is an Assistant Professor of English at the School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad, India. She is a member of the board of directors of *The Posthuman Lab* and is a Fellow of the Indian Posthumanism Network. She has been published in the *Journal of Posthuman Studies*, *Convergence*, *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, *Journal of Posthumanism*, *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, *Transpositiones*, and *EASST Review*. She has also written chapters that are included in books published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Bloomsbury, ibidem-Verlag, and Routledge.

Dominik Ohrem (University of Cologne), “Willfulness: On Human Sovereignty’s Wayward Animals”

Abstract: This paper situates itself in longstanding debates about forms and possibilities of animal agency under conditions of human control by mobilizing a concept that has received little theoretical attention from animal studies scholars. “Willfulness” – together with its close semantic cousins “obstinacy” and “self-will” – is defined by an insistence on autonomy (bodily, spatial, temporal) and self-direction in the face of heteronomous impositions. At its most basic, it can be understood as an embodied subject’s response to the experiential rift created between the capacity to perceive one’s environment and the freedom to engage with it in ways that align with

one's interests, needs, or desires. In this paper, I explore the utility of this concept for (historical) animal studies, specifically with respect to the relations between animal agency (and/as resistance) and the routines of human sovereignty at work in the exploitation of animal labor. To do this, I turn to German historian Alf Lüdtke's (1943–2019) work on *Eigensinn*, a concept he employed to identify the spatial and temporal niches of “self-willed freedom” and forms of “self-willed corporeality” that factory workers in the decades around 1900 managed to carve out for themselves amid the disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms of the industrial labor regime. Lüdtke stressed that *Eigensinn* was not the “turning against” often equated with resistance but registered a kind of distancing from, a leaving out of account – a turning *away* from “sovereign impositions” (*herrschaftliche Zumutungen*). Drawing on examples from my own historical research in the North American context, I underline the extent to which willfulness operated as an explanatory framework in recurring practical confrontations with unwanted animal behavior. Willfulness, I suggest, indexed an implicit folk theory of animal mind in which working animals like mules, horses, and oxen figured (for better or worse) as willing subjects with interests, desires, motivations, and tendencies of their own, which were often exasperatingly at odds with a more or less clearly articulated cluster of human demands and expectations.

Bio: Dominik Ohrem is Research Associate at MESH – Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities and Postdoctoral Researcher at HESCOR (Cultural Evolution in Changing Climate: Human and Earth System Coupled Research) at the University of Cologne. His research is focused on the history and philosophy of human-animal relations, with an interdisciplinary orientation. His most recent publication is *Humans, Animals, and U.S. Society in the Long Nineteenth Century: A Documentary History* (Routledge, 2025).

Piotr Piekutowski (University of Silesia in Katowice), “Why Look at Rabbits? Narrative Representations of More-than-Human Resistance”

Abstract: In the presentation, I want to take part in the discussion raised by Éric Baratay on animal history (2012), particularly cases of resistance, and its bonds with conventional, human-centred history. A non-obvious example of a complex connection of human and animal emancipation and more-than-human resistance that I would focus on in the paper is the history of rabbits in the divided Berlin during the Cold War, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As an analytical material, I intend to use *Rabbit a la Berlin* (2009), a Polish–German documentary film directed by Bartosz Konopka, and nominated for the Academy Awards in 2010. The non-fiction film tells the multifaceted story of several generations of rabbits who populated the “death strip” in Berlin, and who simultaneously populated the imagination of Berliners as living metaphors, e.g. resistance, freedom, or victims. Konopka's film used to be interpreted as a vivid allegory of political oppression on Berliners, but I propose a re-reading of the film narration in an econarratological method (James 2015; 2022) and shed a new light on animals' agency and signs of defiance. In the analysis, I am going to borrow David Herman's categorization of strategies for projecting nonhuman experiences in storyworlds (2018, 138–156), to show diegetic representations of more-than-human resistance in *Rabbit a la Berlin*. Narrative forms as perspective, narration, animal characters, focalization, but also allegory or anthropomorphization problematize one-dimensional recipients of the work. Formal models of imagining animal experience and narrating animal resistance are located on a spectrum, with unstable positions that can produce different meanings. *Rabbit a la Berlin*, with

various narrative techniques, could be seen as an anthropocentric or zoocentric story, or a record of an unideal but interspecies and inclusive way to emancipation.

Bio: Piotr F. Piekutowski – PhD, assistant professor of Polish and literary theory at University of Silesia in Katowice (Poland), where he leads the National Science Centre grant project “Poetics of Entanglement. The Nonhuman Side of Polish Literature in Econarratological Approach”. His research interests include narrative theory, econarratology, posthumanism, contemporary Polish prose, and Anthropocene fiction. Member of the European Narratology Network (ENN) and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE).

David Ingram, “Violence and Revenge in Ecohorror”

Abstract: The image of a pod of orcas seemingly engaging in an act of resistance to their exploitation raises the question of the role of violence and revenge in ecohorror and in ecopolitical thinking in general. Rust and Soles’ define ‘ecohorror’ as ‘those instances in texts when nature strikes back against humans as punishment for environmental disruption’. This ‘punishment’ usually takes the form of violence and revenge, which are expectations of the horror genre. In graphically violent horror cinema, Xavier Reyes describes the affective-corporeal dimension of watching such films as ‘a form of masochistic pleasure gained from exposure to affect through a contractual encounter with, among other things, corporeal transgression’. The politics of such films are survivalist. Violent horror films invite their viewers to take aesthetic pleasure in a mental and physical ordeal of negative affect in a test of their endurance and resilience.

Bataille linked the pleasures of violence to wider questions of ecology. For him, human beings seek to overcome their feeling of separateness from the rest of nature through rituals of violent sacrifice. ‘A violent death’, he wrote, ‘disrupts the creature’s discontinuity; what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the succeeding silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one.’ Bataille extrapolated from this an ecology based, it should be noted, not on sustainability and conservation, but on expenditure and waste.

In contrast, psychologist Renée Danzinger seeks to explain the wishful desires for violent revenge and retribution in global popular culture by arguing that revenge has a ‘feelgood’ factor, because it is a ‘means of restoring a sense of self’ from perceived harm. Fantasies of revenge become popular responses to intractable social and political problems in the perceived absence or ineffectiveness of alternatives.

Bio: Dr. David Ingram is the author of *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (University of Exeter Press, 2000) and *The Jukebox in the Garden: Ecocriticism and American Popular Music Since 1960* (Rodopi, 2010), as well as several articles on ecocriticism in film, music and literature. He taught Film and Television Studies at Brunel University, London until his retirement in 2020.

Session 3.e Vegetal Agency

Room: JK2–3 1.15

Chair: Mia You

Speakers:

- Virginia Luzón-Aguado (University of Zaragoza), “Little Joe Doesn’t Think at All!’: Representing Plant Agency in *Little Joe* (2019)”
- Olena Tiaglova (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena), “Narrating with Plants: Econarratology and Non-Human Vegetal Ontologies in Contemporary Russian Literature”
- Jennifer S. Henke, “Ferocious Fungi, Monstrous Mushrooms? On Fungal Resistance in Contemporary Folk Horror Film”
- Luiza Teixeira-Costa (Meertens Institute), “Flipping the Parasite Spectrum: Plant Humanities Meet Eco-Physiology”

Virginia Luzón-Aguado (University of Zaragoza), “Little Joe Doesn’t Think at All!’: Representing Plant Agency in *Little Joe* (2019)”

Abstract: When fantasies of Nature taking revenge for the damage that humans inflict are reflected in popular culture, animals usually take the centre stage. Cinematic examples of such confrontations spanning a number of genres abound, including Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds*, Stephen Spielberg’s *Jaws* and James Cameron’s *Avatar*. It is a fact that plants are granted a secondary position in the fictional struggle against human domination. There are two likely reasons for this. Wandersee and Schussler (1999) have observed that humans suffer from “plant blindness,” i.e. we are generally unable to appreciate plants in the same way as we appreciate animals, despite the fact that plants are key for our survival. Also, because of their limited mobility, humans find it difficult to identify plants as a threat to our integrity. As they cannot move in the same way as animals can, plants are not able to chase humans. However, this does not mean that plants do not pose dangers. In fact, some plants are capable of intoxicating, even killing, humans and other animals when their berries are eaten or their flowers are touched. In this paper, I propose to elaborate on the ideas above by making reference to the film *Little Joe* (2019), a recent example of the “plant horror” subgenre. Throughout my analysis I will be stressing the agentic power of plants, which are not the passive living entities that many humans believe them to be. In both real life and in fiction, they display volition and the capacity to react to their environment. *Little Joe* makes direct reference to such abilities by presenting us with a group of flowers bred in a biotechnical laboratory that revolt against human exploitation.

Bio: Film scholar Virginia Luzón-Aguado works at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. She has published work on different forms of ecomedia in different anthologies and journals, including *ISLE*. Her most recent publications include the book chapters “Turning over a New Leaf: Exploring Human-Tree Relationships in *The Lorax* and *Avatar*” (Bloomsbury, 2022), “Take Back the Walk: Trekking and Female Empowerment in *Wild* and *Tracks*” (Routledge, 2025) and “Breaking the Species Divide. Entangled Empathy and Environmental Hope in *The Olive Tree* and *My Octopus Teacher*” (Vernon Press, forthcoming).

Olena Tiaglova (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena), “Narrating with Plants: Econarratology and Non-Human Vegetal Ontologies in Contemporary Russian Literature”

Abstract: In 2015, Erin James introduced the term “econarratology”, unifying narratology and ecocriticism by proposing that narrative structure itself can convey ecological meaning, even in texts that lack direct environmental representation.

Building on James's framework, scholars have increasingly turned to non-human narratology, exploring how narratives reshape human perceptions of animals, plants, and other forms of non-human life. David Herman (2018), for instance, draws on post-Darwinian theory to examine the complex interrelations between humans and animals. According to Herman (2018), the narrative has the power to reframe the cultural models or ontologies that undergird hierarchical understanding of human's place in the larger biotic communities of which they are members.

This paper extends the research on non-human narratology and representation of plants in Russian literature. Environmental humanities scholars have developed "phytocriticism", a method of reading literature "through a botanical optic" (Ryan 2020). Philosopher Michael Marder (2013, 2014, 2016) develops a new ontology of plants, reframing the ethical relationship between humans and plants. Similarly, Joela Jacobs (2022) introduces "phytopoetics" – a counterpart to zoopoetics – emphasizing vegetal life as a force entangled with themes of gender, violence, and death.

Drawing on Driscoll and Hoffmann (2018), Jacobs argues that plants in narrative "are neither just metaphor, nor just plant." Stobbe, Kramer, and Wanning (2022) engage with Roland Borgards' argument that plants can, in certain respects, be considered alongside animals.

My study applies these concepts to contemporary Russian literature, focusing on Andrei Rubanov's dystopian diology *Chlorophyllia* (2009), in which invasive grass overtakes Moscow and humans gradually merge with vegetal life. Rubanov's narrative reimagines human-plant relations, offering a powerful vision of post-anthropocentric ecological entanglement. Rubanov's narrative dramatizes vegetal power in ecological and metaphysical terms. The author challenges the notion of passive plant life, suggesting instead that humans are subject to vegetal cycles. His dystopia is an eco-philosophical meditation: not a warning against plants, but a radical reimagining of life with and as plants.

Bio: Olena Tiaglova is a Ph.D. candidate in Slavonic Literature at Friedrich-Schiller University Jena, specializing in Russian dystopian literature, narratology, and environmental humanities. She is a DAAD and former DBU fellow, with research experience at the University of British Columbia. In 2025, she serves as Social Media Representative for EASLCE. Her recent publication, "Cultural Perception of Environmental Problems in Russian Literature" (2025), examines how ecological crisis shape narrative structures in contemporary Russian environmental discourse.

Jennifer S. Henke, "Ferocious Fungi, Monstrous Mushrooms? On Fungal Resistance in Contemporary Folk Horror Film"

Abstract: In this talk, I use the mycological imaginary to explore how fungi function as forms of nonhuman resistance in a genre that has only recently been experiencing a revival, but which is particularly well-suited for questions of ecology: folk horror. Taking my cue from works by Scovell (2017), Tsing (2017), Sheldrake (2021), Crane (2021), Kreike (2021), Schmitt (2023), Bacon (2023), Ingham (2023), Sideris (2023) and others, I argue that folk horror films such as those produced by Ben Wheatley, and which often feature active and hostile landscapes, not only destabilize binaries between the human and nonhuman but can also be read against the backdrop of nature uprising. In *A Field in England* (2013) and *In the Earth* (2021), for example,

fungi also play a crucial and ambivalent role: besides the fact that fungi themselves are neither plants nor animals, they have the potential to both enlighten the films' human characters and to harm them. In the course of my discussion, I will focus on the psychoactive qualities of certain fungi, the question of how they can help us understand our interconnectedness with nature, and how contemporary folk horror films negotiate this potential. What happens when human characters are offered the possibility to communicate with nature through fungi but do not listen? How do fungal networks resist human and especially scientific mastery and rewrite it in terms of survival in a world of ecological crises? What role does the aspect of horror play in the representation of fungal agency? How do other horror films such as Colm McCarthy's *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2016) or Jaco Bouwer's *Gaia* (2021) tie in with folk horror and the fungal imaginary? My preliminary conclusion is that fungi resist not only conceptually but also provoke ecological awareness. This holds particularly true for psychedelic mushrooms, which can be both monstrous and enlightening – depending on whether humans choose to listen or not. Ultimately, the films under discussion urge their audiences to confront fungal alterity not only as a monstrous uprising but also as an invitation to reimagine alliances across species boundaries.

Bio: PD Dr. phil. habil. Jennifer S. Henke received her PhD for a thesis on gender and space in cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays (WVT, 2014) from the University of Bremen, and recently published her second book on gender and medicine in eighteenth-century cultural artefacts with a special focus on material cultures (Routledge, 2025). She obtained her *Venia Legendi* in Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Bonn and currently works as an interim professor of English Literature at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg.

Plant Humanities Meet Eco-Physiology”

Abstract: In recent decades, the topic of parasitism among plants has become a subject of interest in biological and human sciences. This has led to an increasing body of research reporting on the cultural value and the ecological benefits brought about by certain parasitic plants, mainly those like mistletoes and eyebrights, which are now understood as being “not so bad after all.” Nevertheless, at the other end of a horizontal spectrum, plants like dodder and broomrape, which lack the photosynthetic capacity to fulfil their nutritional needs, are portrayed as dangerous weeds that threaten food security. I argue that this point of view obfuscates the role played by land use changes and intensive monoculture in disrupting ecosystem processes that balance out the negative effects associated with parasite populations. To address this, I combine historical and literary accounts of parasitic plants with data from ecology and physiology research to reimagine the terms “parasite” and “host” as dynamic identities that fluctuate in a vertical spectrum spanning the whole life cycle of these plants and their parasitic relationship. Considering multispecies entanglements, I extend these fluctuating identities beyond the two interfacing plants to also include the fungi, humans, and non-human animals that participate in the eco-cultural networks centred around parasitic flowering plants.

Bio: Luiza Teixeira-Costa has an academic background in Plant Biology/Botany, with a focus on morphology, ecology, and physiology. She currently works as Postdoctoral Researcher at the Meertens Institute (Netherlands) and is an Honorary Research Associate at Meise Botanic Garden (Belgium). Her research focuses on the multiple interactions among plants and between plants and people, with particular

interest on parasitic plants, botanical art, natural history collections, and history of urban landscaping.

Session 3.f Aquatic Animals/Imaginarities III

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Miryam Danielsson

Speakers:

- Jennifer Leetsch (University of Trier), “Equiano’s Animals: Of Walruses, Whales and Flying Fish”
- Ruth Bryant (Utrecht University), “Spoils of Whaling: Commodifying Nature in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Arctic Genre Scenes”
- Annette Bickford (York University), “Yacht-Ramming Orcas: Towards Democratic Interspecies Communities”
- Nguyễn Huy Hoàng, “Mơ mơ màng màng: On the Aesthetic-Ontological Ambiguity of the Holy Whale in Vietnam”

Jennifer Leetsch (University of Trier), “Equiano’s Animals: Of Walruses, Whales and Flying Fish”

Abstract: Olaudah Equiano’s 1789 slave narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, constructs the Black self in tandem with an oceanic world that teems with lively interspecies relations and unexpected ecological solidarities, but also with ecological dependencies and the eco- and genocidal realities of European (settler) colonialism and its deathly, extractive logics. The ocean is Equiano’s most constant companion, acting as both his greatest adversary and most trusted enabler. It is where he nearly dies repeatedly, yet he cannot stay away from it due to the relative financial security it promises and the contingent freedom aboard the ships traversing its watery depths. Its ecologies – currents, waves, coasts, shoals, marine flora and fauna – enrich and complicate Equiano’s experiences, pushing the boundaries of his ecological understanding and, in turn, the way he fashions himself within the Atlantic world.

This talk focuses on one aspect of Equiano’s oceanic environment: his animal encounters. During his travels, he meets a multitude of marine animals, from flying fish during the Middle Passage, to whales and walruses on his trip to the Arctic. Equiano’s animals are an integral part of his story, from slavery to freedom, from pain and horror to complicity and empowerment. They are imagined as bearers of slavery’s suffering, act as species companions, and help Equiano construct his humanity. Reading these encounters through the lens of more-than-human entanglement allows us to reconsider Equiano’s slave narrative as an early site of ecological and multispecies thought — one that, as I hope to show, complicates white, Western exceptionalism and opens up space for alternative forms of resistance, solidarity, and co-existence.

Bio: Jennifer Leetsch is Junior Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Trier, where her research and teaching explore three interrelated strands: 1) postcolonial literatures with an emphasis on Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean, 2) postcolonial Environmental Humanities and 3) Anglophone media cultures. Previously, she held a postdoctoral research position at the Bonn

Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies at the University of Bonn. She is currently working on her second monograph, tentatively titled *Black Atlantic Ecologies: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Black Life Writing beyond the Colonial Anthropocene*.

Ruth Bryant (Utrecht University) , “Spoils of Whaling: Commodifying Nature in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Arctic Genre Scenes”

Abstract: Dutch whaling played a foundational role in the rise of commercial whaling and the establishment of large-scale operations in the Arctic and Subarctic regions, positioning the Dutch Republic as a dominant whaling power of the seventeenth century. This article explores a group of seventeenth century depictions of the Dutch whaling industry, which I call Dutch Arctic genre scenes. As an understudied body, these paintings depict the complex mechanisms of the whaling industry, the Arctic landscape, and the Dutch dominance over both. These paintings, which appear to document human ingenuity and expansion, simultaneously render whales as commodified bodies, transformed into floating sources of oil. By isolating this class of painting, this article examines how the Dutch artists —Cornelis de Man (1621-1706) and Abraham Storck (1644-1708)— visually framed the Arctic as a space of economic opportunity, imperial aspirations, and normalized extractive activities. In doing so, the article traces these historical narratives of human exceptionalism embedded within Arctic genre scenes to the ongoing systemic violence embedded within global meat industries. The article concludes by purposefully re-centering of the perspectives of whales, emphasizing their socio-ecological relationships, agency, and resistance. In acknowledging the richness of whale life and culture, this article challenges the exploitative, human-centric logic that underpins Arctic genre scenes and their ideological legacies. This contemporary understanding of historical materials acts as a form of countervisibility, subverting the extractivist gaze and asserting alternative ways of seeing. By elucidating the ways in which whales have been falsely represented as passive, complicit creatures by Dutch painters, this article encourages a way of approaching Arctic genre scenes that acknowledges the tandem role of art and industry and the historic erasure of whale resistance to commodification.

Bio: Ruth Bryant is a Research Master’s student in Art History at Utrecht University, with a BA in Art History and Biology from Case Western Reserve University. Her research explores Early Modern Netherlandish art through ecocritical, global, and decolonial lenses. She has presented at the Graduate Humanities Conference (UU 2025), a Southeastern European silversmithing conference (Institute of Art Studies at Bulgaria Academy of Sciences, 2024), SUNY New Paltz Art Symposium (SUNY New Paltz, 2023) and co-organized the *Canal to Cuyahoga* symposium (Cleveland Museum of Art, 2023), linked to the 2023 U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale. Ruth Bryant has recently published a DURARE blog on historical reconstruction fifteenth century recipes for imitation pearls.

Annette Bickford (York University), “Yacht-Ramming Orcas: Towards Democratic Interspecies Communities”

Abstract: Since May 2020, an unprecedented series of interactions between a critically endangered subpopulation of Iberian orcas (*Orcinus orca*) and vessels off the coasts of Spain and Portugal has attracted global attention. What began as 49

documented incidents in 2020 has escalated to more than 750 encounters by mid-2025, including at least six sinkings and damage to over 250 vessels. These events, primarily involving yachts of approximately twelve meters, typically involve coordinated ramming and rudder-targeting behavior lasting from 30 minutes to two hours. Curiously, orcas have not harmed mariners, despite the sometimes-grave injuries they inflict.

Marine biologists identify ramming participants with the suffix “Gladis,” adapted from an early vernacular name for the species, *Orca gladiator*. The behavior is widely attributed to cultural transmission, possibly originating with the matriarch known as White Gladis. While some scientists and journalists frame these encounters as fad-like, or “just the playful curiosity of these animals,” comparisons to transient orca “trends” risk obscuring the persistence and apparent intentionality of the behavior. Ramming has caused severe head wounds in at least one male juvenile.

This paper interrogates dominant interpretations that trivialize these interactions as curiosity or play. It asks instead whether such actions might be understood as expressions of exasperation, fury, revenge, and resistance to anthropogenic pressures? Situating the phenomenon within broader debates following the 2012 Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness, I examine the tension between growing scientific acknowledgment of other-than-human consciousness and the continued framing of sentient, chronically stressed marine mammals as benign, mechanistic actors.

Three questions guide this inquiry: First, how can we distinguish between epistemic limitations of our capacity to better understand orcas on their own terms and our collective unwillingness to do so? Second, how does reason function as a technology of power reinforcing human exceptionalism? Given our veneration of reason as a marker of superiority and entitlement, would empirical evidence of orcas’ complex cognition be enough to persuade us to rethink our human-animal dualism? Third, how might solidarity with these “voices from below” contribute to forms of ecological rationality grounded in solidarity and deep democracy? Drawing on marine neuroscience, environmental ethics, and political philosophy, the paper argues for a reframing of these encounters as ethically and politically significant, rather than anomalous curiosities.

Bio: Annette Louise Bickford is an Associate Professor on faculty in the Department of Social Science, York University, and is cross appointed with the Graduate Programs in Social & Political Thought and Humanities. Trained as an historical anthropologist, she now works in interdisciplinary social science, with current research interests in the anthropology of animals and the anthropology of consciousness. Her book, *Southern Mercy: Empire and American Civilization in Juvenile Reform, 1890-1944* (University of Toronto Press, 2016) critically analyzes our present-day state of supposed “post-raciality through an historical examination of citizenship, national belonging, and alterity in the American South during the Progressive and New eras.

Nguyễn Huy Hoàng, “Mơ mơ màng màng: On the Aesthetic-Ontological Ambiguity of the Holy Whale in Vietnam”

Abstract: This paper examines the more-than-human coexistence between fishermen in Quy Nhơn - a South Central city in Vietnam and the Holy Whale, who are worshiped for his saving of the fishermen at times of exigency on the sea and harmonious weather conditions for seafaring business. The Holy Whale, for his ability to induce the fishermen into a trance-like state of “*mơ mơ màng màng*” (half-dreamy, half-awake) upon his saving, is recognised as a force of divine otherness, thus occupying an ontological rupture compared to the fishermen. Solution to ontological ruptures by prevalent theoretical Western-centric paradigms like the Ontological Turn involves radicalizing them further with the creation of new linguistic concepts. While recognising the premise of ontological differences between the fishermen and the Holy Whale, this paper proposes an alternative analytics of co-existence: a shared aesthetic world of ambiguity. That is, I argue that Quy Nhơn fishermen continuously think through him with their techniques of imagination instead of defining Cá Ông in discrete linguistic terms. Respectively, the conceptual shape to their thoughts, I advance, is that of flow, as opposed to a linear line putrifying all differences. This aesthetics sustains ambiguity across minds, believers, and generations, for the fishermen to keep “*mơ mơ màng màng*” and engage with this force of divine otherness.

Bio: Hoàng Nguyễn-Huy holds a BA degree in Social Studies from Fulbright University Vietnam. His research focuses on the figure of the non-humans in anthropology and how they relate to larger ecological relations and the process of worlding or building world(s). At the intersection of theoretical tenets such as nature-culture, myth, aesthetics, ecology, and cosmopolitics, Hoàng's bachelor thesis examines flows of ontological ambiguity surrounding the Holy Whale (Cá Ông) as worshipped by fishermen in Quy Nhơn, Vietnam.

Session 3.g Pedagogy and Children's Literature

Room: JK2-3 1.17

Chair: Sara Bédard-Goulet

Speakers:

- Judith Benz-Schwarzburg (University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna), “Animal Agency, Autonomy, and Resistance in Picture Books”
- Hanne Bolze (University of Rostock), “‘We can't tame the Forest – it'll hate us forever': Vicious Vines and Scary Water in Contemporary Children's Literature”
- Ida Marie Olsen (University of Agder), “Child-Animal Alliances in Times of Extinction: Rethinking Pedagogy, Environmental Futurism, and Ethics of Resistance through Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible*”
- Sabina Magagnoli (University of Ferrara), “Visualising Nonhuman Resistance: A Multimodal Approach to Multispecies Resilience in the EFL Classroom”

Judith Benz-Schwarzburg (University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna), “Animal Agency, Autonomy, and Resistance in Picture Books”

Abstract: Depictions of animals are ever-present in children's media, especially in picture books – and they are known to play a critical role in shaping children's understanding of animals and the human-animal relation. Yet, these highly curated, sometimes first and only encounters with animals in childhood have not been

recognized by animal ethicists as significant for the trajectory of human-animal relations. This is a significant gap in ethical research if we want to understand how members of our society develop their animal ethics and what contents can either make them recognize the animals' own potential and moral significance or stir them towards anthropocentrism. This paper presents findings from a selection of picture books and interprets them in light of care- and justice-based ethical claims. The focus of analysis will be on the way the books address the animals' own perspective, their interests and desires, agency, autonomy and resistance. The aim is to show how child-animal encounters on the pages of picture books are ethically relevant and how they can, in fact, help to overcome the human-animal divide.

Bio: Judith Benz-Schwarzburg is an animal ethicist, working at the intersection of animal cognition and philosophy. Since 2011 she is a Senior Postdoc at the Messerli Research Institute of the Messerli Research Institute at Vetmeduni Vienna. Applying a critical and interdisciplinary approach she addresses topics like culture, language, theory of mind and morality in animals, the ethics of animal representations (in picture books, contemporary art, or advertisement), species conservation, wildlife tourism and zoos.

Hanne Bolze (University of Rostock), “‘We can’t tame the Forest – it’ll hate us forever’: Vicious Vines and Scary Water in Contemporary Children’s Literature”

Abstract: My presentation examines the representation of nonhuman retribution in contemporary children’s literature, with a focus on the agency of plants, forests, and water. In environmental children’s literature, forests and the sea are often portrayed as victims who must be protected from human actions and restored to idyllic pastoral harmony. Conversely, the texts I am looking at construe forest and sea as active antagonist rather than passive setting. Here, the human (and animal) protagonists learn to respect the nonhuman by literally and metaphorically abandoning their anthropocentric position, as their bodies and lives are reconfigured as hybrid and entangled. Nadine Kaadan’s picturebook *The Jasmin Sneeze* (2016) and Frances Hardinge’s children’s book *The Forest of a Thousand Eyes* (2024) depict plants as protective and hostile *actants* punishing the protagonist for past misdeeds; the sea in Oliver Jeffers’ picturebook *The Fate of Fausto* (2019) and Sylvia Bishop’s YA novel *On Silver Tides* (2024) is a powerful entity that human characters cross at their peril. Each of these texts challenges the idea of human exceptionalism, as the nonhuman environment is imbued with anthropomorphised ideas of revenge and retribution, and portrayed as powerful, dangerous, and beyond human control.

These texts do not situate nonhuman resistance in a plot of tragic struggle with ultimate success or defeat. Here, the human characters must learn to adapt to and live with the nonhuman environment rather than save, restore, or change it. While plants and sea may stay as they are, the protagonists must embrace compromise in order to experience them as less hostile. As such, these texts stress adaptation and accommodation instead of struggle and hierarchies as necessary strategies to face the challenges of environmental crisis.

Bio: Hanne Bolze is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer for British literature at the University of Rostock, Germany. Her PhD dissertation titled “*Something to do with polar bears*”: *Climate Crisis in 21st-Century British Fiction* is located in the fields of ecocriticism and econarratology and examines narratives of deferral in British climate change novels. Her current research focuses on picturebooks as tools for fostering

critical literacies, as well as the literary representation of power hierarchies in gardens, doomsteads, and hybrid landscapes.

Ida Marie Olsen (University of Agder), “Child-Animal Alliances in Times of Extinction: Rethinking Pedagogy, Environmental Futurism, and Ethics of Resistance through Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*”

Abstract: This paper explores the cultural construct of the child-animal bond as a site of resistance against corporate, industrial, and adult forces of environmental destruction. While recent developments might suggest that the Fridays for Future movement has lost its initial momentum, children and young adults continue to symbolize the future in environmental rhetoric. This “child-as-future” environmentalism has mainly revolved around issues like climate change, and less around species extinction, biodiversity loss, and practices of nonhuman exploitation. This exclusion is strange considering the deep-rooted idea of child-animal affinity in Western culture, where both children and nonhuman animals are perceived as vulnerable, inferior, and not-quite-human. In their own separate ways, however, children and nonhumans have become agents and activists of resistance in ecological discourse.

Using Lydia Millet’s allegorical novel *A Children’s Bible* (2022) as a case study, I examine how literature about children’s relations with nonhuman animals can unsettle categories like “natural” and “eco-hero”. In its allegorical complexity and its treatment of child-animal interactions, Millet’s novel explores what it means when children take on the role of educators rather than *educands*, and at the same time complicates the stereotype of children as saviours of the environmental future. I argue that the idea of a child/animal alliance offers a productive framework for simultaneously advancing and interrogating the concept of resistance against forces of ecological destruction. In doing so, my paper also reflects on the implications for pedagogy and pedagogical relationships in the Anthropocene. What does it mean, moreover, when child-animal relationships are severed and disrupted by ongoing anthropogenic species extinction and biodiversity loss? And how might literature in itself be read as a form of resistance against extinction and the disappearance of nonhuman species?

Bio: Ida M. Olsen is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Agder’s Centre for Education Research. Situated at the intersection of literary studies and pedagogy, her research explores the pedagogical potential of environmental narratives in education for sustainable development. She holds a PhD from Ghent University, where her dissertation explored species extinction and biodiversity loss narratives in contemporary literature. Her work has appeared in journals such as *ISLE*, *Green Letters*, *Ecozon@*, and *Studies in the Novel*.

Sabina Magagnoli (University of Ferrara), “Visualising Nonhuman Resistance: A Multimodal Approach to Multispecies Resilience in the EFL Classroom”

Abstract: This presentation analyses a multimodal educational project with upper secondary school students learning English as a foreign language. It analyses how the visual representation of multispecies (in)justice in Steve McCurry’s “Animals” exhibition can be used as a pedagogical tool. The project aimed to decenter students’ anthropocentric perspectives by engaging them in a semiotic reflection on

the human animal relationship and the challenges faced by animals in environments impacted by war and climate crises. The students read passages from John Berger's "Why Look at Animals?" (1980) and used his insights to question how humans perceive and represent other species. They then visited the exhibition and created multimedia works, a fusion of selected photographs, their own spoken thoughts and chosen background music, to embody the animals' positions of resistance and resilience.

Focusing on nonhuman resistance, this project demonstrates how art and language can be used to re-imagine multispecies alliances. The students' creations offer a form of "complex intimacy" with the subjects (Hopf et al., 2019), that challenges binary thinking and promotes empathy. The project is in line with Arjun Appadurai's (2004) concept of the "capacity to aspire" extending this right beyond the human realm and using artistic creation to explore themes of coexistence and survival. It also serves as a critical response to the "knowledge making crises" (Morgan & Wise, 2017) and the challenges of climate change denial by fostering a more nuanced understanding of our shared world. Ultimately, this educational approach seeks to use the humanities to promote a more inclusive and just worldview by reflecting on how narratives shape our understanding of interconnected crises (Caracciolo, 2019) and encouraging an active, empathetic engagement with nonhuman lives.

Bio: Sabina Magagnoli is a PhD student of the Italian National Doctoral Programme on Sustainable Development and Climate Change coordinated by IUSS Pavia and works at the affiliated Faculty of Human Sciences of the University of Ferrara. Drawing on a range of methodological approaches and her experience as a teacher and trainer of English as a foreign language in upper secondary schools, she is committed to promoting environmental awareness in educational contexts through the contribution of environmental humanities and ecocriticism.

