

9TH BIENNIAL  
EASLCE CONFERENCE

TRANSCREATIONS:  
CREATURELY ENCOUNTERS AS  
CULTURAL ARTEFACTS



Universidad de Granada  
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Book of abstracts / Libro de resúmenes

Monday / *Lunes* 12

Room / *Aula* 2

16.00 - 17.30

Opening lecture / *Conferencia inaugural*

Chair: Margarita CARRETERO GONZÁLEZ, University of Granada, Spain.

**Margo DEMELLO, Carroll College, USA.**

**Bigfoot, Bunyip and the Beast of Exmoor: What Cryptids Can Tell Us about Human-Animal Relationships.**

Cryptids are, according to the subculture that hunts and studies them, hidden or secret animals, or animals whose existence has not yet been substantiated by science. These animals—and the myths, folktales, and other stories that surround them—are found in all cultures, yet have rarely been taken seriously by scholars, and have, with a handful of exceptions, been completely ignored by animal studies scholars. In fact, it is this tension between the refusal of the scientific community to recognize the existence of cryptids, and the cryptozoological community who fervently believe in that existence, that drives much of cryptozoological research as well as the popular understanding of cryptids.

This talk will attempt to bring an animal studies/anthrozoological lens to the discourses surrounding cryptids. I am not interested in seeking to prove or disprove the existence of cryptids. Instead, I want to focus on alternative ways of seeing and understanding these beings who lurk just outside of the realm of the natural sciences. As an inter- and multidisciplinary field, animal studies is uniquely positioned to better understand creatures whose entire existence stems from the human imagination, and who live in the realm of folklore, myth and legend. Finally, I will argue that this precarious moment in the history (and future) of our planet demands that we pay attention to cryptozoology. As more and more species disappear forever from the planet, cryptozoology may offer alternative ways of thinking about co-existing on this planet.

18.00 - 19.30

Room / *Aula* 4

Humanimal Encounters I

Chair: Claudia ALONSO RECARTE, Universitat de València, Spain.

**Núria MINA-RIERA, University of Lleida, Spain.**

**'How much they can teach us': Lorna Crozier's Portrayal of Non-human Animals.**

Contemporary Canadian writer Lorna Crozier (Swift Current, Saskatchewan, 1948) has advocated for the need to respect non-human nature throughout her oeuvre. Such a claim has been intensified in her later work, in which she urges humans to become environmental stewards, so as to face the challenges of our current planetary crisis. In this line, Crozier's poetic oeuvre underscores the need to protect animals from extinction. As such, the relationship established between the human personae and the animals in her poems is one of kinship. Drawing on literary animal studies theory, the following paper will examine Crozier's depiction of animals in her poems following Shapiro and Copeland's (2005) analysis criteria.

Special emphasis will be placed on some of Crozier's latest publications, namely the poetry collections *The Wild in You* (2015), *God of Shadows* (2018) and *The House the Spirit Builds* (2019), in which Crozier's advocacy for environmental responsibility has become more vocal. It is my contention that Crozier's literary animals, both pets and wild animals, are not anthropomorphized. On the contrary, their animality is both acknowledged and cherished. This is done by means of paying careful attention to the animals' features and behaviour, which often leads to a portrayal of animals as superior beings from which humans can gain great wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, I also contend that Crozier's poetry interrogates the relationship between human and non-human animals as present in both traditional cultural and literary renderings of animals. It is in this sense that, while all kinds of animals are depicted in Crozier's poems, those animals that have been usually despised or considered inferior in Western culture, such as rodents, insects, reptiles, and amphibians, are granted saliency. As such, Crozier's poems – and especially her later work – offer a truly biocentric perspective, according to which all animals are relevant and necessary for our planet's diverse ecosystems.

**Leonor María MARTÍNEZ SERRANO, University of Córdoba, Spain.**

**Annotating the Other-Than-Human World: Elena Johnson's *Field Notes for the Alpine Tundra*.**

A poet, editor and translator based in Vancouver (Canada), Elena Johnson is sensitive to the subtle nuances of the other-than-human world, which she masterfully captured in *Field Notes for the Alpine Tundra*, a book of poems elegantly printed by Gaspereau Press in 2015. The poems collected in *Field Notes* were written and researched while she was the writer-in-residence at a remote ecology research station in the Yukon's Ruby Range mountains, located beyond the Arctic Circle in the tundra. In fact, in 2008, Johnson was invited to spend four weeks with a group of “researchers – of marmots, vegetation, pika and ptarmigan” (43) at their remote encampment in the middle of the alpine tundra, “within the traditional territory of Kluane First Nation” (44). The 27 poems gathered in *Field Notes* record her pristine encounter and conversation with the wilderness, a mobile assemblage of actants ranging from animals and plants to weather and line contours. Aware that “[e]ach landscape leaves its mark — / a scratch at the heart, faint / as a pole-scar on talus” (39), as Johnson writes in “Edge Effect,” each of the poems responds not only to the presence of the animal other (ptarmigan, pika, marmot, fox, caribou, and sandpipers) with a mixture of awe and recognition, but also to the minute details of nature and weather (creeks, flowers, rain, mist, lichen, moss, and mountains) and the routine actions and feelings associated with camp life (e.g., laundry, pre-packaged food, coffee, hiking, map-reading, silence, time passing, solitude, and extreme physical isolation) amidst the vast wilderness, where humans are “the tallest objects / bent by the wind” (15).

More specifically, this paper focuses on those poems that are a transcript of Johnson's encounters with the animal other, ranging from “[m]ammals the width of a hand” (15), through a fox that “fits no guidebook description” (35) and three ptarmigans that “brood on this ridge (13), to “a marmot / shaking the water from its coat” (18) and two caribou silently appearing “antlers-first / from behind a ridge” (31), whilst not forgetting a wide “range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies” (Bennett ix). The poet *qua* naturalist resorts to a wide spectrum of poetic techniques that convey the complexity of her alertness to the other-than-human world and make *Field Notes* an experiment in hybridity that juxtaposes poems, maps, charts, and observation lists. Following Karen Barad's insight that “[matter] is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification” (151), our contention is that Johnson resists with great perspicacity all attempts at anthropomorphisation, while translating the existence of the animal species dwelling in the alpine tundra from the world of what-is to the world of what-means, i.e., from the physicality of reality to the realm of language. The fruits of this interspecies encounter might as well be “interspecies transcreations” or a language-mediated transposition from the world to the page. At any rate, Johnson responds to the vibrancy of matter (Bennett, 2010) and to the singularity of the alpine tundra, a world rich in species other than human, with utmost respect and empathetic resonance. The lesson the poet might ultimately be said to gain is that *homo sapiens* is just a tiny part of a more-than-human world where Stacy Alaimo's notion of transcorporeality, i.e., “human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world” (2), reigns supreme.

Works Cited

Alaimo, S. (2010). *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment and the Material Self*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

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**Michaela FREY, University of Basel, Switzerland.**

**I can't coax this bird to my hand'. Writing Animal-Human Relations in Contemporary Poetry.**

The ecological crisis has led to an increasing poetic interest in the relations of the human and the more-than-human world. However, while writing in the challenging context of the Anthropocene, a main concern of twenty-first century anglophone poetry is to write about *our view on* 'nature' - rather than writing about 'nature' itself. A particular interest of some poets is to ask how the relations between humans and animals can be represented. Hence, my talk focuses on the three poets Kathleen Jamie, Caitríona O'Reilly and Sinéad Morrissey from Britain and Ireland, whose writing traces imagined encounters with the animal world. While writing with different agendas, all three are set against the background of a long tradition of the individual, male nature-poetry. As a response, they explore the encounters between the human and the more-than-human world by questioning the idea of a harmonic dwelling. At the same time, they approach the environmental loss from an intimate and subjective point of view, countering scientific abstraction of the extinction of species in scales, numbers, or graphics. Even if their writing is strongly located into the British and Irish landscape, it is also embedded into the context of the collective, global anthropocentric experience.

A particular focus of all three is a deeply embodied engagement with the environment. This includes the shift from a rather metaphysical idea of writing to a more material poetic exploration. Drawing on Stacy Alaimo's term 'trans-corporeality', which defines the human body as always interconnected with the more-than-human world, I argue that the corporeal experience described by the poetic texts is a way to highlight the relations between the human and animal world. In doing so, the texts are very much aware of the problematic representation of 'nature'. They highlight how human imagination perceives animals' bodies often as a mere placeholder for human desires and expectations; how the animal is considered, both, familiar and strange; and how the human body itself is an organism constituted by many different organisms. Poet Kathleen Jamie, for instance, reflects on the dilemma of writing animal encounters as she observes a bird in "The Dipper": "I can't coax this bird to my hand", she concludes (Jamie 2004, 49). The bird cannot be persuaded into the (writing) hand. Hence, the encounter between human and animal also often entails an uncanny moment revealing the 'illegibility' of 'nature'. These poetic reflections display the mutual vulnerability and precarity of dwelling in a world characterised by the global ecological crisis.

keywords: contemporary poetry; ecopoetry; transcorporeality; ecoprecarity; animal bodies;

### **Room / Aula 5**

#### Narratives of extinction

Chair: Bénédicte MEILLON, University of Perpignan Via Domitia, France.

**Mark CLADIS, Brown University, USA.**

**Du Bois' "The Comet": Cataclysmic Political And Environmental Hope.**

W. E. B. Du Bois used speculative fiction to critique the unjust status quo and to palpably depict alternative, anti-racist democratic politics. Furthermore, with this genre he depicted the more-than-human not as standing outside humanity but as an integral feature of a shared and

interconnected world. After briefly introducing Du Bois' literary radical aesthetics, I focus on his futuristic, speculative fiction, "The Comet"—a short story about a comet that destroys most of humanity. This work enabled Du Bois to present both: a) a vision of a post-racial world and a world in which the agency of the more-than-human is recognized and honored; but also b) the obdurate realities of anti-Black racism and anthropocentrism. The hopeful vision of a post-racial and post-anthropocentric world is situated perilously between the world immediately after the comet's impact and the world's subsequent return to the status quo. Du Bois depicted not only the *injustice* of racism but also the *beauty* of a post-racist, post-anthropocentric world, crafting a utopian futurity that inspires ethical possibility by imagining profound social, political, and environmental transformation.

In 1920, with the publication of "The Comet," among other works, Du Bois anticipated the genre of speculative fiction, a genre that often clarifies present social and ecological harms by situating them in imaginative settings—the fantastical, the futuristic, the magical, the supernatural, the cataclysmic. Speculative fiction presents us *what is* and *what may be*, and the unknown between the two. And it is precisely this tension or uncertainty between the two that has been put to great use by various Black, Indigenous, and Latinx authors.

"The Comet" is an exercise in hope. The form of this hope, however, is an example of hope rooted in death, vulnerability, and despair. After all, the hopeful vision requires a cataclysmic event. Ultimately, the hope is provisional, vulnerable, and "fantastic." This is not to discount the work and practice of such a precarious, dark hope. It is only to make clear that when Du Bois looks to the future, the sight is neither clear nor certain nor optimistic. A post-racist, post-anthropocentric world is far from an inevitable future. "The Comet"—the culminating chapter of *Darkwater*—looks forward, offering a powerful vision of justice and beauty. Yet in the end, the future looks gravely like the present and the past.

**Ida M. OLSEN, Ghent University, Belgium.**

### **Absence of Absence: Exploring Representations of Non-Charismatic Species in Extinction Fiction.**

As the planet's sixth mass species extinction event unfolds, conservation efforts, scientific research, media interest, and cultural representations of biodiversity loss are all subject to a taxonomic bias where only certain types of species are afforded attention. Often this attention will revolve around the so-called charismatic megafauna – iconic animals such as panda bears and tigers that function as "flagship species" in conservation campaigns in order to foster public awareness of biodiversity. The bias is also reflected in fiction and non-fiction writing about extinction, as the affective appeal of mammals, birds, colourful butterflies, and bees elicits more human interest and make these species better suited for narrativization than for instance plants, fungi, amphibians, or algae. Such disregarded critters are severely underrepresented in literary portrayals of species extinctions, even though literature is no doubt uniquely poised to imagine the precarious lives of non-charismatic others. This skewed focus may be problematic in times when cultural awareness can potentially spark conservation measures and when the difference between "preservation and callous disregard" can be determined by "even slight acquaintance" (Tsing 6).

The representational bias that currently characterizes extinction fiction is what this paper seeks to address. My talk will discuss the challenges and obstacles that writers must confront in order to move beyond taxonomic bias and write non-charismatic, non-spectacular species extinction narratives. One such obstacle is having to grapple with the otherness of endangered nonhumans that are radically different from us. What strategies and tools are at writers' disposal to provoke care for these species? If narrative empathy can generate ethical output, how can texts induce emphatic concern for non-charismatic and elusive others, especially when the subject of concern is not an individual suffering animal but rather the more abstract concept of a whole endangered species? In the context of accelerating biodiversity loss, should literary manifestations aim to preserve the alterity of radically different species, or is appropriation necessary or even unavoidable? Thinking with multispecies theory and Levinasian alterity ethics, I will consider two very different novels that might provide some answers to these questions: Orson Scott Card's science fiction novel *Ender's Game* (1985) and Annie Proulx's environmental epic *Barkskins* (2016). These texts, in their engagement with non-charismatic endangered species, can illuminate what a more inclusive multispecies extinction discourse might look like.



**Lena PFEIFER, University of Würzburg, Germany.**

**Fossil(ized) Encounters: Thinking Towards Other-than-Human Life Forms Through Extinction in the Anthropocene.**

Since the early 2000s, the concept of the Anthropocene has raised renewed and acute awareness for the accelerating loss of biodiversity. Recent scholarship and science writing on the Anthropocene (such as Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction*, 2014, and Ursula Heise's *Imagining Extinction*, 2016) have foregrounded its explicit relation to the ongoing mass extinction of other-than-human species. At the same time, its focus on *anthropos* as a geological agent locates humankind in geological or deep time and thereby emphasizes its status as one species amongst many. The growing awareness of degrading ecosystems has been accompanied by a growing interest within the Environmental Humanities in the representation of other-than-human and human life forms as well as their entanglements across planetary scales. One of the primary challenges has been if, and if so how, to evade the anthropocentrism inherent in cultural narratives.

Rather than focusing on narrative and poetic strategies which attempt at defamiliarizing anthropocentric narratives and exploring, as Timothy Clark has it, "less anthropocentric"<sup>1</sup> ways of representing other-than-human life forms and experiences, this paper takes an unexpected – and possibly radical – approach in thinking within the framework of the ultimate extinction of both human and other-than-human life forms. In this context, imagining human extinction fulfills the function of deconstructing the very core of human exceptionalism, which is the human species' capability to evade extinction. In the context of the Anthropocene as a geological concept, a species going extinct also elicits a search for its fossils and remaining traces in the Earth's strata. In reading a selection of fictional as well as nonfictional texts (among them Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction*, 2014, and David Farrier's *Footprints*, 2020), I first of all attempt to shed light on structures of what Stacy Alaimo calls 'trans-corporeality',<sup>2</sup> thereby bringing the material realities of extinction into conversation with their cultural ramifications. Based on the premises and insights of material ecocriticism,<sup>3</sup> I then reason that these fossils ultimately need to be read as cultural artefacts in themselves and as material engagements with agencies beyond the human. In conclusion, I argue that the shared materiality of these fossils, against the backdrop of shared extinction and as cultural artefacts, allows for rethinking the intersections of other-than-human and human life forms.

1. Clark, Timothy, *The Value of Ecocriticism* Cambridge UP, 2019, p. 67

2. Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana UP, 2010.

3. For instance, Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann, editors. *Material Ecocriticism*. Indiana UP, 2014.

**Room / Aula 7**

Hybridity, vulnerability and affective permeability

Chair: Vanessa ROLDÁN ROMERO, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

**Felicity SMITH, University of Granada, Spain.**

**'Myth made Flesh. Creature lifted from a story book. Siren she is.': Spectrality, Hybridity and Deconstructing Boundaries in Jan Carson's *The Fire Starters*.**

Northern Irish writer Jan Carson's award-winning novel *The Fire Starters* (2019) depicts a fictitious Belfast 16 years after the signing of the peace treaty. The novel begins in flames and ends in flooding. The story is comprised of parallel accounts of two fathers, both concerned, though in different ways, about the inheritance of past trauma and violence. Sammy's son is the notorious 'Firestarter', calling on the youths of Belfast to wreak havoc on the city, whilst Jonathon's new-born daughter is born to a siren that emerged from the River Lagan. The two stories are regularly interrupted by those of the so-called 'unfortunate children' of Belfast - a girl with wings, a boy with wheels for feet, another who sees the future in every liquid surface. This paper approaches the figure of the siren in the story from the perspective of Derridean hauntology with the aim of revealing how, in deconstructing the ontological

binaries of present/absent, human/non-human and living/dead, the novel holds the potential to encourage the reader to converse with the ecological spectres which haunt our current narratives. The spectre, according to Derrida, is a deconstructive force which, by moving across borders, disrupts any sense of certainty, both within and beyond the text itself. It is described as the absolute Other, which looms somewhere between life and death, being and non-being. Set in Belfast, *The Fire Starters* is undoubtedly concerned with both real and symbolic borders, but Carson's convincing magic realism extends this concern with boundary lines beyond the anthropocentric. The siren has come from the river (nature) into a city that is burning (culture), and utterly ruptures the sense of space, time and understanding of a weary, lonesome doctor (the male voice of human rationality). The voice of the siren is as seductive as it is disruptive, and it is the becoming of this voice that Jonathon fears so deeply in his hybrid daughter, so much so that he plans to cut out her tongue in order that she be forever silenced. Hope, however, is found in the novel through Jonathon's personal transformation as the narrative unfolds, encouraged by his encounters with the winged, flightless girl, and ultimately resulting in his decision not to cut the tongue of his daughter. The hybridity of the 'unfortunate children' allows for a further blurring of boundaries, whilst also igniting a sense of shared vulnerabilities. This paper concludes that an analysis of *The Fire Starters* from the perspective of hauntology, and the consequent dissolution of binaries, reveals the productive potentialities of the literary imagination not to silence other-than-human spectres, but to converse with them, uncovering the entanglement of the ecological and the political, and of human and nonhuman agency in a posthuman world.

**Małgorzata KOWALCZE, Pedagogical University of Krakow, Institute of English Studies, Poland.**

**'We found a clearing in the wood, and walked along the clearing, in a world made green'.  
The Multidimensional Agency of Nature in Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane***

Neil Gaiman's novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is a story of a 7-year-old boy's terrifying encounter with an ancient monster who finds its way to the Earth. The boy is supported by three female neighbours who wield power over both human and non-human beings and whose mysterious activities leave him in awe. Gaiman brilliantly depicts child mentality, with plethora of horrors, a sense of defenceless, dependence on magical powers of unknown origin or obscurity of one's surroundings. However, the author does more than that, as the novel establishes one's coexistence with nature as one of the most important factors in human formative years.

Magic realism, the novel makes most of, aptly accounts for all these aspects of the universe which we find hard to understand, and thus often feel uneasy about. The abundant sensual imagery, with which the author depicts the protagonist's reality, makes a point of the importance of one's corporeal experience. It does take a child's emotionality – or rather a child's 'bodymentality' – to notice nature's subjectivity and its agentive power which goes far beyond mechanical physicochemical processes: not only can an ocean fit inside a bucket, but it needs to be convinced to cooperate. The protagonist is initially "rock-solid unshakably certain, that [he is] the most important thing in creation". Only later does he discover how multidimensional the universe is and that there are certain inconspicuous non-human powers actively influencing the world.

This paper focuses on the main character's unique perception of the world, which is presented as possessing the uncanny power to directly affect human emotions, stimulate their imagination, and indeed forge the very identity of an individual. Gaiman does not fall for the patronising and simplistic idealization of nature, so typical of pastoral or idyllic writing. Treated with respect and humility, nature is portrayed in a variety of its hypostases which generate in the protagonists emotions ranging from utmost pleasure to petrifying terror. The novel applies images of the four elements: mainly water, but also air, earth and fire and shows the intraconnectedness between them and an individual, who becomes immersed in a particular kind of aura they create – the aura defined by fluidity of borders and alternation of forms. *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* questions the validity of traditional dualisms such as human vs non-human, animate vs inanimate or corporeal vs spiritual, and thus raises issues important to posthumanism, and as it examines the human vs plant as well as human vs animal relationship, it also provides interesting material for ecocritical scrutiny. Therefore, this analysis will apply selected elements of new materialist theories (Barad, Bennett) as well as refer to a number of ecocritical concepts.

## Room / Aula 8

### Ecopoetics

Chair: José Manuel MARRERO HENRÍQUEZ, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.

**Evy VARSAMOPOULOU, University of Cyprus, Cyprus.**

**'Open lines of communication': Gary Snyder's Non-Anthropocentric Ecopoetics.**

The main purpose of this paper will be to delineate the peculiar coordinates of Gary Snyder's ecopoetics as manifest in his poetic and prose writings. The focus will be on his statements regarding the potential of language in general, and poetry in particular, for realizing a reorientation of human attitudes, perception and interaction with non-human life forms. Though variously hailed as 'the poet laureate of deep ecology', a member of the 'San Francisco renaissance', a poet of Native American or Buddhist sensibilities, Snyder's poetry clearly shows affinities and affiliation with all of these, but can be designated by the more encompassing term of ecopoetry. Indeed, it is a passionate commitment to the environment that his poetry, prose, activism and autobiographical accounts bear witness to above all else and which, in fact, is the nodal star attracting him to indigenous peoples, Buddhism, the Beats and beyond. The same commitment pits him as surely against hegemonic politics and economics from West to East and from the contemporary to ancient anthropocentric mentalities and programmes of mastery and exploitation of non-human nature. Gary Snyder's ecopoems raise non-human living beings and the elements to the status of 'personhood'. His is a non-anthropocentric but not an anti-anthropocentric ideology; a post-humanism that is not post-human in its ethics and politics. While man is not the measure of all things in his poetics, humans are placed on a par with all other entities and elements; one part of a large and varied company that make up Gaia. In *The Practice of the Wild* (1990), Snyder undertakes a critical philosophical reevaluation of the concept of the term 'wild' as 'the process and essence of nature', arguing further that 'even language can be seen as a wild system', whilst professing his commitment to 'keep working for wildness day by day' (x). Although a wide range of his work will be taken into account for the arguments forwarded in this paper, the main references will be to *The Practice of the Wild* (1990), *Turtle Island* (1974), *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), and *This Present Moment: New Poems* (2015).

**Daniel ELTRINGHAM, University of Sheffield, UK.**

**Guerrilla Ecopoetics in "Transcreation".**

This paper argues that translations of Latin American guerrilla lyric could be seen as "transcreating" the proto-ecopoetic trope of "the mountain" [*la montaña*], by resituating it in Anglophone poetry networks. The adoption of the rhetorics of armed struggle by 1960s countercultures and artistic avant-gardes responded to broader processes of intercultural "translationality" ("translation in the loose sense") or "transcreation" as what is "more than translation" (Reynolds 2016). But the ecological dimension of translational guerrilla poetics has travelled unremarked in the circuits of textual circulation. My phrase, "guerrilla ecopoetics," takes its framework from current debates around the theorization of poetry that addresses the environmental crisis (Walton 2018).

Drawing on new archival sources, I focus on the ecopoetic dimensions of guerrilla poetry translated in small-press editions such as the poet Edward Dorn's collaboration with the Latin Americanist Gordon Brotherston, *Our Word/Palabra de Guerrillero* (1968). This volume was produced in dialogue with the North American poet, editor and translator Margaret Randall, whose recent translations of the Bolivian *guerrillera* Rita Valdivia (1946–69)'s militant-hermetic lyrics will be my main focus. I contextualize the militant ecology of guerrilla lyric with reference to *testimonio* narrative, which established the ecopoetic figures of "la montaña" and "la selva" (or near-cognates such as "la sierra") as often idealized ciphers for semi-autonomous rural spaces beyond the state's direct control; as temporary communities where social, political and ecological organization could be reconceived; and as pedagogical opportunities to learn from the nonhuman world and from Indigenous knowledge practices (Rivera Cusicanqui 2020). Guerrilla "mountain lyric," as it might be called, offered transatlantic poetry networks



an imaginative and material topography that combined militant and ecological practices of rural resistance, whose appeal lay in the way it gave voice to “the intransigent material of the resistance of a rural world” (Gonzalez and Treece 1992). And yet, as the artist Filipa César has argued about Amílcar Cabral, it is vital to undertake a materialist critique of the Guevarist doctrine of *la montaña* from an agrarian “counter-extractivist mindset” that is grounded in the reclamation of the soil (César 2020).

“Eco-translation” might provide a medium for thinking biosemiotic entanglements in transcultural and -historical ways (Cronin 2016). But to propose a “translational” or “transcreative” guerrilla ecopoetics confronts Anglophone environmental traditions with an alternative Latin American genealogy in Nicanor Parra’s 1983 *Ecopoemas*, and more profoundly with the intertwined emergencies of decolonial struggle and the unevenly distributed consequences of contemporary earth-systems breakdown; while Latinx environmentalisms are wary of a discipline coded as white and associated with neo-colonial conservation practices (Ybarra et al 2019). As such, my ecopoetic frame is conceived in reference to Jonathan Skinner’s transnational poetry journal *ecopoetics* (2001–09), which provided a space for Latin American poets such as Cecilia Vicuña and Humberto Ak’ Abal to experiment with “transcreations” that move between Indigenous and colonial languages, while experimenting with play between the sonic materiality of words and nonhuman utterance—questioning the utility of the term “translation” to describe such processes.

**Valeria MEILLER, University of Texas, San Antonio, USA.**

**Ruge el Bosque (The Forest Roars): Environmental Preservation through Ecopoetry in South America.**

This presentation introduces [Ruge el Bosque](#), a multidisciplinary project on ecopoetry in the South American region. Ruge el Bosque is a literary anthology of contemporary South American ecopoetry, complemented by a podcast and a speculative environmental cartography, that brings together poets from diverse communities and literary traditions based on a mutual concern for the environment. Organized by climate regions, this project proposes poetry as a means of archiving and resisting the disappearance of natural, social, and linguistic diversity in the midst of a global climate crisis perpetuated by: colonialism, the neoliberal development model, extractivist policies, and racial capitalism. Most urgently, the anthology seeks to initiate a transnational, cross-cultural, and multilingual conversation about how Latin American literary, artistic, and cultural production is addressing our current climate crisis.

### Room / Aula 10

#### Posthuman scenarios

Chair: Irene SANZ ALONSO, University of Alcalá, Spain.

**Lorraine KERSLAKE, Alicante University, GIECO-Franklin-UAH, Spain.**

**A Posthuman Reading of Shaun Tan’s *Tales from the Inner City* in the Age of the Anthropocene.**

Today’s environmental crisis is largely “a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity’s relation to it” (Buell 2). Children’s writers (and illustrators) are in a position of singular responsibility, for it is largely up to them to transmit not only cultural values, but to educate and teach respect for our natural world and to invite young readers into the negotiation of responsibility with nature and their local environments.

My analysis looks at Shaun Tan’s evocative *Tales from the Inner City* (2018), written as a sequel of sorts to his previous *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (2009). I argue that, through word and image, Tan questions the effects of the Anthropocene and the possible synergies and tensions between the human and more-than-human in his work inviting us to look at human and animal relationships in new and challenging ways.

Using Posthumanism and (critical) animal studies, I propose that Tan’s work can be aligned with more recent efforts to rethink the scope of human-nonhuman relationship and argue for the collection’s

contribution to the understanding of questions concerning animality and an ethics of care towards humans, nature and non-human animals. To do so I will draw on Donna Haraway's notion of "companion species" and concepts such as empathy and an ethics of care to question the privileged anthropocentrism of western society and human exceptionalism over animals. I will also draw inspiration from Rachel Carson's paper "Help your Child to Wonder" (1956) and Lawrence Buell's concept of "environmental imagination" (1995), referring to the reader's ability to experience a sense of connection with the environment and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

By blurring the boundaries between the human and more-than-human world and anthropomorphizing his animal characters to show otherness Tan's art and writing explores the ways in which we perceive nature through our senses whilst instilling a sense of wonder in children and perhaps adults too.

**Key words:** Shaun Tan, *Tales of the Inner City*, the Anthropocene, more-than-human, ethics of care, wonder.

**References:**

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**M<sup>a</sup> Isabel PÉREZ RAMOS, University of Oviedo, GIECO-Franklin-UAH, Spain.**

**Posthuman "strangers": Alternative Subjectivities and Unexpected Coalitions in Degraded Scenarios of Global Public Health Emergency.**

In the context of the current global public health emergency, the novel *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992), published 30 years ago by Chicano writer Alejandro Morales, becomes surprisingly up to date, speaking more than ever to our present time. *The Rag Doll Plagues* already imagined the effects of illnesses affecting a globalized human race in times of environmental degradation. The novel presents three physicians struggling against toxins and viruses causing plagues that decimate human population in three separate moments in history.

The present study focuses on the biopolitical dimension of the third part of the novel, set in a dystopian near future affected by ecological disasters. It depicts a technologically advanced humanity threatened by plagues derived from environmental pollution, mainly due to the accumulation of waste. In this context, the mutant blood of disadvantaged citizens happens to turn them into precious assets in the struggle for survival in a socially segregated and environmentally degraded world. Meanwhile, some other human beings are forced to become cyborgs—more or less successfully—, as a means to supposedly improve their nature and make them more able to confront, handle, and ultimately stop the pandemics.

The alternative subjectivities of the cyborgs and of those with mutant blood are examined combining conceptualizations of the stranger and the posthuman. Furthermore, by looking at the risks and possibilities offered by these posthuman strangers, this study investigates how toxicity and trans-corporeality (Stacy Alaimo) intermingle in a way that resembles Donna Haraway's argument for "making kin," challenging class, race, and species discourses. The study moreover deconstructs how the novel exposes the causality between economic systems and biopolitics, while exploring how unexpected coalitions can both foster and challenge structures of power.

**Keywords:** posthuman; stranger; biopolitics; trans-corporeality; making kin; global public health emergency; dystopia; coalitions; inequality; speculative fiction; *The Rag Doll Plagues*.

9.00 – 11.00

Room / *Aula* 4

Birds

Chair: Lorraine KERSLAKE, University of Alicante, Spain.

**Isabel Maria FERNANDES ALVES, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal / ULICES/CEAUL - University of Lisbon, Portugal.**

**‘They inhabit us/ inside, the birds’: A. M. Pires Cabral’s Attunement to Other Modes and Manners of Being.**

During the pandemic, John W. Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, while staying at home due to Covid-19, wrote: “I am comforted to know the scrub-jays are there, pairing up under the bright Florida sun, lining new nests with palmetto fibers, unperturbed by the tremendous human ordeal around them”. Fitzpatrick’s words emphasize the idea that birds’ cyclical patterns are reassuring when compared to unexpected human ordeal and upheaval, but they also illustrate a discourse that accounts for the never-ending human fascination with birds.

Drawing upon an ecocritical perspective, this paper considers how the depiction of birds in A. M. Pires Cabral’s poetry illustrates the way human dialogue with the nonhuman is a powerful tool in contemporary rediscovery of nature. Moreover, this paper is inspired by David Herman’s notion of creatural, which claims that the status of being a creature, subject to the requirements of the surrounding environment, the vicissitudes of time, and the vulnerabilities of the body, accentuate the fundamental continuity between humans and other animals. When this assessment meets affective ecocriticism, the result is an increased consciousness of interaction between bodies, psyches and environments.

In this sense, my purpose is to show that by thinking with birds, by merging with them, the poet transforms not only his own self, but also the way readers envision the nonhuman other. Interestingly, the presence of birds in A. M. Pires Cabral’s poetry is framed by knowledge of place and attentiveness of human-animal relationships. Also, if bird imagery is used as symbols, most birds are used as linked to an ecosystem that the poet observes and interprets, thus evincing a worldview that sees the more-than-human world as meaningful and deserving respect. Although A. M. Pires Cabral’s passion for birds is not unique but part of a tradition that goes back to medieval bestiaries, in a time of biodiversity rarefaction, his poetic depiction of birds is certainly an expression of the human affection attuned to the more-than-human world; mostly, however, this paper invites discussion on the poet’s multilayered affection for birds as a result of his recognition that thinking with birds prompts, ultimately, deeper thinking in human beings.

**Wit PIETRZACK, University of Lodz, Poland.**

**‘Their bright lobster bills / are a beacon for themselves’: Birds in the Poetry of Sean Lysaght.**

Throughout his work, the contemporary Irish poet Seán Lysaght has regularly evoked encounters with birds, from cuckoos and choughs all the way to Romanticism’s pinnacle emblem for poetry, the skylark. However, unlike in the majority of modern Irish poetry, where birds play a prominent part, in Lysaght the avian encounter is never symbolic of some aspect of life or of the poetic utterance. Instead, he pays attention to the actualities of avian existence, emphasising the particularities of various birds’ species. And yet, in his poems, the encounter between the human and the avian is often to the detriment of the latter, whose life is imperilled by the urban sprawl and agricultural work done on the traditional habitats of various Irish indigenous species. The presentation will explore the various interstitial points between birds and the poet, in the process suggesting that it is in language, which is conventionally regarded as the distinguishing feature of the homo sapiens, that people can experience the strangeness but also the illuminating cohesiveness of the avian world.

**Clara CONTRERAS AMEDURI, University of Extremadura, Spain.**

**Wings of their Own: Birds and Ecofeminist Visions in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing.**

From the caged bird metaphor to the controversial use of feathers in feminine accessories, women and avian imagery were closely connected in the Victorian cultural imaginary. Such associations became particularly apparent in art and literature, where parallels were often established between the passive and idealized “angel in the house” and the appropriation of birds as aesthetic ornaments in domestic spaces. Female characters in works like Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1849), Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879), or even Neo-Victorian films such as Tim Burton’s *Sweeney Todd* (2007) are attributed bird-like qualities which reflect their position in nineteenth-century society. However, this trope was subverted by women writers like Charlotte Brontë or Sarah Orne Jewett, whose textual birds were turned into symbols of freedom and mobility, as well as into a metaphorical critique of the confinement of women to the private sphere. Most significantly, birds and bird-watching became a bridge towards female participation in the male-dominated world of scientific inquiry and political activism.

This paper aims to examine the relationship between birds, women’s literature and reformist movements in the nineteenth century. More specifically, it focuses on nature writing by British and American authors who documented their ornithological activities in order to raise awareness concerning the loss of biodiversity and the mass annihilation of birds for the plumage trade. Through what may be regarded as early ecofeminist visions, pioneering ornithologists such as Graceanna Lewis, Florence Merriam Bailey, and Elizabeth Barber chose to transgress the boundaries between the private and public spheres, stepping outdoors to develop alternative forms of scientific research while remaining excluded from academic institutions. As manifested in these texts, the study of birds facilitated the development of ecological sensibilities and, at the same time, the involvement of female advocates in animal rights’ activism and the conservation of nature, among other political causes, thus redefining traditional associations between avian imagery and women’s oppression.

**Brycchan CAREY, Northumbria University, UK.**

**‘Little is said, but much is meant’: Gilbert White, W.H. Hudson, and the Language of Birds.**

This paper contrasts two important and influential accounts of ‘the language of birds’ in British natural history writing. Gilbert White’s *Natural History of Selborne*, published in 1789, became cult reading for nineteenth-century naturalists, inspiring an entire genre of local natural history writing. A century later, the Anglo-Argentinian novelist and naturalist W.H. Hudson became one of Britain’s most prominent early conservationists, contributing more than 50 books of popular natural history. Both authors had a special interest in ornithology, and both offered highly anthropomorphised accounts of avian communication. In *Selborne*, White claimed that ‘The language of birds is very ancient, and, like other ancient modes of speech, very elliptical: little is said, but much is meant and understood’ but then offered a poeticised interpretation of that language which ascribed human motivation and linguistic patterns to birds. In *Birds and Man*, published in 1901, Hudson makes what he calls a ‘pilgrimage’ to White’s village of Selborne and, while standing over White’s grave, takes White’s language of birds a step further to imagine how birds perceived the ‘eccentric and contradictory’ humans in their habitats and what they might say to one another about the human beings around them—an approach that culminates in a bizarre imaged dialogue between stuffed birds in a glass case. As the most popular nature writers of their day, both White and Hudson thus contributed significantly to an anthropomorphised conception of bird communication that has continued both to inspire and to bedevil popular representations of bird communications, from the natural history writing of their time to the televised nature programmes of today. This paper will closely read key passages from *Selborne* and *Birds and Man* to reveal both the unwitting assumptions and the deliberate literary techniques behind these highly influential pieces of writing.



## Room / Aula 5

### Plants

Chair: Carmen FLYS JUNQUERA, University of Alcalá, Spain.

**Heather I. SULLIVAN, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, USA.**

#### **Bad Plants.**

Referring to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's 2015 *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Katherine E. Bishop, David Higgins and Jerry Määttä write in their introduction to *Plants in Science Fiction: Speculative Vision*, "the way we think about vegetation is not simply central to the way we think about ourselves or even humanity; the way we think about vegetation may also be key to our continued existence" (4). Such considerations gain complexity as new forms of plant-human relations are emerging from the radical, anthropogenic ecological changes of the Anthropocene. In that we are fully dependent upon vegetal beings for oxygen, food, local ecosystem function, and caffeine, much work in critical plant studies justifiably celebrates the enormous yet often overlooked impact of botanical life. In contrast, I focus here instead on what I call "bad plants" precisely to highlight the disturbing immensity of vegetal power much like Dawn Keetly and Angela Tenga do in their 2016 volume, *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous in Fiction and Film*. I consider depictions of the dangerous vegetal during the early Anthropocene when modern industrialization, urbanization, and rapid technological development of agriculture are just emerging and the inevitable outcomes are yet unknown. Although the category "bad plants" could include the many poison-producing, drug-creating plants, the so-called "weeds," the rampaging invasive species transported and transplanted by human beings during colonialism, the pesticide-resistant crop-destroyers, or the predatory alien vegetables of science fiction, I address here writings from the early Anthropocene authors Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Ludwig Tieck, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, who all attributed to plants various forms of a disturbingly transgressive agency. Tieck writes in his dark fairy tale, *The Rune Mountain* (1802), about the choice to live either in a pastoral gardening community or in the steep mountainous terrain among the mine shafts, condemning the soul-stealing plants who blind one to the scintillating aspects of the "stones." E.T.A. Hoffmann's famous "fairy tale from recent times," *The Golden Pot* (1814) portrays the talking *Holunderbaum* that lures young Anselmus into a love relationship with the green snake, leading him to abandon his bourgeois life for "Atlantis." Goethe also describes the seductive allure of the vegetal, focusing his botanical studies in *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* on the sexual lives of plants in an era when many philosophers like Friedrich Schelling could not even agree that plants were alive much less sexual (and Lincoln and Lee Taiz note in their 2017 *Flora Unveiled: The Discovery and Denial of Sex in Plants* the long debates regarding vegetal sexuality). While our human bodies are all indeed vegetally enabled, the denial of plant power continues to produce distorted cultural visions of our multispecies lives. Those who offer glimpses into botanical energy, especially in the form of "bad plants," reveal even stranger, albeit weirdly insightful, visions as we navigate the Anthropocene's troubled new forms between gardens and monocrops.

**Christa GREWE-VOLPP, University of Mannheim, Germany.**

#### **Turning into a Potted Plant: Metamorphosis in Han Kang's "The Fruit of My Woman".**

Fictional narratives have recently explored new, non-anthropocentric perspectives on living with plants, especially with trees, the most prominent being Richard Powers' novel *The Overstory*. These narratives often rely on discoveries in scientific plant studies that reveal how much human beings and plants have in common, despite their radical differences. They raise questions about our own "ecological situatedness" (Ryan), about our entanglement with each other in many intricate ways, imaginatively exploring Donna Haraway's anti-dualistic concept of co-shaping interactions between species (animals and plants) and Anna Tsing's thesis that humans exist in interspecies relationships. A central question concerns the (im)possibility of communicating with plants, of narrating human-plant interactions, of the dilemma to enter the realm of an utterly different form of life on (by necessity) human terms. In my presentation I will investigate this dilemma in the short story "The Fruit of My Woman" by the Korean



writer Han Kang, a story she later expanded and changed in her more famous novel *The Vegetarian*. Whereas the female protagonist in the novel dreams of turning into a tree, the female protagonist in the short story actually does metamorphose, albeit not into a freestanding tree, but into a potted plant on the balcony of her and her husband's apartment where he dutifully takes care of her. Taking the insights of plant studies about the amazing properties of plants into consideration I will examine not only the woman's desire to turn into a plant, but also the changed relationship with her husband. The crucial question is whether to interpret this unusual metamorphosis as a form of suicide and defeat, or as a victory over patriarchal domination and personal as well as environmental sterility.

**Harriet TARLO, Sheffield Hallam University, UK,**  
**Judith TUCKER, University of Leeds, UK.**  
**SALTWORT: Poetry, Art and Plant Agency**

In this paper, poet Harriet Tarlo and artist Judith Tucker present recent work from their sustained practice-based research into East Coast Lincolnshire saltmarsh plant-life. The work is contextualised within Tarlo's consideration of thirty years of her own landscape poetry and thinking around plants in relation to that of other writers and artists who have influenced her through their writing such as William Wordsworth; John Clare; H.D.; Lorine Niedecker; Elisabeth Bletsoe and Thomas A. Clark.

Key questions considered are: What can be the relationship of language and naming to plant-life - (how) is it possible to acknowledge, even represent, the agency and intelligence of plants as explored by recent thinkers such as Anthony Trewavas and John Ryan? Is it desirable or possible to move beyond botanical and ecological classifications and descriptions? What can cross-disciplinary and aesthetic exploration in space, sound, colour and science achieve in this area? Or might it be better to convey the mystery of what is not known than to attempt to encapsulate current "science" within "the arts"? How can wider concepts of time and place, such as localised context (place), seasonality and the symbiosis of all elements of the more-than-human world be adequately present in art and poetry? Finally, how do we erode hierarchical thinking to consider our own human minds in relation to the minds of plants in new and exciting ways, whilst remaining cognisant of the age-old cultural significance of plants to humans and retaining what is of value there?

On the ground, in the particular case of the saltmarsh and the specifically adapted plants that grow there, we must recognise the threat such bioregions have been under from as early as Roman times when they first began to be "reclaimed" from the sea. Now modern developments, climate change and hard sea defences erode them even further threatening saltwort plants along with their habitats, though pioneering "colonisers" such as cord-grass and samphire are still taking back beaches and establishing sedimentation. It is important for humans to understand and to respect, not just the importance of these areas as permeable barriers to flood, but also the extraordinary ability of these plants to survive high and varied levels of salination in their respective zones of the saltmarsh as they make rooted and cellular decisions and take energetic actions necessary for their survival daily in relation to tide and weather. Perhaps, through artistic practice, landscape decisions might be influenced by interaction in person, in poetry and in art with these plants' lives below and above land, in water and, through dispersal, air.