Session 3.h Critical Infrastructures II

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Celandine Fleur Seuren

Speakers:

- Therese Lilliesköld (Södertörn University), "More-than-Human Animals as Knowledge Bearers and Meaning Makers"
- Timo Müller (University of Konstanz), "Technological Mastery and Environmental Resistance: Paradox Agencies in Early Narratives of Automobility"
- Lena Pfeifer (University of Würzburg), "Blue Resistance: Energy Infrastructures and Narrative Form"
- Thayse Madella (Universidade Federal de Sergipe), "The Borderlands as a Decolonial Multispecies Locale"

Therese Lilliesköld (Södertörn University), "More-than-Human Animals as Knowledge Bearers and Meaning Makers"

Abstract: Since the "animal turn" in the humanities (Ritvo, 2007) and the growing area of cognitive ethology, other-than-human animals have more often been recognized to possess intention, intelligence and culture. However, they are less

often seen as possessing knowledge, an area which still often seems to be viewed as strictly human.

I am doing the empirical research for my PhD project at the Swedish Transport administration, where I am investigating the knowledge production behind decisions affecting more-than-human animals, as well as the knowledge (and forced loss thereof) of the more-than-human world. Other-than-human animals and traffic will for most people be associated with roadkill, but to view other animals as nothing but victims sacrificed for the necessity of roads, is in a way to strip them of their agency. I am drawing from examples from my empirical research, particularly with deer and the development of deer warning signs along the roads in Scania, instances where it becomes obvious that the deer understand and make use of symbolic systems created by humans, sometimes in surprising ways. Nonhuman bodies affect human ones, not just the other way around (Despret, 2004) and co-production of knowledge can emerge from interactions between humans and other species (for example Gillespie, 2021).

What kind of different pathways might be possible, if we viewed nonhuman animals as knowledge bearers and meaning makers, interacting in their own ways with human attempts to enhance safety in a shared environment? Is it possible to find ways for humans to cooperate with other animals, so that they become active participants within transport planning?

Bio: Therese Lilliesköld is currently a doctoral student at Södertörn University, within the research school Transplace. Her project investigates the knowledge production behind decisions affecting more-than-human animals, the knowledge of more-than-human animals and whether other animals could be active participants in decisions concerning them. Therese has extensive previous experience of working with a wide range of other animals and on topics concerning them, in diverse settings and countries. She is an author and has an academic background in Ethology and Anthrozoology.

Timo Müller (University of Konstanz), “Technological Mastery and Environmental Resistance: Paradox Agencies in Early Narratives of Automobility”

Abstract: From its emergence in the late nineteenth century, automobility was hailed as an instrument of technological mastery over nature. Traces of this attitude can be found in popular road narratives from Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* to the *Mad Max* movies. These narratives date from the period after World War II, when a large automotive infrastructure had been put in place that usually allowed drivers to disregard environmental factors such as fauna, topography, and weather. Literary scholarship on automobility has tended to reproduce this exclusion of the environmental, not least because it has seldom considered sources that appeared before the mid-twentieth century. My paper expands the scope to the early decades of automobility, from the 1890s to the 1920s. In this period, car drivers were exposed to environmental forces in a much greater degree. Dust and rain pounded travelers in roofless cars. Roads were often made of sand or earth, which made them difficult to distinguish at times and hindered driving in bad weather. Flora and fauna intruded constantly onto the road. Engaging with recent ecocritical theories of the material, the elemental, and the pastoral, my paper draws on the literature corpus of the OffRoad project (offtheroad.org) to examine how early narratives of automobility negotiated these experiences of environmental agency. The paper reveals a paradoxical

imaginary of nonhuman resistance at work in these texts. Faced with obstacles to their notions of technological mastery over nature, early motorists tend to either invisibilize these obstacles or to depict them as dramatic acts of nonhuman resistance. Many of the narratives hover between these strategies, thus unwittingly suggesting forms of material agency that counter the anthropocentric ideology they seek to promote.

Bio: Timo Müller is Professor of American Studies at the University of Konstanz. His main research areas are the Environmental Humanities, literary modernism, and the Black Atlantic. He has published two monographs and co-edited *Our Shared Planet: The Climate Issue of the American Studies Journal* and the special issues *Elemental Agency for ZAA* and *Hip Hop Ecology for Ecozon@*. From 2023 to 2027 he is directing the ERC-funded research project “Off the Road: The Environmental Aesthetics of Early Automobility” (offtheroad.org).

Lena Pfeifer (University of Würzburg), “Blue Resistance: Energy Infrastructures and Narrative Form”

Abstract: One of the central driving forces behind the ongoing ecological crisis is modern society’s historical dependence on fossil-based forms of energy. The extraction of oil, coal, and natural gas has altered entire ecosystems as well as land- and seascapes, and the emission of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels continues to contribute extensively to the warming of the atmosphere. Both scientists and politicians have thus called for tapping into other material sources – in particular, wind, water, and the sun – for generating more sustainable forms of energy. However, mobilizing such alternatives also means facing new forms of elemental resistance to humanity’s extractive endeavors and its thirst for widely-available, stable, and affordable energy.

This paper examines the representation of water as both an enabling and resisting force in contemporary energy narratives (such as Martin MacInnes’ *In Ascension*, 2023). Waterscapes figure both as infrastructures for transporting fossil-based energy (such as liquid gas) and as spaces for generating renewable energy (such as through hydropower). At the same time, waterscapes are not only energy infrastructures that sustain existent and enable new forms of energy but also infrastructures of blue resistance, since water – as an unruly force – resists human control and extraction. By reading waterscapes as energy infrastructures and infrastructures of resistance, I show how energy narratives articulate the shifting energy politics of the Anthropocene while simultaneously questioning the human desire to subsume natural elements into extractive logics. Water, as portrayed in the selected energy narratives, possesses an ambivalent agency and the capacity to both enable and unsettle visions of sustainable futures.

Bio: Lena Pfeifer is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Würzburg, Germany, where she completed her doctoral dissertation on Anthropocene narratives in 2024. Her research interests are situated at the intersection of American Studies and the Environmental Humanities and include fictional and non-fictional environmental writing of the 20th and 21st centuries, New Formalism, climate fiction, scale, and energy narratives. Her first monograph, *Anthropocene Affordances: Scale, Narrative Form, and the Human in US-American Literature*, is forthcoming with transcript.

Thayse Madella (Universidade Federal de Sergipe), “The Borderlands as a Decolonial Multispecies Locale”

Abstract: This work analyzes how Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of the Borderlands (1987) functions as a decolonial multispecies perspective that counteracts humanistic rationality. The investigation focuses on the Borderlands as a geographically located material performativity that takes into consideration the knowledge and experience of marginalized multispecies subjects. Anzaldúa's decolonial thinking develops from the dehumanization, violence, and exploitation inflicted upon the land, peoples, and all beings constituting this space she calls “Borderlands”. Consequently, her theorizations are grounded in the material reality and complex entanglements of Borderlands life. Within this framework, Anzaldúa forges kin companionships that are illegible within Enlightenment-based individualism. In doing so, she envisions new archetypes by drawing on Indigenous and non-human knowledge to imagine possibilities for existence outside the constraints of Western, white, colonial, and Anglo-European society. The onto-epistemology of the Borderlands thus counters the humanist discourse that relegates nonhuman existence, including humans who are marginalized or do not fit into a normative expectation, to inferiority. The rationality embedded in the coloniality of knowledge is dismantled by a theorization that values knowledge and beings from a marginalized space, which unfolds into the dismantling of binary constructions such as us/them, superior/inferior, human/nature, West/rest. Ultimately, this work argues that the Borderlands are constituted by the lands, territory, history, ancestors, spirituality, and the constant articulation between the human and nonhuman in creating these psychological and geographical spaces. The very concept of Borderlands, discussing the space in the multiplicity of the whole in which it is formed, is by itself a human and nonhuman articulation. The non-normative constitution of this kind of space is exactly what allows different possibilities of beings. This analysis is informed by the material and decolonial theories of Gloria Anzaldúa, Jasbir Puar, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, and AnaLouise Keating.

Bio: Thayse Madella is a Professor of English at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), Brazil. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil, where her dissertation, *Cartography of Chicana Desire*, explored the intersections of subjectivity, space, and desire in Chicana literature. Her academic journey also includes research conducted at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, as a Fulbright grant recipient.

Session 3.i Sacrifice in the Name of the Modern: The Sacrificed Beings and Territories Strike Back! [preformed panel]

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Andrea Casals-Hill

Speakers:

- Ingrid Molderez (KU Leuven), “Reintegrating the Wolf: What a Predator Teaches Us about Sustainability and Co-living with Nature”
- Caterina Rondoni (University of Ferrara), “Food Systems as Sites of Multispecies Injustice and Resistance”

- Maria Alessandra Woolson (University of Vermont), “The Rapa Nui Multiple Use Marine Protected Area: An Interspecies Community Triumph”
- Andrea Casals-Hill (Universidad Finis Terrae), “*Madre del viento negro* (2021): More-than-Human Entanglements”

Panel description: This panel brings together research that explores the metaphoric and material reality of entangled lives and territories that have been sacrificed in the name of modernity. Viewed from an ecological perspective, these imposed sacrifices delineate systems burdened with environmental injustice and anthropocentrism. However, the human and more-than-human populations explored in this panel demonstrate that communities may strike back in entanglements of collaboration: wolves in European landscapes, South Pacific marine habitat in Rapa Nui, Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon and Mapuche territories, and the Tocopilla critters in Northern Chile.

The European wolf come back is an opportunity for understanding how cultural narratives and emotional responses shape the acceptance—or rejection—of coexistence strategies. At the same time, the wolf functions as a litmus test for sustainability transitions: if coexistence with a native predator proves difficult, what does this suggest about our readiness for broader ecological transformations? Amazonian and Mapuche food systems as sites of multispecies injustice and resistance in sacrifice zones, tell us stories of human and nonhuman entanglements in imposed extractivist economies, merged pollution, and climate crisis. The Rapa Nui marine protected area demonstrates that urgency requires action, and action can bring about a cultural change of a community where the colonial past eroded their oceanic identity for a de facto terrestrial mindset of the West. Lastly, industrial activity sacrificed Tocopilla’s life entanglements; *Madre del Viento negro* shows that urgency also requires art, and art can bring about a cultural change in a community where the modernist matrix was never meant to ensure any good in the territory.

Ingrid Molderez (KU Leuven) and Pascale Maas (KU Leuven), “Reintegrating the Wolf: What a Predator Teaches Us about Sustainability and Co-living with Nature”

Abstract: The return of the wolf to European landscapes has sparked polarized debates that extend far beyond questions of wildlife management. More than a biological species, the wolf is a powerful cultural symbol, deeply embedded in myths, fears, and emotional narratives. Its reintegration compels societies to confront long-standing attitudes toward nature and our

capacity to share space with non-human others. This contribution examines the wolf’s return as a case for understanding how cultural narratives and emotional responses shape the acceptance—or rejection—of coexistence strategies. At the same time, the wolf functions as a litmus test for sustainability transitions: if coexistence with a native predator proves difficult, what does this suggest about our readiness for broader ecological transformations? Drawing on perspectives from human–wildlife coexistence, actor-network theory, sustainability studies, and the environmental humanities, this presentation argues that the reintegration of the wolf is less a matter of ecological feasibility than of cultural readiness, social imagination, and the narratives that shape our visions of sustainable futures. During the presentation, the audience will be invited to co-create alternative narratives that

challenge dominant fears and open new imaginaries of how the wolf might belong in our shared landscapes.

Bios:

Ingrid Molderez is associate professor at KU Leuven's Faculty of Economics and Business, with a background in applied economics (PhD, Hasselt University, Belgium) and social theory (MA, Keele University, UK). Her research and teaching focus on sustainable management, service learning, social entrepreneurship, and art-based pedagogies in higher education. With a background in applied economics and social theory, she embraces a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from organization theory, philosophy, cultural studies, and the arts to explore how education can contribute to a more just and sustainable society.

Pascale Maas is a young researcher with a transdisciplinary background and holds a master's degree in Environment, Health and Safety Management. She is interested in research about doing standard things in a new and improved way such as transformative learning, art-based methodologies and nature-based solutions. She is now pursuing a PhD in Business Economics at KU Leuven and explores what the role of art is in sustainable transitions, particularly within organizations and educational settings.

Caterina Rondoni (University of Ferrara), “Food Systems as Sites of Multispecies Injustice and Resistance”

Abstract: This contribution explores food systems as sites of multispecies injustice and resistance, particularly in sacrifice zones where human and nonhuman lives are entangled in extractivism, pollution, and climate crisis. Drawing on fieldwork with Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon and Mapuche territories, I reflect on how cosmologies, food sovereignty, and agroecology inspire practices of care and alternative imaginaries of more-than-human coexistence.

Bio: Caterina Rondoni is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Ferrara with a dual PhD in Environmental Sustainability (Italy) and Agricultural Sciences (Chile). Her research focuses on food systems, territorial governance, and socio-ecological justice across Latin America and Europe. She has conducted fieldwork with Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon and Mapuche territories in Chile.

Maria Alessandra Woolson (University of Vermont), “The Rapa Nui Multiple Use Marine Protected Area: An Interspecies Community Triumph”

Abstract: The “orca uprising” is reminiscent of the events portrayed in Luis Sepúlveda’s 1988 novel when a group of pilot whales strikes a Japanese whaling factory ship, reminding readers that respect and multispecies coexistence was the way of the land and its people in continental South Pacific. Today, migratory species like the grey whale are dying off and starving in alarming numbers, due, in part, to their feeding grounds warming up and changing. An estimated 4 million fishing boats overfish the oceans internationally, without proper restrictions and controls. In this presentation I discuss the arduous and persistent community process behind establishing the Rapa Nui Multiple Use Marine Protected Area, now part of the Marine National Park Motu Motiro Hiva, a large-scale 740,00 square km “fully no-

take” marine protected area, and the first to be managed by a council with an indigenous majority. I will argue that urgency requires action, and action can bring about a cultural change of a community where the colonial past eroded their oceanic identity for a de facto terrestrial mindset of the West.

Bio: Maria Alessandra Woolson teaches interdisciplinary courses in English and Spanish, for the Honors College and the School of World Languages & Cultures, at the University of Vermont. She is also an affiliate of the university’s GUND Institute for Environment, graduate studies. Initially trained in biology and entomology, she holds a PhD in ecocriticism and contemporary Latin American literature, having since cultivated broad transdisciplinary and interconnected views of the environmental humanities, which are the focus of her courses. Her publications range from topics in Ecocriticism and Sustainability to Eco-pedagogy, often exploring the relationship between people, place, and identity. Two years ago, she began working with storytellers and members of the Rapa Nui community, Rapa Nui, South Pacific, to contribute to current efforts in revitalizing their indigenous language and preserving their ancestral heritage.

Andrea Casals-Hill (Universidad Finis Terrae), “*Madre del viento negro* (2021): More-than-Human Entanglements”

Abstract: The academic community engaged in environmental humanities is aware of the “urgent need to imagine modes of interspecies solidarity and collective action, in pursuit of alternative forms of more-than-human coexistence...”, however narratives seem to linger on the apocalyptic trope rather than imagine possible futures. Studying the narratives about and from “sacrifice zones” in Chile, the picturebook *Madre del viento negro* (created for a pedagogical intervention in Tocopilla) stands out as an artistic effort that portrays the community’s feelings of loss, grief, fury, but also their identities entangled with the coastal habitat, and their generative acts of care, as the growth of a gumtree, against all odds in the polluted area, represents hope and resilience.

Bio: Andrea Casals-Hill holds an MA in Environmental Studies and a PhD in Literature. Her research interests are environmental humanities and young humans’ literature. At Universidad Finis Terrae, she teaches Literature (undergraduate program), and Methodology in the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Humanities. In 2019 we published *Futuro esplendor: ecocrítica desde Chile* (Orjikh), co-authored with Pablo Chiuminato.

Session 3.j Artistic Practices I: Writing the Nonhuman

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Joep Christenhusz

Speakers:

- Wendy Wuyts, “How to Write Nonhuman Characters in Healing Fiction”
- Rosanne van der Voet (Leiden University), “Eiland van Brienenoord: More-than-Human Communities in the Urban Delta”
- Andrea Volken, “Mutualistic Narration: A Non-Hierarchical Framework for Writing with the More-than-Human”

- Matthias de Groof (University of Antwerp), “The Animals’ Lawsuit against Humanity”

Wendy Wuyts, “How to Write Nonhuman Characters in Healing Fiction”

Abstract: This paper examines the aesthetic and ethical challenges of writing nonhuman characters—particularly plants—in the context of healing fiction. Drawing on ecofeminist theory and posthumanist plant studies, it reflects on my own creative practice, including my ecofeminist retelling of the French/Flemish fairytale *The Nettle Spinner* (English, published in 2024 by Ecozon@) and the Flemish ecofiction novel *Tussenland*, as well as the experience of facilitating over twenty international online and live *writing(with) plants* workshops.

A central tension concerns anthropomorphism: how can writers acknowledge vegetal agency without collapsing it into human categories of thought and feeling? As Michael Marder has argued in his work, plants invite us to rethink cognition, temporality, and resistance. Yet literary traditions, ranging from fairytales populated by speaking animals and enchanted forests to contemporary works such as Naomi Novik’s *Rooted* or Hannah Whitten’s *Wilderwood*, often frame plants either as decorative backdrop or as agents of vengeance. These tropes reproduce what Val Plumwood critiqued as a logic of dualism, positioning the nonhuman either as a passive resource or threatening Other.

The presentation explores alternative strategies: vegetalizing fairytales as a way to decenter human protagonists; employing metaphor not to instrumentalize but to invite readers into modes of relational thinking; and cultivating narrative practices that write *with* rather than merely *about* plants. Drawing also on Donna Haraway’s notion of “sympoiesis” and María Puig de la Bellacasa’s ethics of care, I consider how nonhuman characters might contribute to stories of repair, alliance, and more-than-human healing.

At the same time, I reflect critically on the traps of these practices, particularly from my positionality as a relational designer and thinker. How do we avoid appropriating nonhuman voices while still imagining interspecies storytelling? Ultimately, the paper proposes healing fiction as a fertile space for experimenting with aesthetics and ethics of coexistence, where writing itself becomes a practice of multispecies solidarity and resistance.

Bio: Wendy Wuyts (PhD Environmental Studies, Nagoya University) is a socio-environmental systems researcher and writer exploring kinship with the more-than-human world. A certified forest therapy guide, she curates woodwidewebstories.com, gathering plant–human narratives across geographies. Her fiction experiments with nonhuman characters, blending ecofeminism, solarpunk, and posthumanist thought. Published in *Ecozon@*, *Uneven Earth*, *MO Magazine*, and *Educational Fabulations*, she also co-organizes Nordic Summer University symposia on transformative learning practices with and within more-than-human communities.

Rosanne van der Voet (Leiden University), “Eiland van Brienenoord: More-than-Human Communities in the Urban Delta”

Abstract: In the river Meuse in Rotterdam lies the ‘Eiland van Brienenoord’. This presentation and creative reading reflects on the island as a polyphonic, intimately

trans-corporeal landscape that offers opportunities for shaping a multispecies urban delta community.

Due to widespread urbanization and infrastructuralisation of the Rhine and Meuse estuary, its identity as delta is not always obvious. Yet at the island, which lies outside of surrounding dykes and is therefore exposed to the tides, the delta becomes tangible. Having been employed for industry and fisheries in the past, the island has recently been rewilded. Natural riverbanks have been created to redevelop tidal ecosystems, inviting tide-dependent species, such as marsh marigolds, sea bass and freshwater mussels, back into the city. After its redevelopment, 'nature was given the initiative to reclaim the island'.¹ The island is home to allotments and a cultural centre that functions as a 'rehearsal space for the future'.²

I will present and read the first text that I have written as part of a creative-critical writing project that explores the potential of an urban multispecies community at the island. Applying theoretical insights to read and narrate place, I imagine the island as an assemblage of 'delta voices'. My reading begins with a creative application of the concept of 'ghosts' through an imagination of the locally nearly extinct salmon population.³ I then imagine the perspective of many current voices, including algae, a heron, invasive parakeets, a boulder, a human artist and a plastic chair. The literary representation of the various voices is a creative enactment of Elizabeth DeLoughrey's call to engage more-than-human models of history and a hermeneutics that shifts the attention from spectacular to nonspectacular, systemic ecological decline.⁴ Through writing the delta community, I explore the potential of 'fabulation', a multispecies writing practice theorized by Donna Haraway and Gilles Deleuze.

Bio: Rosanne van der Voet is Assistant Professor in environmental humanities and urban studies at Leiden University. Her research spans across various interdisciplinary strands of the blue humanities, with particular focus on more-than-human experience of environmental issues, creative-critical approaches and applied ecocritical analysis of new nature-based water management projects in urban and industrial environments in the Netherlands. Her first book, *Literary Storytelling and the Environmental Crisis of the Oceans: Jellyfish Poetics* is forthcoming in the Routledge environmental humanities series.

Andrea Volken, "Mutualistic Narration: A Non-Hierarchical Framework for Writing with the More-than-Human"

Abstract: One of the most urgent concerns in contemporary nature writing is a predicament of narrative. When we write about the more-than-human, we often fall into modes of domination—projecting our own aims, assumptions, and interpretations onto non-human entities. Even when our intention is to resist domination, conventional narrative structures can perpetuate anthropocentric hierarchies, rendering nature inert or passive. Influential writers have highlighted this difficulty: Robin Wall Kimmerer advocates a 'grammar of animacy', exposing limitations in English and other Western languages; Robert Macfarlane challenges the common tendency to treat rivers as inanimate in *Is a River Alive?*; and, in a recent interview, Amitav Ghosh emphasizes restoring non-human voices to our stories as crucial. These interventions illuminate the urgency of the issue but leave open a question of

literary theory: how can we understand and produce narratives that present nature as animate, agentive, and non-hierarchical?

I propose mutualistic narration as a conceptual framework to address this question. Drawing from the (often ecological) concept of mutualism, this describes a mode of storytelling in which narrative itself enacts reciprocity rather than domination. It is not limited to narrators or focalization but encompasses the broader structuring of narrative: how perspectives, events, and textual rhythms create space for the more-than-human to act, affect, and co-shape the story.

To operationalize mutualistic narration, I reformulate the features of feminist communication scholars Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's theory of invitational rhetoric for literary practice. Foss and Griffin define, first, equality, where all participants are considered equal in the dialogue. Second, immanent value, asserting that all living beings have intrinsic worth—an ecocentrist principle, which Foss and Griffin illustrate through the work of ecofeminist author Starhawk. Third, self-determination, grounded in respect for others and recognizing that all beings have agency. I will recalibrate and exemplify these features using existing literature, showing how we can recognize presentations of mutualistic narration and how writers can craft narratives in which the more-than-human is neither appropriated nor silenced, but fully present as participant and co-creator.

Bio: Andrea Volken is an educator, writer, and researcher with an MA in English Literatures (HU-Berlin) and a BA in Creative Writing (Western Washington University). She directed the Berlin University Alliance research team *Applying Ecofeminism: A Collective and Interdisciplinary Approach*, curating their publication, *The Mesh*. Her recent work includes a chapter on ecofeminist grief and Paula Modersohn-Becker in *Forever Again* (Distanz Verlag) and the presentation of her concept of the ecofeminist sublime at the international conference *Gender, Nature, and Ecology* (Université Paris 8).

Matthias de Groof (University of Antwerp), “The Animals’ Lawsuit against Humanity”

Abstract: *The Animals Lawsuit Against Humanity* is a 10th-century Islamic tale, part of an encyclopedia written by members of a Sufi order, the Islamic *Brethren of Purity* or *Ikhwan al-Safa*, in Basra, Iraq. Our current film adaptation of the story, in collaboration with the Zoöconomic Institute (see below), brings this text into the urgent debates on speciesism, and the rights of the more-than-human. In this fable, eloquent representatives of all parts of the Animal Kingdom – from horses to bees – appear before the king of the jinn to complain about the terrible treatment they must endure at the hands of humanity. During the ensuing trial, the non-human animals ingeniously illustrate and argue their case.

The story rejects human self-understanding based on arrogance and pride, which allows man to use, dominate, enslave and destroy other species under the pretense of fulfilling so-called human needs, while denying the rights of other beings. Needless to say, this arrogance has been most forcefully advanced in the West through humanist/naturalist ontologies since modernity and the idealization of the Promethean human.

What is remarkable about the Sufi text is that, unlike fables such as *Reynard the Fox* or those of La Fontaine, the animals in *The Lawsuit*... do not metaphorically stand for a particular type of human, but speak *as* animals (though they rely on human language). Moreover, the text does not create a universalizing amalgam of “the human,” but differentiates between those who are in solidarity with non-human animals and those who oppose solidarity.

In the context of the conference, I address three challenges raised by our film adaptation:

- What forms of storytelling can do justice to the voices of the more-than-human?
- How can we avoid falling into anthropomorphism while simultaneously acknowledging our own inevitable anthropocentrism?
- How can the film integrate non-human animals into productional, artistic, and narrative decisions—from development to distribution?

A crucial strand here is our collaboration with Zoöp, an organizational model for cooperation between human and non-human life that represents the interests of all *zoé*. The model incorporates voices and interests of non-human life into decision-making processes. Our film will be the first film *as* Zoöp.

While the conference will provide critical feedback for the development of the film, this contribution also aims to bring 10th-century perspectives into the debates from film-historical and philosophical viewpoints.

Bio: Matthias De Groof is a Belgian filmmaker and assistant professor in Film Studies and Visual Cultures. He holds MA's in philosophy (KULeuven), international relations (UCLouvain), and cinema studies (UAntwerp). After his PhD, Matthias has held fellowships at NYU (Fulbright), UWaseda in Tokyo, UAntwerp (FWO), the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and the UvA and the Rachel Carson center for Environmental Humanities (MSCA). Beyond academia, he is frequently invited to speak in cultural settings, curate film programs, and write for magazines. As a filmmaker, Matthias's works—produced by Cobra Films—include *Under The White Mask* (2020), *Palimpsest of the Africa Museum* (2019) and *Lobi Kuna* (2018). His award-winning films have screened internationally, including at the Berlinale and IFFR, and have been curated by outlets like *The New York Times*' Op-Docs Channel.

Session 3.k Canine Configurations

Room: JK2–3 2.19

Chair: Trisha Bhaya

Speakers:

- Ishaan Selby (Concordia University), “Long Teeth of the Law: A Dialogue Between Animal Studies and Critical Police Studies”
- Mustafa Demir (Pompeu Fabra University), “Caring for ‘Unloved Others’: Media Rhetoric and Street Dogs in Turkey”
- Eri Kato (Asia University), “Rethinking Dog Breed Ideology and Multispecies Justice in Japan”
- Indrė Liškauskaitė (Vilnius Academy of Arts), “Playing with a Dog as an Artistic Practice”

Ishaan Selby (Concordia University), “Long Teeth of the Law: A Dialogue Between Animal Studies and Critical Police Studies”

Abstract: A critical study of police places policing at the centre of capitalism and, as Guillermina Seri argues, “exposes the ubiquitous use of force in capitalist societies, which ranges from visible interventions to preserve order to minute acts supporting capital accumulation and the routine reproduction of social relations.” Policing here is understood not just as law enforcement but also as social policy and the management over life by the state and civil institutions. My argument is that such work can and ought to take into account the place of animals under capitalism. I further contend that animal studies can and ought to take into account the role of police and policing as key technologies in fabricating and reproducing the species line as well as disciplining animals when they resist infrastructures of exploitation and murder like the slaughterhouse or the zoo. My paper argues that the management of life under capitalism has always been an interspecies affair and zeroes in on the interspecies nature of that management through a critical engagement with the history of policing and the confinement of animals.

A consideration of animal studies and critical police studies together helps us think about the ways in which capital incepts and governs life itself and the politics of resistance that emerge in response to such inception and governance. I follow scholars of animal resistance like Dinesh Wadiwel and Sarat Colling in reading animal resistance into the infrastructures of global capitalism. Jason Hribal historicizes the role of animals as workers and commodities within specific conjunctures as well as subjects who refuse their conditions of exploitation and death. I add to this by historicizing forms of animal control through policing apparatuses and practices. Ultimately, I argue for a police abolition that takes seriously the lives and desires of animals.

Bio: Ishaan Selby (he/they) is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Postdoctoral Fellow at Concordia University in the Department of English. His research explores the intersections of Marxism, animal studies, and critical theories of race, gender, and sexuality. His work has appeared or will appear in *Humanimalia*, *Ecocene*, *English Studies in Canada*, and the edited collection *Lost Kingdom: Animal Death in the Anthropocene* (Vernon Press, 2024). He divides his time between Montréal and his home city of Toronto.

Mustafa Demir (Pompeu Fabra University), “Caring for ‘Unloved Others’: Media Rhetoric and Street Dogs in Turkey”

Abstract: The new animal protection law came into force in Turkey in 2024. Even before the new regulation, street animals were targets of violence on the streets, and after the new law, street animals, especially street dogs, became targets of catching policies by municipalities. This paper situates these developments within the broader themes of multispecies justice and the construction of “unloved others” in urban ecologies, focusing on the rhetorical strategies used by the media. These days, street dogs are under threat due to the “streets are only for humans” rhetoric. Drawing on a critical discourse analysis of mainstream and social media content, this work will focus on how human-dog relationships and coexistence culture change in the process, and how street dogs become ‘unloved others’ in society through media and its rhetoric.

The work will show how pro-government media target street dogs through coordinated narratives, portraying them as ‘terrorists’ via ‘dog terror’ and ‘terror on our streets’ rhetoric, as well as how fake news amplifies hostility. It will also examine how political Islam and Islamist outlets frame street dogs, explaining why dogs, rather than cats, become specific targets. Moreover, the study will consider how applications like *Havrita* facilitate harm to street dogs.

Lastly, the project will utilize specific examples and stories to understand the situation in Turkey and the polarization between humans and dogs, as well as humans and humans, such as the story of Boji, a street dog in Istanbul, and Necla Ulker, an animal lover in Ankara. By connecting these cases to the conference’s focus on nonhuman resistance and multispecies (in)justice, the paper aims to contribute to understanding how media rhetoric shapes both policy and public sentiment toward marginalized nonhumans.

Bio: Mustafa Demir is a political philosophy MA graduate from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, focusing on political ecology, animal ethics, and multispecies justice. His thesis explored human–dog relations and street dog issues in Turkey. He has presented at international conferences including Animal Liberation (Rennes 2 University, 2025) and the Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies (2025). A member of University of Gothenburg's Network for Critical Animal Studies and the Finnish Society for Human-Animal Studies, he actively engages in animal rights initiatives in Turkey and Spain.

Eri Kato (Asia University), “Rethinking Dog Breed Ideology and Multispecies Justice in Japan”

Abstract: This paper examines the cultural politics of dogs in modern Japan, focusing on the intersection of breed ideology and animal welfare. Prior to the modern era, the category of “dog” in Japan was fluid and loosely defined. With the introduction of the Western concept of “dog breeds,” canine identity was reconfigured and soon became tied to projects of cultural nationalism, culminating in the invention of the “Japanese dog.” Over time, purebred ideology came to dominate, reshaping everyday practices of dog keeping, normalizing the purchase of pedigree puppies, and marginalizing mongrels.

In contemporary Japan, breed selection is widely regarded as the natural way to acquire a dog. Yet the realities of unwanted dogs in shelters and the routine commodification of puppies through the pet shop industry remain largely obscured. In response, movements advocating the adoption of shelter dogs have emerged as a counter practice. At the same time, while pet shops continue to promote purebred dogs as the standard, debates within the Japanese dog world persist over what constitutes the “authentic” Japanese dog, with voices challenging the modern categorization of dog breeds.

Situating these cultural and economic dynamics within broader debates on multispecies injustice and resistance, this paper argues that the concept of “breed” continues to shape the contemporary dog industry in Japan and to produce new structural inequalities in welfare outcomes. By revisiting the intertwined histories of breed, nation, and welfare, it underscores how critical reflection on breed ideology can inform contemporary debates on pet shop culture and welfare activism. In doing so, the paper contributes to broader discussions of multispecies justice and seeks to open pathways toward more inclusive multispecies futures.

Bio: Eri Kato is a researcher specializing in Area Studies with a focus on human-animal relationship. Kato holds a Master's degree from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo. Since 2024, Kato joined Asia University as an assistant professor in the Department of Business Administration. She has been teaching “Humans and other animals” course which focuses on the cross-cultural views on animals in human societies. Kato's scholarly works include research papers such as *Diversification of Animal Welfare Initiatives in Asia* (2023).

Indrė Liškauskaitė (Vilnius Academy of Arts), “Playing with a Dog as an Artistic Practice”

Abstract: For the “Join the Orca Uprising!” I would like to propose a presentation of my current doctoral research project *Human Behaviour*. It is a research that investigates the complexity of dog-human companionship through the inter-species encounters while playing. The play in this research ranges from tugging with the toys, training and sport games, to attempts to play with/within art and its contexts. The dog-human play shows the joy and the labor, the love and the discipline, the dedication and obedience, which comes along in the dog-human history.

The research applies playing with a dog as a method and seeks to draw the insights about the collaborative art practises within the dog-human companionship and rethink the ethical ways of the animal involvement in the creative practises and processes. It also underlines the misunderstandings in the language, the human desire of control, animal images and representation problematics.