### **Room / Aula 7**

#### **Empathetic encounters**

Chair: María Isabel PÉREZ RAMOS, University of Oviedo, Spain.

**Claudia ALONSO RECARTE, Universitat de València, Spain.**  
**(Conceptual) Art, the Gallery, and the Encounter with the Nonhuman Other.**

In his famous essay *Why Look at Animals?* (1977), John Berger suggests that capitalism and modernity arrive not only with (and at the expense of) the disappearance and extinction of animals, but also with the allocation of their remnants in spaces vectorized by a human gaze that reduces the observed to the

symbolism of expectations. Berger focuses much of his attention on the representation of nonhuman animals in the confines of zoos, where the inmates fail to live up to the splendid wildlife images that captivate the minds of visitors, and instead abandon themselves to misery and lethargy. This presentation seeks to examine humans' alienation from nonhuman others in another significant space, that of the gallery or museum, where the 'Eye' is forced into a form of visual semiotics that deprives the object of the gaze from any meaning antithetical to the believed purpose of art. Specifically, in this presentation I explore the use of suffering or potentially suffering nonhuman animals in proposals and exhibitions with artistic pretensions so as to explore how these spaces aim to disrupt the possibility of empathy and interspecies communication. Through an examination of representative works by Marco Evaristi, Eduardo Kac, Huan Yong Pin and especially by conceptual artist Guillermo Vargas (Habacuc), I discuss how the situated nonhuman animal body and its suffering are instrumentalized and strategized about in order to make a point about human self-awareness. Nonetheless, the obvious attempts at shock tactics not only suggest little creative input on the part of artists who too easily and recklessly resort to the nonhuman animal body, but also form an interpretative space where dissenting 'Eyes' choose to focus on the animal-object as a sentient subject, thus crumbling the tropes and conventions that have traditionally articulated the gallery walls. In this particular exegetical form, the nonhuman animal body is de-mechanized – the body frees itself from the gallery's construction of it as an object that reacts, and emerges instead as a subject with the ability to respond. Such forms of interspecies translations constitute an attack on anthropocentrism from the very heart of spaces meant to celebrate who humans are and what they can create, offering alternative ways through which to exercise creation, ones in which care and empathy provide a more affective understanding of the experiential other's subjectivity.

**Marco CARACCILO, Ghent University, Belgium.**  
***The Animals in That Country and the Limitations of Empathy.***

The word "empathy" has undoubtedly positive connotations in contemporary culture. Developing empathetic skills is seen as a step toward prosocial behavior and more responsible citizenship. Yet even empathy has its detractors. Psychologist Paul Bloom writes in *Against Empathy* that empathetic perspective-taking is individualistically biased: we empathize with individual persons, but global challenges such as climate change or widespread poverty call for engagement with the *collective* scale of such phenomena. To develop this thinking of the collective, Bloom argues, empathy is less well suited than rationally and empirically grounded compassion. My paper seeks to build on this insight on the *limitations* of empathy in order to reframe the ecocritical discussion of literature's confrontation with nonhuman others. "There are no limits to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another," remarks Elizabeth Costello in J. M. Coetzee's hybrid novel/lecture *The Lives of Animals* (a line quoted in the CFP for this conference). But Costello is a famously unreliable character: her statement shouldn't be taken at face value.

In this paper, I discuss a recent novel by Laura McKay—*The Animals in That Country* (2020)—to argue that fiction can pursue an alternative route to exploring "creaturely encounters." McKay's conceit is that a pandemic enables humans to sense animals' thoughts. But these animals cannot be understood, or at least not straightforwardly: their poetic language is obscure and typographically demarcated from the human narrator's prose. Instead of fostering empathy for individual animals, McKay's work taps into the affordances of poetic form to disrupt readers' ability to project themselves into animal minds. This strategy is used to broach broader questions of responsibility toward the nonhuman and to create affect that straddles the human-nonhuman divide without involving empathy for specific animal characters.

**Vanesa ROLDÁN ROMERO, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Spain.**  
***The Sympathetic Imagination and the Equines in Anne McCaffrey's Black Horses for the King (1998).***

Mario Ortiz Robles charges that more-than-human animals are largely reduced to voiceless tropes in contemporary literature. Ortiz Robles argues that this simplification could speak of the absence of other-than-human animals which, paradoxically, "is made all the more poignant by the cultural embeddedness of animals" (21). A consequence of this ontological reduction is that other-than-human animals have often been denied their own materiality and voice, justifying not only their metaphorical but also material exploitation, exemplified in their daily slaughter for human consumption (Adams 69).

Consequently, if the material experiences of other-than-human animals were translated and rendered into a language that human animals can understand, humans might be compelled to listen to them and to acknowledge their *zoe* (Braidotti 252). In line with this, Margarita Carretero-González advocates for what she calls “interspecies transcreation,” a successful translation of “other-than-human experience into human language” (850). In literary products in which a narrator focuses on other-than-human animals and successfully undergoes the project of transspecies transcreation, without forgetting the situated knowledge of the narrator, the text can then provide a sympathetic acknowledgement of the material experiences of nonhuman animal characters. This can also lead to a reshaping of readers’ ethical attitudes towards the nonhuman in their daily life.

One type of literature in which the more-than-human has traditionally been present, albeit marginalised and so silenced, is Arthurian romance. In the context of the Arthurian revival of the 1980s and 1990s, Anne McCaffrey’s *Black Horses for the King* (1998) attempts to rewrite this tradition by placing horses in the spotlight rather than leaving them as secondary characters, perhaps because of her close connection with horses in her life. Interestingly, the novel is narrated by the protagonist, a human character who is continually surrounded by horses, whom he tends. In this paper, I aim to discern whether McCaffrey’s narrator performs as a translator of the experiences of the equine characters in the novel. Besides, I examine whether and how the translation promotes the anthropomorphisation of the equine characters. To this end, I shall apply Ífakat Banu Akçesme’s ecocritical analysis of Arthurian romance, Judith Butler’s understanding of vulnerability, Margarita Carretero-González’s take on “interspecies transcreation,” and Gordon Burghardt’s conception of anthropomorphism(s) to McCaffrey’s novel.

**Keywords.** Horses; Vulnerability; Anthropomorphism; Interspecies Transcreation; Arthurian Romance; Anne McCaffrey; Contemporary Fiction.

**Julia LIBOR, Independent scholar, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.**

**Empathy and Affective Ecocriticism - New Perspectives on Ecofeminist Matters and Life Writing.**

The literary landscape offers a wide range of ways on how we can narrate and thus perceive our environments. While the first-person narrative is arguably an unreliable account of such observations, it does not fail to transport first-hand impressions to an audience. It is within this framework I shall suggest to have a closer look at how life writing narrates perceived environments and the personal situation of the author alike, leading to the question: How can these components be used effectively to narrate the non-human?

This paper discusses this question using Robyn Davidson’s travel account *Tracks* (1980) as one example since it displays the first-person travel narrative within an ecofeminist framework. In her work, Davidson travels the Australian desert on her own, only accompanied by four camels and a dog. Being reminded of her own situation of being a female in the male dominated environments of Australia’s deserts, Davidson soon begins to sympathise with the animals as they, for example, also face maltreatment in the camel farms and a general oppression. Thus, a strong bond is being formed which leads to seemingly personified representations of the animals at times – a combination of literary traces of her own personal challenges, her emotions and her unique perception of the Australian deserts on her solo trip are dominating her travel narrative.

Ultimately, this ecofeminist framework in the discussion shows how much Davidson relates to the animals on an emotional level and political level. Accordingly, this leads to a political and emotional narration of the non-human alike and Davidson effectively uses these traits to give the non-human a voice. Through empathy and her own emotions Davidson is able to provide the reader with a detailed description of the camels. In this context, this paper shall discuss the challenges of such approach to narrate life writing, and it shall give an insight on how an interrelationship between the first-person narrative, empathy and emotions and the environment is used to give the non-human a much-needed voice.

## Room / Aula 10

### Perspectives on anthropomorphism

Chair: Felicity SMITH, University of Granada, Spain.

**Rosanne VAN DER VOET, University of Sheffield, UK.**

#### **Writing as Research: Narrating the Nonhuman Experience of the Environmental Crisis.**

In the context of this conference, the following question emerges: how can we, in the context of environmental emergency, write the nonhuman experience of the crisis while being critically aware of the human tendencies of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism?

This presentation explores how Creative Writing can function as a mode of research when approaching this question. Viewing humanity as a homogenous force is problematic as it obscures social inequalities and the complexities of the current crisis. As argued by Stacy Alaimo, a more trans-corporeal definition of the human – as inextricably interconnected with nonhumans and other matter – is needed to forge collective ways out of this predicament (1). Given environmental issues exhibit the enmeshment of earthly processes, it is no longer viable to hold onto traditional subject-object binaries – even human bodies have always been much more nonhuman than assumed. Consequently, the nonhuman experience of the world is not as separate from human experience as has traditionally been supposed. In this presentation, I build on the idea that acknowledging this fundamental human-nonhuman intimacy creates a useful opening for writing the nonhuman experience of the environmental crisis while being critical and aware of the limits of human imaginations.

Against this background, I introduce an experimental, creative approach to writing the nonhuman that has the potential to make this human-nonhuman intimacy tangible and material on the page. By blending academic and creative styles, imagining nonhuman perspectives, and experimenting with the material form of the text, the abstracted, homogenous human voice is destabilised, and a trans-corporeal, heterogeneous voice emerges. Using some examples from my PhD research, such as a writing style based on human-jellyfish relationships, I demonstrate the need not only to theorise this human-nonhuman intimacy, but also to put this into practice creatively, connecting material ecocritical insights to concrete practice and experience.

Nonhuman experience as intimately connected to human experience thus emerges materially on the page, stimulating a more collaborative and diverse human perspective from which to write the nonhuman. Although this does not eliminate the tendencies to anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, it allows human imagination to come to its full potential by embracing its intimacy with nonhuman life while being aware of its own limits. This experimental writing still emerges from a human perspective, but the material presence of nonhuman experience on the page presents potential to forge interspecies transcreations.

(1) Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p.155.

**Claire CAZAJOUS-AUGÉ, University Toulouse 2 – Jean Jaurès, France.**

#### **Redefining Anthropomorphism to Save Trees: The Example of *The Overstory*, by Richard Powers.**

In *The Overstory*, by Richard Powers, Patricia Westerford's father asserts that we have become "plant-blind," because we are only interested in the beings that look like us and with whom we can empathize—other human beings and nonhuman animals. This inability to recognize the importance of the vegetal world in the biosphere might stem from the "radical otherness" (Francis Hallé) of plants: their immobility, their peculiar textures, and their endless ability to renew themselves make it impossible for us to understand what it is like to be a plant. In other words, our zoocentrism has led to marginalizing plants, and ultimately, to consider them as mere resources that we can kill and exploit.

So as to put an end to this neglect of plants, foresters Peter Wohlleben (*The Hidden Life of Trees*) and biologists Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola (*Brilliant Green*), among others, make an uninhibited use of anthropomorphism, which allows them to translate how plants, and more precisely



trees, live. Philosophers Jacques Tassin (*Think Like a Tree*), Florence Burgat (*Qu'est-ce qu'une plante ? – What is a Plant?*) and Michael Marder (*Plant-Thinking*), however, fear that anthropomorphizing plants will erase the essential differences between human and vegetal lives and lead to consider plants as the lowest living forms. They assert that describing plants by applying a human or animal frame of reference may be considered a representational failure, and suggest that they cannot be thought of on their own terms.

Focusing on the descriptions of trees and forests in *The Overstory*, this paper proposes to analyze Richard Powers' use of anthropomorphism in this novel. Many of Powers' characters, whose aim is to protect the last uncut forests, often rely on anthropomorphic tropes to bring an end to our plant-blindness and to paradoxically invite us to adopt a decentering eye on the vegetal world. For example, dendrologist Patricia Westerford explains that trees can be "impulsive, or shy, or generous," that they have brains, and that they form "communities," and Olivia, a young environmental activist, asserts that she can hear trees talking to her. I will argue that far from trying to reassert a form of human domination over the nonhuman world, such images and narrative devices function as imperfect educational tools that serve Powers' environmental project; indeed, they contribute to restoring our relationships with plants and to showing the entanglements between trees and human lives, at a time when the redwoods, Douglas firs or red cedars are more than ever threatened by human activity.

**Matthias KLESTIL, University of Klagenfurt, Austria.**

**Age, Family, Species: Mark Twain's Sentimental Anthropomorphism as Anthropocene Critique.**

Readers familiar with Mark Twain have long been aware of his love of non-human animals and their importance in much of his writing. At the same time, scholars have often emphasized the writer's involvement in animal welfare and antivivisection movements, and have been invited by animal-focused Twain collections (e.g. Rodney/Brashear (1966), Smith (1972), Fishkin (2010)) to reconsider his work through environmentally oriented perspectives. Contributing to a growing ecocritical and animal studies engagement with Twain's work (e.g. Lindsay 1996, Shein (2009), Marcus (2016)), my paper focuses on two early-twentieth-century texts, "A Dog's Tale" (1903) and the novella "A Horse's Tale" (1906), in order to examine Twain's sentimental anthropomorphism for its potential as Anthropocene critique. Rather than (re)turning to the context of animal welfare, I explore how the stories' anthropomorphizing narrative technique expresses more-than-human perspectives and functions as a means to speculate about the boundaries between human and non-human as well as individual and species life through themes such as age, race, and family. Both texts, one the story of a dog who has to witness her offspring's brutal murder in a medical experiment, the other a story about old horses and young humans, have mostly been read (and often denounced) as representatives of Twain's late sentimentalism. My argument, however, suggests that the texts' use of animals as narrators and of themes of age and familial ties also offers a deeper philosophical critique of the constructions that mark the Anthropocene. "A Dog's Tale" and "A Horse's Tale" are more than overly sentimental texts, as they muse about life's stages and "temporal units" as well as emotional familial ties not simply to "humanize" animals but to analyze the boundaries that construct the modern human as such. They speculate about the limits of different forms of life, the constructedness of such demarcations and their connectedness to issues of race and gender, and are therefore fruitful instances for exploring and finding strategies of writing against some of the harmful divides that mark Anthropocene practices.

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**Richard KERRIDGE, Bath Spa University, UK.**  
**Dialectics of Anthropomorphism.**

This paper will start from the premise, familiar enough, that anthropomorphism in the literary representation of nonhuman creatures is dangerous and to be resisted, yet also necessary and to be explored and developed. My partial defence of anthropomorphism draws upon an analysis of it as a form of engagement with otherness with origins in the infant's acquisition of an ability to understand and imitate faces, and also an account of the dangers that follow when anthropomorphism is banished. What fills the space that it vacates? Some literary texts, fictional and non-fictional, investigate this question by experimenting with the withdrawal of anthropomorphism followed by its partial return. I will analyse this sequence as it occurs in works by Dane Huckelbridge (tigers), Sy Montgomery (octopuses), Philip Hoare (whales), Helen Macdonald (hawks), J.A. Baker (more hawks), Karen Joy Fowler (chimps) and Audrey Schulman (bonobos).

The second phase of my argument will ask what the conditions are in which literary anthropomorphism can legitimately be encouraged. What sort of dialogue, or dialectic, does it need to have, in the literary text, with one of its opposites, a recognition and attempt to represent, if only in flashes, the intransigent otherness of nonhuman experience? My starting-point here is the challenge to nature writers offered by the ecocritic Timothy Clark, when he asks whether a description of a swallow might present the bird not 'as a unified self-relating subjective agent to which events happen in narrative sequence', but as 'a transitory and changing constellation of percepts, hunger and muscular flexing, metamorphosing itself as a variously focussed assemblage of co-ordinations and impulses' (Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, Cambridge UP 2011: 198). The word 'assemblage' calls up ideas from New Materialism, Actor-Network Theory and Biosemiotics, and I will conclude by looking briefly at ways in which literary attempts at replacing the unified self with an attention to expansive assemblages can retain modified versions of plot, story and suspense. My examples here will include short stories by Lauren Groff and Usman T. Malik. Throughout the paper, I will attempt to show what an 'anthropomor-phisation' that does *not* 'eventually deny the specificity of the other-than-human being' might actually look like on the page.

**Room / Aula 2**

**11.30 - 13.00**

**Plenary lecture / Conferencia plenaria**

Chair: Margarita CARRETERO GONZÁLEZ, University of Granada, Spain.

**Florianne KOEHLIN, Biologist and author, Blauen Institut, Switzerland;**  
**Noëmi SCHWANK, Saxophonist, Switzerland.**

**Plant whispers: How plants communicate and how they build networks.**

Plants communicate with fragrances, above and below ground. They warn each other of pests or drought, purposefully attract beneficial insects through the language of fragrances, and perhaps even coordinate their own behavior. They engage in lively relationships with their environment and peers. They support relatives, harass strangers, and make alliances. They learn from experience, remember past events. Underground, they form extensive root and fungal networks through which they exchange nutrients and information – an internet of plant communication of an unimaginable size. But plants are still regarded by many scientists as a kind of biological automaton with pre-programmed, genetically determined reactions. As passive and isolated beings. This view of plants is being turned upside down by the new findings. What are the consequences? For agriculture? For our relationship with plants?

15.00 – 16.30

**Room / Aula 4**

Las voces del paisaje

Moderadora: Virginia Luzón-Aguado, University of Zaragoza, Spain.

**Gonzalo LUQUE GONZÁLEZ, Universidad de Almería, España.**

**El abismo del paisaje. La escisión de la naturaleza en la estética romántica.**

Las humanidades ambientales suelen partir de un presupuesto de empatía y de la esperanza de una posible armonía con otros seres, esto contrastaría considerablemente con la escisión del hombre con la naturaleza que se da en el Romanticismo. A pesar de esa escisión (o precisamente debido a esta), el romanticismo produjo por primera vez la desantropomorfización del paisaje y de la naturaleza en general, donde la figura humana desaparece y la naturaleza cobra una autonomía desconocida anteriormente.

Este surgimiento del paisaje propiamente dicho (no solo en la producción pictórica) que tiene lugar en el Romanticismo no es meramente contingente ni se trata de la continuación de una tradición que surge en las postrimerías del medievo, sino que está íntimamente ligada a un cambio radical en la relación entre el ser humano y la naturaleza inseparable del proceso histórico de expansión del capitalismo y la industrialización que lo acompaña. El romanticismo radical reconoce —y sufre— la naturaleza como una otredad irreductible, inalcanzable y, a la vez, deseada. El empequeñecimiento de la figura humana frente a una naturaleza ilimitada es, sin embargo, aparentemente paradójico, pues el paisaje deviene a su vez una representación externa de la complejidad de la psique. Con todo, esto no debería comprenderse como una contradicción sino como el apercibimiento de una distancia vertiginosa: el ser humano no puede acceder inmediatamente a la naturaleza; solo puede percibirla a través de la mediación cultural, de su propia sociabilidad. Esa mediación, sostenemos, es justamente el reconocimiento doloroso de la otredad de la naturaleza. Reconocimiento que se diluye hasta desaparecer en la razón instrumental que va generalizándose en la Modernidad. La lógica abstracta del proceso de valorización de capital borra toda cualidad bajo el poder transformador del trabajo abstracto (Robert Kurz, Anselm Jappe). La fascinación paradójica del romanticismo por el paisaje es una negación de esa lógica: la naturaleza es una concreción inaccesible directamente; y solo puede ser subsumida a la lógica del valor bajo el riesgo de su destrucción.

Con base en los esfuerzos de comprensión de la relación entre el ser humano y la naturaleza de algunos exponentes de la teoría crítica (Adorno y Horkheimer), mediante una revisión histórica del surgimiento del paisaje y la estética romántica (Javier Maderuelo, Rafael Argullol), queremos cuestionar la importancia dada a la empatía desde ciertas perspectivas ecologistas que, al reconocer al otro como similar, pierden de vista la distancia que fundamentaría una relación de no explotación. Creemos que la pretensión —o asunción— de cierto ecologismo de una relación no mediada, directa, con la naturaleza da pie a mistificaciones que llevan a una serie de *impasses* que limitan seriamente una transformación de las prácticas destructivas de la sociedad contemporánea, o llegan incluso a ser solidarias con la lógica abstracta del valor en que se funda el capitalismo. Pretendemos con esta ponencia hacer un esbozo teórico sobre la concepción de la naturaleza en la estética romántica (no limitándonos a una producción epocal) que permita una revisión radical de los presupuestos de las humanidades ambientales. Mostrar, en general, la potencialidad crítica de la ideología romántica en lo que respecta a una relación no dominativa entre el ser humano y la naturaleza, sin olvidar tampoco las limitaciones de dicha ideología.

**Montserrat LÓPEZ MÚJICA, Universidad de Alcalá, GIECO-Franklin-UAH, España.**

***Forêts Obscures*: la voz del bosque en la obra de Corinna Bille.**

Dar a conocer, a través de sus cuentos, relatos o novelas, la naturaleza de su región, describiéndola con gran precisión, no es solo una muestra del profundo respeto que esta autora siente por su tierra, sino también una forma de dar voz a los seres que en ella habitan. Entre los seres animados que desfilan en sus relatos se encuentran por supuesto los árboles, pero también los viñedos, las flores y los animales. La relación tan especial que existe entre Corinna y el bosque se puede observar a lo largo de toda su producción, pero es en *Forêts Obscures* donde resulta ser más evocador. El manuscrito de esta novela lleva como subtítulo “Récit romanesque autobiographique des étés passés aux Vernys”. “Forêts Obscures” relata la llegada de Corinna y Maurice a esta nueva residencia, camuflados en las figuras de Blanca y Clément, los personajes principales del relato. De ahí que encontremos muchas similitudes entre ambas parejas, la real y la ficticia. Al igual que Maurice, Clément debe ausentarse por trabajo durante días, lo que deja a Blanca el tiempo de dedicarse a su actividad favorita: recorrer “las seis hectáreas de campos y de bosques en pendiente” que poseen en propiedad. Gracias a estos paseos descubrimos al verdadero protagonista de la novela: el bosque, a través del cual se canalizan las inquietudes, las dudas, lo “oscuro” del drama frente a la vejez y la muerte de los personajes. Desde un punto de vista ecocrítico resulta muy interesante analizar cómo interactúa este elemento natural con cada uno de los personajes.