How playing with a dog can become a method of artistic research? How can it produce new knowledge about inter-species coexistence? How to play with a dog, in order to analyze social, cultural and philosophical influences that shape our relation and understanding of each other? How can the games, the sports and the sounds we play can be directed, in order to open up new contexts and create new meanings?

Bio: Indrė Liškauskaitė is an interdisciplinary artist and PhD researcher based in Vilnius, Lithuania. With her non-human collaborators and companions, poodle Delta and border collie Delfina, she is researching how playing with a dog(s) can become an artistic practice as well as a method to create collaborative art pieces. Liškauskaitė has a background in painting and textile studies. Her works include drawings, mapping, writing, textile, sound and video pieces, also sculptural installations made of the artifacts of the companionship - dog toys, leashes, sticks, chewed sketches and other findings. She became an agility athlete with her two dogs after reading Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*. Liškauskaitė ironically portrays human and human behavior in order to take a deeper look into social, cultural and philosophical constructions that shape the inter-species encounters.

Session 3.1 Ambiguous Encounters and Uncanny Intimacies II

Room: JK2–3 2.20

Chair: Reinhard Hennig

Speakers:

- Judith Meurer-Bongardt (University of Bonn), “Ambivalent Encounters: Interspecies Storytelling in the Icelandic films *Hross í oss* (*Of Horses and Men*, 2013) and *Hrútar* (*Rams*, 2015)”
- Matthias Klestil (University of Innsbruck), “Interspecies Solidarity through Narrative Ambivalence? Versional Storytelling and Nonhuman Animals in Fowler and Martel”
- Stefan Kjerkegaard (Aarhus University), “Weird Ecologies in Matias Faldbakken: Clay, Care, and the Monstrous”
- Pavle Luketić (University of Zagreb), “‘Something We Haven’t Ruined Yet’: Nonhuman Life and Ethical Attention in Jens Bjørneboe’s *Powderhouse*”

Judith Meurer-Bongardt (University of Bonn), “Ambivalent Encounters: Interspecies Storytelling in the Icelandic films *Hross í oss* (*Of Horses and Men*, 2013) and *Hrútar* (*Rams*, 2015)”

Abstract: In the Icelandic films *Hross í oss* (2013) and *Hrútar* (2015), horses and sheep share centre stage with the human protagonists. They occupy a contradictory position as semi-wild, farm and companion animals, a status they have held for over a millennium. There are clear similarities between the two films. Through dry, sometimes macabre humour, they draw attention to the problems that entrenched dualisms can cause. At the same time, the films reveal traces of interspecies coexistence that hark back to a pre-industrial past while also opening up paths to possible futures. The Icelandic landscape, composed of multifaceted relationships between humans, animals, soil, water and rocks, plays an active role in the plot as a shared environment, as do weather phenomena and pathogens. The visual aesthetics and sound design are also similar. Furthermore, the protagonists often communicate non-verbally or through a limited number of sounds, words and short sentences, which blurs the boundaries between human and non-human actors.

However, in terms of their narrative form, the two films differ significantly from one another. The horses in *Hross í oss* play an active role more frequently than the sheep in *Hrútar*. Moreover, events are often ocularised by horses, indicating that the film’s narrative structures are clearly oriented towards them and their mode of communication (Meurer-Bongardt, 2024). This results in a shift in perspective at both the content and structural levels, enabling animals to influence the regimes in which we and they must live (Haraway, 2003).

Both films reflect the ambivalent entanglements of humans and animals, characterised by tenderness, humour and harshness. My analysis of interspecies communication, which takes into account behavioural biology findings and film narratological elements (Kuhn, 2011), reveals that animal-human encounters extend beyond romanticised symbioses and the reproduction of narratives of oppression. The films initiate a polyphonic ethic that is significantly shaped by non-human beings.

Bio: Judith Meurer-Bongardt is a researcher and lecturer at the Unit for Scandinavian Studies at the University of Bonn, Germany and an adjunct professor for comparative Nordic literature at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. She received her PhD in 2011 with a dissertation on utopian thinking in Finland-Swedish modernism and has published works on Nordic literature in the Anthropocene with focus on genre, spatiality and temporalities, on plants and animals and on writing and reading as

sustainable practices. She is one of the coordinators of the Ecocritical Network for Scandinavian Studies (ENSCAN).

Matthias Klestil (University of Innsbruck), “Interspecies Solidarity through Narrative Ambivalence? Versional Storytelling and Nonhuman Animals in Fowler and Martel”

Abstract: While narrative is a fundamentally human activity, the various effects of this activity on (relations to) that and those not considered as residing on this side of the constructed divide between the human and the nonhuman cannot be overestimated. With the premise that revising our narratives thus has the power to contribute significantly to shaping our relations with the more-than-human world, this paper turns to the affordances of a particular type of storytelling. I focus on narratives that create multiple versions of their stories through nonhuman animals, thereby producing a form of ambivalence that has the potential to open new ways of interspecies solidarity.

My paper analyzes two novels as examples of this type of narrative. Karen Joy Fowler’s *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) plays with multiple versions and perspectives as it initially hides the fact that the “sister” with whom the protagonist and homodiegetic narrator Rosemary describes growing up is in fact a chimpanzee. This strategy, which has been read for its negotiation of human-animal relationships and its potentials of creating empathy with nonhumans (Calarco; Böhm), I argue, together with Fowler’s achronological technique enables readers to reflect on differences in forms of solidarity among humans and with nonhumans. The second text, Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2001), engages in versional storytelling as its protagonist Piscine ‘Pi’ Patel, after presenting a tale of shipwreck that features nonhuman animals, retrospectively introduces a version of the tale that replaces the nonhuman with human animals. Adding to existing interpretations of the text as rethinking forms of humanism (Ding; Drew 121-167), my focus is on the ambivalence created by this narrative as a strategy for thinking about solidarity in relation to kinship beyond species boundaries. My eco-narratological reading of these texts shows how versional storytelling through nonhumans makes use of the always speculative nature of the human activity of narrative, by mobilizing strategic forms of ambivalence that can help us revise the constructed positions of the human and the nonhuman and afford modes for imagining new forms of interspecies solidarity.

Bio: Matthias Klestil is Postdoc Assistant in American Studies at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. He received his PhD from the University of Bayreuth, Germany, and was Bavarian Fellow at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., United States. Klestil’s research interests are in nineteenth-century and contemporary American literature, ecocriticism, narrative theory, and ethnic American literatures. His current research project focuses on “Versional Narration in Contemporary North American Fiction and Film.” Recent publications include *Environmental Knowledge, Race, and African American Literature* (Palgrave 2023), and scholarly articles on Frederick Douglass (*The Concord Saunterer* 2023), W.E.B. Du Bois (*JAAAS* 2024), and Jesmyn Ward (*Ecozon@* 2025).

Stefan Kjerkegaard (Aarhus University), “Weird Ecologies in Matias Faldbakken: Clay, Care, and the Monstrous”

Abstract: This paper explores how the Norwegian writer Matias Faldbakken's novels *Vi er fem* (2020 [*We Are Five*]) and *Stakkel* (2022 [*Poor Thing*]) mobilize the aesthetics of weird fiction to interrogate multispecies relations and more-than-human resistance in the Anthropocene. Both novels center on encounters with strange, unruly beings that destabilize human-centered categories of life, care, and agency, while dramatizing how the ordinary is already haunted by the monstrous.

In *Vi er fem*, a clay-monster emerges from the combination of grief, technological tinkering, and soil. Initially perceived as a companion and caregiver's object of affection, the creature increasingly resists domestication, asserting the unruliness of matter itself. The narrative resonates with María Puig de la Bellacasa's call for cultivating caring, non-linear relations to soil and substance, while also revealing the dangers of trying to master or instrumentalize matter.

Stakkel shifts the focus from soil to flesh: the young Oskar discovers a bandaged, feral girl in the forest, whose grotesque body oscillates between human and nonhuman. Through their relationship, Faldbakken explores how vulnerability, neglect, and dependency bind together human and nonhuman lives. The narrative's grotesque humor and fairytale-like atmosphere highlight how the monstrous can expose social cruelty while also opening possibilities for unexpected care and kinship.

Read together, these novels develop a Nordic variant of weird fiction that stages encounters with the more-than-human as a mode of resistance. Faldbakken's clay monster and feral girl both refuse assimilation into extractivist or anthropocentric logics, instead insisting on precarious, uneasy forms of coexistence. By foregrounding the vitality of matter and the instability of species boundaries, Faldbakken's fiction demonstrates how literature can contribute to reimagining multispecies ecologies and futures beyond human mastery.

Bio: Stefan Kjerkegaard is Associate Professor of Scandinavian Literature at Aarhus University. He specializes in contemporary Nordic fiction, poetry, narratology, autobiography, literary sociology. He leads the *Literary Cultures* research program and the project *Young Literary Practices*, funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark. His current work investigates how literature and writing articulates affective responses to the Anthropocene.

Pavle Luketić (University of Zagreb), “Something We Haven't Ruined Yet': Nonhuman Life and Ethical Attention in Jens Børneboe's *Powderhouse*”

Abstract: This paper offers an ecocritical reading of Jens Børneboe's *Powderhouse* (1969), arguing that the novel anticipates ecological sensibilities through its depiction of nonhuman life and human attentiveness. A brief reference to the “kitchen garden” of the titular *Powderhouse*, a mental asylum, evokes a utilitarian, instrumental logic in which plants and animals are valued primarily for human use. Similarly, the narrator's teleological question “What did God intend by the hedgehog?” reduces nonhuman life to human-centered purpose. However, these instrumental perspectives are unsettled by the narrator's nocturnal garden, also situated on the asylum grounds, where fruit trees, snails, bats, and the hedgehog persist outside human control, forming a feral ecology.

The narrator's sustained attentiveness to the sensory richness of the garden, culminating in him offering a saucer of milk to the hedgehog, models a proto-ecological ethic in which perception and engagement form a responsive relationship with the living world. Read through the lens of Aldo Leopold's *land ethic* (1949), the night garden illustrates a shift from use-oriented thinking toward recognition of membership in a biotic community: nonhuman persistence and human provision together create a dynamic in which awareness of vulnerability generates responsibility.

In this sense, *Powderhouse* arguably contains the early germs of environmental thinking without retroactively imposing contemporary debates on the novel. The hedgehog, whose quiet presence also bookends the narrative, exemplifies the ethical potential embedded in attentive human–nonhuman relations. Bjørneboe's asylum garden thus stages an intersection of perception, material presence, and ethical response, highlighting how literary representation can prefigure ecological consciousness and practices of small-scale, more-than-human solidarity.

Bio: Pavle Luketić is a Research and Teaching Assistant in the Scandinavian Section of the Department of English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. He is a PhD candidate in Literature at the same institution, working on an ecocritical reading of Jens Bjørneboe's so-called *History of Bestiality* trilogy.

4.a Invasive Species I

Room: JK2-3 1.15

Chair: Celandine Fleur Seuren

Speakers:

- Melvin Geib Caballero (University of Kaiserslautern-Landau), "The Political Inclusion of Invasive Species"
- Hatib Kadir (Aarhus University), "The Resistance of Co-species Invasion at the Eastern End of Indonesia"
- Barrie Blatchford (, "America's 'Global Goose-Chaser': Nelson Gardiner Bump, the Foreign Game Introduction Program, and the Scientific Theory of Wild Animal Introductions"
- Deborah Hardt (University of Wollongong), "Cocaine Hippos: Nonhuman Resistance and Escobar's Invasive Legacy"

Melvin Geib Caballero (University of Kaiserslautern-Landau), "The Political Inclusion of Invasive Species"

Abstract: Following the political turn in animal ethics, political scientists began exploring the political inclusion of animals into the political community. In this discussion the migration of animals has received little attention thus far. This paper discusses the implications and pitfalls of including so-called invasive species into the demos. Central to this discussion is the question of how to deal with so-called invasive species that threaten the lives of native animals. While that question might

seem arbitrary from the standpoint of animal ethics focusing on animal sentience, the question arises when conceptualizing native animals as members of the political community. Does the state have a duty to protect native animals from so-called invasive species? To answer this question, this paper (1) gives an overview of the discussion on so-called invasive species in the realm of animal ethics (2) argues for the political inclusion of animals into the demos according to the All Subjected Principle (3) discusses the implications of their political inclusion (4) differentiates between different approaches to animals and politics and (5) applies this theory to so-called invasive species, concluding by drawing critical comparisons with the political inclusion of human migrants to further illuminate these challenges.

Bio: Melvin Geib Caballero is a research associate and Doctoral Candidate at the University of Kaiserslautern-Landau (RPTU) in Germany where he works in the Department of Political Science. His research focuses on the political inclusion and representation of animals. In his dissertation he explores whether animals should and how they can be politically represented and analyzes the role of the German Animal Protection Commissioners in this context.

Hatib Kadir (Aarhus University), “The Resistance of Co-species Invasion at the Eastern End of Indonesia”

Abstract: The concept of “co-invasion” points to the role of non-human species in colonial, neocolonial, and settler occupation. This paper argues that introduced fish, originally planned to help remake landscapes for settler projects, have become feral and invasive. It shows how these species enact their own forms of resistance, blurring the lines between domestication and ferality, and thereby unsettling both human and non-human orders under settler colonialism.

Based on five consecutive summers of fieldwork conducted between 2020 and 2025 in the city of Sorong, West Papua, Indonesia, this paper examines how introduced species have shifted into invasive dynamics. It analyses how the government, by promoting these species, justifies the infrastructure-driven destruction of Indigenous wetlands and their replacement with a settler food-security regime. Since Indonesian occupation in the 1960s—and especially after 2000—wetlands, rivers, and swamps have been converted into canals, embankments, and sediment-filled drains. In this transformed environment, the introduced fish not only survive but thrive, establishing feral and invasive populations that displace endemic fauna and resist domestication. This more-than-human violence reveals not only how infrastructural change and species introduction work together to remake Papuan waterscapes, but also how the introduced fish resist planned domestication and thrive in these polluted, sedimented, and modified swamplands and rivers.

This paper focuses on four invasive freshwater fish as the main actors—the Snakehead, Catfish, Mozambique Tilapia, and Nile Tilapia—all of which have become feral in West Papua’s waterscapes. These freshwater fish were introduced as part of a larger Indonesian program of landscape transformation and settler colonial projects known as Transmigration, involving military, agricultural, fisheries, and food security experts. However, their domestication turned into ferality, eradicating endemic Papuan fish. This act not only demonstrates the blur between domestication and ferality, but also shows how non-human factors, including settlers

themselves, operate within what anthropologist James C. Scott calls “the act of trespassing,” referring to state-led projects and introduced species transgressing socio-ecological orders, when resistance emerges from the unexpected movements of non-human species beyond the planned boundaries of domestication.

Bio: Dr. Hatib A. Kadir earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2018. In 2024-2025 he was a postdoctoral researcher in Global Studies at Aarhus University under the project of Multispecies Intellectual History. Beginning in January 2025, Hatib join the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) as a mid researcher in the Netherlands. Hatib’s research centers on environmental humanities, with a particular focus on the Anthropocene in peripheral regions. His work explores settler colonialism, multispecies interactions, and the rise of feral species in the swampy landscapes of coastal West Papua. He examines how settler colonial projects are inherently multispecies enterprises, involving the settlement not only of people but also plants and animals.

Barrie Blatchford (, “America’s ‘Global Goose-Chaser’: Nelson Gardiner Bump, the Foreign Game Introduction Program, and the Scientific Theory of Wild Animal Introductions”

Abstract: The contemporary hegemony of the discourse of “invasive species” makes willful introductions of non-native species seem to belong to a distant, unenlightened past. Indeed, historians have generally viewed the organized, intentional introduction of non-native species – what contemporaries called “acclimatization” – as a misguided nineteenth-century phenomenon. According to this narrative, acclimatization abruptly lost scientific credibility and popular support with the proliferation of unwanted species, like house sparrows and European starlings in North America, in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet the introduction of new foreign game species – particularly birds – became a core component of America’s twentieth-century wildlife management regime. Indeed, American government biologists spent millions of dollars attempting new animal introductions until the late 1970s, all while articulating sophisticated scientific justifications for acclimatization projects.

I assess the persistence of animal acclimatization and its enduring scientific credibility in America by examining the career of the biologist Nelson Gardiner Bump. Celebrated by the media as America’s “global goose-chaser,” Bump traversed the world for 25 years as head of the federal Foreign Game Introduction Program (FGIP, founded 1948). Ranging as far afield as Argentina, Finland, India, and Japan, Bump investigated over 100 birds for possible introduction to America. He and his colleagues ultimately facilitated the American introduction of hundreds of thousands of individual creatures drawn from several dozen distinct species. Throughout, Bump argued that FGIP was “slow, careful, and scientific,” bringing “reason and order” to the practice of animal acclimatization. Indeed, Bump espoused ecological rationales that legitimated animal acclimatization as a scientific wildlife management technique. While Bump’s acclimatization attempts rarely succeeded, he was largely successful in defending the scientific validity of acclimatization during his career. Thus, his life offers an aperture into the complexities of scientific authority as well as the abilities of animals and nature to defy human control.

Bio: I am an environmental historian of North America who focuses particularly on the relationship between humans and non-human animals. I have written about the interplay of settler colonialism with projects of wild animal introduction and propagation, the practice of exotic petkeeping, and the commercial animal trade in North America. I wish that the world was better for all animals, human and otherwise, and hope my work convinces more people to take that goal seriously.

Deborah Hardt (University of Wollongong), “Cocaine Hippos: Nonhuman Resistance and Escobar’s Invasive Legacy”

Abstract: In the 1970s, Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar imported four hippos from the United States to inhabit his private menagerie. When Escobar was killed in 1993, most of his exotic animals were left behind along the Magdalena River. Against the odds, a group of four hippos not only survived but thrived, expanding to a population nearing 200 individuals. Today, these so-called “cocaine hippos” have become both ecological marvel and management nightmare: thriving in Colombia’s lush wetlands with no natural predators, they are celebrated by some as a charismatic part of the landscape and condemned by others as a dangerous, invasive species.

Efforts to control the population, including sterilization programs and even state-sanctioned culling, have backfired. The killing of a male hippo named Pepe in 2009 provoked a national outcry, revealing the deep ethical and political fault lines surrounding human attempts to contain animal life. These hippos embody a paradox: they are illegal immigrants to Colombia, yet their continued survival resists human designs, bureaucratic control, and pharmaceutical attempts at tranquilization. Their nocturnal, semi-aquatic habits and massive size make them nearly untouchable.

This paper explores the poetics and politics of the “cocaine hippos” as an emblematic case of multispecies conflict, asking what it means to label thriving nonhuman lives as invasive, and what forms of justice are possible when animals refuse to be controlled. By reading the hippos’ reproduction and persistence as a form of nonhuman resistance, I argue that they force us to reckon with questions of belonging, sovereignty, and co-existence—challenging anthropocentric notions of territory and control. In light of a recent U.S. court decision granting the hippos limited legal personhood, I consider how their case unsettles both legal frameworks and ecological imaginaries, opening space for rethinking the politics of invasion and imagining alternative modes of multispecies solidarity.

Bio: Deborah Hardt is an Assistant Professor in the Media Department at the University of Wollongong in Dubai. She is the author of “Dangerous Play: Orcas, Mêtis, and the Global Lockdown” (*Humanimalia*, 2024) and the book chapter “Animal Agency and Animal Subjectivities in *Roar*” in *Animality and Horror Cinema: Creaturely Fear on Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). She is currently completing her monograph, *Animal Revolt*, forthcoming with Sydney University Press.

4.b From Below: Subsurface Disruptions [performed panel]

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Reinhard Hennig

Speakers:

- Anna Seidel (University of Vienna), “Narratives of Disintegration, Catalysts of Solidarity: Galician Oil Texts as Agents of Non/Human Kinship”
- Frederike Felcht (Goethe University Frankfurt), “Multispecies Relationships, Subsurface Extraction, and the End of the World: Agnar Lirhus’s and Rune Markhus’s Norwegian Picture Book *Hva var det hun sa?* (2014)”
- Sophie U. Kriegel (Free University Berlin), “The Dis/Connective Power of Oil in West African Petrofiction”
- Katie Ritson (LMU Munich), “Literature and Energy Precarity: Texts We Can Warm Ourselves By”

Panel description: This panel session examines literary representations of subsurface matter - oil, precious minerals, but also other subterranean resources, such as water, and archaeological remains - and investigates how these texts engage with dominant extractivist discourses. Drawing upon Imre Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel's conceptualization of extractivism as "a human instrumentalisation of nonhuman nature," (Szeman/Wenzel 2021) we explore both formal and thematic dimensions of literary works and literary practice that either challenge or reinforce extractivist ideologies. The panel will address two central questions: To what extent do these literary texts disrupt political and economic instrumentalizations of the earth, or instead consolidate an extractivist perspective on subsurface matter? Secondly, how can human-authored narratives and readings subvert petroc capitalist approaches to and engagement with nonhuman nature, fostering solidarity with nonhuman entities across space and time—particularly underground materials that constitute the material foundation of the very extractivist perspectives and practices these narratives seek to critique? Panelists will engage with these questions through close readings of literary texts from different linguistic and geographic contexts, including Scandinavian, Central European and African literary contexts. We are particularly interested in how literary scholarship might offer alternative ways of understanding our relationship with the earth—moving beyond extractivist logics toward more collaborative forms of human-nonhuman engagement.

Anna Seidel (University of Vienna), “Narratives of Disintegration, Catalysts of Solidarity: Galician Oil Texts as Agents of Non/Human Kinship”

Abstract: Oil “reeks, it stinks, it becomes a Problem” writes Amitav Ghosh when coining the term petrofiction in 1992. To him, the problematic status of oil as well as a lack of suitable literary forms for narrativizing the Oil Encounter accounts for the scarcity of oil fiction. This claim cannot be substantiated in the Central European context. Literary texts about the oil fields in Galicia—which represented the European center of petroleum extraction and production in the 19th and early 20th centuries—demonstrate how the problematic nature of oil can in fact be negotiated in literary form. In most of these narratives, an overarching narrative pattern emerges in which these texts stage the Oil Encounter as original sin: human intervention in nonhuman nature initiates a vicious cycle of disintegration in non/human relations, where the degeneration of nonhuman nature correlates directly with the moral-social decay of humans. Oil ‘stinks’ in all these narratives from the very beginning, but becomes truly problematic only after humans commodify it as raw material. Through this

intervention, humans destroy the harmony between non/human natures; at the same time, the protagonists' social and moral downfall is staged as revenge by exploited nonhuman nature, disrupting the economic success stories the texts narrate on the level of plot.

Drawing on theories of intra-active relations between nonhuman matter and human practice (Haraway, Barad, Bennett), I analyze selected texts from the Galician petrofiction corpus (Hermann Blumenthal's *Der Weg zum Reichtum*, 1913; Ivan Franko's *Boa Constrictor*, 1884; Ignacy 'Sewer' Maciejowski's *Nafta*, 1893) to demonstrate how this narrative pattern illustrates the loss of non/human kinship while simultaneously producing integrative effects at the level of narrative practice. Their critical positioning toward extractive exploitation can thus be understood as 'caretaking activity' (Freeman 2007), whereby these early oil narratives become agents against the very disintegration they depict, functioning as catalysts for human and nonhuman solidarity.

Bio: Anna Seidel is assistant professor of West Slavic Literatures and Cultures at the University of Vienna, where her research focuses on energy humanities, ecocriticism, urban literature, and gender studies. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from Humboldt University Berlin and is the author of *The City in a State of Exception* (transcript, 2025). She is currently working on her second book, which examines 19th and early 20th-century petrofiction from Central Europe.

Frederike Felcht ((Goethe University Frankfurt), “Multispecies Relationships, Subsurface Extraction, and the End of the World: Agnar Lirhus’s and Rune Markhus’s Norwegian Picture Book *Hva var det hun sa?* (2014)”

Abstract: *Hva var det hun sa?* is a picture book based on Inger Christensen's unsurpassable long poem *alfabet* that developed a strategy of preserving life in poetry when facing the threat of planetary destruction. Combining impressive pictures and a rewriting of Christensen's text by including new species and extractivist practices, *Hva var det hun sa?* develops an additional layer that explores the roles of the submarine/subterranean for planetary life and its destruction.

In my talk, I will analyse some examples of the representation of the submarine/subterranean and their relationship to extractivism and multispecies conviviality. I will furthermore reflect on rewriting and illustrating as conservation practices of resistance in times of environmental crises.

Bio: Frederike Felcht is a professor of Modern Scandinavian Literature and Culture and the managing director of the Institute for Scandinavian Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt. Her main research areas are modern Nordic literature, environmental humanities, and hunger and poverty in Nordic literature. Her current research focuses on literature and biodiversity.

Sophie U. Kriegel (Free University Berlin), “The Dis/Connective Power of Oil in West African Petrofiction”

Abstract: The proposed paper takes the perspective of the long durée to explore how West African literary representations of mobility, kinship, and oil extraction

converge on different scales to form non/human ecologies of community. The topic is approached through a combination of postcolonial literary studies, ecocriticism, and energy humanities. The novels *How Beautiful We Were* (2021), by Cameroon-American author Imbolo Mbue, and *Oil on Water* (2010), by Nigerian novelist Helon Habila, explicitly challenge extractivist capitalism while implicitly consolidating aspects of dominant extractivist discourses that legitimise the instrumentalization of non-human nature (Szeman, Wenzel), such as river deltas and forests in West Africa. A comparative close reading of the petrofiction novels (Ghosh) uncovers that they are thematically and formally structured by (disrupted) circularities, which originate from the forceful extraction of oil from the ground.

The circularities are tied together through subtle question of non/human agency and conviviality ranging from the individual, local scale to a collective, transatlantic scale and across different temporalities to create transgenerational narratives of slow violence (Nixon). Thematically, the spatial and temporal dimensions are connected to disruptions of natural cycles that repeatedly cross the threshold between the surface and subsurface. The novels' circular constructions flow around oil as its omnipresence creates cultural continuities (LeMenager) and ruptures. Three nodes are explored to trace the dis/connective potential of oil as an aesthetic strategy. Firstly, the potential to imagine community beyond the humannature binary. Secondly, the metaphor of darkness that intertwines the blackness of oil with the colonial discourse of progress, transatlantic slavery, and environmental destruction. Thirdly, representations of automobility that epitomise the paradox nature of oil as it constitutes global inequalities while enabling greater mobility for some. Mbue and Habila's novels are attempts by authors to decentre the human thus an analysis of their works can help to move beyond extractivist logics.

Bio: Sophie U. Kriegel is a visiting lecturer at different departments of English Studies in Germany. She has taught a variety of classes on anglophone and South African culture, media, and the history of the British Empire and has published on mobility in South African fiction. Other research interests include petromasculinity, gendered spaces, and postcolonial mobilities.

Katie Ritson (LMU Munich), "Literature and Energy Precarity: Texts We Can Warm Ourselves By"

Abstract: My paper will explore the challenge of literary criticism against the status quo of extractivism and the threat of energy precarity.

While fossil fuel extraction and dependence continues to rise, and the threat of energy loss drives calls for a transition, there is a need to question the petromodern literary system that is imbricated with the ever increasing need for fuel. Szeman refers to what he calls the "fiction of surplus," stating that "instead of challenging the fiction of surplus - as we might have hoped or expected - literature participates in it just as surely as every other social narrative in the contemporary era. Ever more narrative, ever more signification, ever more grasping after social meaning: what literature shares with the Enlightenment and capitalism is the implicit longing for the plus beyond what is." (Szeman 2017).

Literary criticism itself apes many of the features of extraction - mining both surface and subsurface (text and subtext) to produce ever more meaning: newer techniques such as distance reading and digital humanities are predicated on the idea on a large and growing corpus of readable material. How can literature, and literary criticism, conceive of a turn away from the model of surplus?

I will explore this question through a reading of *Jimmen* (2011) by the Norwegian author Øyvind Rimbereid. Rimbereid's long poem depicts the Norwegian city of Stavanger at a moment of energy transition, at the beginning of Norway's age of oil. While the oil industry draws on subsurface reserves of decayed matter, *Jimmen's* narrators are concerned with the processes by which matter becomes reabsorbed into the system, with decomposition and decay, thus modelling an alternative to the fiction of surplus, and directing critics towards a different kind of reading.

Bio: Katie Ritson is assistant professor in the Institute for Scandinavian Studies and affiliated researcher at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment & Society at LMU Munich. She has written extensively on the North Sea in northern European literature, and more recently on oil and literature in Norway and Great Britain. Katie is a coordinator of the ENSCAN network for Ecocriticism in Scandinavian Studies.

4.c Artistic Practices I

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Jessica Ullrich

Speakers:

- Laura Ouillon (Université Paris Cité), “Tree Yarnbombing Against the High Speed Two Project: Arboreal Craftivism as Interspecies, Community Solidarity”
- Alicija Kochanowicz (University of Nicolaus Copernicus), “Dripping, Flowing, Soaking – How to Dissolve Art into Reality”
- Angela Tait (University of Salford), “Holders of Soup and Meaning: Clay as Feral Material in Contemporary Ecological Art”
- Christina Goestl, “The Universe Is Not Only Queerer Than We Suppose, It Is Queerer Than We Can Suppose”

Laura Ouillon (Université Paris Cité), “Tree Yarnbombing Against the High Speed Two Project: Arboreal Craftivism as Interspecies, Community Solidarity”

Abstract: This paper examines the case of tree yarnbombing by local communities resisting the destruction of public trees caused by the construction of the new British high-speed railway, High Speed Two (HS2), whose ecological impact remains much debated. Yarnbombing, an international street phenomenon initiated by the Texan artist Magda Sayeg in 2005, consists in wrapping in knitting elements of public architecture – including trees. Described by Sayeg as an ‘empowering’ practice for

communities, yarnbombing is a form of craftivism, a term coined by the US writer Betsy Greer for ‘crafting [...] motivated by social or political activism.’

The craftivist strategy of tree yarnbombing was employed during HS2 protests around Euston Station in London in 2017 and 2018, following the passing of the High Speed Rail Act in February 2017, and the prompt beginning of site preparation works around London’s Euston Station. Such works entailed the felling of hundreds of mature trees in Euston Square Gardens and the streets in Camden, as well as the complete removal of St James Gardens. Collective yarnbombing was seen by protesters as a quick emergency measure to mark trees threatened to be cut down and raise collective awareness: their trunks were wrapped with colourful, hand-knitted scarves, evoking improvised bandages or shrouds, sometimes accompanied by hand-written messages (see enclosed pictures below). Making trees more visible invited passers-by to reflect on their emotional attachments to urban trees, as well as to imagine a future without them.

This contribution offers to consider these artistic forms of collective, political action as community solidarity beyond the human. This paper will, moreover, interrogate the ways in which these arboreal, craftivist interventions reappropriate the traditional folk tradition of tree dressing, weaving new, more careful cultural and emotional relationships to trees and highlighting the active role and value of trees in local communities, of which trees are valued members.

Bio: Laura Ouillon is a doctoral student in British art history at the Research Laboratory on English-Speaking Cultures (LARCA – CNRS UMR 8225), Université Paris Cité, France, where she co-founded and co-run the research group ‘Environmental Humanities’ between 2020 and 2025. Her thesis examines the tree motif in the work of contemporary British artists in the light of the contemporary crises of national identity and climate change from the 1980s onwards. She has published articles in *Burlington Contemporary* and *Etudes britanniques contemporaines*.

Alicija Kochanowicz (University of Nicolaus Copernicus), “Dripping, Flowing, Soaking – How to Dissolve Art into Reality”

Abstract: My doctoral artistic-research project explores watery relations and marginalized landscapes shaped by capitalocenic extractive logics. For this presentation, I focus on three interconnected threads that reveal how wetlands—critical climate-stabilizing ecosystems—are drained, built over, or transformed into monocultures.

The first is Opolno-Zdrój, a former spa village disappearing under the Turów lignite mine. Here groundwater is drained and community life dismantled, yet post-artistic practices open fragile spaces of collective resilience.

The second is Winnica in Toruń, a Natura 2000 wetland threatened by a high-rise project. This case exposes the clash between urban extractivism and ecological protection, where wetlands are misperceived as wastelands rather than spaces of retention and biodiversity.

The third emerges in my work *Fever*, developed in the riverside landscape of the Vistula. Its central metaphor is mistletoe, a semi-parasite that thrives on human-made monocultures under climate stress. While draining resources and placing additional stress on host trees, mistletoe simultaneously nourishes birds and soils, redistributing matter and destabilizing monocultural order. It embodies a liminal, ambivalent

agency: both a symptom of capitalocenic disruption and an unexpected agent of biodiversity.

My presentation will take the form of a performative reading combining theoretical reflection with field recordings. Drawing on Jerzy Ludwiński's post-art, Stephen Wright's usership, and Astrida Neimanis's hydrofeminist "thinking with water," I ask how post-artistic practices can dissolve into reality, strengthen climate resilience, and open collective imaginaries that resist extractivist logics and redirect toward the symbiocene.

Bio: Alicja Kochanowicz is an interdisciplinary artist and doctoral researcher based in Poland. She holds a BA in Photography from the University of the Arts in Poznań and an MA in Intermedia and Multimedia from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, where she is currently pursuing her PhD at Academia Artium Humaniorum. Her research investigates the intersection of post-artistic practices and climate resilience, focusing on wetlands and marginalized landscapes shaped by extractivist logics. Her projects span multimedia, intermedia, and ephemeral forms, including performative readings, field recordings, and site-specific collaborations. They have been presented in exhibitions, workshops, and discursive formats. She is co-founder of the duo KWKO and the collective Wilgoć, and collaborates with The Office for Postartistic

Angela Tait (University of Salford), "Holders of Soup and Meaning: Clay as Feral Material in Contemporary Ecological Art"

Abstract: Clay is so abundant in our lives it risks invisibility: the humble cup of daily ritual, the monumental structure of collective ceremony, the sticky plaything of childhood. Yet this most primal of substances carries within it millennia of accumulation, pressure, and transformation. It is the Earth itself, pummelled by ice and fire, laden with possibility. This paper reframes clay as a feral material: one that resists mastery, pushes back at the hand, and insists upon its own agency.

Taking the Hayward Gallery's 2022 exhibition *Strange Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art* as a point of departure, I speculate on how artists working in ceramic are answering the urgencies of our ecological moment via animistic practices. Jonathan Baldock's towering *Facecrime* demands we look up in reverence to creatures that are other-than-human. Leilah Babirye reclaims detritus as kinship, queering Buganda clans into regal presences. Lindsey Mendick's vermin reoccupy the home, a reminder of the fragility of our domestic privilege. Klara Kristalova conjures hybrid beings who wander freely across the porous borders of human, animal, and plant. Brie Ruais wrestles with clay as body-to-body encounter with the Earth itself. Liu Jianhua's porcelain flotsam stages excess as prophecy of disaster. Clay's unique characteristics—its plasticity, its alchemical permanence, its capacity to endure long after other art forms perish—make it a material through which artists address the entangled questions of the Anthropocene. Echoing Val Plumwood's call to undo the "standpoint of mastery," and attuned to contemporary animist imaginaries, ceramic practice operates in the speculative folds between object and subject, human and nonhuman, the everyday and the mythic.

I propose that clay, feral and abundant, is not simply a medium but a collaborator: an animate substance through which artists reimagine our place in turbulent ecological times, offering new ways to live with the Earth rather than above it.

Bio: Angela Tait is a sculptor and writer, primarily working in the field of expanded ceramics practice, investigating issues of the domestic and creative practice via the universally understood form of the vessel. Angela holds a PhD from the University of Sunderland and contributes book chapters, journal papers and other research outputs. She is a Member of the Royal Society of Sculptors and lectures on the Fine Art programme at the University of Salford.

Christina Goestl, “The Universe Is Not Only Queerer Than We Suppose, It Is Queerer Than We Can Suppose”

Abstract: an experiment in storytelling that interweaves theory, poetry, the personal and the political to create a fable about the rich legacy of discourses on complexity and transformative processes in the sciences (namely zoology/biology) and the arts. It is a radical, anti-binary story about water, air, and sound that embraces diversity and celebrates coexistence - an invitation to turn from knowledge to thought, affection and vision.

Bio: Christina Goestl is an artist. She works in the fields of audiovisual live performance and digital video, utilising series, sequences, modulations and loops, superpositions, cut-ups and electronic impulses. Central aspects of her artistic work are rhythm, dynamics, movement and temporality, communicative interfaces and semiotic systems. Goestl has accumulated an extensive dossier of projects at the intersections of art/tech/science, many of them linked to a comprehensive reflection of sexualities and gender. (www.cccggg.net)

4.d Gardens and Gardening

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Sara Bédard-Goulet

Speakers:

- Axel Goodbody (University of Bath), “Kin in the Anthropocene? Weeds in Gardening Narratives”
- Brussels Health Gardens: Heide Maria Baden (Ornö university), Vitalija Povilaityte-Petri (University of Mons), and Wendy Wuyts (Nordic Summer University), “Co-creating Relationships with Resisting Hogweeds”
- Eline Tabak (University of Oulu), “Tending to Small Life: On Biodiversity (Loss), Seed Saving and Storytelling”
- Nelly Mäekivi (University of Tartu) and Riin Magnus (University of Tartu), “Semiotic Perspectives on Resistance and Care in Multispecies Urban Gardens”

Axel Goodbody (University of Bath), “Kin in the Anthropocene? Weeds in Gardening Narratives”

Abstract: Weeds are, as Richard Mabey writes, plants ‘in the wrong place’: a plant becomes a weed where and when it isn’t welcome. The very category presupposes plants are viewed from a human perspective, and what constitutes a weed is dictated

by social values and practices, usually in relation to agriculture, gardening or medicinal use. Today, plants traditionally regarded as weeds are experiencing a re-evaluation as ‘companion plants’, in the context of biodiversity loss and climate change. Our lives are entangled with weeds in many ways. Weeds are a product of human activity: thriving in disturbed ground, they have accompanied agriculture and horticulture and shaped the evolution of societies. The longevity and adaptability which allow native weeds to out-compete crops, or permit them to disrupt carefully curated aesthetics and steal water, light and nutrients from a favourite herbaceous ornamental, and which enable introduced species to become invasive, are reminders of nature’s resilience, and that we must learn to live with it rather than wage war against it. Agriculturalists, garden designers and theorists have developed conceptions and practices of mutually beneficial co-existence with weeds, and garden writers have depicted scenarios of co-creation with them. In this paper, I consider gardening in collaboration with weeds as an aspect of Anthropocene gardening, a sustainable form of cultivation which seeks to overcome antagonistic human-nature dualism and facilitate mutual flourishing. I ask what Anthropocene discourse, posthumanism, Ludwig Fischer’s theory of ‘nature alliance’ and Donna Haraway’s notion of companion species might contribute to its theoretical underpinning. And I examine examples of English and German garden writing exploring gardening as a field of experimentation in living with nature. Possible texts are Michael Pollan’s essay, ‘Weeds Are Us’ (1991) and more recent narrative/essayistic garden writing including Richard Mabey’s *The Accidental Garden* (2024) and Lola Randl’s *Der große Garten* (2019).

Bio: Axel Goodbody is Professor Emeritus of German and European Culture at the University of Bath, England, and Visiting Research Fellow at Bath Spa University’s Centre for Environmental Humanities. His principal research fields are representations of nature and environment in German and English literature, and ecocritical theory. He served as first President of EASLCE (2004-6), and was Associate Editor of its journal *Ecozon@* from 2010 to 2020. He has published on climate fiction, climate scepticism, energy narratives, and human/ animal relations, and he is currently working on a collection of essays on garden writing in the Anthropocene. He is a series editor of the Brill book series ‘Nature, Culture and Literature: Readings in Environmental Humanities’.

Brussels Health Gardens: Heide Maria Baden (Ornö university), Vitalija Povilaityte-Petri (University of Mons), and Wendy Wuyts (Nordic Summer University), “Co-creating Relationships with Resisting Hogweeds”

Abstract:

This paper explores the “resistance of hogweeds” through an ecocritical lens, bringing together biological, ethnographic, and artistic approaches to rethink multispecies entanglements. Building on Wheeler’s (2011) notion of life as semiosis, and Kohn’s critique of Western thought’s isolation of humans from other life-forms, we foreground Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Persian hogweed (*H. persicum*), and Sosnowsky’s hogweed (*H. sosnowskyi*) as pharmakonic figures, at once poison, medicine, and scapegoat (Derrida).

Official strategies frame hogweeds as invasive threats to ecosystems, economies, and human health, emphasizing eradication. Indeed, the plants’ furanocoumarins can cause severe phototoxic reactions, and they are widely demonized in media and

policy discourse. Yet, as ecofeminist critique (Plumwood) reminds us, such framing backgrounds alternative ways of knowing. Herbalist Stephen Buhner suggests that so-called “invasives” may embody ecological intelligence, offering qualities that support homeodynamic balance, while biologist Ken Thompson warns against “killing the messenger” when eradicating species whose impacts may be neutral or beneficial. Recent findings, for example, point to giant hogweed’s role in nourishing soil microbiomes.

Our research is collective and processual, combining analogue fieldwork, experimental practices, and online exchanges. We situate hogweeds not only as toxic hazards but also as teachers, allies, collaborators, and provocateurs. Drawing on folklore, ethnobotany, art practices (e.g. Ingela Ihrman), songs (e.g. Genesis’ 1971 song Invasion of the Giant Hogweed) and lived encounters, we ask: what might hogweeds be communicating to human societies about medicine, poison, and power? Can their phytochemistry and persistence be read as resistance, or as a demand for respect and humility?

By engaging with Derrida’s pharmakon and multispecies practices of learning, we propose hogweeds as agents of more-than-human critique. Rather than eliminating *plantae non gratae*, we explore how attention to their ambivalent vitality can foster resilience, joy, and wonder, opening paths toward more reciprocal, less domineering relations with the more-than-human world.

Bios:

Brussels Health Gardens (BHG) is a collective of caring citizen researchers and their kin, with links to Brussels, interested in exploring human-nature relationships. By acknowledging BHG as author, we want to stress out the importance of caring and learning in a collaboration with others, humans and nonhumans. The first activities of BHG were organised early 2019.

Dr. Heide Maria Baden is a western-trained botanist, geographer, and biodiversity researcher working to inform illusions of separation between nature and culture. Her focus on holistic pedagogy and humans’ integral role in ecological interactions in a living climate rebalancing process led her to design a cross-continental community-university partnership for water cycle regeneration.

Dr. Vitalija Povilaityte-Petri is a pharmacist, transdisciplinary researcher, kin gardener and co-creator in urban communities focusing on therapeutic and artistic nature-based health practices for resilience and personal exploration in possible becoming. In her work she is focusing on relational lived experiences shared between humans and plants.

Dr. Wendy Wuyts is a writer, entrepreneur and a feminist political-industrial ecologist. She curates www.woodwidewebstories.com and writes eco(healing)fiction. Two short stories are published in Ecozon@. As a scientist she is interested in questions around belonging, homecoming, healing and re-enchantment with/in wounded landscapes.

Eline Tabak (University of Oulu), “Tending to Small Life: On Biodiversity (Loss), Seed Saving and Storytelling”

Abstract: What is the connection between seed saving and storytelling? Both practices and imaginaries of saving and sharing seeds are important in preventing plant species loss. Storytelling gives meaning to practices of seed saving, and seed saving itself can be a way of telling a story. In this context, gardening can become

more than a hobby or a way to produce food: the garden becomes a space where people tend to small life and, with that, a biodiverse future. Especially now that urban green spaces are becoming increasingly important in safeguarding biodiversity, (allotment) gardens carry the potential to cultivate and grow plant diversity. As Sandilands and Gersdorf write, gardens are ‘sites of contestation and resistance.’ In the sixth mass extinction one question naturally follows: how is biodiversity loss contested and resisted in the garden, if at all? There is a significant amount of research conducted and published on seed saving in gardens with a focus on food sovereignty and justice, heritage, and community building. However, with growing awareness of biodiversity loss and its consequences, seed conservation for biodiversity preservation in private gardening is becoming increasingly important and both practices and imaginaries of seed saving become means to resist this loss. In this presentation, I will further explore the connections between practices of seed saving and storytelling. I look at individuals’ reasons to harvest and save their seeds at the end of the season in their private gardens and allotments in Finland and the Netherlands. I will show that in these individuals’ gardens, too, practices of seed saving and storytelling are connected and thus, storytelling can play a role in preventing — or rather, resisting — further plant and biodiversity loss.

Bio: Eline Tabak is a postdoctoral researcher in the environmental humanities at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her academic work revolves around questions and possibilities of storytelling, biodiversity loss and extinction, and care. Her doctoral thesis is on the cultural side of insect decline, and she currently researches imaginaries and practices of seed saving.

**Nelly Mäekivi (University of Tartu) and Riin Magnus (University of Tartu),
“Semiotic Perspectives on Resistance and Care in Multispecies Urban
Gardens”**

Abstract: Urban gardens are semiotic landscapes where human and nonhuman lives meet in shared processes of meaning-making. Our talk examines private gardening in Tartu, Estonia, through semiotics and more-than-human studies, asking how cohabitation with other species reshapes routines, judgments, and care work in shared environments. We draw on semistructured interviews with 30 private garden owners. Findings show that multispecies encounters unsettle familiar routines and generate new interpretive frameworks. Human, animal, and plant interactions emerge through subtle cues of noticing, approach, retreat, and transformation. Nonhuman agency often becomes salient when gardeners lose practical control, for example when expected growth patterns fail, or when a species suddenly proliferates or vanishes. Such events prompt gardeners to rethink safety, care, and responsibility, but may also lead to the suppression of nonhuman agency or the removal of certain species. Everyday artefacts can act as contact zones, mediating interspecies interactions. Small adjustments accumulate into routines of who can be where and when, shaping the shared place. Gardeners practice conditional hospitality, ranging from relocation to tolerant co-presence. We conceptualize these situated negotiations as everyday practices that contribute to multispecies power relations in urban settings, linking attention, affordances, and interpretation across species to reconfigure who may do what, where, and when. Our approach offers analytic tools that make nonhuman agencies visible without reducing them to metaphor, while

remaining critical of the glorification of nonhuman agency under conditions of technological superiority and suppressive social and cultural norms.

Bios:

Nelly Mäekivi is a research fellow at Tartu University, Estonia. She is currently working on hybrid spaces, where human lives intersect with the lives of other animals. Her interests lie in intra- and interspecies communication, ethology, anthropology, and human representations of other species. Her main research focus lies in analysing hybrid environments and species conservation as a multifaceted research object by applying zoosemiotic, ecosemiotic, and cultural semiotic perspectives.

Riin Magnus is a research fellow at the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu. Her research focus is on ecosemiotics and human-environment relations. She has published on topics such as alien species in urban environments, visually impaired person-guide dog interactions, vocal mimicry in birding and human-non-human animal interactions during natural disasters. She has co-edited special issues of the journals *Sign Systems Studies* (*Umwelt theory, Framing nature*) and *Biosemiotics* (*Hybrid natures*).

4.e Speculative Fiction III

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Matthias Klestil

Speakers:

- Sylvia Mayer (University of Bayreuth), “Ursula K. Le Guin’s Poetics of Resilience: Nonhuman Resistance and Multispecies Coexistence”
- Esther-Marie Schilling (University of Rostock), “In Forests & Along the Shores: Non-Human Spaces as Gendered Contact Zones in Speculative Fiction”
- Manuela Crivelli (University of Oxford), “Dengue Boy: Imagining Hybridity as Resistance on a Damaged Earth”
- Yu-Ching Wang (National Chi Nan University), “Re-Worlding: Multispecies Intimacy and (in)Justice in Becky Chambers’s *Monk and Robot* Series”

Sylvia Mayer (University of Bayreuth), “Ursula K. Le Guin’s Poetics of Resilience: Nonhuman Resistance and Multispecies Coexistence”

Abstract: This paper investigates how Ursula K. Le Guin’s essays and fiction contribute to the theorization of resilience, nonhuman resistance, and multispecies coexistence within the environmental humanities. While the neoliberal concept and practice of resilience building have been criticized for privatizing adaptability and obscuring structural causes of crisis, literary studies has begun to draw attention to the variety of concepts and practices of resilience that are communicated in fictional texts. Depending on, for instance, geographical, socioeconomic, and cultural perspective, they present different temporalities and spatialities through which

practices of adaptation and survival become thinkable. Le Guin's theoretical and fictional work - in this paper most notably "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be," and her ethnographical novel *Always Coming Home* - develops a concept of resilience that displaces neoliberal notions and narratives, proposing instead distributed agency, reciprocity, and care. Crucially, such a reconfiguration also involves reconceiving resistance as the cultivation of practices that sustain ecologically and culturally rewarding multispecies coexistence.

Building on insights from ecocriticism, posthumanist theory, and resilience studies, the paper argues that Le Guin's work offers a distinct poetics of resilience that, not only with respect to nonhuman resistance, challenges and transcends both anthropocentric revenge imaginaries and neoliberal instrumentalizing discourses of adaptability. Her speculative narration shows that literature can function as a site of "more-than-human" world-building, where resistance is not a spectacle of "nature's revenge," but the expression of a rebellious practice of living differently. In this sense, Le Guin's poetics reconceptualizes resistance based on principles of sympoetic meaning-making and redefines practices of resistance as relying on multispecies solidarities.

Bio: Sylvia Mayer is Professor of American Studies and Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bayreuth. Over the last years, her ecocritical work has focused on the literary and cultural imagination of (planetary) environmental risk, most importantly, on the study of climate change fiction as environmental risk narratives. More recently, this focus has been complemented by an additional focus on issues of (environmental) resilience building. Her publications include monographs on Toni Morrison's early novels and on the environmental ethical dimension of New England Regionalist Writing, 1865 –1918. She has edited and co-edited several volumes, among them *Restoring the Connection to the Natural World: Essays on the African American Environmental Imagination* (2003) and *The Anticipation of Catastrophe. Environmental Risk in North American Literature and Culture* (2014, with Alexa Weik von Mossner). Her most recent essay publications discuss climate fiction by Margaret Atwood, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Jenny Offill as environmental resilience narratives. A coedited special issue on "Environmental Citizenship" is forthcoming with *Amerikastudien/American Studies*.

Esther-Marie Schilling (University of Rostock), "In Forests & Along the Shores: Non-Human Spaces as Gendered Contact Zones in Speculative Fiction"

Abstract: This paper examines forests and shorelines in contemporary speculative fiction as gendered spaces of non-human resistance. In the Western imagination, these spaces are traditionally conceived as borders between "Wilderness" and "Civilisation". However, novels like *Station Eleven* (Emily St. John Mandel, 2014) and Leni Zumas' *Red Clocks* (2018) portray them as metaphorical and material contact zones between different temporalities and modes of existence. As such, they evade human domination and conceptualisation on a variety of levels and invite a reconsideration of agency not as a human-centred force, but as a diffuse mode of resistance. *Station Eleven* anchors its story in the multi-level rupture of a pandemic and survivors of the pandemic now have to live in and with "Wilderness". And, while characters operate within a stereotypical nature-culture binary, the novel's framework

itself highlights the artificiality of this dichotomy. Thus, the forest functions as site of temporal and spatial defiance:

While it is variously imbued with different metaphorical connotations, it transcends temporal and cultural contexts and remains an independent entity beyond human control. It is simultaneously fixed and fluid in meaning and materiality, it is an active agent, and physically expands into the former realm of “Civilisation”. This outward movement of the forest contrasts with the ocean’s inwardly-directed erosion of shorelines, which continuously reshapes the shore in its physicality. This dynamic tension is especially notable in *Red Clocks*. Here, the forest functions as a safe haven for female characters while beaches – with dead whales washed ashore – serve as an all-encompassing confrontation with decay and the dissolution of land. Although an ecofeminist lens reveals these forests and shores as possible gendered zones, I argue that a close reading of their ecological modes of resistance complicates such assumptions and instead imagines them as transcending binary understandings.

Bio: Esther-Marie Schilling is lecturer and 2nd year PhD candidate at the Institute for British and American Studies at University of Rostock. She teaches literary and (some) cultural studies and is coordinator of the newly established M.A. programme “Culture, Ecology, Change”. Her academic interests include literary representations of contemporary anxieties, as well as narratives of social and political unrest. Her dissertation project examines the intersection and narratives of women’s roles, climate change, and eroding democracy in contemporary speculative fiction.

Manuela Crivelli (University of Oxford), “Dengue Boy: Imagining Hybridity as Resistance on a Damaged Earth”

Abstract: Published in 2023, *La infancia del mundo* is a work of speculative fiction that imagines a catastrophic future in which the anthropogenic shaping of the planet has radically altered its physical and political geography. In this novel, Argentine author Michel Nieva offers a blunt critique of capitalist modes of exploitation and harm through the figure of the *dengue boy*, a human-mosquito hybrid who seeks revenge against those responsible for his mother’s suffering. This presentation responds to the call for papers’ invitation to envision forms of nonhuman resistance beyond entrenched dualisms and human exceptionalism. Particularly, I examine how the novel pursues this project both thematically and formally, focusing on how hybridity and excess function as devices for imagining multispecies alliances on a damaged Earth.

I read the abject morphology of the dengue boy as a transgressive body that unsettles the boundary between human and animal while undermining broader categories structuring Western epistemologies and traditional depictions of the relationship with the nonhuman. By tracing the subjectivity of a creature situated at the margins of both the human and the animal, the novel resists definitive categorisation and instead proposes hybridity as a model on which to articulate more-than-human agency and resistance.

This negotiation also unfolds on a narrative level: constant shifts in perspective, temporality, and scale generate a delirious textuality that resists stable

representation, turning excess into a mode of attunement to the nonhuman. By destabilising narrative conventions and linguistic codes, the novel refuses a unified account of reality and instead performs a continuous labour of dismemberment and reconstruction of the story. Ultimately, I argue that the text itself emerges as a monstrous, shifting narrative, whose elusive shape signals both the impossibility of fully capturing the nonhuman and the fascinating prospect of becoming-with it.

Bio: Manuela Crivelli is a DPhil candidate in Medieval and Modern Languages at the University of Oxford. Her research focuses on the representation of catastrophic futures in works of contemporary Southern Cone fiction, with a particular interest in the ways in which these novels explore new strategies for narrating the experience of vulnerability and uncertainty that characterises a time of environmental disruption. Her research interests include memory studies, new materialisms, the Anthropocene, and environmental humanities.

Yu-Ching Wang (National Chi Nan University), “Re-Worlding: Multispecies Intimacy and (in)Justice in Becky Chambers’s *Monk and Robot Series*”

Abstract: This paper examines the affective, ethical, and material-semiotic dimensions of multispecies intimacy and (in)justice in Becky Chambers’ science fiction series *Monk and Robot*, demonstrating how human-nonhuman relations are mediated culturally. Set on the fictional moon Panga, the novels imagine a world in which robots have voluntarily renounced servitude, peacefully retreated into the wilderness, and idly dedicated their time to observing and comprehending the world. Different world views unfold and contest each other through the encounter and shared journey of a non-binary monk, Dex, and a sentient robot, Mosschap. Dex’s yearning for the sounds of endangered crickets in the wilderness motivates them to leave behind their urban gardening vocation and become a traveling tea monk, providing tea and comfort to the people of Panga. Dex meets Mosschap in the wilderness when Mosschap is undertaking a quasi-ethnographic expedition to explore what human needs in a world no longer governed by labor obligations. While Dex’s longing for the sounds of crickets conveys a sense of ecological nostalgia and multispecies intimacy, their fear and discomfort with the wild and their casual invocation of leeches and parasites as metaphors for human unproductivity lead us to question how their differential affective responses are produced. Although fragments of human knowledge remain embedded in Mosschap’s robotic memory, the robot demonstrates the capacity to be affected and become-with the world. By recognizing the intrinsic and ontological value of the unloved species within the ecological system, Mosschap challenges Dex’s anthropocentric hierarchy and neoliberal trope. Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s theory of affective economies, Donna Haraway’s speculative fabulation and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s posthuman care, this paper demonstrates how affects circulate, through bodies, discourses, and environments, and argues that destigmatizing metaphors of abject or unloved species can cultivate more capacious ways of knowing and caring, opening space for a demoralized and relational vision of multispecies justice.

Bio: Yu-ching Wang is an assistant professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Chi Nan University (NCNU), Taiwan. She also serves as secretariat-general for the Comparative Literature Association of the Republic of China. Her research interests include contemporary English and

American literature, affect theories, medical humanities, animal ethics, and environmental humanities. She teaches “AI in Literature and Film”, “Emotion, Affect, and AI”, and “Technology, Life, and Ethics of Caring” at NCNU.

4.f Creaturely Poetics I

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Merve Tabur

Speakers:

- Amanda Wang (Durham University), “‘Who Benefits’: Materiality of Language and Injustice in Indigenous Poetry”
- Elizabeth Smith (University of Warwick), “The Bacterium Ate My Poem”
- Meliz Ergin (Koç University), “Interspecies Poetics and Humanimal Embodiment in Contemporary Turkish Poetry”
- Kennedy Dragt (UCLouvain), “Books and Being: Buddhist Practice in Ruth Ozeki’s *The Book of Form and Emptiness*”

Amanda Wang (Durham University), “‘Who Benefits’: Materiality of Language and Injustice in Indigenous Poetry”

Abstract: To realise the promise of multispecies justice, it is necessary to return to the question, “Who benefits?” The answer that might appeal to everyone is: all of us. Alliances among diverse human and nonhuman actors enable the generation of multiple visions. Indigenous studies often stand at the forefront of critiquing rigid binaries to pursue multispecies collaboration, highlighting the ecological vulnerabilities of indigenous (feminist) groups and providing a framework in which the autonomous self can be situated within larger relational networks. Poetry with indigenous language can serve as a powerful tool of resistance, fostering an understanding of interspecies solidarity and collective action across multiple perspectives. In terms of poetic language, it can carry, mimic, and perform the materiality of what it describes. Each element of a poem can be involved in the play of its separate energies. Poetry can navigate the complexities of lived experience while also articulating assemblages between human and nonhuman beings. Focusing on an Inupiat-Inuit poet dg nanouk okpik’s poetry, I plan to explore how poetry enacts indigenous epistemologies concerning multispecies injustice. I will argue that embodying an “union of living” through word arrangement engenders new ways of imagining and being in relation to others, while opening up possibilities for rethinking the forms of collaboration we need today.

Bio: Amanda Wang is an English Literature PhD candidate at Durham University, specialising in Anthropocene poetry, Blue Humanities, and New Materialisms. Her project emphasises how the materiality of water and toxicity can be expressed metaphorically in Anthropocene poetry. She is a member of the Centre for Culture and Ecology at Durham University and convenes a reading group on environmental humanities.

Elizabeth Smith (University of Warwick), “The Bacterium Ate My Poem”

Abstract: Spanning 25 years and two volumes, Christian Bök's *Xenotext Experiment* involves encoding a poem into the DNA of a bacterium: first *E. coli*, then the extremophile *D. radiodurans*. At first, the experiment may appear collaborative. However, Bök describes the bacterium as an archive and a machine for writing poetry, preserving a universalised 'civilisation' beyond a projected apocalypse. As a result, critics like Andrea Callanan and Isabel Waidner have pointed out the uneven power dynamics that structure any apparent 'collaboration.' This archival model runs counter to the collaborative world-making of the organisms themselves, infecting and shaping others through acts of 'bacterial innovation.' Although the experiment was reported as a 'success' in July of 2025, much of the life of the experiment has been characterised by the deferral of this 'success,' first when *E. coli* broke down the poem rather than reproducing it, and then when the extremophile refused to express the poem. I therefore read Bök's experiment against the grain, analysing moments of bacterial resistance through the absorption and metabolisation of the poem: eating the poet's words. I argue that this is where the real collaboration of the experiment lies, not in the passive reproduction of the text, but in the bacterial tendency to metabolise and mutate, disrupting the stability of the text and of the human author. In "Fingereyes: Impressions of Cup Corals," Eva Hayward introduces the possibility for haptic surfaces of encounter with more-than-human life, but also the "unmetabolizable" tensions and failures inherent in this (585). Similarly, Ada Smailbegović calls attention to the importance of failure as a way to make space for more-than-human alterity. My paper asks how the "unmetabolizable" friction and metabolic resistance of bacterial poetics can unlock alternative forms of collaboration with other-than-human life, despite the upheavals of the text—and the human—that result.

Bio: Lizzie Smith is an Early Career Research Fellow at the University of Warwick, having recently submitted a PhD in the multispecies encounter in contemporary ecopoetics. With chapters on ocean invertebrates, insects, bacteria, and fungi, her research explores the potential of poetic encounters with "weird" or uncharismatic organisms to reconfigure the narratives that structure our encounters with other-than-human life. She is keen to explore interdisciplinary perspectives, especially from the sciences, and is open to conversations about unconventional creatures or perspectives.

Meliz Ergin (Koç University), "Interspecies Poetics and Humanimal Embodiment in Contemporary Turkish Poetry"

Abstract: This presentation examines a constellation of contemporary Turkish poets who foreground interspecies justice by critiquing both the physical and discursive violence inflicted on more-than-human beings. Through an analysis of the works of İlhan Berk, Birhan Keskin, and Elif Sofya, I investigate how poetry can serve as a critical medium not only for confronting animal cruelty and exploitation, but also for exposing the complicity of language in sustaining speciesist ideologies.

Each poet articulates a distinct poetic strategy in response to animal oppression. Berk's *entomo-poetics* centers on insects to develop a reading practice grounded in radical attention and care, while playfully revealing our linguistic and epistemological limits in understanding more-than-human life. Keskin's *interspecies poeisis* cultivates

relational intimacy and shared vulnerability between humans and animals through the transfiguration and doubling of the poetic voice. Sofya's *poetics of humanimal embodiment* dissolves corporeal boundaries to conjure unnameable bodies that disrupt speciesist language. Across their works, motifs of liminality, transformation, and resistance emerge as vital tools for reimagining the ontological boundaries between humans and nonhumans, and for acknowledging the deeply entangled nature of multispecies life.

By engaging closely with their innovative poetics, I pose a set of interrelated questions: How might we invent a resilient grammar that fosters affective bonds between human and more-than-human beings? Can poetry function as a medium for engaging with animals without erasing their irreducible alterity? And how might poetic inquiry challenge anthropocentric thought, thereby reconfiguring dominant ideological constructs surrounding both the human and the animal? Ultimately, I argue that these poets mobilize the aesthetic and ethical possibilities of poetry to create a space for cross-species kinship and critical reflection.

Bio: Meliz Ergin is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Koç University, İstanbul. She is the author of *The Ecopoetics of Entanglement in Contemporary Turkish and American Literatures* (Palgrave 2017) and *Ecocriticism and Turkey* (Bloomsbury 2024). Her research interests include environmental humanities, comparative ecocriticism, critical theory, literature and philosophy, and contemporary (eco)poetics.

Kennedy Dragt (UCLouvain), “Books and Being: Buddhist Practice in Ruth Ozeki’s *The Book of Form and Emptiness*”

Abstract: Japanese-American Author and Zen-Buddhist Priest, Ruth Ozeki has come to be recognized as one of the most creative contemporary writers engaging directly with the climate crisis and its more-than-human consequences. Her 2022 novel *The Book of Form and Emptiness* engages with similar concerns. The Book follows the tale of a young teen who begins hearing the voices of non-human things following the death of his father. One such voice is that of The Book itself, who calls out to Benny, the aforementioned boy in the basement of a library. The Book comes into being as both a unique narrative entity and as the process of “dependent co-arising” between and The Book. In this paper I argue that the unique posthuman metafictional form of the novel and its suggested animacy is born of Buddhist Philosophy and practice. Examining the Buddhist influence on the ‘form and emptiness’ of text, I argue that spiritual mattering in literary texts urgently challenges the ways in which we perceive the acts of reading, writing, and listening in a more-than-human world.

Bio: Kennedy is a PhD Candidate and FNRS ASPIRANTE Research fellow at UCLouvain in Belgium. Her research focuses on religion and spirituality in contemporary climate poetry and fiction. Her work can be read in *Green Letters*, the *Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture*, as well as *TRANSPOSITIONES*.

4.g Convivial Communities I

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Emilia Quinn

Speakers:

- Émile Dardenne (Université Rennes 2), “Zooinclusivity”
- Aylin Walder (TU Braunschweig), “An Introduction to Affinity Studies: Embracing Material Identity to Be(Come) More”
- Massih Zekavat (University of Groningen), “From Multispecies Justice to Emancipatory Worlding”
- Sophie Ingle (Radboud University), “Reimagining the Ethics of Gene Drive Engineering Through Donaldson and Kymlicka’s Animal Citizenship Framework”

Émile Dardenne (Université Rennes 2), “Zooinclusivity”

Abstract: Fifty years after the publication of *Animal Liberation*, by Peter Singer, the widespread adoption of animal-friendly practices remains elusive. Despite growing public concern for nonhuman animals, their sentience and agency, behavioural change remains slow and inconsistent. This paper introduces zooinclusivity as a conceptual and practical tool to support incremental and inclusive transitions toward better human-animal relations. Drawing from animal studies, moral philosophy, and insights from social psychology, zooinclusivity recognises the psychological and social barriers preventing radical lifestyle shifts. Rather than imposing strict ethical standards, it starts from the acceptability of usages, and promotes a flexible and pragmatic approach that values all efforts to include nonhuman animals in human ethical, political, and social frameworks.

Defined as the disposition to include nonhuman animals in our spheres of consideration and action, zooinclusivity encompasses a wide range of domains—from individual dietary choices to public policy, education, business, urban planning, and law. It seeks to integrate other-than-human animals into practices, discourses, and institutional arrangements, empowering individuals and groups who are already inclined toward change but may not be prepared for radical shifts. Positioned in contrast to animal welfare, ethical veganism, and antispeciesism, zooinclusivity emphasises inclusiveness and supports a spectrum of pro-animal actions. It shares affinities with Tobias Leenaert’s pragmatic approach, while extending beyond dietary concerns to a systemic perspective on interspecies justice.