**Melissa M. CULVER, Universidad de Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, EEUU.**

**De la ecología del noir a la(s) transcreación(es) interespecie: El caso de *La cara norte del corazón*, de Dolores Redondo.**

La obra de Dolores Redondo, en general, y *La cara norte del corazón*, en particular, constituye un buen ejemplo dentro del *noir* de “transcreación interespecie”, entendida aquí, siguiendo a Carretero-González, como la inclusión de una perspectiva animal en el espacio de lo literario que descentra y, así, cuestiona la primacía de la mirada del *anthropos*.

En *La cara norte del corazón*, cuarta novela de la saga que protagoniza Amaia Salazar, un asesino en serie opera en EE.UU., aprovechando el caos y la confusión que causan los desastres naturales en este país. Redondo sitúa el escenario principal de los crímenes en la ciudad de Nueva Orleans en 2004, cuando el huracán Katrina causa estragos en la París del sur. Mientras la unidad del FBI en la que está haciendo prácticas Salazar intenta dar caza al malhechor, la policía se ve desbordada por la desolación del Katrina y los intentos desesperados de la población por escapar de la ciudad, ahora trampa mortal. Este asesino serial, en el entretanto, arrasa familias enteras en sus propias casas, crímenes que habían pasado desapercibidos por las autoridades al imitar estos destrozos los daños causados por distintas catástrofes naturales.

Si bien existe en la novela negra española una nada desdeñable tradición que une el delito contra las personas y el expolio de la tierra—en la obra, por ejemplo, de Maria Antònia Oliver, en *La niebla y la doncella*, de Lorenzo Silva o *Una casa en el desierto*, de Javier Fernández de Castro, incluso en el *noir* pionero de Francisco García Pavón—este enfoque se suele hallar centrado en el campo y sus gentes como espacio de la producción, frente al ámbito citadino, el de la distribución. Por ello, en este tipo de novelas el delito ecológico se entiende, ante todo, como un delito contra la propiedad, bien individual, bien colectiva (con consecuencias funestas para el medio ambiente en tanto que espacio productivo).

Se trata *La cara norte*, sin embargo, de otra cosa. Porque, aquí, la Naturaleza no constituye ámbito de expolio, sino de cohabitación. No aparece en Dolores Redondo, por tanto, el campo, sino el bosque y el manglar. Y, con los bosques—o los manglares—, sus criaturas, seres que pasan a formar parte de las tramas, no como mero *atrezzo*, sino como entes activos, dotados de una perspectiva muy propia, y muy suya.

En esta comunicación me centro en dos asuntos que considero fundamentales a la hora de articular la transcreación interespecie en *La cara norte*. En primer lugar, en el paso dentro del *noir* del campo en tanto que espacio de producción y explotación a la Naturaleza como representación de lo vivo, frente a la muerte. En segundo, en las consecuencias de ese fundamental trastrueque de la perspectiva, a saber: la inclusión de todo lo vivo en el mundo del delito, de un lado; la necesidad de un esfuerzo concertado interespecie para atajar el Mal, del otro.

## Room / Aula 5

### Pre-formed panel Empirical Ecocriticism: Examining Encounters with Eco-Narratives

Organizer and Chair: Alexa WEIK VON MOSSNER, University of Klagenfurt, Austria.

Since its inception, ecocriticism has asserted that narratives – whether in literature, film, or other media – are of central importance to our relationships with other creatures and the nonhuman environment more generally. However, when it comes to the question of the actual influence of such narratives on their audiences, these assertions have largely relied upon speculation. In recent years, some ecocritics have begun to empirically examine this question, sometimes in collaboration with social scientists. Under the label of “empirical ecocriticism” they combine econarratological analysis with empirical methods used in disciplines such as environmental communication, environmental psychology, and the empirical study of literature. This panel presents the results of three such studies examining the impact of narratives dealing with issues such as animal sentience, speciesism, extinction, and slow violence across a range of media including literature, documentary film, radio features, and print journalism.

**Keywords:** empirical ecocriticism, intersectionality, speciesism, extinction, slow violence.

**Alexa WEIK VON MOSSNER, University of Klagenfurt, Austria.**

#### **Creaturely Encounters and Intersectionality: Understanding the Narrative Impact of Alice Walker’s ‘Am I Blue?’.**

The study presented in this paper is the latest in a series of attempts to tackle a psychological conundrum posed by Alice Walker’s “Am I Blue?” (1988), a story about a grieving horse that, in 1994, was banned by the California Board of Education for being “anti-meat eating.” An interdisciplinary team of ecocritics (Alexa Weik von Mossner, W.P. Malecki, Matthew Schneider-Mayerson) and psychologists (Paul Slovic, Marcus Mayorga) conducted a large online-based survey (N=800) in the United States and combined narratological analysis with quantitative empirical methods to study the narrative impact of “Am I Blue?” on contemporary American readers. We were seeking to replicate the results of an earlier study, conducted in Poland (Malecki et. al. 2019), while also testing new hypotheses about the cultural situatedness of reception, and about the impact of text-immanent features such as human-animal comparisons. The results of the study are in part surprising and counterintuitive, reminding us of the challenges involved in studying the reception of complex literary texts. While partially confirming our hypotheses about the effects of human-animal comparisons and the depiction of emotional rather than physical violence against animals, the study’s most important takeaway is the insight that culturally radical texts may fail to have the desired effect on readers who do not already share their position.

**Nicolai SKIVEREN, Aarhus University, Denmark.**

#### **Sympathy across Borders: An Empirical Reception Study of Slow Violence and Environmental Dumping in Eco-documentary.**

This paper explores the representational challenges of slow violence from an empirical perspective. The paper reports the findings of an explorative and qualitative reception study of the observational documentary *Plastic China* (2016), a film that portrays the social and environmental consequences of the international plastic recycling industry in China. Methodologically, the paper examines the experiences of a group of Danish viewers (N=14) using qualitative interviewing to map their different affective reactions to the film as well as the active efforts they made to interpret it. The interviews found that a number of scenes and narrative features had caught the attention of the participants, who described feeling apprehensive toward the toxic environment that makes up the backdrop of the film, sympathetic for the recycling workers who are forced to live in it, and troubled by the fact that they would recognize many of the waste objects from their everyday lives in Denmark. In addition to the filmic experiences,

the study also reports on the reflections that the individual participants voiced in response to the documentary, including thoughts on the complex connections between global consumer capitalism, the agency of the individual (Western) consumer, the recycling industry in China, and environmental degradation in general. In discussing these responses, the chapter employs Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model of communication to illustrate how the individual variations within the viewer testimonies can be made sense of through three subject-viewer positions: (i) dominant-hegemonic, (ii) negotiated, and (iii) oppositional. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates one way in which empirical ecocritics might utilize the qualitative framework of audience reception studies as a means to not only evaluate the actual capacity of an environmental documentary to communicate or represent complex ecological issues, but, more importantly, to identify some of the representational obstacles involved in such an effort.

### Room / Aula 7

#### Pre-formed panel The Arts of Transcreation

Chair: Serenella IOVINO, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA.

“Transcreation,” the keyword for this conference, refers to the porosity of experiences, codes, and creativities through which we—human subjects—attempt to “think ourselves into the being of another,” to use Jonathan Safran Foer's words. Stimulated by the philosophy animating the CFP and Margarita Carretero-González's inspiring coinage, this panel reflects on modes of enabling this “thinking into the being of another.” Conceived as chapters of an interlaced conversation across indigenous studies, multispecies ethnography, cosmopolitics, new materialisms, and biosemiotics, our four papers will discuss contemporary art, poetry, “storied matter,” and indigenous mythologies as forms of communication beyond the human realm. The panel also includes a poetry reading by Colombian poet and ecocritic Juan Carlos Galeano.

**Keywords:** Transcreation, indigenous studies, multispecies ethnography, new materialisms, biosemiotics, eco-art, poetry.

**Serenella IOVINO, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA.**

**Messages from Within: Signs, Transcreation, and Freedom in Primo Levi.**

A tapeworm finds its expressiveness in a poetic mode that celebrates its connection to an indifferent (and mostly unfriendly) host, while a medical patient/literary scholar deciphers its code: This literary case, from Primo Levi's *Natural Stories*, is something more than a chapter in the history of Italian science fiction. Being a narrative way to “think ourselves into”—and through—“the being of another,” it is an exercise in transcreation, namely, the laborious practice of conjuring up similarities, which are already inscribed in the isomorphic statute of the living.

Levi's transcreative imagination, however, is not limited to considering universal semiosis and the necessity to enable the communication-interpretation nexus across life forms. Resonating with Jesper Hoffmeyer's notion of “semiotic freedom,” his narratives are also a reflection on how practices of communication, expression, and *poiesis* are fundamental ingredients for a democratic life as well as a more-than-human ethical ontology.

**Keywords:** Biosemiotics, Transcreation, Primo Levi, Semiotic Freedom, Ethics.

**Federico Luisetti, University of St Gallen, Switzerland.**

**Earth Beings.**

In *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Duke University Press 2015), Marisol de la Cadena translates the Quechua word *tirakuna*, the plural of earth, as “earth beings.” Earth beings are



considered by the Quechua as other-than-human beings, odd subjects that frighten and preannounce, protect and punish, deceive and heal, sharing emotions, feelings and expressions with the people (*runakuna*). I suggest extending the notion of earth beings also to non-indigenous eco-social subjectivities such as the *Pierre des Marmettes*, a large Alpine erratic boulder now sitting in the parking lot of the hospital of Monthey, Switzerland. This fragment of deep time is an ex-centric being that emerged from processes of transcreation and still confounds categories.

**Keywords:** Earth beings; Decolonial subjectivities; Crisis of presence; Pluriverse.

**Juan Carlos GALEANO, Florida State University, USA.**

**Amazonian Animals and Plants: Poetics of Transcreation.**

My contribution to this panel will be sharing prose poems on animals and plants animated by the mythological ethos and stylistic traits of the storytelling traditions present in Amazonia. In my introductory words to the reading, I will express that these prose poems are a sort of “interspecies transcreations” as I believe that the fabric of my writing, derived from historic processes of cultural exchange and hybridity in Amazonia, is strongly influenced by indigenous cosmovisions giving credence to the idea that there is a breath, a substance that unites spirits, animals, plants, places and all beings of the world. Cosmopolitics, cosmologies of reciprocity, forces of nature, and shape-shifting present in my poems are also grounded on the religious view and philosophy of life of Amazonians. Within such frameworks, I argue, my writing of the poems proposed for my presentation becomes an experience of feeling the multiple subjectivities of the nonhuman, an act of multispecies coauthoring through imagination.

**Keywords:** Amazonian world, poetry, mythological ethos, cosmopolitics, hybridity, Indigenous shape-shifting, coauthoring, animals and plants.

### **Room / Aula 10**

#### **Pre-formed panel**

#### **Beyond Human: Decentering the Anthropocene in Spanish Ecocriticism I**

Chair: Shanna LINO, York University, Collège Universitaire Glendon, Toronto, Canada.

Dismantling the nonhuman-human dichotomy and nature-culture divide in ways that decentre the human is critical in order to imagine alternative socioeconomic policies and ecocultural structures that would lead to the kind of interspecies kinship and disanthropocentrism that the ecological health of the planet requires. With this objective in mind, this two-part session examines the interrelations between Iberian cultural practices, historical developments, and ecological processes, which at present have remained undertheorized in Iberian cultural studies.

The six papers distributed in two panels discuss representations of the environment in Spanish culture in two distinguishing manners: by exploring specifically the *more-than-human* and by tracing the *historical representation* of these elements in works from the early modern through the post-crisis periods so as to highlight the central roles that the beyond-human has played in texts that counter those political, economic, and social strategies that have led to the current state of ecological devastation. Exposing anthropocenic logic and bringing forth examples of resistant voices that consider nature and the human not in binary opposition but rather as constitutive of an integrated ecological system on Earth, the first paper engages with ecofeminism and ethics of care to reveal that in the context of the post-crisis era, surviving the vulnerability of the Capitalocene requires unconditional hospitality and unconventional kinships. The second presentation shows how early modern interest in caged birdsong suggests attention to ecological interconnectivity despite human objectification of birds. A study of 21st-century Ibizan poetry of/about/through waste considers the ways in which capitalism has alienated beings and proposes that the concept of salvage can foreground the links between human affect and the more-than-human world.

In order to call attention to the mastery narratives that have disrupted ecosystems while emboldening speciesism and human-centredness, the three papers on the second panel dismantle anthropocenic frameworks of past, present, future, and fantastical realms. An analysis of consumptive materializations through imaginations of hybrid beings in the ecogothic allows us to perceive recurring human exceptionalism and ecophobic tendencies. A study of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos' writings and Goya's neoclassical landscapes draws attention to eighteenth-century perspectives on humans' dominion over nature and the tensions between rural landscapes and agricultural reform. Finally, an ecopostcolonial reading of young adult fiction delves into the ways in which these works expose and challenge the ideologies surrounding speciesism, racism, sexism, and imperialism while cultivating ecocitizens.

**Maryanne L. LEONE, Assumption University, Massachusetts, USA.**

**Tracing Spanish Environmental Culture in the Anthropocene/Capitalocene/Chthulucene: A Case Study via Ecofeminist Materialism and Entanglements of Care.**

This paper shifts away from an anthropocenic perspective that considers nature and the human in binary opposition and argues that theoretical alternatives such as the Capitalocene or Chthulucene better decentre humans and support an ecosocial understanding of more-than-human matter. Using Sara Mesa's *Un incendio invisible* (2011, 2017) as a case study, this presentation contributes to critical conversations about cultural responses to Spain's economic crisis and its aftermath as well as to the field of Spanish ecofeminisms to critique expansionist, consumer-driven economics, and real estate speculation at the heart of the 2008 financial crisis. I argue that Mesa's text not only narrates the neoliberal economic model's destructive impact on sentient and non-sentient beings, but moreover suggests the agentic potential of the nonhuman to call attention to an ecological interconnectivity that we must recognize in order to respond effectively to the multiple environmental and social crises of our times.

**John BEUSTERIEN, Texas Tech University, USA.**

**Birdsong and the Earth's Polyrhythm: Filippo the Blue Rock-Thrush.**

Listening to birdsong in a bird's natural habitat enables the appreciation of the earth's polyrhythm, that is, the complex interconnectivity of different planetary rhythms. This chapter studies the ecocritical significance of Juan Bautista Jamarro's *Conocimiento de las diez aves menores de jaula, su canto, enfermedad, cura y cria* (*Concerning Ten Small Caged Song Birds, their Song, Sickness, Care, and Breeding*, 1604). Beusterien provides an overview to how caged songbirds formed part of the practice of making birds the objects of human spectacles in the early modern period. As a foil to the destructive practice of caging birds, the chapter offers an ecocritical interpretation of *Concerning Ten Small Caged Song Birds* that celebrates the life of an individual bird—Filippo the Blue Rock Thrush—and a bird's song as truly only a song when it is part of the earth's polyrhythm.

**Micah McKAY, University of Alabama, USA.**

**The Salvage Poetics of Ben Clark's *Basura*.**

The aim of this presentation is to reflect on the role of poetry in thinking through the concept of the Anthropocene, which tries to grapple with the enormous dimensions of the crises—both “cultural” and “natural”—that human beings currently face. The focal point of my analysis is the 2011 poetry collection *Basura*, written by Ben Clark (Ibiza, 1984). Clark's collection both engages with multiple notions of waste and foregrounds trash's troubling material vibrancy by framing it as a protagonist in his kaleidoscope of poetic reflections on moments that run the gamut from the mundane (picnics in El Retiro that leave the grounds strewn with garbage) to ones of World-Historical import (the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan during World War II that left wasted humans and environments in their wake). In my reading of *Basura*, I propose that the organizing principle of Clark's work is that of salvage, a concept I develop in two ways. First, I consider the manner in which Clark composes his collection through the lens of Walter Benjamin's preferred metaphor for the materialist historian: the *Lumpensammler*, *chiffonnier*, or ragpicker. Second, I turn to the work of Anna Tsing, who sees salvage

(which she defines as taking advantage of value produced without capitalist control) as a key strategy in capitalism's project of alienating beings—both human and nonhuman—from their lifeworlds. In this sense, I contend that Clark's poetic methodology of combing through sources to rescue trash-inflected examples from the dustbin of history is an act of salvage and that his insistence on foregrounding the links between trash and both human affect and the more-than-human world constitutes a critical reflection on the possibility of cultivating life and meaning amidst the ruins of capitalism.

17.00 – 18.30

**Room / Aula 5**

Pre-formed panel

Forest Ecopoetics of Transcreaturely Encounters in Literature and Dance

Chair. Noémie MOUTEL, Université de Caen, France.

**Noémie MOUTEL, Université de Caen, France.**  
**Ecofeminist Poetics of the Forest.**

The EASLCE's 9<sup>th</sup> biennial conference seeks "to explore the way in which creaturely encounters have been textually rendered in order to transfer the experience of the nonhuman species to a human audience." As a researcher in ecofeminisms, I will first address the assumption of humankind's homogeneity, potentially a dangerous one. Social divides, exploitation and power struggles have hierarchized social groups for centuries. There is hopefulness in believing in one great, human family, but there are also deceit and pitfalls. An ecofeminist approach to the topic of human and non-human relations requires that we specify which humans are interacting with those other-than-human beings. As French philosopher Catherine Larrère warns: "by speaking in general terms of relations between [hu]man and nature without wondering which [hu]man is being spoken of, one risks approaching nature from a strongly masculine point of view (*Guide des Humanités Environnementales*, 46-47).

Analyzing and comparing the treatment of creaturely encounters within forest spaces in three novels (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, 1831; Theodore Roszak's *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, 1995; and Jean Hegland's *Into the Forest*, 1996), I shall hope to contribute to an ecofeminist poetics of the forest that takes into account the patriarchal soil in which the industrial revolution plunges its roots. The creaturely encounters explored shall involve Shelley's man-made being and his interactions with blades of grass, moonlight, streams and berries; Roszak's imaginings of women's interactions with birds of prey; and Hegland's creation of sisterly interactions with a nurturing sequoia stump and a protective mother bear. In these three narratives, the creaturely encounters that occur in the space of the forest are possible because they happen outside of men's rule. The setting and specificities of these encounters demonstrate how the etymological origin of the word forest (from the latin *forestis*, emanating from *foris*, which signifies "outside of"), its mythological significations, and its appropriation by subordinate earthly creatures construct a most appropriate *ecofeminist transcreative space*.

**Bénédicte MEILLON, University of Perpignan Via Domitia, France.**  
**Poetic Echoes of an Ancient Forest through Dance, Photography, Writing, and Film.**

What if dancing with other-than-human nature and nature writing followed similar processes, half-way between ecopoetic translation and multispecies *sympoiesis* (Donna Haraway)? This presentation will deal with a multimedia creative research project carried out over two years in the Natural Reserve of the Massane, an ancient forest that is now a UNESCO site on the border between France and Spain. The project gave rise to a transdisciplinary collective including Béné Meillon, Caroline Granger, Béranger Lacoste, Margot Lauwers, Karen Houle, Olivier Panaud, Joseph Garrigue, and Mina Dos Santos. My aim is to challenge the notion of artistic production as resulting from human design and technique, arguing instead that ecopoetic forms of art emerge from a work of co-composition with the more-than-human

world. In this presentation, I will present the work that has stemmed from explorations of the forest and in situ improvisation. I will broach our collaboration with scientific colleagues who have shed light onto the rich biodiversity of this ancient forest, part of which is threatened by climate change. Inspired by research in eco-poetic dance and literature, the participants in the project have braided different fields of knowledge across the environmental sciences, arts, and humanities and produced a multimedia exhibition involving dance, film, photography, and poetry. Based as it is mostly on improvisation, on writing and dancing *with* forest beings and elements, this creative work results from creaturely encounters. Consequently, the final product is an eco-poetic work of interspecies transcreation. I will first situate our project within the larger research domains underlying our work and approach, ranging from biology, plant genomics and forestry, to ecopsychology, ecofeminism, eco-poetics, and dance studies. I will then explicit our aims, methodology, and creative processes. Showing photos and clips from the film included in the final exhibition, I will offer insight into how such research-creation projects can provide a translation of the ongoing dance and song of the world, while hoping to restore sensitivity and attention to the multispecies life of an ancient forest.

**Caroline GRANGER, University of Caen Normandy, France.**

***Rainforest* by Merce Cunningham: Experiencing an Unexpected Ecosystem.**

The word forest refers to the outside woods, a foreign territory, a space on the margin of most people's daily lives. The forest captures a forbidden and mysterious world nourished by many fantasies. To step into a forest makes way for the unexpected to take place. Walking in the forest can turn into an open invitation to travel through a place where one's body comes across elements of different sizes, colors, sounds, smells, movements. Human landmarks tend to be blurred by the wild entanglements of vegetation, paving the way for surprising interspecies encounters.

Merce Cunningham was born in 1919 in Centralia, close to the Hoh Rain Forest. This place is well-known for its diverse plants, ferns and moss which transforms the shapes of the rocks and trees into pillows and create an illusion of softness and suspension. This paper explores the hypothesis that Merce Cunningham's experience of this forest has influenced his work as dancer and choreographer. It tackles the relationships created between the non-human, the choreographer, the dancers, and the audience in Cunningham's work, and questions to what extent they may be translations derived from looking and moving through the Hoh Rain Forest. How does Merce Cunningham's dance performance convey this immersive experience to the audience?

I will first look into the choreographer's own experience of the forest. I will then turn to his artistic process, to demonstrate that his use of randomness in his creative and collaborative processes provides him with a way to create an unexpected ecosystem. His idea was to free dance from having to convey any message or any intention. As a result, the spectators can never predict what will happen next and may feel like animals. Their look has to circulate among the dancers or it can be caught on one side and be quickly trapped on another side. Finally, I will verify this idea through the analysis of the poem "Rainforest" written by Alexandra Grilikhes, and show how strong the impact on the audience can be. After attending Merce Cunningham's choreography, the poet reveals her experience and leads the readers to a mysterious more-than-human place.

### **Room / Aula 8**

#### **Situated encounters**

Chair: Heather SULLIVAN, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, USA.

**Lenka FILIPOVA, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.**

**Situated Worlding and the Non-Human: Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* and Melissa Lucashenko's *Mullumbimby*.**

The paper is concerned with the notion of 'worlding' and temporalities of the non-human in environmental literature. Working to unsettle notions of the 'world' based on concepts of centre and



periphery as well as various forms of ‘world systems’, it foregrounds literary representations of more-than-human forces. I analyse two novels by Australian Indigenous writers, namely Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* (2013) and Melissa Lucashenko’s *Mullumbimby* (2013), in order to foreground a poetics of discontinuity and interruption in being which the human relation to the non-human (plants, animals, but also traditionally ‘inanimate’ objects) poses and is posed by, as it is born in language.

I argue that while using specific narrative strategies, the writers foreground alternative notions of nature and culture that go beyond eco-constructivism on the one hand (the idea at the heart of the Anthropocene discourse that ‘nature’ does not exist anymore), and forms of environmental holism on the other (various concepts of ‘natureculture’). While I argue that not everything is nature, I also agree with Frédéric Neyrat that “nature makes it so that everything is not human” (154). Moreover, while the novels challenge the notion of absolute time by a phenomenological, subjective time, they also demonstrate how this phenomenological notion of time grows smaller in importance as multiple human and non-human temporalities come into view. In particular, both novels are shown to highlight radical alterity of the non-human, its caprice and unpredictability, and the way it needs to be acknowledged in the environmental discourse today. By doing so, they problematise the idea of ‘togetherness’ as a unitary horizon of environment and social factors and speak about togetherness as situatedness instead. I draw on insights from New Materialism and vitalist thought (Bennett and Latour), as well as Indigenous cosmologies (Martin and Mirraaboopa; Bawaka Country et al.), and show that both novels question the ways in which dominant notions of modernity impose chronological notions of time and ‘progress’, and propose notions of plural and simultaneous environmental ‘modernities’ as forms of ‘situated worlding’.

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**Patrycja AUSTIN, University of Rzeszów, Poland.**

**Fungi, Mosses and Humans - Creaturely Encounters in Liz Ziemska’s Stories.**

The phrase attributed to Heraclitus Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ is typically translated as “Nature loves to conceal herself” In Western philosophy, up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, plants and fungi were placed low on the ladder of living things. Philosophers did not often stoop that low to give much thought to what lies so low, and when they did, they did not question that hierarchy. In my talk I intend to show, following Heideggerian thought, especially his idea of *aletheia*, or un-concealment, that proper engagement with the vegetal other abolishes this hierarchy and makes the charge of anthropomorphism invalid. Attunement to the ontological makeover of more-than-human life forms places human capacities such as awareness, language, or the sensorial perception of the environment on a continuum with plants and fungi, not in opposition to them. I will apply this reading to my interpretation of 21<sup>st</sup> century American short stories by Liz Ziemska – “The Mushroom Queen” and “Hunt Relic”. While Heidegger’s existential philosophy is my point of departure, I will develop it with the help of philosophers associated with Object Oriented Ontology - Timothy Morton and Graham Harman, and contemporary plant/fungi philosophers and scientists - Michael Marder, Stefano Mancuso, Merlin Sheldrake.

**Begoña SIMAL GONZÁLEZ, Universidade da Coruña, Spain.**

**Thinking Like a Mountain, Thinking Like a Tree: From Pathetic Fallacies to Inlanding Promises.**

Imagining non-human nature from our inescapably human point of view has always been a formidable task. More often than not, literature has used and abused the nonhuman as a means to an end, analogical artifacts to convey human emotions and dilemmas—from Aesop’s fables to contemporary



Disney productions—instead of engaging with the actual creatures themselves. If giving voice and agency to nonhuman animals has seldom been a priority among artists, doing so with other plants and the land has been even more rare. And yet, a few contemporary writers have not shied away from this challenge; instead, they have attempted to explore the nonhuman in their own right, and they have also tried to reflect the intriguing bond between human beings and the nonhuman. In this paper I want to focus on several narratives that have mobilized daring rhetorical tools in order to try and capture that bond: Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, or Perry Miyake's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Manzanar*. All of these narratives move away from the temptation of pathetic fallacy and discard earlier literary strategies of anthropomorphism; instead, they favour new modalities of “interspecies transcreation” (Carretero- González 2019), such as “inrooting” and of interaction with the land, like “inlanding.” Like classical anthropomorphic tropes, inlanding makes the human form visible in the landscape. The difference lies in the dynamics of empowerment attached to each phenomenon: when we anthropomorphize the land, *tout court*, it is we as human agents that give shape and value to a particular land formation. In contrast, inlanding allows for the opposite process, whereby it is the land, not people, that endows the inlanded object—in this case a human body—with shape, power and value. Even though all literary texts are, inescapably, human narratives and articulate human perceptions, the notion of inlanding, indebted to earlier theories of “transcorporeality” (Alaimo 2008, 2010), allows for a meaningful change in the directionality of agency: the human body does not necessarily impose its shape/will on the land(scape); it is the land that “borrows” it.

### Room / Aula 10

#### Pre-formed panel

#### Beyond Human: Decentring the Anthropocene in Spanish Ecocriticism II.

Chair: Maryanne L. LEONE, Assumption University, Massachusetts, USA.

Dismantling the nonhuman-human dichotomy and nature-culture divide in ways that decentre the human is critical in order to imagine alternative socioeconomic policies and ecocultural structures that would lead to the kind of interspecies kinship and disanthropocentrism that the ecological health of the planet requires. With this objective in mind, this two-part session examines the interrelations between Iberian cultural practices, historical developments, and ecological processes, which at present have remained undertheorized in Iberian cultural studies.

The six papers distributed in two panels discuss representations of the environment in Spanish culture in two distinguishing manners: by exploring specifically the *more-than-human* and by tracing the *historical representation* of these elements in works from the early modern through the post-crisis periods so as to highlight the central roles that the beyond-human has played in texts that counter those political, economic, and social strategies that have led to the current state of ecological devastation. Exposing anthropocenic logic and bringing forth examples of resistant voices that consider nature and the human not in binary opposition but rather as constitutive of an integrated ecological system on Earth, the first paper engages with ecofeminism and ethics of care to reveal that in the context of the post-crisis era, surviving the vulnerability of the Capitalocene requires unconditional hospitality and unconventional kinships. The second presentation shows how early modern interest in caged birdsong suggests attention to ecological interconnectivity despite human objectification of birds. A study of 21st-century Ibizan poetry of/about/through waste considers the ways in which capitalism has alienated beings and proposes that the concept of salvage can foreground the links between human affect and the more-than-human world.

In order to call attention to the mastery narratives that have disrupted ecosystems while emboldening speciesism and human-centredness, the three papers on the second panel dismantle anthropocenic frameworks of past, present, future, and fantastical realms. An analysis of consumptive materializations through imaginations of hybrid beings in the ecogothic allows us to perceive recurring human exceptionalism and ecophobic tendencies. A study of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos' writings and Goya's neoclassical landscapes draws attention to eighteenth-century perspectives on humans' dominion over nature and the tensions between rural landscapes and agricultural reform. Finally, an

ecopostcolonial reading of young adult fiction delves into the ways in which these works expose and challenge the ideologies surrounding speciesism, racism, sexism, and imperialism while cultivating ecocitizens.

**Shanna LINO, York University, Collège Universitaire Glendon, Toronto, Canada.**  
**Disrupting Agentic Paradigms: Ecophobia, Fantasy, and Anthropogenic (Self)Destruction.**

This paper critically examines Spanish ecocultural traditions that reinforce human-nonhuman hierarchies and prioritize humans' aesthetic and recreational pleasures through ecologically devastating consumptive practices. Drawing on the example of ecogothic preoccupations with the uncanny and abject, and building upon a growing corpus of criticism that identifies the catalyzing potential of monster fiction, this paper illuminates Catalan author Albert Sánchez Piñol's exposé of humanity's cyclical trajectory toward self-annihilation. Through my readings of ecophobia, agentism, and the materiality of inter-species art, I evince the ways in which the 2002 novel and its English-language cinematic adaptation by Xavier Gens (*Cold Skin* 2017) dismantle verticality, blur the nature-culture divide, and promote beyond-human hybridity. I position the significance of this and other fantastical texts within an appraisal of recurring human exceptionalism in order to present a case for how ecohorror and the ecogothic enable us to more clearly perceive ecophobic tendencies and to embrace nonhuman agentism as a step to activism.

**Daniel FROST, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, USA.**  
**Of Witches and Land Reform in Enlightenment Spain.**

"Luche Vuestra Alteza con la naturaleza," writes Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos in his *Informe sobre la ley agraria*, delivered to King Charles IV in 1795, "y si puede decirse así, oblíguela a ayudar a los esfuerzos del interés individual, o por lo menos a no frustrarlos." Pitting the Crown against nature, Jovellanos recognizes a sense of agency in the land, implying it is capable of struggle and, like an enemy, subject to human domination. My article offers a closer examination of how Jovellanos and likeminded reformers of Spain's Enlightenment cultivated a discourse of struggle and conquest in their arguments to "improve" nature by overcoming its "obstacles" and creating a "perfect" natural environment. For Jovellanos, as for his contemporaries, the combination of art and ingenuity becomes the measure of a society's progress, holding the potential to turn nature from "[lo] estéril e ingrato que era" into "un jardín continuado y lleno de amenidad y abundancia;" fusing the productive and the visually pleasing into a continuous system, he describes an art powerful enough to make all of nature a garden. Pleasing though the prospects may appear, however, such artful discourse hides the environmental destruction and patterns of social domination necessary to achieve the "admirable spectacle" that he celebrates, and in doing so, privileges man's political and economic activity above environmental consciousness.

Drawing on the work of Karen Warren and Carolyn Merchant, who recognize modern attitudes towards the land as part of an oppressive conceptual framework that includes the domination of women, this paper's exploration of reformist discourse in Eighteenth-century Spain helps to understand some of the premises of an antagonistic view of nature in modern times, raise some of the ethical implications of such a perspective, and give some background into our current post-enlightenment world view of nature as an adversary to be conquered.

**Victoria L. KETZ, La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA**  
**Monstrous Humanity: An Ecopostcolonial Reading of Laura Gallego García's Trilogy *Guardianes de la Ciudadela*.**

One of the most interesting features of Young Adult Literature (YAL) is the importance placed on the connection established between the protagonists and their environment. Due to the interconnectivity between the fictional characters and nature, literary scholar Harini Das has argued that the adoption of ecocriticism when analyzing children's texts is vital. The ecocritical perspective offers an acute vision, which can lead to change in the pattern of humans' inhabitation of the planet, to analysis of the representation of nature in texts, as well as to reassessment of the values held about the environment and nonhuman life by society. This presentation employs the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism to analyze Laura Gallego García's trilogy, comprised of *El bestiario de Axlin* (2018), *El secreto de Xein* (2018), and *La*

*misión de Rox* (2019). In these works, Gallego animates young readers to engage with complex environmental and social issues by revealing the dangers of striated social structures, speciesism, and dualism, as well as encourages environmental literacy and the development of an environmentally aware self-identity. Gallego's world demonstrates a systemically biased allocation of uncultivated and urban space as well as a hierarchization of social structures. Speciesism in the text creates class distinctions and apportions specific sites for each group to inhabit. Dualisms, including urban/rural, centre/periphery, human/nonhuman, civilized/savage, anthropocentric/supernatural, individual/collective, self/other, and good/evil, further a binary construction of the world, which heightens the environmental crisis in the narrative. This study explores how an ecocritical postcolonial agenda in Gallego's work shapes not only the young fictional characters in their development of a self-identity, but also real-life young readers, thereby creating basic environmental literacy and potential environmental leaders for the future. The balancing of ecosystems, endorsed in YAL, is vital for sustaining all life on earth. By "reframing the text," as Kate Rigby, British environmental scholar, states, the young reader can better understand, "the necessity of recalling the true cost, both to subordinate humans and to the earth, of our production processes and consumption habits" (151). Thus, Gallego's YAL work develops awareness of the environment and mobilizes the reader to take action towards healthy ecological habits.

**Wednesday / Miércoles 14**

**9.00 – 10.00**

**Room / Aula 5**

Pastoral

Chair: Isabel Maria FERNANDES ALVES, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal / ULICES/CEAUL - University of Lisbon.

**Artis SVECE, University of Latvia, Latvia.**

**Dangers of Closeness to Nature: Pastoral Discourse and Justification of Practices Harmful to the Natural Environment.**

There are many ways of understanding nature, and not so many ways of determining whether this understanding has succeeded. Latvian discourses of national identity often articulate this identity by referring to the supposed closeness of Latvians to nature. Latvian pastoral literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has maintained and strengthened this connection although, or because, it has gone through several abrupt replacements of ideological frameworks that sometimes were artificially imposed upon literature. Even today, the pastoral literature is relevant for articulating identities and the place of people, or Latvians in particular, in the natural environment. Nevertheless, the interpretation of what it means to be close to nature can be quite diverse and not necessarily corresponding to, for example, contemporary understanding of the sustainable development and related practices. Instead, the belief that one understands nature can be used to ignore and reject criticism of practices that are convenient, harmful to the natural environment, and sometimes presented as traditional.

In my paper, I describe the development of pastoral literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Latvia, including its survival and development during the era of soviet ideology that had its own complex relationship to pastoral. I demonstrate the influence of pastoral discourse on the contemporary discourses of nature in Latvia and the variety of ways it influences debates about the protection and use of nature.

**Stefano ROZZONI, University of Bergamo, Italy / Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany.**

## From the *Locus Amoenus* to the *Locus Conventus*: A(nother) Possible Reframing of the Concept of ‘Pastoral’.

Since Lawrence Buell’s call for “a mature environmental aesthetics” (1995) in the study of pastoral poetry, an array of ecocritical perspectives on this subject has developed, including the neologisms ‘post-pastoral’ (Gifford, 1999), ‘necropastoral’ (McSweeney, 2015), and ‘dark pastoral’ (Sullivan, 2017). This trend allowed the concept of pastoral to become a privileged site for determining valuable considerations regarding issues of human-nonhuman connectedness. However, traditional figurations and critical clichés still survive, which perpetuate dualistic and anthropocentric understandings of the pastoral: the *locus amoenus*, the pleasant place, is one of them.

In alignment with the idea of reframing concepts in literary and cultural studies (Berning et al., 2014), my paper negotiates the notion of the pastoral primarily as an idealized, escapist, and *pleasant* place, while readdressing the relational dynamics existing among the several entities inhabiting it. In this sense, the pastoral is re-discussed through the original notion of *locus conventus*, the place of encounter – of humans and nonhumans: this expression aims to inspire critics to investigate the peculiarity of the interspecies dynamics occurring in the pastoral (literary) universe for determining ethical relational models as a response to the challenges posed by the Anthropocene. Inspired by Hubert Zapf’s discussion on re-reading and reevaluating the archives of Western literature (2020), the *locus conventus* becomes a hermeneutical tool for disclosing alternative narratives from pastoral poems, which traditional approaches have often disregarded.

Specifically, I will offer an analysis of selected pastoral poems appearing in the overlooked five-volume anthology titled *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922), demonstrating that, beyond the accusation of prolonging old-fashioned trends in Modernist England, a new critical evaluation allows for: a) determining that they presents valuable examples of ethical relationality between humans and nonhumans; b) underlying how this collection appears surprisingly *modern* when regarded through an ecocritical lens; c) establishing a dialogue between this collection and the ecological discourses of the present-day world.

**Keywords:** pastoral; reframing; *locus amoenus*; *locus conventus*; English Georgian poetry.

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## Room / Aula 10

### Semióticas de la naturaleza

Moderadora: Pilar ANDRADE BOUÉ, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España.

**Virginie MUXART, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord, Francia;**

**Miguel DELIBES DE CASTRO, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, España.**

**La gineta: Tema de investigación en ecocrítica.**

La ecocrítica “es el estudio de las relaciones entre la literatura y el medio ambiente” (Glotfelty, 1996). El marco teórico de la ecocrítica abarca la forma en que los estudios literarios ayudan a entender el mundo y a conocer las relaciones del ser humano con el entorno natural, contribuyendo de este modo a la salud del planeta y de sus habitantes. El caso de la gineta (*Genetta genetta*; Mammalia, Carnivora) en Europa muestra cómo la literatura comparada, utilizando la ecocrítica como marco, puede trabajar conjuntamente con las ciencias naturales para intentar resolver algunos misterios en relación con la presencia poco previsible de este animal en Europa.

Proponemos una comunicación a dos voces: un diálogo entre un investigador en biología y un investigador en literatura comparada para mostrar cómo la literatura y otras ciencias humanas aportan respuestas a preguntas planteadas en el marco de la biología. Desarrollaremos tres puntos relacionados entre sí: origen de la gineta en Europa, casos de albinismo y melanismo en las ginetas ibéricas, y el posible uso de la especie a modo de gato en los domicilios humanos.

La biogeografía y la genética sugieren que la presencia de la gineta en Europa no es natural, sino que fue traída por los humanos. Pero ¿por quiénes?, ¿cuándo?, ¿con algún objetivo concreto?, ¿con qué consecuencias? Hablaremos de los argumentos biológicos y de los de la literatura comparada, que vienen a sostener a los primeros, pero también a sugerir nuevas alternativas. En la Península Ibérica se han registrado numerosas ginetas melánicas y unas pocas albinas, gracias a las recientes fotografías y a las pieles conservadas en los museos. En Francia, hasta ahora, no se ha registrado ninguna gineta melánica ni albina, y en África, son muy raras. La zoohistoria, la literatura y la iconografía sugieren que los ejemplares con pelajes inhabituales fueron muy apreciados, lo que unido a su mayor abundancia en Europa que en África podría sugerir que en algún momento la población introducida experimentó selección artificial. Por fin, ¿Qué relación mantuvieron las sociedades humanas de la cuenca mediterránea con la gineta en la historia? ¿La gineta fue, en otros tiempos, nuestro “gato”, como se lee en muchos libros? La familia de los Vivérridos, que incluye a las ginetas, muestra semejanzas con la de los Félidos. ¿Qué nos dicen las ciencias humanas sobre el tema? Arte del Antiguo Egipto, iconografía, testimonios y literatura nos dan algunas respuestas y sugieren que la gineta pudo vivir asociada a los humanos. Así, ciencias naturales y literatura comparada se encuentran y se enriquecen mutuamente en este complejo caso.

**Rosa María BERBEL GARCÍA, Universidad de Granada, España.**

**Semillas que devienen semillas: imaginación compasiva y biosemiótica en *El sueño de toda célula* (2018) de Maricela Guerrero.**

Las relaciones bilaterales entre la práctica poética y el pensamiento ecológico no han cesado de incrementarse en las últimas décadas. Ante la evidencia del cambio climático, la destrucción medioambiental y la acelerada urbanización del territorio, la poesía nos ha proveído de modelos alternativos de relación con el medio, reformulando la oposición tradicional entre naturaleza y cultura y cuestionando las fronteras ontológicas entre el ser humano y el resto de formas de vida no humanas. De este modo lo pone de manifiesto la aceptación creciente del término “ecopoema”, como categoría estética que arraiga en el deseo de confrontar la crisis ecológica desde la creación poética, formulando nuevos paradigmas para una vinculación significativa, armónica y afectuosa con el medioambiente.

Esta propuesta de comunicación plantea, así, indagar en las nuevas direcciones que en este siglo adquiere el nexo entre poesía y ecología, ponderando las posibilidades estéticas y políticas del ecopoema y las decisivas transformaciones que opera en la producción de subjetividades. Para ello, nos centramos

en el poemario *El sueño de toda célula* (2018) de Maricela Guerrero, que constituye un espacio revelador para el replanteamiento de las formas tradicionales de representación, mediante el énfasis en la imaginación compasiva y las semióticas de la naturaleza, así como a través de la desestabilización de las fronteras entre el lenguaje poético y el conocimiento científico. A medio camino entre el manual de botánica y el estudio de la taxonomía, sus poemas concilian el pensamiento ecológico, la experimentación lingüística y las posibilidades especulativas de la ficción, concediendo la voz a formas de vida no humanas y restituyendo el diálogo entre los discursos tradicionalmente implicados en el dominio literario y los ámbitos científicos. En suma, la obra de Guerrero representa un lugar privilegiado para expandir los límites de la imaginación política, al tensionar y revertir los modos históricos de representación de la naturaleza, favoreciendo nuevas estrategias empáticas para las relaciones entre especies.