This paper outlines existing zooinclusive practices, such as wildlife-respecting photography, and animal-friendly urban charters. It also shows how zooinclusivity can serve as a basis for developing new tools, such as a corporate label to assess and encourage animal-friendly business practices. It also critically examines the limits of zooinclusivity, including the risk of animal-welfare washing and the challenge of establishing robust standards. Ultimately, zooinclusivity offers a non-binary, adaptable framework for rethinking our relationships with nonhuman animals in a

diverse and unequal world, aiming for solidarity and ethical progress without exclusion.

Bio: Émilie Dardenne is currently a professor in English and animal studies at Université Rennes 2, France, and a senior member of the Institut universitaire de France.

She has published two books, *Introduction aux études animales* (2022), as well as *Considérer les animaux. Une approche zoinclusive* (2023). Since 2019, she has headed the Animals and Society University Programme, at Université Rennes 2, and since 2024 she had co-headed the Observatoire de Recherche sur la Condition Animale (CNRS), a French-speaking network of animal studies scholars.

Aylin Walder (TU Braunschweig), “An Introduction to Affinity Studies: Embracing Material Identity to Be(Come) More”

Abstract: contemporary speculative fiction demonstrates a particular ability to imagine dark speculative ecologies creating anti-anthropocentric worlds that focalize more-than-human agencies and foreground human dependency on the more-being world. In tracing the negotiation of alterity and identity within speculative fiction for my PhD, I conceptualized the notion of *affinity* as a recognition of the materiality of identities that bind the Self and other Selves across time and space. By enmeshing New Materialism (Bennett; Alaimo) with concepts from queer studies – such as Freeman’s *queer belonging* and Muñoz’s *queer futurity* –, I not only argue for *affinity* as a concept of identity, but also for an *affinitive turn* within the Humanities.

To introduce the idea of Affinity Studies, I will first elaborate on the notion of *affinity* and trace my theoretical development from anthropocentrism and heteropatriarchy via trans-corporeality and queer belonging to affinity. Second, I will exemplify the application of *affinity* to literature by discussing N.K. Jemisin’s *Broken Earth* trilogy and Preme Mohamed’s *The Butcher of the Forest* as prominent examples of imagining a dark sublime in which Nature strikes back through a vertically configured power dynamic. While Jemisin’s series introduces readers to an exploited Father Earth, who comes alive to plague human civilization with natural catastrophes, Mohamed imagines a forest of horrific vitality, emphasizing human powerlessness in the face of Nature and subverting the patriarchal hierarchies – both examples foregrounding the importance of being as *being with* Nature.

Although both narratives center on the darker agency of Nature, I argue that they neither romanticize nor demonize Nature. Rather, these narratives critique human extractivism and exploitation by foregrounding its consequences. Considering speculative fiction as an affective archive, I propose that the study of affinity in speculative fiction offers valuable insights for developing new modes of living that prioritize solidarity over division.

Bio: Aylin Walder is a research assistant at the TU Braunschweig, Germany, and studied English and History at universities in Cologne, London, and Istanbul. In her PhD, she introduces her concept of *affinity*. Her research interests include SFF in queer studies, ecocriticism, and postcolonial studies. She presented and published on eco-anxiety, cultural appropriation, and (inter)dependencies. Her work is featured in edited volumes such as *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Fantasy*, and she is co-editor of the proceedings of the *Inklings Society*.

Massih Zekavat (University of Groningen), “From Multispecies Justice to Emancipatory Worlding”

Abstract: Drawn from my forthcoming monograph, *Leveraging Satire for Environmental Advocacy: Creative Arts in the Chthulucene* (Palgrave Macmillan), this presentation offers a critical examination of the concept of multispecies justice, critiquing its limitations, particularly its anthropocentric and institutional biases, before positing emancipatory worlding as a radical alternative. Beginning with Derrida’s reading of Kafka’s fable “Before the Law,” I will show how the law derives its legitimacy from individuals appealing to it, even as it withholds justice. By stepping away from this unproductive cycle, individuals can defy the structures that perpetuate injustice and create new opportunities for emancipation. While justice is often perceived as passive, emancipation paves the way for revolutionary action, offering a more urgent and dynamic response to climate urgency for the “exhausted of the earth” (Chaudhary, 2024).

As opposed to the miscarriages of multispecies justice, emancipatory worlding is rooted in decolonial ecology (Ferdinand, 2022) and anti-capitalist principles such as interspecies commoning (Barca, 2024). It challenges the violence imposed on both humans and more-than-humans through colonial practices of inhabitation. It further opposes a mode of living that exploits planetary resources for the enrichment of a privileged few, while leaving entire populations in states of environmental degradation. Emancipatory worlding requires the rejection of simplified views of human identity as self-contained and human labor as inherently opposed to non-human nature. This involves resisting species supremacy and the resulting degradation of Earth’s systems. In advancing emancipatory worlding, this presentation calls for a radical reimagining of ecological and social relations that resists species supremacy, dismantles systemic oppression, and cultivates transformative modes of interspecies coexistence.

Bio: Massih Zekavat is researcher and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. He is author of *Satire, Humor and the Construction of Identities* (John Benjamins) and co-author of *Satire, Humor, and Environmental Crises* (Routledge).

Sophie Ingle (Radboud University), “Reimagining the Ethics of Gene Drive Engineering Through Donaldson and Kymlicka’s Animal Citizenship Framework”

Abstract: The accelerating biodiversity crisis has prompted interest in more radical conservation strategies, including the use of gene drive technologies that bias genetic inheritance to alter or suppress populations. While supporters highlight their potential to combat extinction and mitigate ecological disruption, these interventions raise a series of ethical questions about justice for non-human beings. Traditional conservation methods and animal ethicists alike often falter in addressing cases where intervention affects non-humans directly, rather than via their environments. This paper turns, instead, to Donaldson and Kymlicka’s citizenship framework, which reconceptualises non-human animals as political subjects whose entitlements (from humans) vary according to their relationships with human communities.

Applying this framework to gene drive engineering, the paper examines different entitlements owed to three categories of animals: domesticated ‘co-citizens’, sovereign wild animals, and liminal animals who inhabit human spaces without full integration. This paper argues that while population suppression drives conflict with principles of fair intercommunity interaction, population replacement drives may, in certain circumstances, be justified – particularly when framed as a last resort to aid the survival of endangered species or to protect the health of domesticated co-citizens. The analysis further considers how concepts of assisted and interdependent agency complicate assumptions about autonomy, and how models of shared decision-making can resist paternalism while recognising the vulnerability of non-human communities.

Ultimately, the paper suggests that Donaldson and Kymlicka’s framework offers a valuable insights into non-human (in)justice because it foregrounds political membership, relational entitlements, and the risks of paternalism. Yet, it also exposes the need for stronger governance structures to ensure that interventions like gene drives do not overstep the bounds of justice for intercommunity interaction. In this way, the debate on gene drive technologies becomes not only a question of conservation, but of reimagining multispecies political community.

Bio: Sophie Ingle (MA) is a Research Master’s student in Ethics and Political Philosophy at Radboud University. Her background is in philosophy and politics, and she has been teaching at university level since August 2024. Sophie is also the editor-in-chief of a philosophy publication at Radboud University, Nijmegen. Her main research interests include the relationship between humans and non-humans, and the implications of such on the relationship between ethics and ontology.

4.h Indigenous Ecologies

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Caroline Durand-Rous

Speakers:

- Ho’esta Mo’e’hahne (University of California), “Anti-Extractivist Visualities and Indigenous Ecologies Otherwise”
- Doro Wiese (Radboud University), “Sharing Worlds: Human and Animal Motherhood in Tanya Tagaq’s Teeth Apape”
- Halbe Hessel Kuipers (University of Amsterdam), “Eye to Eye with the Wild, Radical Alterity, and the Limits of the Modern Cosmology”
- Bethany Davison (University of Lincoln), “Im/material Landscapes in the Arctic Iconotext: Reading Tanya Tagaq’s Split Tooth”

Ho’esta Mo’e’hahne (University of California), “Anti-Extractivist Visualities and Indigenous Ecologies Otherwise”

Abstract: Indigenous scholars, artists, activists, and community leaders have long theorised and attested to the ways that the extractive violences that are visited on

Indigenous homelands, waters, and more-than-human beings take shape in tandem with the violences that are directed at Indigenous (human) embodiments, genders, sexualities, and communities. Entering these conversations, I contemplate the ways that contemporary Indigenous visual cultures become vital sites for practicing decolonial worldmaking and envisioning more ethical relations between human and more-than-human beings. I read the Indigiqueer and trans* artist Theo Jean Cuthand's short film "Extraction" (2019) alongside the feminist writer and artist Quill Christie-Peters's paintings and public intellectual work. I propose that both artists' decolonial visual aesthetics index, critique, and imagine beyond the apocalyptic worlds that are produced by extractive violence in the Indigenous homelands and waters currently identified as Canada. For instance, Cuthand's film brings together personal narratives of queerness as well as communal and environmental violence. However, by slowing and reversing images of mining as well as sharing an ecological oral history, Cuthand gestures to a world where extractive violence will end, and more reciprocal relations will be shared between humans and more-than-humans. Similarly, Christie-Peters's public intellectual work and paintings connect residential school violence and family separation to the forced removal of Indigenous communities resulting from the construction of hydroelectric power infrastructure. Christie-Peters conceptualises environmental violence as taking place at the level of Indigenous relationships to the body and kinship relations to homelands. Her vivid paintings of residential schools flowering with the spirits of ancestors reconnect generations of her community members to one another and their homelands. Together, Cuthand's and Christie-Peters's anti-extractive visual worldings offer glimpses of what Charis Enns and Brock Bersaglio call Indigenous "ecologies otherwise," that is, ecological relations that resist the eliminatory settler biopolitics that target human and more-than-human life.

Bio: Ho'esta Mo'e'hahne is a Southern Tsistsistas and Hinono'ei person who lives and works on Tongva homelands. They are Assistant Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, where they are an affiliate faculty with the American Indian Studies Centre and a member of the LGBTQ studies faculty advisory committee. They are currently completing a book that traces how queer and trans Indigenous literatures, performance, and cinema craft decolonial genders, erotics, and ecologies in settler cities across Canada and the United States.

Doro Wiese (Radboud University), "Sharing Worlds: Human and Animal Motherhood in Tanya Tagaq's Teeth Apape"

Abstract: In the music video for Teeth Agape (Tagaq and Seitz 2022), a striking visual sequence depicts the transformation of a wolf's paw into a human leg and then into a running woman. This transformation occurs alongside lyrics describing her as having 'Grown strong / from holding up weight / By thigh that carries rocks and urgent gait' (Tagaq and Seitz 2022). The woman then morphs into a stone formation before becoming a wolf again. The lyrics state that she will hunch her shoulders and wait, 'Claws sharpened / teeth agape' (Tagaq and Seitz 2022), signaling a readiness to defend her kin across species. Through this powerful blend of sound and imagery, Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq and writer, director, and animator David Seitz challenges patriarchal and anthropocentric frameworks that are central to Euro-Western socio-political organization.

Two significant shifts emerge from the music video's portrayal. First, it blurs the boundaries between animals, humans, and stones, allowing for a metamorphosis between these entities. Second, as highlighted in the interlude of Teeth Agape – 'Touch my children / And my teeth welcome your windpipe' – it is the mothers, regardless of species, who are depicted as the primary figures of protection and survival. In my talk, I will show how singer and performer Tagaq invites us into a world where care, particularly maternal care, transcends species and is essential for survival and defense. Life-sustaining "motherly" relationships—rooted in concern, nurture, and protection—create a sense of communion that transcends species and challenges patriarchal hierarchies and domination. As I will demonstrate, such visions go against the grain of settlercolonial ideas about motherhood, and establish a vision that interweaves living beings, demonstrating that they share the same world while simultaneously making us aware of unequal conditions.

Bio: Doro Wiese, assistant professor, Radboud University Nijmegen, was trained in literary studies, film studies and cultural studies. In her multifaceted research, such as *The Powers of the False* (Northwestern UP 2014), she investigates how aesthetics is a manner of drawing people into an effective relation with the lacunae of knowledges and histories. Doro Wiese evinces a strong commitment to the study of colonialism, epistemic injustices, transcultural epistemology, or nature and culture. She is inspired by insights formulated in Indigenous Studies.

Halbe Hessel Kuipers (University of Amsterdam), "Eye to Eye with the Wild, Radical Alterity, and the Limits of the Modern Cosmology"

Abstract: In Amerindian cosmology, the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro specifies, the figure of the jaguar embodies radical alterity: not just another as opposed to ourselves, but an Other that has its own other. The jaguar, so we are told in Amerindian myth, is the proto-figure of predation in that the encounter with the jaguar expresses the potential to be made into the other's other, game, that is, the prey, while it perceives itself as human. As a figure of radical alterity, the case of the jaguar presents us with an excellent opportunity to inflect its operative logic and disclose what we might call the limits of the modern cosmology. In this talk, I mean to examine these limits across two poles: the supposed ontological position of, on the one hand, the object 'out there,' and on the other, the subject and its ontological position as the base and origin of all experience. In line with what Viveiros de Castro calls ontological perspectivism, we might draw two theses from here that make it clear that we must affirm that a thing can be a different thing, ontologically so, and that a subject must always be understood in terms of its production. Finally, I want to consider the cosmopolitical implications of the theses.

Bio: Halbe Hessel Kuipers holds a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Amsterdam, thesis under the direction of Patricia Pisters and Erin Manning. Having worked a lifetime in the experimental laboratory for research-creation at SenseLab, Kuipers served as editor of the journal *Inflexions* and spearheaded its radical pedagogy project on neurodiversity. Kuipers' first book, *A Cinematic Mode of Existence*, will soon appear at Bloomsbury.

Bethany Davison (University of Lincoln), "Im/material Landscapes in the Arctic Iconotext: Reading Tanya Tagaq's Split Tooth"

Abstract: Positioning the Arctic tundra as a ruptured and breathing landscape, this paper argues that the construction of iconotextual moments throughout Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth* creates a geologic aesthetic within the text, where the interpolative form becomes analogous to layers of geological strata.

Demonstrating how the Inuit wonderwork (Justice, 2018) performs layered episodes of *becoming* through its narrative prose, pictorial insertions and poetic ruptures, I read the iconotextual moment as a site of intra-material encounter, enabling a co-constitutive exchange that Louvel describes as a “becoming image” of the text and the “becoming-text” of the image’ (2016). Subsequently, this paper argues that Tagaq’s text demonstrates a textual mode of “becoming-landscape”.

Apertures emerge from such text–image–body episodes, and the narrator of *Split Tooth* is depicted as a transient vessel for the multi-scalar and multi-elemental inter-mixing between corporeal, planetary and cosmic bodies. Throughout the text she performs a multi-elemental becoming located in the diffracted and shamanistic, specific to the Arctic landscape and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. That this celestial interaction is facilitated by birth and the spilling of bodily fluids, I argue that it can be located within the hyperobject (Frantzen and Bjering, 2020).

Showing how the narrator inhabits the landtimescape (Barad, 2017) of the textual artefact, breathing through and sedimented within its geological patterning, this paper argues that these iconotextual ruptures alter the temporal experience of the textual artefact as it emerges from the porous border of text and image, placing the protagonist at the precipice of both a deep past and future.

I argue that the text depicts a bodily becoming of landscape, specific to the Inuit Arctic, as the iconotextual moment permeates the space and time between text and image, just as it portrays the dissolve of boundaries between im/material realms through the cavernous corporeal body, terrestrial ruptures and celestial apertures.

Bio: Bethany Davison is a doctoral researcher at the University of Lincoln (UK). Her research interests extend across the environmental humanities, with a focus on energy narratives, petrocultures and contemporary fiction. She has a book chapter forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press, examining the re-imagination of spinsterhood in the novels of Scottish modernist Nan Shepherd.

4.j Nature Bites Back — Paper Jam I

Room: JK15a 0.01

Chair: Kári Driscoll

Speakers:

- Graduate students in the OSL Seminar “Nature Bites Back: Nonhuman Resistance in the Contemporary Cultural Imagination”
 - Sarah Rocha Fritz and Anouck Masse on Farming/Slaughterhouses
 - Shupei Pan

- Eirini Arampatzi, Kamil Korus, and Dániel Kemény
- Roos Kreeft and Trisha Bhaya

Session 5

5.a Simone Weil and “Soft” Resistance: Rootedness, Attention, and Sacredness [performed panel]

Room: JK2–3 1.15

Chair: Margarita Carretero-González

Speakers:

- Serrin Rutledge-Prior (Queen’s University) “Rootedness and Flourishing: Weil, Nussbaum, and the Needs of the Animal Soul”
- Carlo Salzani (University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna), “The Ethics and Politics of Attention: Justice, Love, and Poetry as Resistance”
- Zipporah Weisberg (University of Ottawa), “Animal Sanctuaries: Sacred Sites of Resistance”

Panel description: This panel will explore how three of Simone Weil’s core concepts, rootedness, attention, and sacredness, might help imagine new forms of “soft” resistance against humans’ violent oppression of other animals. Each panelist will discuss the relevance of one of the concepts listed above to imagining resistance through the human and nonhuman animal body, and through ethical relations between embodied beings. Simone Weil focused exclusively on human beings in her work. However, as animal studies scholars such as Anat Pick and Silvia Caprioglio Panizza have noted, the central tenets of Weil’s ethical, political, religious, and philosophical worldview can be readily applied to nonhuman animals and our relationship with them. Attention to suffering can be interpreted as attention to *animal* suffering, while focusing on our common “creaturely” vulnerability eliminates the arbitrary dichotomy between humans and animals and dismantles the rationalist ethical framework. We want to investigate other possibilities for employing Weil’s insights to multispecies ethics and theories of resistance. We use the term “soft resistance” to indicate forms of refusal, rejection, and defence that may not be immediately recognizable as forms of resistance due to their subtlety, but are nonetheless powerful and effective.

Serrin Rutledge-Prior (Queen’s University) “Rootedness and Flourishing: Weil, Nussbaum, and the Needs of the Animal Soul”

Abstract: Simone Weil’s *The Need for Roots* (1943), is a meditation on the crisis of the human condition under modernity: a time which not only saw fascist governments wreak terror and havoc across Europe and beyond, but also the exponential growth of systems of production that left workers spiritually bereft. Humans were, in ways both material and psychological, increasingly left rootless; homeless. In offering an

account of how we might (re)establish roots, Weil identifies fourteen “needs of the soul” that must be cultivated: order; liberty; obedience; responsibility; equality; hierarchism; honour; punishment; freedom of opinion; security; risk; private property; collective property; and truth. It is the first goal of this paper to explore how an attentiveness to these needs – as needs of all animals, not merely human animals – might prompt us to reevaluate our obligations to the other animals alongside whom we live, and reshape our shared homes. In doing so, the paper also prompts us to recognise how, lacking access to these needs, animals might engage in forms of resistance and rebellion – as do humans under conditions of similar rootlessness. The paper’s second aim is to put Weil in conversation with another theorist whose approach is ostensibly similar, yet who does not refer to Weil in her own work: Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum’s capabilities approach, to propose a list of “capabilities” that are constitutive of a “flourishing” life, stands as an alternative to social-contract- and utilitarian-based approaches and has been highly influential in animal ethics. In exploring how Weil’s “needs” and Nussbaum’s “capabilities” overlap and diverge, the paper demonstrates how Weil’s work offers animal ethicists and political theorists interesting new foundations upon which to build more just multispecies communities.

Bio: Serrin Rutledge-Prior is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Animal Ethics in the Philosophy Department at Queen’s University (Kingston/Katarokwi), where her research primarily centres around the issue of how animals can be better included in political spheres. Her first book, *Multispecies Legality: Animals and the Foundation of Legal Inclusion* was published with Cambridge University Press in 2025; her next book project, a collection co-edited with André Krebber, explores the place (and absences) of animals in canonical Western political thought.

Carlo Salzani (University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna), “The Ethics and Politics of Attention: Justice, Love, and Poetry as Resistance”

Abstract: Simone Weil’s notion of attention, also taken up and developed by Iris Murdoch, has become a staple feature of some stands of animal ethics, most notably ecocriticism and care ethics. Weil and Murdoch theorized attention as a selfless form of openness to beings, which is antithetical to the “egocentric” approach which involves a projection onto the other. Equated to a form of prayer and spiritual exercise (by the religious Weil as well as by the atheist Murdoch), it is by selflessly yielding to its object that attention allows for genuine understanding and true ethical action. The two main features of attention are *justice* and *love*, as clearly expressed in Murdoch’s definition of attention as “a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual.” Attention is therefore not merely a heightened and penetrating scrutiny of details, but instead a gaze modified by justice and love. After briefly discussing the main features of attention in Weil and Murdoch, I will argue that it can be used to characterize the gaze of the poet, and that (some) attentive poetry works as a form of resistance. A poetic, just and loving gaze is what can allow the embodied presence of nonhuman animals to emerge and impose itself on the observer, instead of being captured and erased by the colonizing gaze of the “scientist.” In the poetic approach (which is a general attitude and not only an artistic practice), justice and love welcome the animal presence and enable its truth to manifest itself, resisting the “imperialism of the same” of human supremacism.

Bio: Carlo Salzani is a research fellow at the Messerli Research Institute in Vienna, where he leads the project “Animal Suffering and the Politics of Shame,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). He is also a member and co-founder of the Vienna Animal Studies Group. His latest book, *Animals, Empathy, and Anthropomorphism: The Limits of Imagination*, was published in open access by Palgrave Macmillan in 2025.

Zipporah Weisberg (University of Ottawa), “Animal Sanctuaries: Sacred Sites of Resistance”

Abstract: In her essay “Human Personality,” Simone Weil declared: “There is something sacred in every man. But it is not his person. Nor yet is it the human personality. It is this man; no more and no less.” It is not the colour of a person’s eyes, the clothes they are wearing, their position in society, or their character that makes them sacred, it is their very existence as a human being that affords them this status. This assertion has significant implications for social justice. It can be (mis)used by anti-abortion activists to deny women the right to reproductive autonomy, but outside such cynical applications, it can be employed to defend against arbitrary violence against any human being in any context. I want to suggest that the “sacredness” that Weil ascribes exclusively to human beings is also present in all animals. Without necessarily putting it in these terms, animal sanctuaries affirm animals’ sacredness as Weil defines it. They take it as a fundamental truth that each animal expects good to be done to them and not evil and that to commit evil against them is to desecrate them, and to betray them in the most profound way. The Latin root of the term ‘sacred’ or ‘sacer’ suggests that which ‘sets apart’, ‘consecrates’, or ‘makes holy.’ Animal sanctuaries, which are among the only places on earth in which animals are protected from systemic cruelty and offered a chance to live their lives in peace, comfort, and community, ‘consecrate’ animals by recognizing their intrinsic value irrespective of species, capability, or usefulness. Sanctuaries are themselves ‘set apart’ from the dominant ideology and system of violence and are, in this sense, ‘holy’ places. Ultimately, they engage in a powerful act of ‘soft’ resistance by refusing to participate in the wider culture’s routinized desecration of animal life in factory farms, laboratories, zoos, circuses, fur farms, and other abominations.

Bio: Zipporah Weisberg is an adjunct professor in the Department of Classics and Religious Studies and the Interdisciplinary Program in the Arts at the University of Ottawa. She is also a member and co-founder of the Vienna Animal Studies Group. Her areas of specialization include critical animal studies, the critical theory of the early Frankfurt School, and existentialism and phenomenology. Zipporah has published on a wide range of topics, including climate justice and animal justice, the ethics and politics of cultured meat, the benefits and harms of animal assisted therapy, the ethical and ontological implications of biotechnology, and the psychopathology of speciesism. She is currently working on a book project on sanctuaries as a form of political refusal.

5.b Material Agency in Aquatic Ecologies

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Bénédicte Meillon

Speakers:

- Agnese Martini (University of St Andrews), “Seaweed Tales: Taxonomies and Nonhuman Agency in the Victorian Algal Imagination”
- Damiano Benvegnù (University of St Andrews), “After a Storm: Resistance in a Seaweed Herbarium”
- Diego Cagüañas (University of Amsterdam), “Interspecies Conviviality: Mollusks, Tides and the Future of Life in Colombia’s Pacific Coast”

Agnese Martini (University of St Andrews), “Seaweed Tales: Taxonomies and Nonhuman Agency in the Victorian Algal Imagination”

Abstract: Seaweeds are among the most prolific and adaptable forms of vegetation on Earth, embodying a certain ‘wildness’ of vegetal nature: they are difficult to domesticate and resistant to human control. Seaweed life cycles and seedless reproductive modes eluded human understanding for centuries, defying classification systems centred on terrestrial plant models. Their ‘absolute alterity’ and ‘strangeness’ was reflected in taxonomic marginalization. Historically, seaweeds were regarded as ‘the lowest level of vegetal life’, imperfect and underdeveloped compared to flowering plants. Positioned at the margins of botanical knowledge, the study of seaweeds was formalized later compared to other branches of botany, flourishing only in the nineteenth century. By the second half of the century, seaweed collecting had become a popular practice among Victorian women, who contributed to the widespread wonder for these ‘ocean flowers’ through natural history manuals and children’s books.

A prime example is *Parables from Nature* (1855-71) by Margaret Gatty, a collection of children’s tales centred on the wonders of the natural world. This paper explores two fables from this collection in which seaweeds appear as main characters: *Knowledge Not the Limit of Belief* and *Whereunto?.* In the first, a seaweed debates with a zoophyte about scientific classification and the limits of knowledge, until a god-like scientist asserts his power to categorize the nonhuman. In the second, set on the shore, a ‘tangle’ of seaweed is central to a discussion about the purpose of each species within the marine ecosystem. By giving narrative agency to marginal non-human characters and employing anthropomorphic strategies, Gatty overturns conventional human/non-human hierarchies and parodies the anthropocentrism underlying scientific certainty. Rather than passive objects of classification and study - as they often appear when dried in algal herbaria - seaweeds emerge as active participants in debates around taxonomies and the relationship between human knowledge and the non-human.

Bio: Agnese Martini is a PhD student in Comparative Literature at the University of St Andrews. Her project, *Seaweed Imaginations*, investigates seaweed narratives in the UK and Italy (1843-1973) through the categories of the monstrous and the marvellous. She previously worked as a research fellow at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice on the Horizon Europe project *Bauhaus of the Seas Sails*, aimed at reconnecting local communities with water bodies. She holds a BA in Philosophy and an MA in Environmental Humanities.

Damiano Benvegnù (University of St Andrews), “After a Storm: Resistance in a Seaweed Herbarium”

Abstract: Herbaria are collections of preserved biological specimens. They were foundational to the rise of modern science, designed to catalogue the world’s botanical diversity. Yet, in their taxonomic drive to classify and order, they often enacted a reductionist and objectifying gaze upon nonhuman life (Thiers, 2020). The herbarium of the St Andrews Botanic Garden in eastern Scotland houses specimens collected across the globe and across the kingdoms of life, including an extensive algal collection with tens of thousands of specimens dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite its richness, this collection remains uncatalogued and largely inaccessible, stored in folders and cupboards out of public view.

Among these neglected specimens lies a seaweed specimen pressed between folded paper, marked only with the words: “*collected after a storm on a beach near Haifa and Tel Aviv, 1937.*” My paper reflects on the forms of resistance embodied by this fragment of alga and the layered “storms” it holds: the material storm that washed it ashore; the historical storm of British colonial rule in Palestine that mediated its displacement to Scotland; and the ecological storm of the Anthropocene that frames our present. Suspended between preservation and erasure, memory and loss, this seaweed testifies to the entangled fates of nonhuman beings caught in human regimes of collection and knowledge. Rather than yielding to a narrative of scientific mastery, the specimen unsettles epistemological certainty and gestures toward practices of multispecies entanglement, humility, and shared vulnerability.

Bio: Damiano Benvegnù is a Reader in Italian Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. He is the author of *Animals and Animality in Primo Levi’s Work* (2018) and *The Fascist Forest: Mussolini’s Trees and the Ecological Legacy of Fascism* (forthcoming, 2026). From 2018 to 2022, he served as Arts and Creative Writing Editor for *Ecozon@*. His research and publications span a wide range of topics, including ecopedagogy, soundscape ecology, and critical animal studies.

Diego Cagüañas (University of Amsterdam), “Interspecies Conviviality: Mollusks, Tides and the Future of Life in Colombia’s Pacific Coast”

Abstract: For millennia, the tidal rhythms of the Pacific Ocean have directed how and when encounters among multifarious lifeforms could take place. For centuries, black people from Bahía Málaga, southwest Colombia, have harvested a mollusk known as *piangua* in synchrony with the high and low tides that renew the cycles of life and death. That is, until recently, when this molluscoid, human, oceanic, and lunar choreography has gone out of sync due to overexploitation. In this paper I follow reparative and protective work with creatures whose species-future is in peril, in search for caring relations that counter the destruction and violence that every extractive economy demands. I explore how a local ecopolitical imagination provides alternative forms of conviviality and care that refuse to feed racial extractivism. I argue that Bahía Málaga’s political ecology can be understood and embodied only once one attunes oneself to the directions of the Pacific Ocean’s tidal rhythms that orchestrate a mollusk’s reproductive life and the livelihoods of the afro-Colombian peoples that inhabit Bahía Málaga.

To protect the mollusk and secure their community's future, women harvesters created the *piangüímetro*, a measuring device they use to prevent that *pianguas* smaller than 5 cm get collected. In doing so, these women create conviviality around the mollusk's reproductive life. Timing the harvest in accordance with the mollusk's sex life is an expression of care and foresight. Tidal rhythms and *piangua's* slow reproductive maturation call for patient engagement. This is the challenge: how to resist the allure of fast profit when *piangua* is becoming as scarce as other sources of income? How not to get trapped into the ongoing, radically expansive, and relentlessly innovative quest to turn the work/energy of the biosphere into capital? As such, these daily interspecies relations of care represent a thoroughly contemporary political wager on future conviviality.

Bio: Diego Cagüañas is a Colombian anthropologist and philosopher. Ph.D. in Anthropology and Historical Studies. M.A. in Philosophy and Cultural Analysis. Assistant Professor in Cultural and Ecological Theory at the University of Amsterdam. Member of the Amsterdam Institute for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). Research interests include political ecology, cosmologies and perspectivism, memory studies, and 20th century Latin-American intellectual history. Latest publication: Cagüañas, Diego. (2024). "When Forests Run Amok: War and its Afterlives in Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Territories, Daniel Ruiz-Serna, 2023." *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 60(3), e2876.

5.c Captivity and Escape

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Celandine Fleur Seuren

Speakers:

- Clayton G. Beasley (Duke University), "Elephant Agency and the Politics of Captivity: Rethinking Zoos as Heterotopias of Resistance"
- Janine Aloe (University of Stockholm), "'Naughty Bears' and 'Freedom Monkeys' – Media Discourse of Escape and More-than-Human Resistance"
- Mary Shannon Johnstone (Meredith College), "Incarceration and Resistance: An Ethics of Sight within Zoo Animal Photography"

Clayton G. Beasley (Duke University), "Elephant Agency and the Politics of Captivity: Rethinking Zoos as Heterotopias of Resistance"

Abstract: Zoological gardens function as sites of heterotopias, spaces where human–animal relationships are structured through built environments that mediate control and representation. Architectural design within these spaces reinforces hierarchies of confinement, shaping both human perceptions of nature and the lived experiences of nonhuman species. This presentation examines Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) as a critical case through which to explore the tension between human-imposed structures and nonhuman autonomy.

Although zoos are frequently framed as institutions of conservation and education, their spatial logic also operates as technologies of surveillance that

discipline both human visitors and captive elephants. Yet elephants often respond in ways that exceed or subvert these boundaries: through escape attempts, collective refusals, or subtle embodied resistances such as stereotypical pacing and non-compliance. Read as forms of agency, these gestures destabilize anthropocentric narratives that position elephants solely as objects of study or spectacle.

Drawing on ecocriticism, animal studies, and posthumanist thought, alongside welfare reports, ethnographic accounts, and cultural representations, this study reimagines the zoo not as a neutral site of conservation, but as a contested space of interspecies negotiation. Asian elephants, long entangled in colonial histories of capture, labor, and display, become figures through which to rethink the politics of captivity in the Anthropocene.

Ultimately, this presentation argues that elephant agency within enclosures reveals both the persistence of hierarchical human–animal relations and the potential for alternative multispecies futures. By situating the zoo as a heterotopia of resistance, it contends that recognizing elephants as political subjects opens pathways toward more ethical and convivial forms of coexistence grounded in care, justice, and interspecies solidarity.

Bio: Clayton Beasley is a first-year PhD student in Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University. His research explores the visual and architectural dimensions of human–animal relations in sites of captivity, focusing on the history and global development of zoological gardens. He examines how enclosures mediate perception, power, and multispecies encounters, while also engaging with animal histories to consider how captivity shapes the visibility, meaning, and continuity of nonhuman life.

Janine Aloe (University of Stockholm), “‘Naughty Bears’ and ‘Freedom Monkeys’ – Media Discourse of Escape and More-than-Human Resistance”

Abstract: Mainstream media typically frames biodiversity loss through crisis and catastrophe, positioning nonhuman life as passive victim and human society as sole agent of either rescue or ruin. Yet recent shifts in cultural and ecological discourse complicate these portrayals of extinction. This paper examines how *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* report on extinction, endangerment, and animal “escapes”, tracing the ideological undercurrents of anthropocentrism, commodification, and emerging imaginaries of nonhuman agency.

Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies and ecolinguistics, I explore how occasional discursive ruptures – animals “returning” in unexpected places, or charismatic runaways such as “naughty” honey-loving bears, fugitive cows, and “freedom monkeys” – point toward forms of more-than-human resistance. While wordplay and humor often trivialize these events, I examine whether such stories nonetheless destabilize the human/nature binary by momentarily foregrounding animal autonomy and multispecies entanglement.

These narrative shifts resonate with broader extinction studies and environmental humanities frameworks that critique the “world without us” trope and instead seek to imagine multispecies survivance and resistance (Rose et al. 2017; Heise 2016), inviting imaginaries of survivance, resilience, and rebellion. I argue that while dominant media still reinforces human exceptionalism, there are growing cracks where more-than-human agency and multispecies entanglements surface. These

include the valorization of “resilient” species, critiques of anthropogenic erasure, and reframings of extinction as political rather than natural.

In the context of this conference’s call to rethink nonhuman resistance and multispecies (in)justice, this paper contributes to a media-centered understanding of how cultural imaginaries of extinction intersect with narratives of rebellion and resilience. It discusses whether media can move beyond mourning and management to narrate ecological solidarity and resistance without reinscribing human exceptionalism.

Mary Shannon Johnstone (Meredith College), “Incarceration and Resistance: An Ethics of Sight within Zoo Animal Photography”

Abstract: What does it mean to have an ‘ethics of sight’ (Gruen, 2014), and how might that help improve human-animal relationships? Using a critical animal studies lens, this presentation will examine a series of artistically altered photographs of zoo animals (“Roadside Zoo: Captive Glow” Johnstone, 2025) and discuss how animal incarceration and animal resistance are visible within the same image. Using Lori Gruen’s notion of an ethics of sight, this presentation examines an alternative way of “seeing” photographs of animals in captivity, and explores how humans might engage in a form of ethical looking by considering what is going on both in and outside of the frame. Through this analysis, I build a case for how an ethics of sight might bring us closer to a more peaceful relationship with other animals.

Bio: Mary Shannon Johnstone is a photographic artist who explores themes of absence and presence within human-animal relationships. Johnstone holds a PhD in Human-Animal Studies from New Zealand’s University of Canterbury (2025), an MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology (2001) and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1996). Johnstone is an Associate with the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies, a Fellow with the Oxford Centre of Animal Ethics in the UK, and a We Animals Media photography contributor. She is a tenured Professor in the art department at Meredith College in Raleigh, NC where she has taught full time since 2002.

Session 5.d Of Stone and Mineral Existences and Resistances:
Aesthetics, Extractivism, and More-than-Human Communities
(performed panel)

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Salomé Lopes Coelho

Speakers:

- Mariana Cunha (University of Westminster), “Telluric Cinema: Malena Szlam’s Altiplano (2018) and Archipelago of Earthen Bones – To Bunya (2024)”
- Rosa Berbel (University of Granada), “Copper Aesthetics in Contemporary Chilean Poetry”
- HC. Krempels (University of Westminster), “The Lithic Other: Exploring Nonhuman Vitality and Personhood through ‘Consensual’ Performance Collaborations with Chalk”

Panel description: This panel explores the role of minerals in the imagination of more-than-human communities and the part aesthetic practices play in reconfiguring multispecies justice. Marginalised by a bias that privileges organic life over the self-organisation of inorganic matter, minerals and stones are relegated to the bottom of ontological and ethical hierarchies, treated as inert or extractable. Yet they are active materialities in worldmaking processes, and art can expose and revalue their agencies. Bringing together work on experimental cinema, contemporary visual art, poetry, and performance, the papers foreground how diverse artistic practices render minerals visible as participants in shared worlds and intervene in the perceptual and affective limits imposed by human- and organic-centric regimes of value. From copper's toxic residues to rare earths and polymetallic nodules, from chalk's disintegrity to photochemical mineral correspondences in 16mm film, the panel traces how aesthetic strategies unsettle anthropocentric frames, resist racialised regimes of extraction, and refigure the place of the inorganic in more-than-human communities. Together, these contributions ask how aesthetic and literary practices can both expose violent histories of mineral exploitation and cultivate geopoetic imaginaries of resistance and relation.

Mariana Cunha (University of Westminster), “Telluric Cinema: Malena Szlam’s *Altiplano* (2018) and *Archipelago of Earthen Bones – To Bunya* (2024)”

Abstract: Mariana Cunha will examine the radical possibilities of a telluric cinema through Malena Szlam's films *Altiplano* (2018) and *Archipelago of Earthen Bones – To Bunya* (2024). Beginning with an investigation of 'surface'—geological, archaeological, topographical, and cinematic—the presentation explores Szlam's work as both geological archive and resistive practice against extractivist logics. Szlam's employment of 16mm film and in-camera editing creates a material correspondence between film emulsion and mineral substrates, enacting a geopoetic gesture that bridges cinematic and geological materialities. The films' photochemical accidents position cinema itself as a geological force. Repurposing the landscape trope central to avant-garde cinema and land art, Szlam radically activates mineral agencies and nonhuman temporalities while foregrounding complex interspecies entanglements—the mycorrhizal networks, bacterial communities, and symbiotic relationships that constitute ecological webs beyond human perception. Telluric cinema functions as both aesthetic and political intervention, rendering visible humans' extractive traces and colonial histories, thereby cultivating new forms of geological consciousness for our more-than-human present.

Bio: Mariana Cunha is a researcher, curator, and senior lecturer at the University of Westminster and the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM). Her research explores the epistemic and decolonial potentialities of ecological practices in contemporary art and moving images from the Global South. She holds a PhD from Birkbeck, University of London. She has published on Latin American and global cinemas, as well as nonfiction film practices. Her practice research includes co-curating the exhibitions *We Live Like Trees Inside the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* and *Liminal Ecologies: Thresholds of Transition and Entanglement*.

Rosa Berbel (University of Granada), “Copper Aesthetics in Contemporary Chilean Poetry”

Abstract: Rosa Berbel will examine the emergence of a “copper aesthetics” in contemporary Chilean poetry, exploring how mining industry and extractivism surface in recent texts and unsettle conventional notions of what poetry can record, figure, or imagine in the Anthropocene. These works engage with the toxic residues of copper production—such as tailings and particulate matter—not as inert by-products but as aesthetic and political materials that generate spectral, residual landscapes. In doing so, these poetics challenge the transparency of language while exposing the impact of extractive logics on territory, temporality, bodies, and human and more-than-human communities. This perspective makes it possible to situate “copper aesthetics” within the broader panorama of geopoetics, lithic poetics, and fossil poetics in Latin American production, which open up new relations with the inorganic world.

Bio: Rosa Berbel is a doctoral researcher at the University of Granada, where she is completing her PhD. Her research focuses on Latin American poetry, ecocriticism, and the intersections between poetry and politics. She holds a degree in Comparative Literature (2019) from the University of Granada and serves as Managing Editor of *Revista Letral* (Q1). She has been a visiting researcher at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (2023) and at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich (2024).

HC. Krempels (University of Westminster), “The Lithic Other: Exploring Nonhuman Vitality and Personhood through ‘Consensual’ Performance Collaborations with Chalk”

Abstract: HC. Krempels will present ongoing arts research that explores notions of nonhuman vitality and personhood through ‘consensual’ performance collaborations with the lithic other, chalk. While recent EH thinking asks us to (re)consider the animacies of geologies and geographies beyond conventional materialist conceptions of deadened matter, it urges us towards the ‘liveliness’ (van Dooren and Rose, 2016) of others such as stones, via mediums such as touch (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Chalk, however, appears to resist our contemporary conceptions of animacy, vitality (and thereby mortality) as well as individuality. Not only is chalk composed of the skeletal remains of coccolithophores—in other words, the bones of the many dead—but it also complicates contemporary Western scholarship around agency and ‘personhood’ (to utilise the language of New Animism) through its characteristic disintegrality: chalk dismantles as it touches, marks as it is marked; chalk deposits itself onto and upon contact with another; chalk yields itself to water, fragments into many, breaches our concepts of dead and alive. How, then, can we (re)conceive of chalk on its own terms? In what ways does consensual sensory contact with chalk broaden our notions of individuality, stability or liveliness, and in what ways does it resist them?

Bio: HC. Krempels is a poly-media performance-maker and PhD candidate at CREAM, University of Westminster. He has worked across written word, theatre, film, photography and audio and was the founder of London-based Theatre Anima, a collective working in the realms of experimental performance and interested in the relationship between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. His writings have been commissioned by BBC Radio 4, VICE, and the Guardian, amongst others. His performance-based

research is at the intersection of environmental philosophy and animist arts praxis, with particular focus on inter-agent collaborations.

5.e Speculative Fiction IV

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Jaya Sarkar

Speakers:

- Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne), “Diegetic Disanthropy: Confrontational Empathy in *Venomous Lumpusucker*, *Afterworld*, and *A Children’s Bible*”
- Lena Leimgruber Haraldsson (Umeå University), “Blackfish City and the Orca Uprising: Speculative Resistance in the Neo-Colonial Arctic”
- Ann Imke (University of Bremen), “Narrating Speculative Space at Sea: Floating Cities and More-than-Human Ecologies”

Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne), “Diegetic Disanthropy: Confrontational Empathy in *Venomous Lumpusucker*, *Afterworld*, and *A Children’s Bible*”

Abstract: In narratives of multispecies (in)justice, a frequent strategy for engaging more-than-human empathy is to imagine a world in which human beings come under threat or are extinguished. Greg Garrard has coined the term “disanthropy” for those fictions invoking a world without humans. The aim of my presentation is to investigate how such a world, and the processes leading to such a world, are staged in different narratives and with different narrative and affective goals: In Ned Bauman’s *Venomous Lumpusucker*, a researcher tasked with securing the survival of an unimposing, yet excessively clever fish, entertains dreams of self-annihilation and animal revenge. In Debbie Urbanski’s *Afterworld*, readers follow the final days of one of the last human survivors after an apocalyptic pandemic and encounter the ways in which an AI explains why humans had to be wiped out for the greater ecological good. And in Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*, it is not humans as such, but the parental generation who, from the perspective of some concerned and ecologically-minded children, have lost their right to survival. In order to assess the different strategies employed in these texts and outline both their potential and their shortcomings with regard to matters of multispecies justice, I will use findings from empathy research and, in particular, Carolyn Pedwell’s notion of “confrontational empathy” to show how these arguably very different texts explore the difficult terrain of empathy in (fictional) worlds devoid of care and concern and the different forms of resistance these engagements index.

Bio: Roman Bartosch is Professor of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures and the Teaching of English as well as Co-Director of the Research Hub for Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities (MESH) at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published on postcolonial ecocriticism, human-animal studies, ecological and climate literacies as well as resilience and resistance. His recent book

is collected volume, co-edited with Ursula K. Heise and Kate Rigby, called *Unsettling Extinction* (published with Bloomsbury).

Lena Leimgruber Haraldsson (Umeå University), “Blackfish City and the Orca Uprising: Speculative Resistance in the Neo-Colonial Arctic”

Abstract: This paper explores Sam J. Miller’s *Blackfish City* (2018) as a speculative reimagining of multispecies resistance in a post-climate collapse Arctic. Set in Qaanaaq, a floating Arctic city characterised by stratified class divisions, the novel centres on a mysterious woman who arrives riding an orca. Her deep, possibly bio-engineered bond with the animal symbolises a realignment of human–nonhuman relations, challenging existing power structures. She and her nonhuman companions disrupt the socio-political fabric of the city. I read these animals as symbols of ecological disruption, but even more so as agents of resistance who challenge extractivist logics and forge unexpected solidarities. In *Blackfish City*, nonhuman resistance emerges not as a binary opposition to human action but as a complex, entangled force. The novel imagines alternative alliances across species boundaries, suggesting that survival and justice in a neo-colonial Arctic depend on multispecies configurations of care, memory and resistance.

Framing *Blackfish City* within the context of “orca uprising” imaginaries and neo-colonial ecologies, Miller’s narrative complicates anthropocentric binaries and opens speculative space for more-than-human justice. The paper argues that the novel’s depiction of a flooded, fractured Arctic critiques contemporary climate futures and interrogates the intersection of environmental collapse, corporate sovereignty and Indigenous erasure. Drawing on multispecies theory (Haraway 2008; Tsing 2015) and decolonial ecocriticism (DeLoughrey 2019), I explore how *Blackfish City* imagines the Arctic as a zone of reinvention: a site where nonhuman agents catalyse collective action in the ruins of climate capitalism.

Bio: Lena Leimgruber is a doctoral student in English Literature at Umeå University, Sweden. Her research focuses on speculative fiction, postcolonial literature and ecocriticism, with a focus on the Arctic region. She is particularly interested in how literature can address and complicate the intersections of climate change, resource exploitation and Indigenous experiences in the Arctic. Lena also has an interest in academic writing and previously worked as a writing tutor at several Swedish universities.

Ann Imke (University of Bremen), “Narrating Speculative Space at Sea: Floating Cities and More-than-Human Ecologies”

Abstract: In speculative climate fiction, imaginary cities act as discursive sites for negotiation between dominant and alternative understandings of climate change. Pushing back against Eurocentric tropes which focus on apocalypse and extractivism, climate fiction can be used to explore alternative imaginaries which foreground both social and ecological justice. In the context of climate change and rising sea levels, future visions of human survival are frequently staged in liminal spaces between land and sea, such as floating cities.

These unmoored urban spaces occupy both natural and social dimensions, illustrating how human dwellings are embedded directly in the environment. However, in recent years, seasteading (a portmanteau from “sea” and “homesteading” to

describe floating societies) has also attracted serious interest from the super-rich due to its potential for political and financial autonomy.

Floating cities are therefore paradoxical – while assuming a certain level of technological sophistication, they simultaneously embody precarity through exposure to the elements, directly juxtaposing human exceptionalism and fragility in the face of natural forces. I argue that these urban environments serve as posthuman contact zones where encounters are staged not only between humans, but also with non-human entities and materialities. These spaces therefore open up possibilities for staging both nonhuman resistance and envisioning alternative alliances beyond the human.

Building on Erin James' concept of econarratology, I examine floating urban spaces both as a formal literary element and in relation to modern day site-specific contexts. Through close-reading case studies of floating cities from Sam Miller's *Blackfish City* (2018) and Ned Beaman's *Venemous Lumpsucker* (2022), I examine how human structures and movement interact with ecological forces and spaces. In doing so, I pay particular attention to tensions between competing visions of humanity's relationship with the natural environment, noting how narratives of aquatic cities spaces draw distinctions or explore entanglement with the more-than-human.

Bio: Ann Imke is a doctoral fellow in the DFG Research Training Group "Contradiction Studies" at the University of Bremen. With a background in literary, media and cultural studies, her dissertation investigates how climate fiction negotiates contradictions between dominant and marginalized climate imaginaries, analyzing narrative space and perspective through the lenses of ecocritical, posthuman and postcolonial theory.

5.f Creaturely Poetics II

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Sara Bédard-Goulet

Speakers:

- Anna Potoczny (University of Warsaw), "A "Squirrel Cage Mind": Virginia Woolf, Animal Entrapment, and Creaturely Poiesis"
- Sara Familiar Rodriguez (University of León), "Stings and Silences: Ecoanxiety and Ecofeminism Sylvia Plath's 'Bee Sequence'"
- Ene-Reet Soovik (University of Tartu), "Resilience and Resistance: Urban Plants in Contemporary Estonian Poetry"

Anna Potoczny (University of Warsaw), "A "Squirrel Cage Mind": Virginia Woolf, Animal Entrapment, and Creaturely Poiesis"

Abstract: Analysing Virginia Woolf's fiction as well as her sizeable body of literary criticism and life-writing, one cannot fail to observe the modernist author's tendency to employ animal metaphor for her staging and scrutiny of the writing process. Employing the biosemiotic understanding of metaphor as a "pattern that connects"

(Gregory Bateson) the mind and the environment, or nature and culture, I explore Woolf's figurations of writing or failure to write as animal labor as well as violence done to an animal through entrapment, loss of habitat, or otherwise. First, I aim to demonstrate that her relentless employment of such metaphors works to emphasise the 'creaturely' (Anat Pick) vulnerability of body and mind alike, and hence the animal nature of *poiesis* as that which pertains both to an organism and a work of literature. Second, if human cultures and other-than-human *Umwelten* are structured by essentially similar semiotic processes, then their unfolding depends on the existence of 'affordances'—elements of the environment that can "act as objects of signs," according to Timo Maran's definition. Consequently, not only survival of the species but also the survival of a semiotic system proves to be dependent on the material environment and, just like species, semiotic systems, too, can go extinct (an occurrence for which Ivan Puura coined the term 'semiocide'). Similarly, creaturely semiotic freedom, just like creaturely bodily freedom, can be limited by oppressive societies and systems.

Animal insights and instances from Woolf's rich *oeuvre* can help illustrate how the detachment from the essentially creaturely nature of meaning-making can lead not only to biosystemic but equally to cultural impoverishment. Conversely, understanding language and culture as organic can serve as an antidote to a productionist imperative of a culture increasingly hinging on the ceaseless repetition of the same.

Bio: Anna Potoczny is a 4th year PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw, Poland, where she works on a PhD dissertation titled *Virginia Woolf's Literary Compost: Literature as a More-than-Human Entanglement*. Her research areas include 20th-century Anglophone literature, ecocriticism, Critical Animal Studies, Critical Plant Studies, and biosemiotics. Additionally, she's a part of a research team working on the project *Animal Adaptations: Film Adaptations of Literary Animal Characters, from the Silent Screen to Hollywood's Golden Age* (PI: Justyna Włodarczyk).

Sara Familiar Rodriguez (University of Léon), "Stings and Silences: Ecoanxiety and Ecofeminism Sylvia Plath's 'Bee Sequence'"

Abstract: Sylvia Plath's "Bee Sequence" (1962), one of her most symbolically productive pieces of poetry offers a complex meditation on power, identity, and survival through the figure of the bee. Long read primarily in biographical or psychological terms, these poems demand reconsideration as an ecological and ecofeminist text, where the feminine and the natural are inextricably linked. In the "Bee Sequence", her poetic personae assumes multiple roles within the hive: the beekeeper who exerts control, the queen whose authority is precarious, and the worker or sacrifice subjected to violence. This shifting identification produces a poetics of the feminine that is communal, embodied, and vulnerable, yet also threatening and transgressive. The bees emerge not only as symbols of female creativity and fertility, but also as figures of exploitation and silencing within patriarchal systems. Published in the same year as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the latter provides a critical ecological framework for understanding the pertinence of bees in Plath's work, particularly when combined with ecofeminist and even ecogothic theoretical concepts. Carson's warnings about the chemical assault on pollinators resonate with the sinister undertones of Plath's hive imagery. Through

this lens, the “Bee Sequence” anticipates contemporary concerns about ecological collapse, climate change, and the gendered dynamics of environmental discourse. This proposal explores Plath’s feminine ecology: one that refuses the binaries of victim and master, human and nonhuman, and instead reveals the interdependence of bodies, labor, and survival. By situating Plath within an ecofeminist tradition informed by Carson, the analysis underscores the urgent relevance of the “Bee Sequence” not only as a personal testament, but as a poetic intervention into ongoing debates about nature, power, and the feminine.

Bio: BA in English Philology, MA in Teacher Training, and in European Culture. PhD candidate in ‘Contrastive and Comparative Studies: English/French/Spanish’ on the topic of ecocritical/ecofeminist studies of North American poetry, supervised by Dr. Imelda Martín Junquera. Predoctoral researcher at the Modern Languages Dept (ULE). Author of chapters on Ecofeminism, Posthumanism and Sustainable Education. Visiting researcher at the Benjamin Franklin Institute of US Studies. Member of the research group GEHUMECO (Gender, Humanities, Ecocriticism) and assistant editor of *Ecozon@*.

Ene-Reet Soovik (University of Tartu), “Resilience and Resistance: Urban Plants in Contemporary Estonian Poetry”

Abstract: The editors of the recent multiauthor volume *Urban Discourses of Crisis, Resilience and Resistance: Cities Under Stress* (Prieto, Lanigan, Lappela 2025) emphasise the crucial importance of studying urban environments – the habitat of a rapidly growing number of humans across the globe – in the face of the current climate crisis and related environmental threats. Cities emerging as sites of multispecies co-existence are also related to concepts such as Timothy Bealey’s ‘biophilic cities’ rich in elements of wildness that, amongst other benefits, can also inspire human fascination and wonder, Jennifer Wolch’s ‘zoöpolis’ that aims to reintegrate people with animal dwellers of the city space, eventually bringing about trans-species urban practices, and Jamie Lorimer’s ‘cosmopolitics for wildlife’ that sees location-specific issues participating in species mobility forging cosmopolitan connections.

Using these notions as a framework, the presentation will observe the interweaving of the natural dimension and urban environment in contemporary Estonian poetry. A special focus will be on poems connected with the city of Tartu whose status as a UNESCO City of Literature seems to be accompanied by a heightened artistic awareness of the mutual impact of urban space and the literature stemming from it. Also, the city’s participation in the European Capital of Culture initiative in 2024 with a programme entitled ‘Arts of Survival’ involved enhancing curated biodiversity in the city centre. While earlier literary scholarship in Estonia has paid more attention to representations of vertebrate urban wildlife, particularly birds, in literature, this contribution will focus on the role of plants in poetic urban environments. It attempts to chart both cultivated green spaces as well as chaotic edgelands in the urban fringes and independently emerging ruderal species, tracing the plants’ poetic function as well as the agency attributed to them in the texts considered.

Bio: Ene-Reet Soovik is an editor of the journal *Sign Systems Studies* published at the University of Tartu, Estonia, and member of the Estonian Research Council’s research project ‘Meaning of endangered species in culture: ecology, semiotic

modelling and reception'. Her scholarly interests include literary urban studies, ecocriticism, geocriticism, and contemporary poetry; she has published in all of these fields both in Estonia and internationally. She is currently guest editing a blue humanities special issue of the journal *Methis. Studia humaniora estonica*.

5.g Multispecies Entanglements

Room: JK2-3 2.19

Chair: Chloë Taylor

Speakers:

- Renata Dalmaso and Júlia Zen Dariva (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina), "On Human and Non-Human Entanglements: The Double Slit Experiment of Live Nature Cams"
- Diana M. Natermann (Utrecht University), "Conquest and Counterforce: Masculine Gazes, German Colonial Photography"
- Alexandra Böhm (Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg), "Rewilding and Imaginations of the Primitive: Towards Convivial Communities with the More-than-Human World"

Renata Dalmaso and Júlia Zen Dariva (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina), "On Human and Non-Human Entanglements: The Double Slit Experiment of Live Nature Cams"

Abstract: We are interested in the phenomena of live nature cams as constitutive of reality, borrowing from Karen Barad's theory of agential realism. Live nature feeds that follow a specific animal, species, or habitat—such as the bald eagle nest at Big Bear Valley or the brown bears of Katmai National Park, to name just a couple—mediate a relationship between humans and non-humans in ways that approximate these subjects at the same time that build a community of like-minded onlookers. These cameras work as material-discursive practices, enacting agency across those multiple relationships. The nature (pun intended) of this phenomena can be read paradoxically, though. The connection of non-humans to humans can be read as one of voyeurism, in which nature is then constructed as a product to be consumed from the comfort of home. At the same time, the entanglement between non-humans and humans can be seen as mutually constitutive, as an interpellation that occurs through a shared relationship of time that produces I/you/we into being. In the first perspective, the relationship of non-humans and humans is unilateral, and the sense of community being established is only among other humans who join the activity. In the second perspective, the relationship is seen as reciprocal, as all subjects, human and non-human, come into being through this discursively material making of space-time. Borrowing from the double slit experiment in physics, which spookily demonstrates how matter can have both particle and wave-like characteristics, across time and space, our hypothesis is that the relationship between humans and non-humans within the system of live nature cams can be read through both perspectives at the same time: they are both unilateral and reciprocal in their constitutive properties. The system of cameras that enables the live feeds can be seen as the apparatus through which the connections are formed. Communities are

entangled in this meaning-making process as well: they can be seen as exclusive to humans, who see cultural value in this consumption of nature, and they can be read as the whole of the relationship within the network of the apparatuses.

Bios:

Renata Lucena Dalmaso is a professor and permanent member of the postgraduate program in English at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil. A two-time Fulbright awardee, she held a Fulbright Dissertation Award at the University of Michigan (2012-13) and a Junior Faculty Award at George Washington University (2018-19). Her scholarly work focuses on life writing, with specific interests in graphic memoirs, representations of disability, queer theory, and feminisms.

Júlia Zen Dariva is a Ph.D candidate at the post-graduate program of English at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Her research interest lie in looking at the affective relationship between fans and their selected objects through a cultural materialist lens.

Diana M. Natermann (Utrecht University), “Conquest and Counterforce: Masculine Gazes, German Colonial Photography”

Abstract: In 1910–11, Duke Adolf Friedrich of Mecklenburg led a major German expedition to Central Africa, producing an extensive photographic record of landscapes, peoples, and animals. 1 These images – crafted through both a colonial and a distinctly male gaze – rehearse the narrative of “man’s war against nature” that Rachel Carson later diagnosed.² Colonial photography staged nonhumans as trophies, specimens, or picturesque scenery, legitimising extractive violence and dispossession. At the same time, the act of photographing itself performed a masculine script of mastery, projecting ideals of virility, control, and domination over both humans and nonhumans. When revisited in light of contemporary imaginaries of nonhuman insurgency – most prominently the so-called “orca uprising” in the Strait of Gibraltar – these photographs reveal silenced counter-histories of multispecies entanglement. Hunting scenes, depictions of dead animals, and orchestrated landscapes capture not only imperial desires to master life itself, but also a specifically gendered performance of colonial authority. Paying attention to detail – the gestures of animals resisting capture, the unpredictability of terrain, the strain visible in coerced labour – opens space to reimagine these photographs as records not solely of domination but of fragile masculinities and unruly ecologies. This paper argues for a decolonial ecocritical lens that connects colonial ecocide, cultural genocide, and today’s crises of multispecies justice, while also interrogating the gendered structures that underpinned imperial visual regimes. By situating the Mecklenburg expedition’s archive within current debates on nonhuman defiance, the analysis highlights how visual culture sustained fantasies of conquest and virility, yet also destabilised them. In dialogue with the environmental humanities, the paper explores how rereading colonial photographs through postcolonial and masculinity studies might foster interspecies solidarities and alternative alliances that resist entrenched binaries, contributing to broader imaginaries of care, coexistence, and more-than-human justice.

Bio: Dr Diana Miryong Natermann is a historian of modern European and African history with a focus on colonialism, postcolonial theory, and visual culture. She

earned her Ph.D. at the European University Institute in Florence and has held positions at Leiden University and Universität Hamburg and, since 2024, is Lecturer in the History of International Relations at Utrecht University. Her research addresses colonial photography, whiteness studies, gender, restitution debates, and cultural genocide. Natermann also serves on the Scientific Advisory Board of LawArt and on the Dutch Afrikamuseum reopening committee, connecting scholarship with public debate on colonial legacies.

Alexandra Böhm (Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg), “Rewilding and Imaginations of the Primitive: Towards Convivial Communities with the More-than-Human World”

Abstract: Over the past years, the notion of ‘rewilding’ seems to have become one of the main guides to salvation from our contemporary ecological crises. This is true for whole ecosystems but also for the civilized self that seeks to escape from the stained, degraded and denaturalized life of urban consumer society. Returning to an innate, natural and often primitive condition promises the recovery of a new balance between human and nature as well as an intimate connection of the ‘rewilded’ self to nature. By doing so, it takes up the wilderness idea, a specific American concept of untouched and unspoiled nature dating back to John Muir’s first preservation endeavours at the end of the 19th century. Wilderness or a primitive pre-human condition is often seen as the proper target of conservation or restoration efforts. However, it is also an extremely controversial notion, which – as critics claim – has significant gendered and racial overtones (e.g. Marti Kheel). For William Cronon, in turn, notions of untouched, pristine nature reproduce the dangerous dualism between culture and nature, setting humans apart from nonhuman nature, while neglecting the historical and geopolitical aspects of the concept.

In my talk, I will focus on the history and theory of the concept of ‘rewilding’ and will then turn to recent literary, philosophical and media treatments of rewilding – to Lisa Eder’s film *Der wilde Wald* (2021) on the Bavarian National Park, Charlotte McConaghy’s *Once there were Wolves* (2021), Nastassja Martin’s *Croire aux fauves* (2020) and Baptiste Morizot’s *Sur la Piste Animale* (2018). My readings will focus on how these representations of rewilding and primitive nature treat the complex relationship between culture and nature. I will then oppose the problems and conflicts that arise in these texts by restoring wilderness to ecosystems and to the self to alternative conceptions that argue for convivial communities with the more-than-human world instead of returning to troubled concepts of wilderness that reaffirm anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism.

Bio: PD Dr. Alexandra Böhm is currently working at the German National Museum in Nuremberg, Leibniz Research Museum for cultural history. She is also a senior lecturer at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, where she teaches courses in the Environmental Humanities. She recently curated the special exhibition „Hello Nature – how best to live with you?“ at the GNM (books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/catalog/book/1478) and is now starting a new project on biodiversity and notions of the wild in art and literature since 1600. She has published widely on topics of Cultural and Literary Animal Studies and Ecocriticism.

5.h Imagining More-than-Human Communities through Migration [preformed panel]

Room: JK15a 1.01

Chair: Neha Vora

Speakers:

- Neha Vora (American University of Sharjah), “Pets in Motion: Transnational Adoption, Commodification, and Nonhuman Politics of Mobility in the Gulf”
- Rachel Lewis (George Mason University), “Feline Animacies: Multispecies Ecologies of Desire and Belonging in Skiathos”
- Jessica Maufort (Université libre de Bruxelles), “Trespassing Territories: Boundaries and Multispecies Co-habitation in Canadian and Māori Fiction”

Panel description: This panel puts migration studies into conversation with multispecies approaches, asking how attention to human–nonhuman entanglements can help decolonize the field, expand its epistemic horizons, and foster solidarities across borders. While migration studies have illuminated the intensification of displacement, bordering, and racialized precarity under global capitalism, their frameworks often remain tethered to Eurocentric, state-centric, and human exceptionalist logics. Meanwhile, multispecies ethnography has foregrounded how plants, animals, fungi, and other beings move, adapt, and co-produce worlds alongside humans—challenging dominant narratives of mobility and belonging. By placing these literatures in dialog, we seek to rethink how movement is conceptualized, whose mobilities are rendered visible, and how shared trajectories across species are shaped by colonial histories and contemporary inequalities.

The panel will bring together scholars whose work engages with communities and environments in which migration is experienced as inherently multispecies: from animal companions crossing borders with migrants, to animal voluntourism, to the entangled mobilities of plants and people in transnational migrant networks amidst climate change, to activist and care practices that forge alternative kinships across species. Our guiding questions include: how do infrastructures of mobility (transport systems, securitized borders, tourism, surveillance, markets) govern multispecies lives? How do race, class, gender, and coloniality shape not only human migration but also its multispecies dimensions? What affordances do plants and animals have in these contexts? In other words, how do they affect, shape and resist human intentions and designs? What solidarities, forms of care, and activist practices emerge when migration is reframed beyond the human?

This panel offers an anthropological take on the migratory mobilities of humans and nonhumans that lay bare the Eurocentric and anthropocentric biases situated in institutions and people alike— opening space for epistemic innovation and for imagining multispecies futures of dignity and coexistence.

Neha Vora (American University of Sharjah), “Pets in Motion: Transnational Adoption, Commodification, and Nonhuman Politics of Mobility in the Gulf”

Abstract: This paper examines the transnational circulations of nonhuman animals in and through the Arabian Peninsula, focusing on how pet life in the United Arab Emirates is shaped by overlapping ecologies of mobility, commodification, and care. While migration to the Gulf has typically been narrated through frameworks of labor extraction and economic precarity, I foreground the parallel and intersecting movements of animals—particularly cats—to complicate dominant accounts of migration.

Animals enter and exit the UAE through diverse pathways: as companions accompanying migrants, as high-value commodities produced by international breeders, as feral ship stowaways who have become urban residents, and as “rescued” beings exported abroad for imagined better lives. The Arabian Mau exemplifies these layered trajectories—once dismissed as a local stray, it is now rebranded as a valuable commodity breed in Europe. At the same time, transnational rescue networks, often driven by Western imaginaries of “proper” animal care, reproduce hierarchies of value that echo colonial and classed assumptions about the Global South.