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**Room / Aula 10**  
**10.15 - 12.00**

T15M (Theses in 15 minutes / *Tesis en 15 minutos*)

Chair: Margarita CARRETERO GONZÁLEZ

**Veronika ARUTYUNYAN, University of Hamburg, Germany**  
***Beyond the Anthropocentric Personal 'I': Reinventing the Subject Position in Contemporary Ecopoetry.***

This project explores innovative forms of lyric voice as alternatives to the personal 'I' that purports to be universal but is constrained by a local sense of time and space. Expressing the urgency of attending to ecocentric visions, poets examined here reinvent the subject position beyond the self, exploring interactions between the subject and environment. Their approaches resonate with ecocriticism's commitment to think beyond human-oriented spatial, temporal, and conceptual scales in expanding experience into global scopes.

These techniques position the subject as intertwined with and affected by the environment. Jorie Graham's and Rebecca Dunham's poems conceive of anthropomorphized natural phenomena and their

figurative participation in shaping poetic narratives. Blurring of human and nonhuman speakers decenters the human subject and the device of anthropomorphism affirms, rather than effaces the difference between human and nonhuman experience. Juliana Spahr's and Brenda Hillman's use of collective pronominal forms in multiple focalizations points to different positions and contexts elided in singular first-person narration. Craig Santos Perez' and Ed Roberson's poetics disrupt narratives of personal experience refracting these through other discourses. Aware of the challenges posed by the scale of environmental issues, these techniques introduce narrative potential for the act of mediation to become ecocentrically oriented.

**Camille LAVOIX, University of Würzburg, Germany.**

***Re-imagining the West Sudanian Savanna in Francophone and Anglophone Literatures.***

75% of the African savanna has been decimated, and most strongly, the West Sudanian Savanna. The consequences of its obliteration include food insecurity, local extinctions, terrorism, uncontrollable wildfires and undermined climate change mitigation efforts because intact savannas make crucial contributions to carbon sequestration. Lately, the *empty savanna* syndrome – empty of biodiversity – has had profound implications for pandemics. By contrast, the African savanna has been (mis)represented as pristine – empty of human inhabitants – by Euro-American writers who came from and lived outside savannas. The topos of the savanna's wilderness is still deeply engrained in Western culture, often taking the form of safari stories and, more recently, of a green colonial discourse deployed to protect natural parks. Countering the danger of a single story, my project takes a look at the ecological state of the savanna from within, through the lens of postcolonial novels situated in the West Sudanian Savanna. This thesis aims to analyze how authors rooted in the ecoregion are writing back, correcting previous and current misrepresentations in order to *unsafari* and reconfigure the savanna with poetics which carry the signatures of African oral traditions and decolonial thinking. Contemporary Francophone and Anglophone writers such as Véronique Tadjo, Maryse Condé, Cyprian Ekwensi and Elnathan John offer invaluable perspectives for establishing a more variegated understanding of the savanna's complexity as an endangered natural and cultural space. Although these novels contain alternative representations that serve to trace the loss of savanna, these texts have not been widely engaged by ecocriticism—a field that predominantly looked at Anglophone texts written by white writers. Therefore, my dissertation participates in the blossoming of a Francophone and Anglophone African ecocritical movement specifically by making visible the causes and effects of the West Sudanian Savanna obliteration in regional novels.

**Summer PHILLIPS, Kingston University, London, UK**

***A call for "Eco-Quality" in our more than human world – how speculative fiction can invite real world change: An introduction to The Multiverse Quilt, a collection of stories around re-visioning***

In a small mountain town in Andalucía, Spain, residents of Galera protested the idea of a proposed *macrogranjas* (a gigantic pig farm) being built alongside their attractive and historical community. Dialogue with residents suggested the main problem lay with the smell, and not wishing for slurry to contaminate local drinking water. When asked about how such intensive conditions might affect the pigs themselves, crammed together in intense heat in their thousands, awaiting their fate, most residents admitted this thought hadn't crossed their minds. Questioning how human beings consider non-human beings is the basis for this enquiry into human minds, animal minds and how the two interweave. By looking beyond our real world, to alternative worlds offered by science and speculative fiction, we can move beyond the shared entanglements suggested by Donna Haraway and Timothy Morton, whilst also unearthing how what we read affects how we live.

This paper offers a summary of a PhD project in progress, addressing the gap between scientific studies of non-human experience of world and consideration of how speculative thought and literature can create positive change for non-human beings. Part of the paper will be a reading of one of the short stories written for the project. *The Multiverse Quilt* story collection interweaves short speculative fiction stories exploring perceptions and creations of world, species discrimination and 'other minded-ness', against backdrops of altered ecologies.

By addressing current ideologies of the similarities and differences between the human and the non-human, we can ask how creative writing can illuminate issues around speciesism and human

behaviour towards the 'other', if such a thing exists. Looking to authors and thinkers demanding increased awareness of non-human animal minds, relationships, and rights to not having these cut short by human intervention, such as Jeffrey Masson, Susan McCarthy, Jonathon Balcombe and Marc Bekoff, provides a springboard for extending this awareness into the world of science and speculative literature. Other key ideas discussed are those presented by authors writing of *more-than-human* worlds, such as Jeff VanderMeer, Carol Emshwiller, David Walton and Karen Traviss.

Recognising that non-human animals have inner worlds which we may not understand does not mean we should exclude all possibilities of their experience. Creative writing invites a new way of seeing, not one that attempts to re-create a non-human experience, but one that allows for plentiful avenues into shared beingness and respectfulness of the *not-knowings*. Traversing strategies of storytelling, the project addresses modes of 'voicing' from authentic standpoints, which cover language, ethics and duty of care. Perception and portrayal of the non-human 'other' is unearthed by questioning what is meant by a non-human 'other', stepping away from a human-centric perspective, if this is possible, to allow a broadening of inclusivity.

The paper makes a case for speculative thought and literature combining to offer new possibilities for improved futures, and calls for a 're-visioning' of non-human animals and ecologies, thus contributing to positive change for the benefit of all living beings.

**Mònica Tomàs WHITE, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA**

***Literature and the Cosmopolitical Imagination: Representing Human and Nonhuman Interests for Ecologically Just Futures.***

My dissertation starts from the premise that countering environmental injustice first requires recognizes all relevant parties, diverse humans and nonhumans alike, as stakeholders in the world that we share. I call this a "cosmopolitical imagination": one in which both human and nonhuman entities are perceived as actors and political stakeholders to whom care is due. The dissertation focuses on how literature can spur this imagination by representing—portraying and advocating for—diverse human interests alongside nonhuman ones, catalyzing values and choices about how we relate to others. In particular, I show how the literary strategies of nonhuman narrators; fictional genres such as speculative fiction and horror; figurative language; and especially the political action of reading with others elicit engaged readers' care for entangled human and nonhuman interests. Conversations with my students guide my choice of texts, and I draw from their readings in order to foreground the transformative effects on beliefs and behaviors of sharing imaginative literature with others. In this way, my project recognizes new, diverse and vital sources of knowledge—both fiction and collective reading—to spur action on environmental injustice. This opens up possibilities for both caring and con/fabulation: building new stories and new worlds, together.

**Thursday / Jueves 15**

**11.00 – 13.00**

**Room / Aula 4**

**Room / Aula 4**

Pre-formed panel  
Arboreal Imaginaries

Chair: Giulia PACINI, William & Mary, Virginia, USA.

The natural history of trees has always been inextricably linked with the history of human civilization. Not only are trees a significant material resource but they have taken on roles as imaginary companions,



vegetal kin, threatening creaturely “others,” deities, mythological and cultural symbols, aesthetic objects, “home” for human and other-than-human animals, models for organizing knowledge into “branches” or structuring narratives. The visual arts are replete with images, and literature is rich in narratives and lyrics that engage with trees and forests in diverse ways. In light of the increasing environmental focus on forests and other arboreal ecosystems the role of trees as actors in interspecies entanglement has changed significantly. Instead of standing in and forming the background of human and animal life, trees seem to call for a re-evaluation of anthropocentric orders. Considering the unequal interdependency of trees and humans – humans and other oxygen-breathing and plant eating animals depend on them, but they are autonomous and, hence, indifferent to “us” – trees point to the uncanny dimensions of precariousness (Tsing). The “dark ecology” (Morton) of trees suggests that life beyond the surface of human attention forges connections and futures that may not be available to “us” and of which humans might not even be a part, pointing back to scary images of tree communities as the “shadow of civilization” (Harrison).

The panels ask for imaginaries of trees that forge transcreations – material and imaginary bonds and connections that may or may not include humans in a web of life that generates both material and imaginary environments. We are interested in both the “dark” and “light” side of arboreal imaginations – “evil roots” (Butcher) and “hopeful branches” alike – that is, we aim to talk about arboreal futures and pasts with or without “us” (Weisman).

**Weronika LIPSZYC, University of Warsaw, Poland.**

### **Tree Form: A Breakthrough. How Trees Present Themselves in Art.**

In human history, trees played a practical and symbolic role. Artistic creations used both the metaphorical properties of trees that seemed universal, such as strength, longevity, combining land and sky, and more arbitrary, for example combining evergreen conifers and mourning. As important artifacts of culture, trees were still preserved in works of fine arts: on the example of changes in the way they are presented, many changes can be indicated in this field.

In the paper, I would like to focus on two moments: in the second half of the 19th century, visual arts in Poland turned to reproducing native nature, including trees, and not duplicating foreign patterns, e.g. Italian ones. The variety of the form of the works indicates that showing the specifics of tree species was associated with a departure from many rules, including the use of geometric perspective (trees do not grow in accordance with Euclidean geometry) or reaching for the expression of lines or color. Chestnut trees of Stanisław Wyspiański, birches of Maksymilian Gierymski, forests and groves of Leon Wyczółkowski, are important actors of artistic changes at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, involved in phenomena such as antiocularcentric turn and crisis of representation.

Nowadays, representations of trees are often not limited to the visual layer, but strive to understand the plant form also in its operation or to establish an equal relationship between man and tree. Reflection on the common occupation of space are devoted "Windfalls 2018": space created by Paweł Althamer and Roman Stańczak in Małachowskiego Square at Zachęta - National Gallery of Art in Warsaw. Althamer and Stańczak, along with invited guests, initiated a congress of sculptors - a plein-air, that is an encouragement to, through sculpture, practice positive and creative work in a shared space and space of one's own. During the plein-air, many individual works and one sculpture were created and not only artists but also city residents took part in them, while the main material was the trunks of trees felled by storms passing over Poland in spring 2018.

Another attempt to understand the relationship between man and trees was made in the play "A Talk About Trees" directed by Weronika Szczawińska staged at Komuna Warszawa in 2019. The actors, with the help of dance, reflected the movement of trees and relationships between them and people. The materials used in the set design and costumes initiated reflections on the role of the tree as a visual form and material. In these works we can find echoes of both the performative turn and the ecocritical reflection that deserves the name of an ecological turn.

As companions of our life, trees - their careful observation - can teach us a lot, also in the field of artistic form.

**Sarah BENHARRECH, University of Maryland, USA.**

### **Imaginary Arborescences.**

This presentation will analyze how plant cuttings and other modes of vegetative multiplication challenged the understanding of corporeal integrity and the conceptualisation of individuality as shaped by the animal analogy.

Since antiquity tree growers and gardeners have known that trees are collective entities, as evidenced by the practice of cuttings and by trees' growth pattern. Even though it was common practice among gardeners in the 17th and 18th centuries to use cuttings to propagate fruit trees, plant physiologists were at a loss to explain how fragments could become complete beings. The Mechanicist framework which informed anatomical research in the vegetable kingdom, as well as the theory of preformation which posited the seed paradigm as an explanatory model for life, did not allow vegetal theoreticians to apprehend the plastic and divisible matter of plants.

Faced with plants' unknown faculties, they were forced to imagine other ways of conceiving the relations between the parts and the whole. In sum, this is an example of plants challenging animal imagination. This study will focus on three metaphorical models of trees, understood as cognitive analogies designed to visualize and understand the collective oneness of trees: the tree as nurturer of its apprentices' vitality, the pregnant woman, and corals, three images found in various texts of 17-18th century French written production: Bernier's *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi* (1684), Bazin's *Observations sur les plantes et leur analogie avec les insectes* (1741), and Saint-Pierre in his account of his trip to the Island of France in 1773.

**Giulia PACINI, William & Mary, Virginia, USA.**

**Arboreal Agency and Personhood in Eighteenth-Century French Climate Discourse.**

My talk examines the ethos underlying early nineteenth-century French climate discourse and attendant reforestation projects. In particular I focus on Antoine-François Rauch's *Harmonie hydro-végétale et météorologique, ou Recherches sur les moyens de recréer avec nos forêts la force des températures et la régularité des saisons par des plantations raisonnées* (1802), a philosophical treatise and reforestation project whose premises resonate deeply with our twenty-first-century concerns over anthropogenic climate change. After having situated this text in a larger political and environmental context, I (obviously) note that Rauch entertained an instrumental view of trees as he called for extensive replanting to counteract the ever-accelerating extreme weather events that were damaging his country. That said, I am much more interested in the text's brief and unexpected mentions of a plant's right to be respected, in Rauch's notions of vegetal agency, and in his recognition of vegetal intelligence and personhood, since these timid and paradoxical gestures offered precocious options for more radical forms of ecological thought at the turn of the nineteenth century. This 'minor' thread running through Rauch's discourse ultimately destabilized his otherwise prevailing representations of human sovereign power: as ethically compelling figures of life, trees complicated humans' ability to exploit them for their own biopolitical purposes. As such Rauch contributed to a historical shift away from Cartesian mechanism towards what we would now call 'plant-thinking.' Like contemporary philosophers such as Michael Marder, Matthew Hall, and Jeffrey T. Nealon, Rauch sensed that the principle of life was vegetal and that a new ethos was required to restructure our being on earth. It is therefore worth rereading this early modern text, not only to find a precursor of today's "plant-thinking" and to resist our tendential "plant blindness," but also to see what other intellectual paths Western culture might have taken.

**Louise FOWLER-SMITH, Honorary Academic from the University of NSW in Sidney, Australia.**

**Adorned and Adored - Sacred Trees in India.**

At a time when ecological degradation and deforestation is still occurring at an alarming rate across the globe it is possible to find pockets of land where trees and forests are considered sacred and as a consequence, are protected. These are called Sacred Trees and Sacred Tree Groves in the country of India and vary from one square metre to about a two million square metres, providing a network of protected areas across the country where the inherent diversity of flora and fauna have been preserved. Sacred groves also help to preserve the cultural identity of the country, as each grove has its own mode of worship.

Sacred trees are found throughout India and venerated by those of varied faiths, including animists, devotees of local cults, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Since 2003 I have travelled the height and

breadth of the sub-continent of India, photographing the veneration of trees and conducting interviews in the field. My paper will provide examples of veneration and a selection of the myths, beliefs, and rituals that underlie this practice. It will be argued that these trees, through their adornment by worshippers, become subjects of adoration for not only Indians but for outsiders as well. In reflecting on this, the link between the aesthetic and the sacred is shown to have the potential to inspire ethical, eco-conscious, and transcultural responses to the natural world.

As a scholar and an eco-artist I aim to promote new, experimental ways of perceiving the land in the 21st century. As an artist I am known as 'The Tree Venerator' and have exhibited and presented at conferences both nationally and internationally, including in America, England, Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Japan. In 2108 I held a solo exhibition with the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in France. Titled Portraits d'Arbres Remarquables Illuminés, the exhibition honoured some of the Remarkable Trees of France, and included nocturnal images taken in the Jardin des Plantes and the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris along with the Parc du Petit Trianon and the Arboretum de Versailles-Chèvreloup in Versailles. To view samples of my work as an artist please visit <http://www.louisefowlersmith.com>

My paper fits under the subheadings of

- Agency and subjectivity of trees: speaking trees, giving trees, wishing trees, evil horror trees, spectral trees, etc. I will reveal sites where trees are believed to cure disease (such as measles), aid with fertility of women and the land, fight demons, take ancestors to 'nirvana' and even offer protection on the road against traffic accidents
- Arboreal metaphors, symbolism, allegory. I will broaden my talk to discuss certain metaphors and symbolism that has existed around trees for generations across the globe.
- Aesthetics of trees. I will be able to discuss this through both the images I have taken of venerated trees in India, along with images of my own work, whereby I venerate trees with light.
- "Becoming a tree": tree/human metamorphoses. I will discuss how women marry trees in India.

### Room / Aula 5

#### European transcreations

Chair: Katsiaryna Nahornava, University of Granada, Spain.

**Axel GOODBODY, University of Bath, UK.**  
**The New German Nature Writing.**

Nature writing, a genre which was until recently believed to be confined to America and Britain, has experienced a remarkable boom in Germany in the last five years. Canonical works have been translated from English into German, and a stream of new German titles have been launched on the book market (fiction and poetry as well as essayistic non-fiction). At the same time, four substantial studies of nature literature have appeared, asking what nature writing is and why it does not occupy the same position in German cultural tradition, and calling for a redefinition of the genre. Focusing on Peter Wohlleben's controversial international bestseller, *The Hidden Life of Trees* and Esther Kinsky's *River and Grove: A Field Novel*, my paper will explore the aims and achievements of different kinds of German nature writing, and ask whether their translation of the lifeworlds of other species and the author's experience of nature into words can be adequately described as a form of 'transcreation'.

**Raffaele RUSSO, University of Innsbruck, Austria.**  
**Buzzati's *Retiarii*.**

My intervention starts from a close reading of a short story by the Italian writer Dino Buzzati, *I rezziari*. An unidentified "Monsignor", in a rural setting, induces two spiders to fight each other as if they were two ancient gladiators, two *retiarii*. The Monsignor does this for no reason: he indulges himself in this cruel game for fun and curiosity in a moment of boredom. For him, the two spiders are not beings who

desire life and happiness like him, and he takes it for granted that he can play with them at his leisure. As he observes their battles, however, and actively intervenes in them (to make them more ferocious and exciting), the Monsignor's attitude changes, he becomes more and more restless, and he seems to intuit that what he is doing is monstrous, even if in a way he cannot understand. In a word, he feels (without understanding) that *there are no limits to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another*. Anyway, as the Monsignor starts to feel sympathetic for the predicament of the spiders, he is at the same time baffled: the human categories he uses to understand the events unfolding in front of him are somehow ineffective to interpret the actions of the two spiders. Meanwhile, something mysterious and indefinite begins to crawl behind him ...

The narration of this short story introduces the representation of the natural world in Buzzati. The interpretation focuses on the essential fact that Buzzati's short stories are often open-ended, as the writer does not propose a rational solution to the problems he introduces but suggests a path, a complex itinerary in a mysterious reality, in which the imagination, not the understanding, is the only possible (and precarious) compass. To propose an analysis of the implication of this kind of narrative for environmental ethics, I make explicit reference to Bateson's essays "Consciousness versus Nature" (1967) and "Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art" (1972). I refer particularly to the idea that pure finalistic rationality, without the help of art and imagination, is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life.

**Peter MORTENSEN, Aarhus University, Denmark.**

**Against *Hygge*: Anthropoperipherality in Isak Dinesen and Karl Ove Knausgaard.**

In the twenty-first century, the concept of *hygge*, which denotes a pleasant, informal, comfortable sociability, has become virtually synonymous with Danish and more broadly Scandinavian culture, spawning a massive industry of self-help books, glossy magazines and self-appointed lifestyle gurus. The antipodal concept – *uhygge* – is much less well-defined and -developed, even though it pervades the work of some of the Nordic region's best-known writers and ties in well with the timely uncertainties of the Anthropocene. In this presentation, I analyze two texts of Scandinavian *uhygge* from an ecocritical and posthumanist perspective, situating the term in relation to adjacent concepts like “the Gothic,” “das Unheimliche,” “the uncanny,” “the creaturely,” and “the weird.” *Uhygge* is often aligned with psychoanalytic concepts, but in Isak Dinesen short story “The Monkey” (1934) and Karl Ove Knausgaard's novel *The Morning Star* (2020), I argue, an *uhyggelig* atmosphere spreads from the incomplete apprehension of dark, unknown and perhaps unknowable forces lurking beneath the surface of the familiar world. Dinesen and Knausgaard's texts work to unsettle humans' previously-held comfortable position in the world, and such a refashioning seems particularly urgent in the present context of rapidly cascading social and ecological crises.

**Riccardo BARONTINI, Ghent University, Belgium.**

**Empathetic Imagination and Ethological Knowledge in French-speaking Contemporary Fiction (Tristan Garcia, Christina Van Acker and Claudie Hunzinger).**

The French-speaking contemporary fiction which has tackled the representation of the animal has also frequently narrativized scientific knowledge and in particular ethologic knowledge. Nevertheless, few literary studies on this matter have been conducted so far. In my presentation, I will explore a fictional corpus composed by texts written by Christine Van Acker (*La Bête a bon dos*, 2018), Tristan Garcia (*Mémoires de la jungle*, 2010) and Claudie Hunzinger (*Les Grands Cerfs*, 2019).

Tristan Garcia, both a philosopher and a novelist, has developed a theoretical reflection on the humanistic prejudice in the essay *Nous, animaux et humains. Actualité de Jeremy Bentham* (2011). In his novel *Mémoires de la jungle* (2010) he chose a monkey as the protagonist and the narrator, and he elaborates an experimental language to express its point of view. The Belgian author Christine Van Acker uses science in order to dismantle the anthropomorphic stereotypes about animals in *La Bête a bon dos* (2018), and she also realizes an unorthodox and ironic ethological study on her fellow humans. The latest novel of Claudie Hunzinger, *Les Grands Cerfs*, tells the story of Pamina, a woman who lives in a remote area of the Vosges, in Eastern France, and decides to observe, study and write about the deer with which she shares the territory.