Through ethnographic research with rescuers, veterinarians, and pet owners in the UAE, I show how animals become entangled in both global consumer cultures—pet cafés, boutique breeders, luxury services—and in community-based care practices that contest abandonment and precarity. By tracing these multispecies mobilities, the paper highlights how animals unsettle dominant narratives of migration, exposing uneven landscapes of value, care, and vulnerability while also raising questions about solidarity, justice, and the nonhuman politics of mobility in the Gulf and beyond.

Bio: Neha Vora is Professor of Anthropology in the Department of International Studies at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Her research and teaching interests include diasporas and migration, citizenship, globalized higher education, gender, liberalism, political economy, and human-nonhuman encounters, primarily in the Arabian Peninsula region. She is the author of *Impossible Citizens: Dubai’s Indian Diaspora* (Duke University Press, 2013) and *Teach for Arabia: American Universities, Liberalism, and Transnational Qatar* (Stanford University Press, 2018). Her current research project approaches Dubai and other UAE cities as sites of entangled precarities between humans and nonhumans, paying particular attention to informal stray cat care by immigrants and the place-making practices of cats themselves.

Rachel Lewis (George Mason University), “Feline Animacies: Multispecies Ecologies of Desire and Belonging in Skiathos”

Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between tourism and animal welfare in Greece. While tourism is typically conceptualized in terms of human infrastructures of mobility, commodification and desire, I seek to examine the impact of tourism on interspecies care and solidarity in the Greek island of Skiathos. Through feminist multispecies ethnographic research and participant observation at Skiathos Cats Welfare Association, I discuss how pleasure and desire—both for cats and for Skiathos—drives migration to and from the island. In Skiathos, romantic and intimate encounters between tourist volunteers and permanent residents are frequently mediated via the social world of cat culture. However, while tourists and volunteers

often arrive in Skiathos with neocolonial and capitalist assumptions about the need for the domestication of street cat populations in Greece, their perceptions are repeatedly challenged in the face of the complexities of feline agency with which they are confronted. By contesting neoliberal narratives of pet ownership and animal rescue, I discuss the extent to which feline animacies can function as a form of decolonial pedagogy, one that encourages us to view tourism in terms of the preservation of multispecies habitats and that teaches us how to better acknowledge the land rights of all beings.

Jessica Maufort (Université libre de Bruxelles), “Trespassing Territories: Boundaries and Multispecies Co-habitation in Canadian and Māori Fiction”

Abstract: This paper compares the different approaches to multispecies resilience, co-existence, and solidarity deployed in *Fifteen Dogs* (2015) by Canadian writer André Alexis and *Sky Dancer* (2003) by Māori writer Witi Ihimaera. Both works blur the lines between human and animal species, albeit from different angles: Alexis’ novel follows the fate of fifteen dogs which two gods endow with “human intelligence” as a way to test the latter’s link with happiness. In Ihimaera’s *Sky Dancer*, two human protagonists transform into birds. They then travel back to the creation of Aotearoa New Zealand in order to assist the landbirds in their fight against an invasion by voracious seabirds. At first glance, comparing these two works may seem futile: Alexis resorts to the apologue, a moral fable featuring anthropomorphised animals, and explores issues of animal sentience, self-consciousness, and communication skills. Such philosophical reflections about animal and human “natures” are almost absent from Ihimaera’s plot-driven novel. Combining elements from magic realism, science fiction, Māori creation stories, and the Bible, this adventure story deals with both natural and cultural/social endangerment, such as birds’ extinction, deforestation, limited Māori land sovereignty, and substance abuse. Yet, despite their narratological/aesthetic, thematic, and cultural differences, these two novels help us nuance our understanding of species boundaries. While they shed light on animals and humans as “companion species” bound in co-constitutive, co-emerging kinship relations (Haraway), such inter- and intra-species co-habitation also implies respecting some delimitations of roles and territories. Alexis and Ihimaera remind us that effective cross-species communication and solidarity need not dismiss the “boundary” concept. In doing so, the authors resist any simplistic, utopian vision of a multispecies biosphere devoid of borders, structure, and conflict. In *Fifteen Dogs* and *Sky Dancer*, humans and more-than-humans may trespass on the layers of contact zones just enough to dispel rigid hierarchies and to spark a multispecies ethics of care that engages with limits and each species’ “significant otherness” (Haraway).

Bio: Jessica Maufort is a Lecturer at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium. She specialises in postcolonial ecocriticism, ecopoetics, and magic realism, examined in Indigenous and non-Indigenous fiction from Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Canada. Related research interests include trauma and affect studies, zoocriticism, material ecocriticism, ecospirituality, and econarratology. Jessica recently co-edited a volume on post-apartheid South African drama (Brill, 2020), a two-part special issue on “New Scholarship” in *The Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies* (2021), and a special issue on “Voicing Absences/Presences in a Damaged World” in *English Text Construction* (2022).

5.i Nature Bites Back — Paper Jam II

Room: JK15a 1.05

Chair: Kate Huber

Speakers:

- Graduate students in the OSL Seminar “Nature Bites Back: Nonhuman Resistance in the Contemporary Cultural Imagination”
 - Maureen Knol and Tessa van Kats, “Eco-weird and the Gothic”
 - Emily Sait, Minke Douma
 - Lily Bakker, and Nadia Ramirez

Session 6

6.a Some We Love, Some We Hate: Why It’s So Hard to Care for Invasive Species [preformed panel]

Room: JK2–3 1.10

Chair: Eline Tabak

Speakers:

- Henry Strivens, “Fascist Squirrels and Dog Whistles: The Exploitation of Ecological Issues in Far-Right British Politics”
- Katie Kung (LMU Munich), “Killing for Conservation: Invasive Species, Taxonomical Impulse, and Storying a Predator-Free New Zealand”
- Vincent Bijlman (Utrecht University), “The Ruddy Duck Invasion in Europe: The Construction of a Threat to Global Biodiversity in the Late 20th Century”

Panel description: Cane toads in Australia, rapa whelks in the Black Sea, and grey squirrels in the United Kingdom are only a few among thousands of species labelled invasive. Defined as introduced organisms that cause ecological or economic harm, they are also presented as one of the greatest threats to global biodiversity. Yet our responses to them reveal striking inconsistencies. Some species are vilified and exterminated, others tolerated, and a few even cherished—exposing the contingent logics that underpin how we decide which lives to kill, which to save, and which to ignore.

In the public domain, invasive species frequently accrue meanings that reach beyond ecology. They may be cast as symbolic threats to national integrity or cultural identity,

while endangered natives are made to embody an idealised, often nostalgic, natural heritage. Such narratives raise questions about what counts as native or invasive, whether ecosystems were ever stable, and how ecological concerns become entangled with political and cultural anxieties.

This panel gathers perspectives from history, heritage studies, STS, and the environmental humanities to interrogate the shifting stories told about invasive species from the eighteenth century to the present. By tracing how ideas of invasion have been constructed, contested, and mobilised across time, while acknowledging their impacts, we aim to illuminate the dynamic relationships between changing ecological realities and the shifting cultural narratives where practices of care and eradication are negotiated, justified and contested.

Henry Strivens, “Fascist Squirrels and Dog Whistles: The Exploitation of Ecological Issues in Far-Right British Politics”

Abstract: Following the introduction of grey squirrels to the British Isles in the 19th Century, the population of the native red squirrel has dramatically declined. The greys proved to be much better at adapting to a rapidly changing industrial landscape, outperforming the reds and becoming the dominant squirrel species across the majority of the country. This narrative is currently being exploited by the fascist British nationalist party, the Patriotic Alternative, and their associated brand Towler’s Tea. The red squirrel’s vulnerability and prominent place in popular culture have made them a dog whistle for the ‘great replacement’ theory that argues white Britons are being ‘replaced’ through immigration. The party has included them across branding, policy, and merchandise, even producing a series of children’s books focused on the animals, exploiting an ecological issue to promote hateful rhetoric.

In this paper, I apply my adaption of the conceptual framework of (animal) authorised heritage discourse to discuss the significant role that seemingly innocuous species can have for pushing ideological agendas. I will be looking at some of the media produced by the Patriotic Alternative to examine how and why animal narratives can be so politically effective. This research is particularly relevant in the current political climate, ultimately suggesting that there is no way to apoliticise the narratives and bodies of invasive species, so it becomes necessary to re-claim and re-frame them to deal with the ecological issue while challenging fascist politics.

Bio: Henry Strivens is an independent researcher, recently graduating from the University of York’s Public History MA. They also have a BA in history from the University of York. Their research interests centre around the involvement of animals within heritage spaces and media, with a focus on breeds and species that are thus far underrepresented in historical narratives. They have also worked with community interest companies such as *Uncomfortable Heritage* in their mission to highlight untold human histories in UK cities.

Katie Kung (LMU Munich), “Killing for Conservation: Invasive Species, Taxonomical Impulse, and Storying a Predator-Free New Zealand”

Abstract: What kinds of stories are told, and what forms of life are organised, to make a predator-free future both thinkable and inevitable? Predator Free 2050

(PF2050) is an initiative launched by the Aotearoa New Zealand government in 2016 to eradicate three groups of ‘invasive introduced predators’: mustelids, rats and possums by mid-century to restore native biodiversity. This paper examines how PF2050 mobilises history and taxonomy to enact a particular necropolitical regime, in which certain lives are rendered killable so others may flourish. I argue that the PF2050 discourse produces the idea of ‘the predator’ by realigning Aotearoa’s biodiversity decline to the category ‘predators’ and the ecological process of predation as the key threat, through myth-making—leveraging a pre-invasion historicity—and science-making—developing the three predators into a killable scientific property. The emphasis on ‘predators’ is historically and technologically contingent and stems from the need to create familiarity to flatten nuances.

This paper reflects on the category of ‘invasives’ and the other names and categories under which organisms are gathered, managed and condemned. In the case of Aotearoa, its long biogeographical isolation and unique evolutionary history amplify and simplify debates around ‘invasive species’, such as the possibility of defining nativeness and the justification for preferences for native species over others. The examination of PF2050 shows that it does not make the violent rhetoric of invasion and eradication less conceptually and practically troubled. Ultimately, I suggest that conservation pasts and futures can be imagined and understood otherwise: less through multispecies enmity and more through care, less on tallying the dead and more on reducing the need to kill.

Bio: Katie Kung is a PhD candidate and lecturer in Environmental Humanities, at the Rachel Carson Center in LMU Munich. She has a BA from Hong Kong University and Durham University, and an MA from the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Her doctoral project, titled ‘Troubled Care: Invasive Species in a More-than-Human World’, researches the intersection of multispecies studies and STS. She is also an editor in the Environmental Humanities platform *Environmental History Now*.

Vincent Bijlman (Utrecht University), “The Ruddy Duck Invasion in Europe: The Construction of a Threat to Global Biodiversity in the Late 20th Century”

Abstract: This paper explores how the ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) became the object of local and international control efforts in Europe and was framed as an invasive threat to global biodiversity. ‘Native’ in the United States, the ruddy duck was first introduced into a wildfowl park in the United Kingdom by international conservationist and wildfowl enthusiast Peter Scott. However, the duck escaped and established a feral population in the United Kingdom in the late 1950s. By the 1980s, it became clear that the population would increase exponentially in the following years and spread to continental Europe. This population expansion and movement were of concern to members of international conservation networks, who were worried by the occurrence of hybridisation between the ruddy duck and the globally threatened white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), another stiff-tailed duck species that resided in the Spanish Doñana National Park. The concern for biodiversity loss led to various large-scale studies and culling programmes throughout Europe, most prominently in the United Kingdom and Spain.

My paper will analyse how a variety of internationally connected stakeholders negotiated an intricate set of practices to contain the perceived threat. I argue that

since the late 1980s, new groups of animals, such as the ruddy duck, have been problematized as invasive threats to global biodiversity. As such, I will use the case of the ruddy duck to study the transborder dynamics of invasive species science and control in the late twentieth century to dissect how the Ruddy Duck is constructed as a global biodiversity threat.

Bio: Vincent Bijman is an environmental historian and lecturer in political history at Utrecht University. In his PhD, part of the project *Moving Animals: A History of Science, Media and Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Maastricht University), he studied the history of animal invasions, and in particular the role of scientification in how moving ‘problem animals’ are understood. The ruddy duck is one of his dissertation case studies.

6.b Post-/Decolonial Ecofiction

Room: JK2-3 1.15

Chair: Mia You

Speakers:

- Demi Wilton (Birmingham City University), “Interspecies Conquest and Interplanetary Displacement in Claire G. Coleman’s *Terra Nullius*”
- Caitlin MacDonald (University of Cape Town), “Mouthful of Mud: Unearthing the Anthropocene in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*”
- Lisa Cristea (TU Braunschweig), “Sonic Sensescapes and Multispecies Entanglements in Indian English Short Stories”

Demi Wilton (Birmingham City University), “Interspecies Conquest and Interplanetary Displacement in Claire G. Coleman’s *Terra Nullius*”

Abstract: This paper examines Claire G. Coleman’s *Terra Nullius* (2017) through the lens of multispecies hierarchies and entanglements, situating the novel within ongoing debates on colonial violence and climate change-related displacement in First Nations Australia. Coleman’s science fiction allegory reimagines British colonization as an alien invasion by ‘Toads’, amphibian settlers whose ecological precarity drives interplanetary conquest. Drawing upon the cane toad’s destructive introduction into Australia as both biological and symbolic colonizer, the novel employs human and nonhuman histories of invasion as a troubling backdrop to present-day climate threat.

By recasting Indigenous histories of forced removal within a speculative future, *Terra Nullius* critiques the violent logic of the modern capitalist world-system, in which populations deemed surplus have been consigned to sacrifice zones both historically and in our present moment. Yet, the Toads’ vulnerability to drought and ecological collapse also destabilizes colonial hierarchies, highlighting the limits of extractive expansion and the shared exposure of colonizers and colonized to climate breakdown. Taking this into account, this paper argues that *Terra Nullius* stages a critical intervention in debates on climate justice by foregrounding the historic endurance of subjugated communities to the kinds of conditions that climate change threatens to enact globally. In this, Coleman’s novel hinges on the timely and pressing question:

will climate change exacerbate or mitigate inequality between First Nations and non-First Nations communities in Australia? Reflecting on this, the paper questions the fluid nature of both human and nonhuman hierarchies in an increasingly hostile world.

Bio: Demi Wilton is a Lecturer in English Literature at Birmingham City University. Her research is particularly concerned with representations of climate change, migration, and knowledge production in twenty-first century world-literature. She is currently working on her first monograph, *Environmental Displacement and World-Literature*. Demi has served as an elected committee member for the Association of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland (ASLE-UKI) since June 2021, most recently as the association's Diversity Officer.

Ceren Özgüler (Hacettepe University), "Animals, Ecologies, and Colonial Legacies: Rethinking Nature in Le Clézio's Novels"

Abstract: J. M. G. Le Clézio, Nobel Prize-winning French author, is widely recognized for his literary engagement with colonial histories, cross-cultural encounters, and the search for alternative ways of inhabiting the world. This paper explores the ecological imagination in his novels, focusing on the ways in which his narratives articulate what can be termed "multispecies resilience" within a (de)colonial ecological framework. In Le Clézio's works, the relationship between humans and nature is never one-directional; rather, nature emerges as a living presence in its own right: animals, the wind, the stones, and even silence acquire subject-like agency, revealing an ecological multiplicity that challenges anthropocentric perspectives. In *Désert* (1980); animals appear in the relationship between the nomads of the Sahara and their environment. Herds, camels, and desert birds embody a vital continuity between humans and non-human life. Animals are not merely decorative: they symbolize a way of surviving in harmony with a harsh landscape. In *La Guerre* (1970); although this novel is more violent and experimental, Le Clézio stages images of wounded or hunted animals, functioning as metaphors for the vulnerability of all living beings in a modern world saturated with violence. Overall, animals in Le Clézio's work are not just background figures: they express an ecological cosmology, a way of inhabiting the world where humans are only one species among others. Le Clézio often associates them with childhood, innocence, and a lost connection to the living world, which situates his novels within an ecofictional perspective. Equally important is Le Clézio's engagement with Indigenous ecologies, where nature is conceived not as a resource but as a shared living environment for humans, animals, and plants alike. By foregrounding this interconnected worldview, Le Clézio idealizes an alternative model of ecological coexistence, resisting the destructive and homogenizing forces of modernity and colonial exploitation.

Bio: In 2007, I began working as a Research Assistant at the Department of French Language and Literature at Hacettepe University. In 2009, I completed my master's thesis titled "City Writing in Louis Aragon's Parisian Peasant and İlhan Berk's Galata and Pera" at the same department. In 2016, I completed my doctoral thesis titled "Interculturalism in the Novels of J.-M.G. Le Clézio" at the Department of French Language and Literature. I was appointed as an assistant professor.

Caitlin MacDonald (University of Cape Town), “Mouthful of Mud: Unearthing the Anthropocene in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*”

Abstract: Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* (1974) enters into the well-worn language of the South African pastoral, assembling its players: the outstretched flatness of the Transvaal farm, the white master, the obedient herdsman, questions of inheritance, the collapse of territorial and sexual conquest. Yet, at every turn, the idyll of white dominion unravels; its cohesion is infected by the presence of an anonymous black corpse found at the perimeter of the farm. The discovery of the body, its shallow burial by police, exhumation by a torrent of rain, and eventual funeral mark the passing of time in a novel with an often slippery, dream-like chronology. The landscape participates in the unsettling of the pastoral genre, as rot, decay, animal infanticide, drought, and flood pervade the narrative. Examining the ambivalent symbol of burial in the text, and in the broader tradition of the *plaasroman*, this analysis will read the novel as a gradual funeral rite – both an elegy for the unnamed corpse and a portent of the unseating of white dominion over the land. Drawing on Kathryn Yusoff’s *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* and J.M Coetzee’s notion of “dream topographies”, this paper argues that the novel stages the embedded fates of exploited earth and the subaltern, revealing the already-haunted textscape of the pastoral mode and the possibilities of more-than-human solidarity between the land and the landless.

Bio: Caitlin MacDonald is a writer and Master’s student in the Environmental Humanities South programme at the University of Cape Town. Her research concerns the intertwined politics of land, language, and species loss implicated in the Bleek and Lloyd archive, which houses records of extinct and endangered languages of Southern African hunter-gatherers. She also co-authored *Clay Formes: Contemporary Clay from South Africa*, a book of lyric essays that surveys the work of thirty significant artists.

Lisa Cristea (TU Braunschweig), “Sonic Sensescapes and Multispecies Entanglements in Indianbea English Short Stories”

Abstract: Textual representations of sound and their particular aesthetics have often been neglected in literary studies. Informed by my Phd research on the affordances of aesthetic forms in Indian English eco-fiction, this paper argues for vivid sonic sensescapes as a narrative strategy to negotiate multispecies entanglements in urban spaces as exemplified by two short stories, “Listen: A Memoir” (2021) by writer Priya Sarukkai Chabria and “The Songs that Humanity Lost Reluctantly to Dolphins” (2021) by Shweta Taneja.

In the first story, “Listen: A Memoir” by Sarukkai Chabria, a Tamil child living in a futuristic Indian city learns to communicate with the more-than-human ‘environment’ by listening to the ‘songs’ of animals, oceans and stars. In the second story, “The Songs that Humanity Lost Reluctantly to Dolphins” by Taneja, human children from all over the world are ‘infected’ by the songs of dolphins, transforming the children’s bodies and rewiring their brains towards more empathy for the more-than-human world, much to the fear of the adults. Drawing on New Materialist concepts such as Iovino and Oppermann’s *storied matter*, Alaimo’s *trans-corporeality* and econarratological notions, such as Caracciolo’s *multiscalarity* and *interdependency*, I

argue that both stories evoke what Brandon LaBelle has called ‘sonic agency’, a relational understanding of sound that aims to disturb hegemonic power structures and foster empathetic and emancipatory “acoustics of assembly and resistance” (*Sonic Agency* 4).

By investigating the aesthetics of the sonic sensescapes in both short stories, I argue that sounds in the two stories are intimately bound up with embodied memory and work to unsettle rigid (post)human/more-than-human boundaries by ‘reactivating’ human’s recognition of their trans-corporeal enmeshment with the more-than-human world. Thus, these two short stories imagine an ethics of human/more-than-human entanglement and kinship based on sonic affects, thereby appealing towards more just futures of multispecies coexistence.

Bio: After graduating in English Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Lisa Cristea is now a research assistant and doctoral candidate in the interdisciplinary project OPEN_Cultures at TU Braunschweig. Her research interests include the Environmental Humanities, Postcolonial Studies and Inter- and Transdisciplinarity. In her research project, she is concerned with formal and aesthetic reconfigurations of materiality in Indian English fiction and their affective affordances, on which she has already presented a paper at the German Association for the Study of English.

6.c Animal Advocacy

Room: JK2–3 1.16

Chair: Salomé Lopes Coelho

Speakers:

- Alexa Weik von Mossner (University of Klagenfurt), “Between Resistance and Resilience: Nonhuman Agency and Sentience in Farm Sanctuary Documentaries”
- Claudia Alonso-Recarte (University of Valencia), “The Contingencies of ‘If’ in Animal Advocacy Documentary Film”
- Brycchan Carey (Northumbria University), “The Robin, the Bullfinch, the Starling, and the Chough: Eighteenth-Century Cagebirds and the Origins of the English Anticruelty Movement”
- Laura Brown (Northumbria University), “Challenging the ‘Voiceless Animal’: Talking Dogs and Animal Spirituality in Early-Twentieth-Century Anti-Vivisection Campaigns”

Alexa Weik von Mossner (University of Klagenfurt), “Between Resistance and Resilience: Nonhuman Agency and Sentience in Farm Sanctuary Documentaries”

Abstract: Like many forms of vegan advocacy, documentaries focusing on the lives of farmed animals often foreground victimization and suffering. Films like *Earthlings* (2005), *Dominion* (2008), *Eating Animals* (2017), and *Milked* (2021) rely on graphic images from feeding lots and slaughterhouses to shock viewers into an

understanding of the moral implications of torturing and killing animals for human consumption. Andrea Arnold's portrayal of a dairy cow in *Cow* (2021) is no less disturbing because the objectified lives of farmed animals are marked by an absence of agency and dominated by pain. As important as these films are in revealing the realities of the meat and dairy industry, their ability to cue not only empathy, compassion and pity in viewers but also strong negative emotions such as empathetic pain, horror, and disgust, along with guilt and shame, makes them difficult to watch and easily evaded.

My paper considers two films that offer a different kind of emotional engagement with farmed animals: Marc Pierschel's *Butenland* (Germany, 2020) chronicles the transformation of an organic dairy farm into a "cow retirement home" and portrays formerly farmed animals with their personality quirks and predilections. Shot on sixteen sanctuaries throughout the US, Logan Call and Naomi Sophia Call's *Called to Rescue* (2016) presents "a compassionate, non-violent story" about rescued farm animals who are changing human lives and beliefs. Building on research in vegan studies, affective ecocriticism, and empirical ecocriticism, the paper combines readings of the films with the presentation of empirical reception data from a screening in Germany. It will show that both films foreground notions of peace, solidarity, and agency as they cue viewers to viscerally *share* the complex emotional lives of their human and nonhuman protagonists, arguing that the engagement with such films can help decolonize our relationships with farmed animals and promote multispecies justice and resilience.

Bio: Alexa Weik von Mossner is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Klagenfurt and currently directs the transdisciplinary "Visions of Sustainability" project at the University of Freiburg. Her research explores the intersections of econarratology, empirical ecocriticism, and environmental literature and film. She is the author of *Growing Hope* (Cambridge UP 2025), *Cosmopolitan Minds* (U of Texas P, 2014) and *Affective Ecologies* (Ohio State UP, 2017) as well as the (co-)editor of several books and journal issues.

Claudia Alonso-Recarte (University of Valencia), "The Contingencies of 'If' in Animal Advocacy Documentary Film"

Abstract: The so-called "renaissance" of documentary film at the start of the twenty-first century also kicked off the production of nonfiction films with an animal rights agenda. Heir to the films that animal activists began to showcase and distribute in the 1980s, this new body of documentaries (arguably launched by Shaun Monson's *Earthlings* [2005]), reframed animal ethics in the digital sphere of the post 9/11 era, absorbing discourses of urgency associated with the fear of the Anthropocene, extinction, extermination and capitalism. The vast number of films produced by activists, organizations or concerned individuals in the last twenty-five years are dire proof of the extent to which filmmakers have explored the plasticity of nonfiction to address the multiple forms in which nonhuman animal sentience, language and consciousness can be audio-visually represented, exploring rhetorics and narratives that engage with their embodied experience of the world and that foreground their subjectivity as reason enough to inspire empathy and compassion. This presentation addresses how the subgenre of animal advocacy documentary formalistically, structurally and narratively engages with the representation of alternative modes of

interspecies co-existence as models of resistance to the noxious speciesism that fuels the Anthropocene. My aim is to examine techniques employed by filmmakers that stretch beyond the anthropocentrism proper of documentary modes (as described by Bill Nichols) and that offer viewers glimpses of “what could be” by representing instances of rescues, interventions and sanctuary spaces where the encounter with nonhuman animal otherness implodes capitalist ideology. In particular, I examine portions of the “observational mode” in Jusep Moreno’s *When Pigs Escape* (2022) and consider how duration and length of shot impact the representation of nonhuman animal subjectivity, enabling exegeses of resistance and defiance. These approaches stand as alternatives to the more “expository”-oriented modes that operate in string-of-interview documentaries revolving around biographies of nonhuman individuals that retaliate and “bite back” (as for instance in Gabriella Cowperthwaite’s *Blackfish* [2013] or James Marsh’s *Project Nim* [2011]).

Bio: Claudia Alonso-Recarte is Associate Professor in English at the Universitat de València. She specializes in (Critical) Animal Studies and is the founder and director of the research group “Animals in Literary and Visual Cultures” (CULIVIAN). She is the principal investigator of a research project titled “The Ethics and Aesthetics of Animal Advocacy Documentary Film in the Twenty-first Century” (CIAICO/2023/046). She recently edited a collection of essays titled *Género y sexualidad en el documental animalista y de naturaleza* (2025), published by Tirant lo Blanch.

Brycchan Carey (Northumbria University), “The Robin, the Bullfinch, the Starling, and the Chough: Eighteenth-Century Cagebirds and the Origins of the English Anticruelty Movement”

Abstract: “A robin redbreast in a cage”, wrote William Blake in 1803, “Puts all Heaven in a rage”. If Heaven was raging, Earth was not. Caged birds were widespread in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and could be found in all the nation’s homes, from the richest to the poorest. Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence” presents the caged robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) as the first in a series of captured or hunted animals whose treatment disturbs, in his view, the natural order ordained by God. Blake’s robin can be seen in the context of the early anticruelty movement. From the mid-eighteenth century, it was increasingly asserted that animals had both sentience and rights that could be protected. In England, the first animal protection bills were presented to Parliament in 1800 and 1802, the immediate context to Blake’s poem. But discussion of caged birds in English literature was widespread. In addition to Blake’s robin, this paper examines three literary caged birds: William Borlase’s tame Cornish chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), which formed the subject of scientific observations in his 1758 *Natural History of Cornwall*; Laurence Sterne’s caged starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) which, by speaking the words “I can’t get out”, becomes a metaphor for imprisonment in Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768); and William Cowper’s poem “On the Death of Mrs. Throckmorton’s Bullfinch” (1789) in which the poet uses a mock-heroic register to satirically dramatize the death of a caged bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) at the paws of the family cat. Between them, I argue, these texts attest to the closeness of human-avian relations in the eighteenth century but also show how, through acts both of companionship and of resistance, birds drew attention to their own sentience and suffering and were thereby active participants in the origins of the British anticruelty movement.

Bio: Brycchan Carey is Professor of Literature, Culture, and History at Northumbria University. He has written or edited nine books and more than 50 articles on topics including literature and empire, natural history, and the cultural history of animal rights. His most recent books are *Birds in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reason, Emotion, and Ornithology, 1700–1840* (Palgrave, 2020) and *The Unnatural Trade: Slavery, Abolition, and Environmental Writing, 1650–1807* (Yale, 2024). Carey was previously the president and is now treasurer of ASLE-UKI.

Laura Brown (Northumbria University), “Challenging the ‘Voiceless Animal’: Talking Dogs and Animal Spirituality in Early-Twentieth-Century Anti-Vivisection Campaigns”

Abstract: ‘Gifted’ animals – such as the Elberfeld Horses – became a popular phenomenon in early twentieth century Europe, both in the field of experimental psychology but also in the public imagination. It did not take long for some animal protection campaigners to see the potential for the inclusion of such case studies in their anti-cruelty arguments. This paper explores how anti-vivisectionists leveraged well-known cases of animal communication and intelligence to argue for the compassionate treatment of nonhuman animals, on the basis that they demonstrated a level of consciousness akin to that of human beings.

To trace these claims about the spiritual status of nonhuman animals, the paper utilises books and periodicals published between 1920 and 1940 by those who promoted such beliefs. The French Spiritualist Carita Borderieux, who wrote about the moral consequences of the intelligence displayed by her dog, Zou, serves as one case study. So too do Lizzy Lind-af-Hageby and Nina Douglas-Hamilton (founders of the Animal Defence and Anti-Vivisection Society and vocal Spiritualists) whose interest in Kuno von Schwertberg – a talking dachshund from Weimar – was widely documented.

The paper considers how – despite being rooted in an earnest belief in their latent spiritual, emotional and intellectual potential of all animals – anti-vivisection arguments which showcased talking dogs were labelled ‘anthropomorphic’ and ‘sentimental’. Despite these disparaging responses, the paper argues that the belief in inter-species communication during the first half of the twentieth century represents an early attempt to disrupt the rhetoric which presents animals as ‘helpless’ and ‘voiceless’ in animal protection campaigns.

Bio: I am an RDF funded PhD student in History at Northumbria University, studying Spiritualism's influence on early 20th century animal advocacy. I received my BA in Photography from the Arts University Bournemouth, and later was awarded my MRes in History at Northumbria University. My wider research interests include the place of emotion and sentimentality in animal advocacy (particularly expressions of grief in response to animal death and suffering), and stereotypes of eccentricity and crankery.

6.d Resistant Trees and Unruly Landscapes

Room: JK2–3 1.17

Chair: Lena Pfeifer

Speakers:

- Stefano Rozzoni (University of Bergamo), “Resistant Trees in Simon Armitage’s (Eco)Poems (2019–2024)”
- Rosamund Paice (Northumbria University), “‘How many stately oaks must buy a fan?’ Brian Fairfax’s rewriting of Andrew Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’”
- Soolmaz Moeini, “Modern Agriculture, Multispecies (In)Justice, and Environmental Migration in Mahmoud Dowlatabadi’s Rural Narratives”
- Michael Markwick, “Shadowtime Ecologies: Caterpillars, Bones, and Unstable Landscapes in the Painterly Imagination”

Stefano Rozzoni (University of Bergamo), “Resistant Trees in Simon Armitage’s (Eco)Poems (2019–2024)”

Abstract: Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom since 2019, has established himself as a leading contemporary voice attentive to the textures of everyday life while engaging persistently with urgent cultural and political questions, including the ecological crisis. As he has stated, “When I became Poet Laureate in 2019, I made the environment a cornerstone of my work and my activities” (Thomas 2023, n.p.). This declaration underscores the centrality of environmental concerns within his recent oeuvre, where themes of nature, justice, and survival are consistently foregrounded. In particular, Armitage’s poetry develops a deliberate and often uncompromising ecopoetics, in which trees emerge as emblematic figures of resilience and resistance.

This paper examines a selection of poems published between 2019 and 2024 in which trees occupy a central and recurring role. Through my paper I argue that these texts show how the trope of the tree functions as a site of resistance, offering both a record of the natural world’s persistence in the face of ecological crisis and a model of ethical relationality that extends the scope of justice beyond the human domain.

The discussion will focus on three poems: ‘Plum Tree Among the Skyscrapers’ (2024), included in a National Trust commissioned anthology title *Blossomise*, situates a solitary tree in the artificial environment of a city square, where the tree resists erasure by outshining its surroundings, staging a performance of survival and vitality that disrupts urban monotony and affirms nature’s enduring presence. ‘The Holy Land’ (2023), first published on Instagram in response to the deliberate felling of a historic sycamore, frames the act as an injustice against both cultural memory and the environment, while navigating questions of guilt, responsibility, and reparation, proposing a form of restorative justice enacted through remembrance, renewal, and the generative potential of nature itself. Finally, ‘Fugitives’ (2019), composed for the celebration of National Landscapes,

presents ancient trees as witnesses and custodians of the land: By granting them “citizenship,” the poem imagines an ecological polity where trees assert rights and responsibilities, embodying a vision of justice that encompasses the non-human world.

Bio: Stefano Rozzoni, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Researcher in Literary and Cultural Studies and Lecturer at the University of Bergamo, Italy. His transdisciplinary work—spanning literature, economics, and posthuman philosophy—focuses on environmental narratives in Anglophone literature and culture across diverse periods, media, and themes, including the pastoral. He is the Principal Investigator of the research network *N.E.S.T. Research Network. Narratives in Environmental and Sustainable Transitions*, funded by the European Union (NextGenerationEU) and the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MUR). Since 2024, he has also served as a member of the Advisory Board of EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment).