In these books, the narrativization of ethological knowledge is a central element in the construction of an empathetic apprehension of the animal. It is also linked to the attempt to understand the specific nonhuman experience of the world, the *Umwelt* theorized in the interwar period by the German naturalist Jakob von Uexküll. We will see how our authors use ethology to decenter the anthropocentric perspective and to rethink the role of humankind among all living things. We will investigate three fundamental questions : first, the deconstruction of the alleged exceptionality of humankind, then the limits of language in the expression of non-human subjectivity, and finally the desire for identification with the animal.

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### Room / Aula 7

#### Cinematic Transcreations

Chair: María Antonia MEZQUITA FERNÁNDEZ, University of Valladolid, Spain.

**Christopher OSCARSON, Brigham Young University, Utah, USA.**

**Recognizing Nature: Mikael Kristersson's Interspecies Transcreative Cinema.**

The representation of the environment and non-human organisms in both aesthetic and scientific discourses is important for the shape and evolution of the metanarratives and figurations shaping human views of the world. In the face of contemporary environmental crises, however, the critical reflection about these discourses often takes a backseat to the undeniably important debates over the scientific evidence of such headline issues as declining ecosystems and climate change. But since these discourses both reflect historical interaction and shape future action they must be considered. Given the environmental crises that have already erupted and others that are likely soon to make themselves known, the stakes over how and why non-human life and the environment are represented have never been higher. Precisely because of the global scale of some of the contemporary crises, one might well argue that never in recent memory has there been a time when the non-human world has been so ready to assert itself, to take on a new type of presence for us, and to insist upon the recognition denied it by its previous objectification.

This presentation will consider the cinematic work of Swedish filmmaker Mikael Kristersson as a means of illustrating imaginative attempts at interspecies transcreation through film. Through creative use of the medium, Kristersson pushes the boundaries of generic and medial expectations to re-think non-human perspective and expand human perception. The camera *re*-presents the world to the spectator introducing a distance between human and non-human perspectives in an attempt to de-center representation's basic anthropocentrism. The ultimate goal in films such as *Falkens öga* (*The Kestrel's Eye*, 1998) and *Ljusår* (*Light Year*, 2010) is not to imitate a true biocentric perspective, rather to invite a fundamental reevaluation of the primacy and adequacy of human perspective and subject-object relations.

**Katarzyna PASZKIEWICZ, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain.**  
**Critterly Aesthetics: The Cinema of Andrea Arnold.**

This paper will analyse the cinema of Andrea Arnold as a case study within a larger research project concerned with how ecocinema can allow us to resituate ourselves within what is known today as the Anthropocene. I define ecocinema, following Lauren Berlant (2011) and John Landreville (2019), as a pedagogy of worldly reciprocity, that is, the site where our engagement with the world can be transformed. Moving beyond the “durational” approaches that have proliferated in early scholarship on ecocinema, I focus on what I call here Arnold's “critterly” aesthetics, making reference to both Anat Pick's (2011) notion of creaturely poetics, and Donna Haraway's rethinking of the “creaturely” in “critterly” terms (2016, 169). Through a close analysis of Arnold's three films, *Dog* (2011), *Wasp* (2003) and *Fish Tank* (2009), I argue that Arnold's sensory-driven cinema transcends the focus on the human body through which it is commonly read by offering instances of non-anthropocentric visuality in relation to the environment and the nonhuman animals that inhabit it. Arnold's filmmaking confounds the binary opposition of human/nonhuman in complex ways that are deeply implicated in current philosophical debates about the ecological.

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**Virginia LUZÓN-AGUADO, University of Zaragoza, Spain.**  
**Turning over a New Leaf: Exploring Human-Tree Relations in *The Lorax* and *Avatar*.**

Cultural theory tends to analyse power relations in our society critically, whether in terms of race, disability, class, gender or sexual orientation. In this paper, however, I will be focusing on the power relations that ecocultural theory analyses. This is a branch of cultural theory that applies the principles of

ecology to the study of cultural artefacts, among them the cinema. Ecocriticism applied to cinema studies is relatively new but has already demonstrated to be tremendously versatile in scope and has gained ground as the environmental crisis has become more patent, despite the existence of climate change-deniers. The idea underpinning most areas of ecocritical enquiry is that in order to avoid environmental disaster anthropocentrism, or the ideology that places human beings at the centre of the universe and regards nature as a mere resource at our endless disposal, should be abandoned. Instead, we should substitute a biocentric ethics which decenters the human and considers the human being one more component in an interconnected and interdependent chain of being. In other words, the hegemony of the human being (especially of a certain type) should be dismantled if the environmental crisis is to be avoided.

With this objective in mind some scholars have carried out work from the perspective of animal rights (Ingram, 2004; Sturgeon, 2009) but not so much attention has been placed on plants. In this paper, I will be considering two popular US films, *Avatar* (2009; James Cameron) and *The Lorax* (2012, Chris Renaud) from the angle of plant rights and deep ecology. More specifically, I shall be assessing whether or not these two films might be proposing new forms of human-tree relations that should facilitate the much-needed transition to greener societies and economic systems. In order to achieve this objective, I shall also be addressing such questions as zoocentrism and the impact of current neoliberal values on human-nature relations.

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## Room / Aula 7

Pre-formed Panel  
Poetic Encounters with Nature.

Chair: José Manuel MARRERO-HENRÍQUEZ, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.

A literary work is a linguistic artifact with its internal disciplinary coherences as much as it is a response to the human impulse to understand the universe. Indeed, poetry not only can be seen incarnating the desire to overcome Mallarmé's *le défaut des langues* (*the failing of natural languages*), but also embodying the

belief in the possibility of establishing solid relationships between words and the world out there. In the poem “The tables Turned”, William Wordsworth invited the reader to quit his books and clear his looks in order to “come forth into the light of things” of nature: the mountains’s head, a lustre mellow, the woodland linnet, a vernal wood. And that is what the readers of “Poetic Encounters with Nature” do, for they transform linguistic barriers into bridges through literary readings that clear the path towards nature to coming forth into the wisdom that its non-human inhabitants conceal: a) **José Manuel Marrero Henríquez** will read on donkeys, b) **Richard Kerridge** on reptiles, and c) **Ana Blanco García** on birds and plants.

### Room / Aula 10

Transcreaciones en lengua francesa.

Moderadora: Montserrat LÓPEZ MÚJICA, Universidad de Alcalá, España.

**María José SUEZA ESPEJO, Universidad de Jaén, España.**

**Diálogo interespecies en la obra del Nobel Jean Marie Le Clézio: Femenidad y Naturaleza en varias obras leclézianas.**

Existe consenso respecto al papel preponderante o a la relevancia que la Naturaleza en todas sus formas, vivas o inertes, detenta en la producción literaria del francés Jean Marie Le Clézio, Nobel de literatura, tras la publicación de *Mundo y otras historias* (1978). Ello se enmarca en la línea seguida por este intelectual comprometido con las grandes problemáticas sociales contemporáneas, siendo la cuestión del medioambiente, su respeto y valoración (de todo lo que contiene, incluye o lo compone) una de las que más trata. Sus ficciones convierten al lector en oyente de un diálogo, mudo pero intenso, que se establece entre los personajes de sus novelas, mayoritariamente mujeres o niñas, con la Naturaleza que suple sus necesidades físicas y afectivas. Con el árbol establecen las protagonistas en varios relatos una relación afectiva o maternal de soporte, refugio, bálsamo y consuelo, por lo que dicha comunicación *interespecies* se percibe con claridad, contribuyendo a destacar las bondades de todo lo positivo que la Naturaleza aporta a quienes la integran en su cotidianidad, como si de un querido familiar o amigo se tratase.

Las obras en las que analizaremos dicho diálogo *interespecies* o *transcreación* serán algunas novelas cortas incluidas en *Mundo y otras historias* (1978), *Desierto* (1980), así como *El árbol Yama*, incluida en *Historias del pie y otras fantasías* (2011). En ellas, subrayaremos la atribución de rasgos o características humanas a lo no humano, en el sentido en que la Naturaleza, o el árbol concretamente en el caso de dos de las obras propuestas, adquiere la dimensión de útero o seno materno protector, que apoya y reconforta a las protagonistas. Por tanto, se evidencia que el autor plantea una visión de los árboles como metáfora de la madre.

**María Teresa LAJOINIE DOMÍNGUEZ, Universitat de València, España.**

**Experiencias y subjetividades animales autobiografiadas: La autobiografía animal en la narrativa francesa contemporánea.**

La autodeixis, entendida como la capacidad de autoreflexividad, esto es, la posibilidad que tiene un sujeto de pensarse y referirse a sí, ha sido tradicionalmente considerada como exclusiva del animal humano. Erigida en condición necesaria para la adquisición del lenguaje y la razón, la autoconciencia del ser ha permitido la escisión de los animales en dos grupos cuya caracterización opuesta y excluyente explica, al mismo tiempo que posibilita, el surgimiento de “lo animal” como otredad radical de “lo humano”. Sin embargo, muchos son los ejemplos en los que, convertidos en protagonistas, cuando no narradores, los animales más-que-humanos toman la palabra en el ámbito literario. Las fábulas de Esopo, de Jean de La Fontaine o, más recientemente, la obra canónica de George Orwell *Rebelión en la granja* (1945) son algunos de los ejemplos más clásicos. Aunque dotados de lenguaje (humano), los animales emergen principalmente en estas obras como recurso literario y deben entenderse, y leerse, como alegorías, símbolos, cuando no metáforas, que remiten a una realidad esencialmente humana que se presenta y critica por boca de aquellos.



Durante el siglo XIX se popularizan las autobiografías animales, género en el que escritoras y escritores, prestando sus plumas a los animales más-que-humanos, tratan de darles una voz propia que refleje el punto de vista animal. *Mémoires d'un âne* (1860) de la condesa de Ségur o *Black Beauty* (1877) de la autora inglesa Anna Sewell se inscriben en esta línea. En este sentido, el género autobiográfico, definido por Philippe Lejeune (1975) como aquel en el que “una persona real hace el relato de su propia existencia”, aparece como el lugar privilegiado para la autoreflexividad del sujeto, y por consiguiente, como género pertinente en el que los intereses animales puedan ser expresados. Así pues, centrándonos principalmente en obras en las que los animales más-que-humanos aparecen como narradores autodiegéticos de su propia historia, la presente comunicación tiene por objetivo rastrear las estrategias narrativas que permiten traducir las perspectivas y subjetividades animales en la narrativa francesa contemporánea.

**Julia ORI, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España.**

**La voz de/para los animales: análisis del discurso animalista de Jean-Baptiste del Amo.**

En 2017 el escritor francés Jean-Baptiste Del Amo publica *L214. Une voix pour les animaux* en el cual explica la lucha de la asociación (a la que él también pertenece) contra la cría intensiva, reflexionando sobre los derechos de los animales y la necesidad de cambiar nuestra mirada sobre ellos.

Este activismo se puede encontrar, de manera muy diferente, en su novela del año anterior, en *Reino animal* (2016), en el cual – como su título lo señala ya – los animales son los verdaderos protagonistas. En este relato narra la historia de una familia a lo largo del siglo XX, cuya existencia es inseparable de la de los animales: el narrador cuenta cómo la convivencia con los animales en un modelo autosuficiente se convierte en cría intensiva a finales de siglo. La descripción aparentemente neutra de un mundo cruel, la representación de la vida de los campesinos y de las condiciones de vida de los animales llama la atención sobre el mismo problema que la asociación L214. Pero mientras que en su libro activista el autor prestó su voz a los animales para defender sus intereses, en la novela la “voz” de los animales se representa mediante la focalización interna, especialmente al final (Milcent-Lawson, “Un tournant animal dans la fiction française contemporaine?” 2019), lo que ayuda a entender cómo son y qué sienten.

Nuestro objetivo en esta comunicación es el análisis de la representación del punto de vista de los animales en la novela *Reino animal* y su papel en la lucha animalista del autor. Es decir, creemos que más allá de las innovaciones estilísticas y estéticas que puedan significar los intentos de superar el antropomorfismo, estos también tienen implicaciones éticas. Nuestra metodología es la del análisis del discurso literario tal como lo entienden Dominique Maingueneau (*Le discours littéraire* 2004), Ruth Amossy (*Images de soi dans le discours* 1999) y Jérôme Meizoz (*Postures littéraires I et II*. 2007, 2011) y que contempla la literatura como discurso, parte de una interdiscursividad que abarca otros discursos. El análisis del discurso postula que el texto es inseparable de su contexto, este último a la vez condición y producto de aquel. Es decir, lo que nos interesa en esta comunicación es la imagen del autor animalista o su postura (Meizoz) que se construye a través de sus discursos verbales y, posiblemente, no verbales.

**Palabras clave:** Jean-Baptiste del Amo, análisis del discurso literario, ecocrítica, animales

**Pilar ANDRADE BOUÉ, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España.**

**Lecciones de empatía en *Retour à Salem* de Hélène Grimaud.**

En esta comunicación se analizará el relato *Retour à Salem* (2013), escrito por la conocida pianista francesa Hélène Grimaud. Se trata del tercer texto literario de la autora, siendo el primero *Variations sauvages* (“Variaciones salvajes”, 2003) y el segundo *Leçons particulières* (“Lecciones particulares”, 2005, que inspira el comienzo del título dado a esta propuesta de comunicación).

El texto surge de un fuerte compromiso ecologista de la autora, creadora de una reserva natural para lobos situada precisamente en Salem (USA). Grimaud propone un relato complejo asentado en una profunda biofilia, y utiliza su “gran afinidad con todo lo viviente” (Wilson) para enriquecer su texto con múltiples variantes temáticas que giran en torno al eje principal del ecocidio planetario. Para hablar de éste, la autora emplea su gran poder emotivo, ya mostrado en los textos anteriores, con el fin de apelar a las capacidades empáticas del lector/a y a sus posibilidades de movilizarse con el objetivo de evitar el desastre ecológico global.

Grimaud nos insta pues a ponernos a la escucha de las voces y mensajes que nos transmite lo viviente no humano hoy. Esta intención motiva tanto el relato marco, que evoca problemáticas y detalles ecológicos y medioambientales diversos (particularidades de la vida de los lobos, de las muertes por gripe aviaria o del vínculo especial que une a la mujer con la naturaleza, por ejemplo) entretejidos en una trama autoficcional, como el relato engastado, presuntamente escrito por el compositor Johannes Brahms y símbolo, en modo fantástico, de la agonía de la naturaleza. En ambas líneas diegéticas se insertan, asimismo, múltiples referencias culturales, como puedan serlo las menciones explícitas de diferentes obras de escritores y músicos del romanticismo alemán, así como de autores franceses, o de hipotextos más o menos ocultos (cf. la novela *Piel de zapa* de Balzac). Estas referencias culturales se codean armónicamente con, por ejemplo, el envío implícito a *Primavera silenciosa* de Carson o la explicación de los trabajos del afamado especialista en bioacústica Bernie Krause. Grimaud consigue, con esta combinación de alusiones y citas a unas y otras obras y autores/as, combinar la temática artístico-literaria con la específicamente medioambiental a partir de una misma preocupación bioplanetaria. En esto mismo consiste la impronta subjetivo-afectiva en el texto, porque la propia biografía de la autora combina la labor artística con el cuidado de la naturaleza. Grimaud aporta así su ejemplo en tanto que intérprete musical que simultáneamente despliega un sólido compromiso ecológico, y presenta su ejecución pianística como una pasión dirigida a promover la creatividad, la contemplación estética y la identificación con el entorno.

15.00 – 16.30

#### Room / Aula 4

#### Speculative transcreations

Chair: Vanesa ROLDÁN ROMERO, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

**Irene SANZ ALONSO, Universidad de Alcalá-GIECO/Instituto Franklin, Spain.  
Altered Subjects in Posthuman Futures.**

Throughout its history, science fiction has provided readers and audiences with countless examples of potential futures and alternate realities in which human beings have had to (re)define what makes them human. This (re)definition sometimes emerges as a challenge when humans are confronted with altered subjects whose behaviour and attitudes respond better to the concept of humanity as defined by a healthy relationship with the *other*. In an era in which artificial intelligences and mutations permeate our everyday life, and when the boundary between human and non-human animals seem to blur as science advances, science fiction proves an interesting experimental field in which humans can re-envision their identity. Using theories as those exposed by Braidotti in *The Posthuman* (2013), this presentation aims at analysing different examples of altered subject/posthuman subjectivities in recent science fiction TV series and films. For example, in the 2003-2009 reboot of *Battlestar Galactica*, the remaining surviving humans travel throughout space escaping from a group of genocidal robots who have evolved to the extent of having a completely human appearance. The interesting confrontation of human and non-human characters in the series reaches a climax when some of the protagonists realize their artificial nature. This blurred boundary is also present in the films *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), whose protagonists often question their own identity as androids and artificial intelligences have evolved to the extent of becoming (almost) human. The concept of what a human being is becomes also part of the underlying conflicts in *Altered Carbon* (2018), a series portraying a future civilization in which your wealth (and your religion) determines your possibilities of living forever by transplanting your conscience into a new body which can in turn incorporate genetic modifications such as non-human animal characteristics. Therefore, the purpose of this presentation is to explore how altered-posthuman-subjects and their feelings and visions of the world pose a conflict when trying to define what makes us human when confronted with these *other humans*.

**Katsiaryna NAHORNAVA, University of Granada, Spain.**

## **Beyond Boundaries of the Human: Interspecies encounters in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.**

The fantasy world created by George R.R. Martin in his popular saga *A Song of Ice and Fire* portrays a sort of humanimal realm, where human characters claim kinship with other-than-human animals (or even with other natural elements), seen as core symbols of their identities, according to which they are structured and judged by others. Westeros is the world where lions (the Lannisters), direwolves (the Starks), stags (the Baratheons), dragons (the Targaryens), and krakens (the Greyjoys) fight for the Iron Throne; crows (the Night Watch) protect the realm, hounds (the brothers Clegane) serve the lions, spiders (Lord Varys) and mockingbirds (Petyr Baelish) spy for other beasts, little birds collect information for the spider, and sparrows (the religious sect) teach ethics.

Martin himself pointed at the fact that “there's a certain amount of identification of all of these great houses to their sigils, to the animal charges that they bear” (“The Interview with the Dragon”). Hence, this paper aims at demonstrating that the saga depicts a variety of interspecies relationships: from merely metaphorical identification with other-than-human animals to a more visceral and even corporeal bond; as well as at illustrating the way the saga promotes deeper interspecies encounters which clearly favour both human and other-than-human characters.

On the one hand, this paper will deal with the clearly more anthropocentrically oriented characters, whose connection with their animal sigils is superficial, purely metaphoric, and which, in fact, provides us with an instance of mastery of nature - the use of a natural element with an exclusive aim to suit human purposes (political interests, for instance). Unlike the Lannisters or the Baratheons, among others, who lack any real lion or stag power, the Stark Children and Daenerys Targaryen, the characters with a more biocentric worldview, manage to break the dualistic boundaries between the human and the other-than-human worlds and connect with their companions on a much more profound, transcendental, level, which eventually enables them to become stronger and more appealing characters. On the other hand, a special attention will be paid to Bran Stark, a disabled boy, who can be seen as an example of interspecies fusion, a hybrid form, where the limits between his human side and both vegetable and animal realms are far from clear-cut. This interspecies hybridity makes him an extremely powerful and important character, who might be crucial in the future development of the event.

With these examples, I aim at proving that Martin's saga seeks to represent nonhuman world from both outsider and insider perspectives, which eventually promotes empathy towards other-than-humans, since through interspecies encounters it casts shadow on the concept of dualism and instead highlights the common ground between the human and other-than-human realms. All this allows me to conclude that the saga calls for an ethically equal attitude and responsibility towards the other-than-human world. Hence, *A Song of Ice and Fire* can be used with didactic purposes with a view to teaching trans-species empathy, other-than-human animal value and the importance of interspecies encounters.

**Andrea BURGOS MASCARELL, Universitat de València; Valencian International University (VIU). Spain.**

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century YA Dystopian Fiction: Reification and Denigration of Other-than-Human Beings in *The Hunger Games* and *Across the Universe*.**

Utopian and dystopian literature offer a myriad of alternative societies described with enough detail to convince readers of the suitability of a particular future or to warn them against the pending catastrophic results of current problematic behaviours from ethical, environmental, or organisational viewpoints. Perhaps the most popular wave of popular-culture dystopian fiction comprises the novels published between 2005 and 2015 targeted at young adults. *The Hunger Games* (2008, 2009, 2010), by Suzanne Collins, and *Across the Universe* (2011, 2012, 2013), by Beth Revis, are two of these popular trilogies, the protagonists of which guide readers through two alternative or future worlds: a totalitarian, materialistic and sadistic society (Panem) and a technological, extremely pragmatic anti-utopian colony in space. These two trilogies present other-than-human beings as genetically modified tools employed by humans but approach these situations from an anthropocentric point of view. I argue that these popular novels neglect the necessary ecocritical perspective when discussing the use of genetic modification on animals. In particular, I discuss the creation of *mutos* in *The Hunger Games* as dogs with human body parts and the genetic “enhancement” of animals in *Across the Universe* to increase the production of “food” and discuss the protagonists' reactions to these two groups of beings. Furthermore, a comparison is established

between the protagonists and other-than-human beings from a posthuman and ecofeminist perspective: while Katniss has to resist the Capitol's attempts to alter her body surgically, Amy, the protagonist of *Across the Universe* is forced into posthumanism and becomes a tool for political interests. Despite these circumstances, the protagonists fail to compare the abuse of power on women to that suffered by other-than-humans, restricting their collectivist values to human peers.

### Room / Aula 5

#### Humanimal encounters II

Chair: Reinhard HENNIG, University of Adger, Norway.