Rosamund Paice (Northumbria University), “‘How many stately oaks must buy a fan?’ Brian Fairfax’s rewriting of Andrew Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’”

Abstract: In his celebrated country house poem, ‘Upon Appleton House’ (1651), Andrew Marvell depicted Mary Fairfax as the genius loci of her father’s estate grounds. The sole-surviving child of the parliamentarian commander Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612–1671), Marvell’s Mary is ‘like a sprig of Mistleto’ that ‘On the Fairfacian Oak does grow’. Twenty years later, Thomas died and left his estate to Mary and the end of the 1670s, Nun Appleton’s oaks were being cut down by Marvell’s ‘Blest Nymph’.

Mary’s act of deforestation is recorded in poems by her second cousin, Brian Fairfax, ‘The Vocal Oak’ and ‘The Oak’s Petition’ (1679), in which Brian ventriloquises an oak planted by her father. This paper will show how Brian’s poems rework Marvell’s motifs to mount an attack on the ‘Mistletoe’ in the voice of a ‘Fairfacian Oak’ — an oak planted by and representing Thomas and his environmental care.

Where Marvell’s poem characterises Mary-as-mistletoe as the ‘sacred Bud’ of the Druids, in Brian’s poem Mary’s parasitic ‘Luxury and Pride’ fuels the estate’s deforestation. Marvell’s mower ‘unknowing, carves the Rail’ and ‘does his stroke detest’; cut grass and sliced bird lie silent. Brian overwrites the act of haymaking for animal feed (Marvell’s mowers) with the felling of trees to fund a lavish lifestyle. He describes an axe wielded so keenly that ‘Oakes are mown down like grass at its command’ and his anthropomorphised oak is passionately vocal in its petition for the deforestation to cease.

Bio: Dr Rosamund (Rosie) Paice is a Visiting Scholar at Northumbria University and Membership Secretary for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (UK and Ireland). Her monograph *Milton’s Loves* was published by Routledge in 2023 and she is currently working on a monograph on writing green and blue spaces in British country estates, entitled *Lost Ground: Literature and the British Estate, 1639–1742*.

Soolmaz Moeini, “Modern Agriculture, Multispecies (In)Justice, and Environmental Migration in Mahmoud Dowlatabadi’s Rural Narratives”

Abstract:

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi’s rural novels, particularly *The Stories of Baba Sobhan* and *The Missing Soluch*, capture the violent transformation of Iranian village life under the pressure of modern agricultural reforms and mechanized farming. While framed as progress, these policies fracture long-standing relationships between humans, animals, and land. Dowlatabadi’s narratives dramatize how the introduction of tractors, state-led irrigation projects, and market-oriented production displace not only peasants but also animals, traditional crops, and ecological rhythms. This paper argues that Dowlatabadi’s fiction offers a powerful case study of multispecies (in)justice. Environmental injustice in these texts operates on multiple levels: marginalized rural families face economic precarity and forced migration; animals and livestock are rendered obsolete and often destroyed; soils and watersheds are depleted under extractive farming practices. By foregrounding these entangled losses, Dowlatabadi moves beyond a strictly human-centered critique to register the suffering and resistance of more-than-human actors. Placing Dowlatabadi in dialogue with frameworks of Environmental Justice and Multispecies Justice, I show how his novels anticipate contemporary concerns about ecological displacement and climate migration. His texts reveal how agrarian modernization produces both human and nonhuman refugees—families leaving their ancestral lands, animals discarded as useless, and landscapes abandoned to erosion. By situating Dowlatabadi’s rural narratives within global ecocritical debates, this paper demonstrates how Persian literature articulates a distinctly local yet transnational vision of environmental injustice. It suggests that literary studies can expose the multispecies dimensions of forced migration, making visible the shared vulnerabilities of humans, animals, and ecosystems in the Anthropocene.

Bio: Dr. Soolmaz Moeini is a researcher and scholar specializing in environmental criticism and comparative studies within Persian literature. Based in Strasbourg, she holds a PhD in Persian literature and has published books and academic articles on ecological and environmental themes. An experienced peer reviewer, Dr. Moeini actively contributes to advancing scholarship at the intersection of literature, environmental studies, and comparative analysis.

Michael Markwick, “Shadowtime Ecologies: Caterpillars, Bones, and Unstable Landscapes in the Painterly Imagination”

Abstract: For my recent solo presentation, *Mum, do caterpillars go to heaven?* (C U AT SADKA, Kraków, 2025), I developed a new body of abstract, visceral paintings that stage co-being across human and nonhuman life. These works include both skeletal figures from my ongoing *Earth Being* series and shifting landscapes, anchored by a new large painting of a caterpillar ascending toward a white sun. In these paintings, landscapes waver between solidity and disappearance, caught in cycles of violence, transformation, and renewal. A punk-like apocalyptic choreography unfolds: a skeletal figure embraces a tree; a burning sun hovers over withering plants; water rises as branches snap and regenerate. A caterpillar—innocent yet defiant—emerges as a figure of shared vulnerability and fragile hope. The titular question, *Do caterpillars go to heaven?*, employs anthropomorphism

strategically—not to humanize the nonhuman, but to expose the limits of human categories and to imagine transcendence as more-than-human.

Rather than reducing the nonhuman to backdrop or allegory, these paintings bring caterpillars, trees, bones, and suns into precarious co-existence with us. They ask what futures we can imagine once we accept our lives as already entangled with nonhuman others. This vision draws on *shadowtime*—a temporal drift in which the future feels stalled and the past refuses to recede. Here, death and rebirth remain inseparable: a caterpillar soars, bones merge with trees, and even amid collapse, renewal pushes upward.

The process-based materiality—digging, cutting, drilling, scraping, and layering paint with silk, sand, straw, and wood—shapes the painterly presence of the works. In doing so, the imagery brushes against ongoing debates on multispecies (in)justice, spectral ecologies, and the imagining of other-than-human communities.

In this way, painting becomes a language for shadowtime ecologies: an imagined revelatory vision in which interwoven realities collapse and renew, holding space for empathy and hope.

Bio: Michael Markwick is a Berlin-based painter whose work explores ecological entanglements and post-human realities through process-driven material practices. His recent exhibitions have been at venues such as Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn und Taxis (Bregenz), Kunstforum Montafon (Schruns), and C U AT SADKA (Kraków). A member of the EASLCE, he brings the perspective of a full-time artistic practice to ecocritical dialogue, presenting his work internationally in galleries, universities, and cultural institutions.

6.e Urban Infrastructures of Hope [performed panel]

Room: JK2–3 1.18

Chair: Hanna Hoorenman

Speakers:

- Claudia Hirtenfelder (Vienna University), “Animals as Urban Problems and Solutions”
- Carlo Salzani ([University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna](#)), “Legal Infrastructures and Ideological Dismantling: The Case of Street Dogs in southern Italy, Turkey, and India”
- Konstantin Deininger, “No Future? Hope and Practical Utopias for Urban Animals”

Panel description: As a political practice, hope plays a fundamental role in motivating change and imagining alternative futures. However, in order to carry out its work, it requires a kind of conceptual and material “scaffolding” to which it can anchor itself. This panel discusses the necessity and function of material and conceptual infrastructures in creating a more just multispecies city. Such infrastructures facilitate, support and orient cohabitation and “development,” as recognized in Goal 9 of the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals, for example. However, these goals rarely mention nonhuman animals or non-anthropocentric objectives. A more-than-human city requires infrastructures that reflect urban animals’ “right to the city,” and that go far beyond these unambitious proposals. In

this panel we explore the intersection of infrastructure and hope to shed light on the lives of urban animals. Both hope and infrastructure share a common thread: possibility. They are both concerned with what is possible and with finding ways to cultivate those possibilities. While hope is more often associated with psychological states and political imaginaries, infrastructure is more often associated with material interventions. Hope considers what might be possible, whereas infrastructure creates possibilities, not all of which are intended. For example, roads are regularly built to enhance human mobility and create connections between existing infrastructure, but they also disrupt the habitats and movements of other animals. In this panel, we argue that engaging with the relationship between hope and infrastructure is a vital step toward envisioning and realizing more just urban futures for animals, taking seriously into account the interplay between political, social, and physical infrastructure.

Claudia Hirtenfelder (Vienna University), “Animals as Urban Problems and Solutions”

Abstract: Infrastructure can loosely be understood as something that creates possibilities. A road allows for the possibility to move in a different direction, and a lamppost the possibility for light. But not all infrastructure is physical, a great deal of what makes life in cities possible is centered on political and social infrastructure. While laws, policies, and social norms are often thought of as limiting, they can also be understood as creating possibilities. These possibilities not only create opportunities, foreclosures, and frustrations for humans, but they shape urban animal lives too. Whether urban infrastructure is made available to aid or frustrate urban animals is greatly shaped by how they are defined in policy and positioned in imaginaries. For example, animals have become intelligible differently as problems and solutions in urban policy related to sustainable development and health. In some cities, animals like bats and stray dogs are understood as vectors of disease that need to be policed to maintain public health, and in other cities, animals like mussels and bees are being framed as nature-based solutions that can help to mitigate the effects of climate change. This presentation broadly considers what opportunities and foreclosures are created for animals as subjects when they are constituted as solutions and problems in urban policy and design. It further ponders how the positioning of animals as urban subjects and the practice of animal-aided design might foster more inclusive multispecies imaginaries than can contribute toward the development of conceptual and material infrastructure that might be necessary to create more just and hopeful futures.

Bio: Claudia Towne Hirtenfelder is an animal studies scholar and podcaster. She has a PhD in geography from Queen’s University Canada and is interested in the urban animal histories and futures. Claudia is also the founder and host of *The Animal Turn* and *Animal Highlight* podcasts and a member and co-founder of the Vienna Animal Studies Group. She is currently an external lecturer in Change Management at the Vienna University of Economics and Business.

Carlo Salzani (University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna), “Legal Infrastructures and Ideological Dismantling: The Case of Street Dogs in southern Italy, Turkey, and India”

Abstract: New, hopeful urban ecologies require adequate legal infrastructures that allow a more-than-human city to flourish by granting all its members, both human and non-human, the “right to the city.” Currently, this right is typically denied to non-human residents (as well as certain “undesirable” human groups), but the situation of street dogs provides an example of an alternative approach. Although street dogs have been “eliminated,” both legally and physically, from Western cities since the late nineteenth century, they persist in many different forms in most other parts of the world. In fact, they constitute the majority of the world’s dog population, accounting for 75–85% according to some estimates. This paper examines three cases in which street dogs’ right to inhabit city streets has been accepted and sanctioned by law, opening up new possibilities for coexistence: southern Italy, Turkey and India. Even on the periphery of the Western paradigm, as in southern Italy, some local legal concessions have granted street dogs a special status as “neighborhood dogs.” This status differentiates them from “homed” dogs, which are the property of their owners, and allows them to live without an owner. The cases in Turkey and India are even more interesting. Important legal reforms in 2004 and 2001, respectively, granted street dogs important and inviolable rights. These “rights,” like the ancient city walls, are what constitutes the necessary infrastructure and framework that enable multispecies cohabitation. However, these rights, as well as the dogs’ presence, are frequently attacked and highly contested issues. In Italy, legal protection is local, fragile and arbitrary. In Turkey, a new law in 2024 and in India, a new order by the Delhi Supreme Court in 2025 attempted to overturn the protections of earlier legislation. This paper will discuss the limitations and potential of these legal infrastructures.

Bio: Carlo Salzani (Carlo.Salzani@vetmeduni.ac.at) is a research fellow at the Messerli Research Institute in Vienna, where he leads the project “Animal Suffering and the Politics of Shame,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). He is also a member and co-founder of the Vienna Animal Studies Group. His latest book, *Animals, Empathy, and Anthropomorphism: The Limits of Imagination*, was published in open access by Palgrave Macmillan in 2025.

Konstantin Deininger, “No Future? Hope and Practical Utopias for Urban Animals”

Abstract: Climate change and biodiversity loss undermine the very conditions of life for humans and animals alike, including those who share our cities. In this light, hopelessness about animals’ future seems natural, exacerbated by a gap between scientific knowledge and its uptake in practice. However, hopelessness may lead to inaction and apathy. The question, then, is how to foster moral motivation and political engagement that recognize animals as beings with their own futures. This paper argues that these responses call for utopian thinking. It develops Mary Midgley’s idea of practical utopia and applies it to urban animals, framing it as a mode of moral imagination grounded in material conditions and oriented toward better multispecies futures. Here, hope functions as an affective stance that combines a desire for a good outcome with the belief in its possibility. Rather than passive or naïve, hope is a stance of trust, even when the outcome is uncertain. Importantly, hope is directed to another’s futurity: it recognizes them as beings with their own futures and commits us to building environments in which their possibilities of flourishing can be realized. Although cities have historically been designed as

human spaces, they have also become environments where many species adapt and thrive. These multispecies realities provide the ground for reimagining cities through practical utopias. The paper illustrates this through the Austrian Bat Station in Vienna, a volunteer-run rehabilitation center that cares for hundreds of injured or orphaned bats each year. Through emergency care, rehabilitation, and the long-term care of disabled bats, the station exemplifies how material and social infrastructures can embody hope: they render wild urban animals perceptible as co-habitants and invite a future-oriented perspective on their flourishing. The paper argues that infrastructures of hope are indispensable for reimagining cities as multispecies spaces and for motivating political engagement.

Bio: Konstantin Deininger (konstantin.deininger@vetmeduni.ac.at) studied ethics and philosophy in Munich and Vienna and is a member and co-founder of the Vienna Animal Studies Group. He taught at the University of Vienna, the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, and Munich University of Applied Sciences. In his PhD, he developed a practice-oriented approach to animal ethics, drawing inspiration from Cora Diamond and Wittgenstein's later philosophy. His research focuses primarily on animal ethics and animal philosophy but also extends to applied ethics, including topics such as biomedical innovations such as organoids and veterinary ethics.

6.f Convivial Communities III

Room: JK2–3 2.17

Chair: Tessel Janse

Speakers:

- Leonardo Bruno Barbosa (Juiz de Fora Federal University), “The Elusive Encounter: Sound, Image, and the Media of Nonhuman Resistance in Birdwatching Ethnography”
- Claudia Cristalli (Tilburg University), “Christ Stopped at Eboli: A Multispecies Ethnography”
- Swad Bruneel (University of Liège), “Ethnography in farm animal sanctuaries”
- Elana Neil, “Tiny 5 Safari”

Leonardo Bruno Barbosa (Juiz de Fora Federal University), “The Elusive Encounter: Sound, Image, and the Media of Nonhuman Resistance in Birdwatching Ethnography”

Abstract: This paper explores how endangered birds — particularly the *Columbina cyanopis*, a species once believed to be extinct and recently rediscovered in a small region of Brazil — become agents of media-specific resistance. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with birdwatchers and nature photographers in Botumirim (MG), I examine how sound, image, and digital circulation produce not only records of encounters but also aesthetic, political, and affective regimes of value. The bird's partial visibility and rare vocalizations generate a multisensory experience shaped by techniques of listening, camouflage, and photographic capture — practices that, while aiming to reveal the bird, often highlight its elusiveness. I argue that this elusiveness is not mere absence, but a form of nonhuman resistance: a mode of

inhabiting the world that resists full representation and becomes meaningful through media specificity. Recordings, photographs, and platforms like WikiAves are not neutral tools; they structure the very conditions of the encounter and the value attributed to it. By engaging with Isabelle Stengers' concept of 'intrusion' and Anna Tsing's notion of 'latent commons,' I suggest that the aesthetics of endangered life — fragile, mediated, sometimes barely perceptible — invite not just contemplation but situated responses to ecological devastation.

Bio: Leonardo Bruno Barbosa is a PhD candidate in Social Sciences at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil) and a visiting researcher at the NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal (2024–2025), where he worked with naturalist archives at the National Museum of Natural History. His research lies at the intersection of anthropology, ecology, and visual media, focusing on multispecies relations, endangered birds, and image-making practices. He is a member of the Visual Anthropology and Documentary Lab (LAVIDOC/UFJF).

Claudia Cristalli (Tilburg University), “Christ Stopped at Eboli: A Multispecies Ethnography”

Abstract: *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945/2014) is the best-known work by Carlo Levi. The book was an important political and philosophical reference in rethinking, after World War II, the so-called “Southern Question.” My paper argues that the book is also a form of multispecies autoethnography, and that it offers interesting insights for our contemporary discussions of animal politics (Meijer 2019; Piazzesi 2023). Confined in Lucania, a historical region that included Basilicata, northern Calabria up to the Pollino mount, and parts of Apulia and Campania, Levi learns to live in an unfamiliar world whose inhabitants—the peasants—are “other” precisely in the sense of not being fully human. While animality is used to dehumanize, it is also a “double nature” and “double birth” that, explicitly lived and talked about by the peasants, contrasts the easy dichotomies of modern rational thinking: a woman was the daughter of a cow *and* of a human mother, and “no-one found any contradiction” in that fact (Levi 2014: 98).

Levi's respectful attitude towards the magic world of his neighbours culminates in the hope for a democratic future that does not rely on the genetically engineered kinship of Donna Haraway's *Camille* (2016: 143-168), but rather on the liberation of the animal within the human as the first step for the institution of a self-determining society. For Levi, fascism is “petty-bourgeois statism” (222), that is, a conception of the State based on the idea of a society of isolated individuals, private citizens. What Levi learns from the more-than-human peasants is that “the individual is not a closed entity, but a relationship, the site of all relationships” (223). In the end, only a society or an organization capable of embracing the relational individuality of the individual-animal can overcome fascism.

Bio: Claudia Cristalli is post-doctoral researcher at Tilburg University. She has worked on the history of psychology and American pragmatism. Her interest in animal studies started while teaching history and philosophy of medicine. She is fascinated by how animal and literature studies allow to decentre the anthropocentric gaze of much philosophical discourse, especially when talking about epistemology and politics.

Swad Bruneel (University of Liège), “Ethnography in farm animal sanctuaries”

Abstract: My ethnographic fieldwork consists in exploring how humans and animals live together in three animal farm sanctuaries. I volunteered for three months at one of them, three weeks at another, and so far only three days at the last one, so my fieldwork is still ongoing. I was surprised to find that everywhere I went, the animals were deeply dependent on humans, who control a large part of their lives. I did not immediately see how ingeniously they adapt to us and transform their habitats into living spaces. Using ethnographic vignettes, I intend to describe multi-specific interactions that account for the complex social organisation made up of each individuals' strategies and personalities in a particular sanctuary. This leads me to propose a reflection on dependence, agency and power relations. These notions are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they form a breeding ground in which dense networks of attachments are forged : linking humans, the environment and animals. Furthermore, within the three sanctuaries, mutual attachment is not experienced and thought of in the same way by the humans in charge. The prevailing discourse reflects a continuing distinction between humans and animals and a revisited naturalism in which humans are no longer superior beings, but immoral beings. For some, animals are pure, innocent beings, while for others they are condemned, having become too dependent on humans. These different positions are attempts to build another possible path, all while inheriting a suffocating world and history. In the sanctuaries, between debt, guilt and responsibility, humans and animals are nevertheless forging paths to live together differently.

Bio: As a second-year doctoral student at the University of Liège, I am participating in the HACAB project (Human Animal Collective Assisting the Biosphere) by conducting a multi-sited ethnography on three farm animal sanctuaries. Initiated by Bruno Frère and Véronique Servais, and in collaboration with Sam Ducourant and Andréa Petitt, this project explores the prospects for emancipation and joint solidarity between humans and animals in the Anthropocene era. In 2019, I completed a master's degree at EHESS focusing on the artistic practices of the orangutans at the Menagerie de Paris.

Elana Neil (University of Salzburg), “Tiny 5 Safari”

Abstract: In 2018, I planned to present at two ecocriticism related conferences in Europe, one in Spain and one in Glasgow. My goal was to travel by train. When I realized how complicated that train journey is, I decided to turn it into a summer on the rails. I had inherited money after my dad's death and thus had the luxury to spend it on all things related to my PhD in environmental humanities which I had been working on since 2009. One of the conference lecturers was an academic who took a successful detour into arts. She inspired me: Each train station I had to change trains or wait for connections, I intuitively took pictures of insects or tiny critters. That was the summer tiny5safari started, that was the summer Northern Europe experienced an unprecedented heatwave for two months. My days at the beaches in Stockholm, Sweden felt like Spain. That was the summer Greta Thunberg emerged. That summer rail journey of 70 days, 70, that's how old my dad a passionate organic farmer was during his last year in the Alps, turned into an exploration of more-than-human-city, reimagining pests & toxic landscapes, non-human personhood etc. My mind-boggling encounters with our tiny co-inhabitants

turned into an ongoing love story: tiny5safari. Ever since I have written countless short stories, taken numerous photos, created public art performances, art shows, conducted art&science events, met Anne Tsing, lectured for scientists for future, started a podcast for scientist for future “Nebelhorn” where I interviewed Scott Slovic and Ursula Heise. Looking down teaches us so much about the grand scale of things. I have not finished my PhD yet, but I have learned a lot along my tiny5safari journey. Come and marvel with me and maybe fall in love with spiders & co as well.

Bio: Elana Neil is the artist name of a PhD student who has been exploring ecocriticism since 2005. She studied at Stellenbosh University South Africa, explored ecocriticism in India under the kind guidance of Nirmal Selvamony, completed a Fulbright FLTA, has been an on-and-off member of ASLE since 2005 and became a member of the Harvard Club Germany, after Lawrence Buell inspired her and invited her to Harvard to research “collective environmental subconsciousness” at Widner Library in 2008.

6.g Theorizing Water Resistance [Roundtable]

Room: JK2–3 2.18

Chair: Ifor Duncan

Speakers:

- Marrigje Paijmans (University of Amsterdam)
- Julée Al-Bayaty de Ridder (University of Amsterdam)
- Rosanne van der Voet (Leiden University)
- Guðrún í Jákupsstovu (University of the Faroe Islands)

Roundtable description:

How does water as a nonhuman mediating agent and a living multispecies ecosystem resist manifestations of human exceptionalism, capitalism and the Anthropocene? Considering floods, droughts, and declining drinking water quality from a new-materialist perspective, disturbed water-human relations come to the fore as a main indicator of environmental crisis. We reflect on ways in which water balances, confronts and resists exploitative human interventions in the environment. We invite three speakers to briefly reflect on this question:

1. How does water manifest in human and more-than-human patterns of thinking and expression? In times of rising sea levels and environmental crisis, Rosanne van der Voet’s research in creative writing examines how we must reckon with the complex trajectories of water that resist human forgetting. How does the paradox of water as nurturing on the one hand and as menacing on the other evolve as we explore multispecies creative expressions?
2. What does it mean to talk about “oceanic territory”? Drawing on the case of the Faroe Islands, a tiny country in landmass but considered a ‘large ocean nation’ due to its oceanic jurisdiction and reliance on maritime industries, Guðrún í Jákupsstovu considers the paradoxical boundary between the framing of watery spaces as resources and territories and the ocean’s ultimate uninhabitability for humans. This

highlights how watery spaces resist and unsettle ideas of human mastery and exceptionalism.

3. How can thinking with water invite alternative epistemologies? Julée Al-Bayaty de Ridder explores watery concepts like murkiness and brackishness in order to address water's implication in colonial and extractivist attitudes. By recognizing that water is never neutral, but always mixed with other materials and histories, concepts like murkiness and brackishness offer material-discursive encounters with water.

4. How does the omnipresence of per-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water resist existing narratives of human-water relationships? Marrigje Paijmans investigates intersections of ecology and postcolonialism in the Neerlandophone space through the lens of water and, currently, PFAS. In this paper she will depart from the specific chemical qualities of PFAS – persistence, toxicity, bioaccumulation and imperceptibility – to reflect on the 'intrusion' of PFAS in our bodies due to our need for drinking water.

The aim of the roundtable is to probe existing theoretical frameworks for water research in literary and cultural studies, and to consider novel perspectives on nonhuman aquatic resistance. How can we approach water resistance from different disciplines, ranging from environmental, (post)colonial, socio-political, historical to scientific perspectives?

Finally, we consider this roundtable an opportunity for establishing a European network for research on water conflicts and aquatic multispecies interactions in the Humanities.

Bios:

Marrigje Paijmans is Assistant Professor in Dutch Literature at the University of Amsterdam. She has published on early modern colonialism in e.g. *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* and *Cultural History*, and co-edited *Slavery in the Cultural Imagination: Debates, Silences, and Dissent in the Neerlandophone Space* (2025) for AUP. Currently, she started a project at the intersection of ecology and colonialism: 'How to Welcome the Water: Re-Imagining Water through Marginalised Stories in the Neerlandophone Space.'

Julée Al-Bayaty de Ridder is a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam. Her project 'Re-imagining Water through Marginalized Stories in the Neerlandophone Space' explores contemporary literature, oral history, performance and arts in the Netherlands and former Dutch colonial spaces in Brazil and Indonesia. This project aims to pose resistance to the age-old Dutch narrative of a 'battle against the water' in order to make space for alternative encounters that reimagine ways of living with water. She has published on extinction cascades in *Interconnections: Journal of Posthumanism*.

Rosanne van der Voet is Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities and Urban Studies at Leiden University. Her research spans across various interdisciplinary strands of the blue humanities, with particular focus on more-than-human experience of environmental issues, creative-critical approaches and applied ecocritical analysis of new nature-based water management projects in urban and industrial environments in the Netherlands. Her first book, *Literary Storytelling and the Environmental Crisis of the Oceans: Jellyfish Poetics* is forthcoming in the Routledge environmental humanities series.

Guðrun í Jákupsstovu is Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of the Faroe Islands. Her research explores literary representations of islands, coastlines and oceans and focuses particularly on how these settings produce particular experiences of time in relation to climate change and the Anthropocene. She has published on Anthropocene temporalities in the journal *Nordeuropaforum* and is currently working on the manuscript for her first monograph. In the coming time, she will be turning her attention towards Faroese oceanic literature and how these can be read together with contemporary geopolitical tensions in the North Atlantic Ocean.

6.h Embodied Performance and Wounded Landscapes

Room: JK2–3 0.19

Chair: Susanne Knittel

Speakers:

- Kitija Balcare (University of Latvia), “Ecotheatre as In-Between Space: Wounded Landscapes and Traps within Them”
- Agnė Narušytė (Vilnius Academy of Arts), “The Inflamed Body as a Future Landscape: Installation by the Artistic Duo Pakui Hardware and Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė in Venice Biennale”
- Wondersearch (Saskia Stehouwer, Issy Clarke and Harry Wels (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)), “The Dandy Explorer: A Decolonial Multispecies Posse”

Kitija Balcare (University of Latvia), “Ecotheatre as In-Between Space: Wounded Landscapes and Traps within Them”

Abstract: Art, including theatre, plays a crucial role in reimagining the values essential for addressing ecological crisis (Chaudhuri, 1994). The spatial dimension of the performing arts provides a unique platform for exploring the interconnectedness of species. In this context, embodied experience – through the body, its expressions, and materiality – becomes central. Ecotheatre, as a space of collective imagination, integrates the environment – whether real or imagined – into the narrative, assigning it an active, dynamic role (Balcare, 2022). This approach is receptive to posthumanism perspectives that emphasize interconnectivity, transcending human-centred boundaries. Posthumanism challenges the human-constructed separations, positioning all beings – human and non-human – within an ongoing corporeal, spatial, and material relationship (Alaimo, 2010, 2023).

The author will examine several examples of ecotheatrical landscapes in Latvian theatre, focusing on the presence of “traps” within them. The analysis will explore memory as a trap, the body as a trap, the museum as a trap, and the destroyed

ecosystem as a trap. Within a posthumanism framework, traps manifest in physical, existential, and ontological forms. In the physical realm, both humans and non-humans can become ensnared in toxic environments or constrained spaces. Existential traps emerge through the interplay of memory and body, while ontological traps arise from human exceptionalism, fostering a sense of separation from non-human world.

As climate change and environmental degradation transform once habitable landscapes into uninhabitable or “wounded landscapes”, they not only exacerbate socio-economic inequalities but also intensify the vulnerability of non-human worlds (Radomska, 2024). Disillusionment arises from the discrepancy between expectation and reality, and it is within this “in-between” space that hope can be reimagined – confronted with unfulfilled potential, the audience is invited to imagine what might have been (Heddon, 2018). In ecotheatre, this “in-between” space becomes a critical site where disillusionment is coupled with the possibility of hope, creating a space for active engagement.

Bio: Kitija Balcare, *Ph. D. (c.)*, researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia, theatre critic, lecturer at Latvian Academy of Culture. Research interests include posthumanism, ecocriticism, with particular focus on ecology and sustainability in the performing arts. Currently researching how ecotheatre evolves as a form of environmental activism. Lead of the scientific committee for project *Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift* (STAGES). Outside academia, worked for a decade as an environmental journalist.

Agnė Narušytė (Vilnius Academy of Arts), “The Inflamed Body as a Future Landscape: Installation by the Artistic Duo Pakui Hardware and Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė in Venice Biennale”

Abstract: The modern fear of socio-political infection created many territories of dreary landscapes, fenced off by barbed wire and marked by surveillance towers guarding skeletal bodies condemned to death. Postmodern thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, on the contrary, saw potential in the mingling with alien elements. Then, our bodies as ‘assemblages’ would be able to mutate and thus adapt to the changing Earth constantly transformed by multiple catastrophes accelerated by the climate change. The Lithuanian artistic duo Pakui Hardware (Neringa Černiauskaitė and Ugnius Gelguda) offered a vision of such abandoned stability and hybrid identities in their installation *Inflammation* at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024.

The historic church Chiesa di Sant’ Antonin, still carrying lost meanings of the past in its décor, was transformed into a future storage of plastic waste. But on those lifeless ‘dunes’, artificial beings emerged. Shining orange glass organs, linked with metal tendons, seemingly managed to use the poisonous matter to create a kind of life. They were also feeding on paintings by Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė created in the 1970s and 1980s. By focusing on heart surgery, on sterile and technological medical environments and their associations with cosmic space, the artist also reflected on the way Soviet occupation dealt with disobedient subjects. The tubes carrying imaginary fluids connected the paintings of the past and the mutating life of the future, feeding the mutated half-artificial organs and transforming the church into a

body. The paper will analyse this system of temporal and spatial, socio-political and corporeal entanglement forming the infected landscape of the future.

Bio: Agnė Narušytė, PhD, is an art critic, curator, researcher, professor at the Vilnius Academy of Art and the editor of the cultural weekly *7 meno dienos*. Her authored books include: *The Aesthetics of Boredom: Lithuanian Photography 1980–1990* (Vilnius Academy of Arts Publishers, 2010), *Lithuanian Photography: 1990–2010* (baltos lankos, 2011), and *Chronometers: Imagining Time or Chronopolitics, Heterochrony and Experiences of Acceleration in Lithuanian Art* (Vilnius Academy of Arts, 2021).

Wondersearch (Saskia Stehouwer, Issy Clarke and Harry Wels (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)), “The Dandy Explorer: A Decolonial Multispecies Posse”

Abstract: We, Wondersearch (Saskia Stehouwer, Issy Clarke and Harry Wels), celebrate the dandelion as a non-human trailblazer reinhabiting deserts of concrete and tarmac. Through images, illustrations, objects, dreams, poetry and prose, this presentation takes you on a journey. We follow the parachuted pioneer from the moment of finding the crack in the pavement and putting down roots, to the time, decades ahead, when this tiny start-up, initiated by dandelion, has transformed into a rich multispecies community. In contrast with many of the human explorations of the past, the dandelion’s ‘exploitation’ of a crack in the pavement does not make the world less liveable for a more-than-human collective. Quite the reverse: the dandelion catalyses a metamorphosis from life-denying concrete and tarmac to life-supporting soil, using the incredible strength of its roots to break open human-made surfaces, all the time offering its own body for food and healing. We approach this tale for our times in a spirit of enchantment, and approach the dandelion, and those who follow its path, as respons-able others demonstrating their resistance and inspiring our wonder by co-creating generative communities in de-animated places.

Bios:

Saskia Stehouwer studied Dutch and English literature at the University of Amsterdam. She has published four volumes of poetry: *wachtkamers* (waiting rooms), which received the prestigious C. Buddingh'-prize; *vrije uitloop* (free range); the compostable poetry book *bindweefsel* (connective tissue) which was handwritten on homemade paper from kitchen scraps and plants; and *wonen op de rand van het wonder* (living on the edge of the miracle). Saskia is one of the founders and core members of the Klimaatdichters (Climate poets).

Isabella Clarke is an independent researcher who has written and presented on non-human animal cultures and relationships with the more-than-human. She is particularly interested in wild Animals and Plants. Her studies embrace the factual and scientific, the theoretical and ethical, and the speculative and imaginal. She works as a broadcast journalist (covering sports) and volunteers for various conservation organizations in her home country, the UK. She is also on the Stewardship Council of The Kerulos Center for Nonviolence.

Harry Wels calls himself a 'multispecies organizational ethnographer' and is Associate Professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the African Studies Centre

Leiden at Leiden University and Extra Ordinary professor at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa at the Department of Women's and Gender Studies. He has this idea that there is no time to waste to keep on studying and reflecting on our multispecies entanglements and share and discuss his thoughts about this with students and colleagues.