**Iris ZECHNER, University of Graz, Austria.**

#### **“Nothing like a pig”: “Wild” Animals and the Absent Domestic Referent in Helen Macdonald’s Nature Writing.**

Living in a global environmental crisis leaves no room for human exceptionalism. The unintended and often dramatic consequences of long-lived anthropocentric hubris emphasise our entanglement within a web of agencies, human and nonhuman alike, troubling traditionally Western boundaries between humans and nature. This entanglement, however, does not imply an elimination of difference between different beings. It much rather gives inherent value to each member of this ongoing and co-constitutive world, be it human or another species. To comprehend this anti-anthropocentric perspective and its implications it appears useful, if not necessary, to recognise nonhuman ways of meaning-making, of reading and experiencing the world. In contemporary British nature writing, also known as “New Nature Writing” (NNW), we frequently encounter attempts to put such more-than-human experiences into language. After all, this continuously growing body of creative nonfiction seeks to redefine the human (inter)relationship to the nonhuman natural world, with the ever-open question of the nature of “nature” itself. As the work of nature writer, historian and falconer Helen Macdonald shows, the characteristically NNW method of paying close attention to nonhuman beings, without assuming to fully comprehend their languages and doings, proves fruitful in avoiding problematic anthropomorphisms and instead acknowledging more-than-human experience, too. Through such careful attentive practices, nonhuman animals do not only emerge as agentic and capable beings but also as distinct from each other, underscoring how each species has their own unique ways of navigating through this world. While this strategy works powerfully against subsuming all nonhuman beings into one undifferentiated entity, it cannot veil the disquieting absence of domesticated individuals in Macdonald’s work. In her writing, “wild”, or undomesticated animals, such as hawks (most prominently in *H is for Hawk*) or boars (“Nothing like a pig” in *Vesper Flights*), are granted singularity both as species and individuals. Apart from the occasional companion dog, however, domesticated animals remain compressed into mass terms, chicks or burgers, that can be fed and consumed without further reflection. What happens here is, on the one hand, a separation between domesticated and what Macdonald calls “wild” animals, only giving inherent value to the latter. On the other hand, “nature”, or “the wild” is, contrary to Macdonald’s more explicit considerations, re-established as something untouched by human beings rather than a multispecies nexus that we all are inextricably intertwined with. Her work hence both demonstrates ways of acknowledging and writing nonhuman experience, illustrating the hubris of imagined human exceptionality, and (perhaps partly involuntarily) highlights the necessity of doing so, if we truly want to change anthropocentric attitudes and behaviours towards more-than-human beings.

**Kristiina KOSKINEN, University of Lapland, Finland.**

#### **Presenting Nonhuman Agency in the Context of Wildlife Documentaries.**

Belinda Smaill scrutinizes the concept of nonhuman agency in the context of documentary moving images and connects it with webcams and YouTube clips produced by peer-to-peer networks (2016, 135–147). In the resulting videos the procession of the events is due to the movements of the animals and often caused by pure coincidence. In these examples, Smaill explains that agency is positioned in a



new way, because the authorship of the making of a film is relocated: either the screenwriting or the filming is partly handed over to nonhuman agency.

Giving away the human controlled authorship of cinematic representations to nonhuman agency can indeed be thought-provoking, but – as also Smaill remarks – it can also alienate audiences. In this study, I approach the question of agency in the context of classic nature documentaries and seek if and how human-induced dramaturgic choices can support a possibility to renew our understanding about nonhuman agency.

The focus of my research is on two nature documentaries presented by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), under the series of *Nature's Wide World (Avara luonto)*. This is a long-standing series considered to show high quality television documentaries of nature, still presented weekly in prime time and continuously raising considerable audience rates. These films do not tend to differ from the 'blue-chip' nature documentary format (e.g. Vivanco 2013, 111) – among other things they share a dualistic idea of nature and an external voice-over explaining the represented nature.

However, a dramaturgic analysis reveals subtlety that makes a difference. The audiovisual narration of *Hidden Kingdoms: Secret Forests* (BBC 2014) builds towards a classic Hollywood storyline, *Life: Plants* (BBC 2009) is based on an episodic structure, where audiovisual means have been utilized to create short stories based on the agency of plants. Hidden in the context of documentary sobriety, the audiovisual narration suggests rather different kinds of perspectives to nature than the factual information delivered by the voice over.

Jean-Baptiste Gouyon defines three central characteristics for wildlife documentaries: they are about knowledge, they are commodities, and they are well-crafted storytelling devices (2019, 5). By focusing on the last, and the dramaturgy that creates the narratives, I scrutinize how these films render the idea of nonhuman agency. Although both films consider 'documentary' in the expository sense of the concept: referring to a reality that can be neutrally explained to the audience (Nichols 2001, 105–109), it seems the interwoven narration does not carry the audience's heavy demands of documentary authenticity. Thus, it poses questions that – instead of scientific accuracy – wander to the blurred boundaries of the embedded ideas of nature.

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**Chang LIU, UC Berkeley, USA; Heidelberg University, Germany.**

**Ruth Harkness's Panda Journey and Her Ethics of Care.**

As the first person who captured a living panda and brought it abroad, Ruth Harkness (1900-1947) is portrayed as a greedy animal trafficker in Chinese language materials published in recent years. However, this paper calls such an assessment into question by performing an ecofeminist reading of Harkness's 1938 travelogue *The Baby Giant Panda*. In this travelogue, Harkness offers a detailed account of her 1936 journey to China for a panda. Focusing on Harkness's ethics of care, this paper argues Harkness distinguishes herself from other male "expeditioners" from Europe and North America by transforming panda from a passive object for scientific investigation to a human-like being that deserves emotional investment. In this process, Harkness establishes herself as a proto-ecofeminist.

Early in 1936, Harkness's husband Bill Harkness died of throat cancer when he was in China searching for a panda. As a widow, Harkness starts her first expedition to fulfill her late husband's dying wish, which differs the motivation of her expedition from her male counterparts'. Harkness specifically wishes to capture a baby panda from the beginning of her journey, probably due to her status as a childless woman. To achieve this goal, Harkness brings dried milk, a feeding bottle, as well as other necessities to cater for the potential needs of a baby giant panda. Different from her male counterparts,

Harkness does not only want to capture a panda, but also wants to keep it alive. As the only white member in her expedition team, she also reflects on how other white male expeditioners mistreat their Chinese local guides and teammates, and further distances herself from white male expeditioners by developing a more respectable relationship with her Chinese teammates. Through a close reading of Harkness's relation to pandas and people of color, this paper unveils Harkness's ethics of care, which establishes Harkness as a proto-ecofeminist who negotiates between a male dominated expedition culture and her ecofeminist ethics of care.

### Room / Aula 7

#### Transcreaciones especulativas

Moderadora: Julia ORI, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España.

**M<sup>a</sup> Antonia MEZQUITA FERNÁNDEZ, Universidad de Valladolid, GIECO-Franklin-UAH; AGLAYA, España.**

**De Carol Danvers a Capitana Marvel: la heroína en un conflicto entre especies alienígenas.**

En la actualidad, la cultura popular constituye un excelente vehículo para la transmisión de mensajes o de una ideología concreta. El cine no es ajeno a este hecho y, a lo largo de los últimos años, ha proliferado el número de películas cuyo propósito es hacernos reflexionar acerca de la problemática del mundo en el que vivimos –junto con su consiguiente destrucción— con el fin de que tomemos conciencia de ello. No debe olvidarse tampoco que este mismo medio es capaz de mostrar con facilidad imaginarios que integran la alteridad. En base a lo anterior, la siguiente comunicación tendrá como fin mostrar, mediante un análisis del filme *Capitana Marvel* (Anna Boden y Ryan Fleck, 2019), el comportamiento y los rasgos de dos especies de alienígenas en una guerra interestelar permanente, los Kree y los Skrull, y su actitud con la protagonista del filme: Carol Danvers, un híbrido mezcla de alienígena y de humana como resultado de un accidente, pero cuyo pasado es humano.

En el caso de las dos razas que aparecen, veremos que están dotadas de cualidades atribuidas al hombre, pues poseen inteligencia y son agentes de modalidad. Asimismo, observaremos que son las circunstancias y el espacio en el que suceden los acontecimientos los que han obligado a estas razas a tener determinados comportamientos más o menos beligerantes como estrategia de supervivencia o de enriquecimiento propio. Pero, además, ambas se ven forzadas a convivir o relacionarse con Carol Danvers, quien se transformará en Capitana Marvel –perteneciente ahora a la civilización Kree— y se moverá con facilidad en espacios intergalácticos entre los cuales la Tierra ha quedado atrapada. Ella tratará de evitar un conflicto entre razas alienígenas y librará una batalla contra la dominación y la colonización de aquellos seres alter-humanos que sufren opresión y racismo por parte de la raza que no los ve como iguales. Claramente, el racismo surge por parte de quienes no consideran a otros seres sus semejantes y “oponen resistencia a la identificación” con un mismo grupo. (Deleuze y Guattari, 1987, en Carretero González, 2018, 432). Así pues, es capaz de valorar las diferencias que la separan de la raza Kree, ponerse en su lugar y acudir en su ayuda. Carol, quien ha olvidado casi por completo su pasado terrícola, se siente una extraña al pisar la Tierra como híbrido por primera vez.

Veremos, por ende y analizando el filme, que, mediante el uso de la ciencia ficción, existe una preocupación por la devastación y el genocidio humano o de otras especies alter-humanas. La película deja patente el mensaje de que solo entendiendo el peligro inminente de la colonización y de no respetar a quien no es semejante, se podrá ponerle freno a la barbarie.

**Gala ARIAS RUBIO, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, GIECO-Franklin-UAH.**

**Empatía interspecies y sensibilidad ecológica en la saga de Geralt de Rivia de A. Sapkowski.**

John Berger, en *Why Look at Animals*, proponía una barrera que consideraba insalvable: la mirada unidireccional a los animales. Según Berger, el animal nunca podía ser el observador, siempre era el

observado. Sin embargo, la literatura fantástica nos ofrece inmensas oportunidades de experimentar con fenómenos en apariencia imposibles, pero de los que podemos extraer aprendizajes para una mejor relación con nuestros compañeros planetarios. La saga de Geralt de Rivia (1992-2013), del autor polaco Andrzej Sapkowski, es una muestra muy interesante de este fenómeno. Las novelas transcurren en un continente ficticio con muchas similitudes con la Europa medieval por su estructura organizativa y sus conflictos bélicos, pero poblado de seres mágicos profundamente inspirados en la mitología eslava, céltica y germánica, así como en los mitos clásicos y artúricos. La voz que el autor otorga a esos seres mágicos, progresivamente diezmados y relegados a un entorno cada vez más deteriorado y reducido, y su mirada sobre los humanos, la especie culpable de su destrucción, nos proporciona ejemplos de esa mirada bidireccional que John Berger consideraba imposible. Esto puede parecer paradójico dado que el oficio del protagonista de la saga es matar monstruos, pero es precisamente esa oportunidad de contactar con otras especies la que facilita la reflexión sobre nuestra relación con todos los seres sintientes no-humanos. Asimismo, a la manera de los binomios de Val Plumwood hombre/naturaleza o humano/animal, es la propia naturaleza no-humana del protagonista, un ser marginado por pertenecer a un colectivo de mutantes, la que le proporciona esa distancia simbólica con aquellos considerados normales y permite que su perspectiva sea más empática con todos los seres «animalizados»: considerados diferentes o marginados en las novelas. En la presente comunicación se analizarán las estrategias utilizadas por el autor para desarrollar la empatía interespecies a través de esa mirada bidireccional útil para expandir la percepción de los humanos sobre sus propios actos. Asimismo, se presentarán ejemplos de otros paralelismos trazados por el autor sobre problemas ecológicos de índole actual, tales como la deforestación, la contaminación de acuíferos, el desequilibrio de los ecosistemas o el cambio climático, que otorgan un sentido metafórico al conjunto de la obra.

### Room / Aula 8

Pre-formed panel

‘A Plea for Our Times’: Transpecies Dialogue in Times of Crises

Chair: Juan Ignacio OLIVA, University of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain.

**Felicity HAND, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain.**

**A Swordfish, a Bat and a Spider: Three Non-human Voices Against Environmental Justice.**

Nnedi Okorafor's 2014 novel *Lagoon* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014) can be read as an example of what has been termed Afrofuturism or African speculative fiction with its emphasis on possible future societies from a clearly non-Western perspective (Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, Lawrence Hill Books, 2013). While I do not disregard these readings, in this paper I propose to focus more closely on how the author attempts to give voice to non-human creatures. *Lagoon* – a novel about the arrival of aliens in the Nigerian city of Lagos and the revolution carried out by fish and marine creatures against the pollution of their habitat by human overproduction of oil – features three creatures that relate their point of view of the invasion. Okorafor highlights the environmental injustice occasioned by oil dependency by means of the vengeful swordfish that sabotages an underwater oil pipeline. Likewise, the fate of the enlightened bat throws into relief the appropriation of the air by humans, crisscrossing the sky in their incessant global travel, in complete disregard for the carbon footprint.

The third creature, the spider, identified as Udide Okwanka, the Nigerian god of storytelling, is given the last word. He is appointed, not only as the spinner of the tale, but also to become "part of the story" and, he warns us, "spiders play dirty" (Okorafor, 2014:293). Thus Okorafor's incorporation of these three non-human actors is an intriguing communicative device, by which – without losing sight of their own specificity – she designs what Carretero-González (cfp 2019) has called "interspecies transcreations". If, in accordance with translation theory, the aim is to instruct the audience, this paper will reflect on Okorafor's success in transmitting her environmental message through the voices of these three creatures that represent the air, the sea and the land.

**Modhumita ROY, Tufts University, Boston Massachusetts, USA.**

**Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain: An Argument for “realism of our times”.**

In a NY Times article, the novelist Nathaniel Rich asked, "Should novelists try harder to confront long-term environmental crisis?" Answering his own question in the affirmative, he goes on to say, "Novelists may be powerless to change the terrifying new world, but they can make a greater effort to understand how it is changing us."

But in what form might this greater understanding be rendered? One important and influential response to environmental and climate disasters has been the turn to speculative fiction, especially in its apocalyptic variations. More interesting, in this genre, has been the exploration of close encounters with other-than-human creatures—as my fellow panelists elaborate. This paper will ask: Why are we speculating about "disaster" when various kinds catastrophe are all too real and has become the normalized for millions? While I acknowledge the importance of interspecies collaborations, we ought also be mindful of the difficult task of *intra*-species dialogue, empathetic imagination, and solidarity. This paper will make an argument for a "revitalized realism" (Fredric Jameson) as the modality for representing the catastrophe of the present, as well as for imagining environmentally just world.

**Juan Ignacio OLIVA, Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Canaries, Spain.**

**Underwater Traumas: a Search for Interspecies Communication in Vandana Shiva’s “Requiem” & Linda Hogan’s *People of the Whale*.**

Both, Vandana Shiva's short story "Requiem" (in *Ambiguity Machines & Other Stories*, 2018) and Linda Hogan's novel *People of the Whale* (2008), tackle lack of comprehension and language abilities in the interspecies dialog underwater. In the close encounters among whales and humans, either in Shiva's technological sci-fi fiction or in Hogan's narrative of trauma, there seems to be a lack of code switching and understanding of the 'Other' as articulate and thinking being. In favor of scientific progress and human perfectibility, other values such as empathetic contact and natural wisdom are neglected for the sake of accumulation and wealth, resulting in suffering and catastrophe for all. In a sort of butterfly effect, the healing of both mammals, cetaceans and humans, undergoes a process of rendering accounts to the planet they inhabit, that is also the vulnerable recipient of their hostility. Thus, the threefold entity proves to be experiencing the same interferences that lead to damage and further annihilation, unless transcreation interspecies processes could be firstly learnt; secondly, implemented; and, ultimately, bear fruit. Therefore, this paper aims at studying the possibilities that Vandana and Hogan open not only for knowledge but for relationship between species (Carretero-González), especially when ambivalent machines, artifacts and human products such as submersibles and sonars are brought to the forefront to help or to disturb communication. Inversely, the incapacity to be in the other's boots or to 'become amphibian' and see the similarities between languages and attitudes will also be analyzed. Finally, the traumatic stress disorder (LaCapra) that this lack of understanding brings about in the two texts will be peered to try to cope with nowadays viral reality: one that is teaching us to understand the tight connection between illnesses, transspecies and planetary fragility.

**Room / Aula 10**

**Stage Transcreations**

Chair: Serenella IOVINO, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA.

**Kitija BALCARE, University of Latvia, Latvia.**

**Forgotten Language: Interspecies Relations and Bioperformativity on Stages in Latvia.**

The role of the performing arts in the era of climate change is growing along with the environmental concerns. Historically theatre has been human-centred. However, in recent decades theatre studies have embraced new concepts related to ecology and the environment, including green theatre, ecodramaturgy, ecodirecting, ecotheatre, and even theatre of species.



As ecotheatre is a new concept in theatre studies, I propose the definition that ecotheatre is a form of performance representing and questioning interplay between the human, the non-human and the more-than-human in the context of environmental challenges looking for alternative co-existence modes, taking also into consideration sustainability aspects of the performance itself.

Nature in theatre comes from the background of the scenery to the foreground of the performances questioning existing relationships between humans and non-humans. Contemporary theatre practitioners connect human and non-human stories to the long-term causes of climate change through transspecies stories.

The aim of this paper is to present research findings about the artistic strategies chosen by Latvian theatre makers in order to put interspecies relations on stage in contemporary Latvian theatrical performance (2019-2022), developing bioperformativity of the non-human.

Chosen case studies of ecotheatrical performances in Latvia show that there are econarratives about the struggle to regain a lost language from pagan times in order to diminish the gap between the non-human and the human communities facing the challenge of climate change, biodiversity loss and extinction of species, pollution, consumerism and other environmental issues co-caused by humans. Ecotheatre performances on various stages in Latvia also introduce new forms of storytelling while increasing the level of audience participation in the theatre. Looking at these performances from an ecocritical perspective, it is possible to observe how the performing arts, demonstrating in their econarratives a gradual shift from an anthropocentric worldview to the ecocentric and biocentric, become not only works of art but also deepen ecological identity, thus becoming a form of an environmental activism.

### **Keywords**

ecotheatre, performing arts, interspecies relations, theatre in Latvia, ecodramaturgy, environmental activism, ecocriticism.

**Stephanie PAPA, Université Paris 13-Sorbonne Paris Cité, France.**

**Voicing the Non-Human: Prosopopeia in Allison Adelle Hedge Coke's *Blood Run*.**

Allison Adelle Hedge Coke's verse play, *Blood Run* is perhaps the only known work of poetry that has directly influenced a state policy decision on the protection of a natural site. In this work, Hedge Coke uses unconventional prosopopeia techniques to disrupt the first-person poetic narrative by writing from the perspective of flora, fauna and artifacts found on the intertribal Blood Run site, an area featuring human-constructed earth mounds that straddle present-day Iowa and South Dakota. Her interrelational human and non-human voices form a heteroglossic chorus that counters the capitalistic dipsomania and colonial erasure which has damaged this site, like other indigenous earth mound sites, throughout the ages. Some of the voices are human, such as the indigenous voice of Clan Sister, and others who want to destroy the site for their own gain. Most of these voices, however, are plants, animals, celestial bodies, abstract concepts, and cultural elements found on the site itself. Hedge Coke does not simply put a mask on faceless entities, as De Man writes of prosopopeia, but rather she extends our imagination and endows the voices with agency. Firstly, the human and non-human voices engage in complex, interrelational and intertextual dialogues which echo their material interdependencies. They are not simply loco-descriptive, but narrate the site's timeline before and after colonial domination, both linguistically and structurally. Through the voices of *Blood Run*, Hedge Coke also provides extensive lists of the site's species against ecological erasure. These political memoranda challenge America's exploitation and "soft capital warfare", to cite Mbembe, which have silenced the site, in order to "retrieve" the non-human body "from the dimension of discourse" (Iovino 79). Finally, the poet's stylistic singularity of non-human voicings engages in decentering, in the sense used by poet Arthur Sze, whom she studied with at the Institute of American Indians Arts. Translating these voices does not, as Derrida suggest, "aggravate seal the *inaccessibility* of the other language", in this case non-human languages, but rather allows for possibilities of interspecies awareness echoing pre-colonial or pre-capitalist relationships. Her interspecies encounters proclaim the site's cultural and ecological significance and assert their interactive material agency beyond apathetic hypernoms.

**Room / Aula 2**

**17.30 – 18.30**

Closing plenary lecture / *Conferencia plenaria de clausura*

Chair: Margarita CARRETERO GONZÁLEZ, University of Granada, Spain.

**Carmen FLYS JUNQUERA, University of Alcalá, Spain**

**Interspecies Dialogics in Ecofeminist Science Fiction.**

This lecture will analyze several science fiction series with regards to the encounter, reactions and relationships established between members of different species. It will include *Lilith's Brood* by Octavia Butler, the *Elysium Cycle* by Joan Slonczewski and Karen Traviss' *Wess'bar Wars*. These SF series can arguably be read from an ecofeminist perspective and include the encounter of multiple species, ranging from pantropic women on an ocean planet, to almost immortal humans, nano-robots, a variety of alien human civilizations and races, a wide spectrum of humanoid creatures and different microorganisms which form human-like civilizations. In these different encounters there are many reactions, from outright rejection, racism/speciesism, to acceptance and cross-overs. These encounters underscore the question of what it means to be "human". Based on Val Plumwood's "interspecies dialogics" and her "counter-hegemonic strategies", the lecture will analyze the reactions and particularly the attempts of bridging the species gap. This process undertaken by different characters outlines a possible strategy to approach *others* and develop meaningful relationships.