Critical Pedagogies Abstracts

A Manifesto for the Agricultural Humanities

Saskia Cornes | Towards a Manifesto for the Agricultural Humanities

Growing food is the oldest surviving and continuous mode of imbrication with the non-human world, fostering an understanding of our dependence on literally countless others – bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes, plants, pollinators, animals, people. These are the dependencies and attunements that have come to the fore in considerations of climate crisis within the environmental humanities. Rather than looking far afield for methods or models of interspecies being, can we envision sustainable agriculture as a praxis or methodology for working relationships with the more-than-human world, as a form of slow counter-violence in which we all have an ancestral share? This talk considers agriculture as a new horizon for the environmental humanities, and frames campus farms and gardens (of which there are more than a hundred on liberal arts campuses across North America) as a living laboratory for work in this sphere.

Laura Sayre | Uncovering the Agricultural Humanities

Why do the agricultural humanities not have the same profile as the environmental humanities or the energy humanities? In this presentation, I review what we might mean by the agricultural humanities, how the term has been used, and what types of scholarship could be said to fall within it. Although excellent examples of humanities approaches to the problems of agriculture exist, as an overarching concept the term is not really in use. I argue that this is largely due to the relative absence of a concept of agriculturally-oriented literary scholarship, or “agroecocriticism.” Great potential for such a concept does exist, however, and could help explain and engage ideas about agriculture through the centuries. In addition, the agricultural humanities could assist in the ambitions of the environmental humanities to claim greater public recognition and engage citizens in proactive efforts to address the climate emergency.

Leah Bayens | The Liberal Arts Farmer

This presentation illustrates the Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College as a model of agricultural humanities-based education that trains farmers “liberally and practically, as farmers,” as Wendell Berry puts it. With the turbulence of our collective history in mind, the WBFP envisions resilient, healthy, inclusive
communities in which people can afford to farm well. The curriculum aims to cultivate neighborly leaders, cooperative economies, and equitable cultures. Through the agricultural humanities, farmers learn to make decisions informed by pasture ecology and geology, experience and conversations with neighbors, as well as by history and poetry.

Jeremy Oldfield | Humanities Course Collaborations at the Yale Farm

Jeremy Oldfield is the Farm Manager at the Yale Sustainable Food Program. In this presentation, he shares several anecdotal cases of Yale University humanities courses that use class visits to the Yale Farm to augment and enliven humanities instruction. One theme that arises: Yale faculty have discovered a useful sort of triangulation at the Yale Farm. They use course discussions, artifacts (and texts) from University libraries and museums, and field experiences at the Farm to make the unseen seen and abstract concepts tangible in their teaching.

Object Lessons: Teaching Ecocriticism via Visual Culture, Part 1

Maura Coughlin | Object Lessons: Teaching Ecocriticism via Visual Culture, Part 1 Introduction

This is the first of two related panels in the Critical Pedagogies Stream, concerning “OBJECT LESSONS: Teaching Ecocriticism via Visual Culture.” We proposed these panels as a way of officially launching our new interest group within ASLE, devoted to Ecocritical Visual Culture, and to fostering the important work that can be done at the intersection of art history and the environmental humanities. We hope that pedagogical projects such as the ones our peers share this year offer answers to the question of what ecocriticism can do for art history, and what art history can do for the environmental humanities. In the models of engagement between objects, images, and ecocriticism that follow, our colleagues explore how their work sheds light on the possibilities provided by a sustained look at visual culture, seen through an interdisciplinary lens.

Maura Coughlin | Elodie La Villette, The Bas Fort Blanc Path, Dieppe (1885)

Elodie La Villette, The Bas Fort Blanc Path, Dieppe (1885) can help us to see—especially in the classroom—the ways in which emergent natural history produced new ways of perceiving, inhabiting and representing the coastline. When teaching my environmental humanities class, I often turn to La Villette in dialogue with early French and British natural history illustrators to orient our discussion to toward the importance of visual observation and description in visualizing emergent knowledges of deep time, species extinction and theories of catastrophism and evolution. La Villette’s painting is an object lesson for the ways in which nineteenth-century natural history produced new ways of perceiving, inhabiting and representing the coastline. Her painting is put into dialogue with early French and British natural history illustrators to discuss the importance of visual observation and description in visualizing emergent knowledges of deep time, species extinction and theories of catastrophism and evolution.

Jaimey Hamilton Faris | Rise: From One Island to Another

This visual analysis of Rise: From One Island to Another by Dan Lin, Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, Aka Niviâna, et. al, (2018) features considerations of the multiple gazes in operation throughout this video poem. It considers the poem in terms of salvage environmentalism, spectacles of climate crisis, and the immersive points of view.
At Skidmore College, my students learn about environmental racism through the exploration of Francophone African and Caribbean artworks. In a course unit on pollution and waste management in Senegal, they analyze Fabrice Monteiro’s The Prophecy (2014 – present), a series of thirteen photographs representing futuristic and nightmarish creatures made out of wasted objects. Students often initially comment on how this work raises awareness about environmental destruction, pollution, and global warming. Monteiro’s multifaceted use of waste, however, leads them to reconsider such apocalyptic perspective in order to decolonize Western teleological narratives of global doom and disaster. In The Prophecy, waste triggers a reflection on how global warming and pollution have disproportionately impacted racialized communities and their environments across centuries of colonization. As students learn how The Prophecy’s aesthetics point to racial, political, and religious, oppression in Senegal, they specifically explore how the work mobilizes the fashion style of the Baye Falls, a socially marginalized Senegalese Sufi movement rooted in recycling practices. Teaching The Prophecy, I have found, helps students decolonize their concept of global warming, deconstruct any perception of Africa as a monolith bloc, and learn about Francophone ecocritical visual cultures beyond France. The perishable nature of the work and its Afrofuturist dimension ultimately engage them to consider how race, technology, and nature, all intersect in the construction of more sustainable futures that account for colonial pasts. If the use of waste in contemporary art is not new, a work such as The Prophecy leads students to question the limits of “traditional” art history by exploring waste as a decolonial process pointing to modes of cultural resilience alternative to Western artistic conventions.

Michaela Rife | Carlos Lopez, Bounty (1940), tempera mural

Bounty by Carlos Lopez, a 1940 mural in the Paw Paw, Michigan post office, presents a valuable opportunity for students to develop environmentally informed research questions from visual analysis, both on-site and from documentation. This New Deal mural is a focal point in an upcoming undergraduate seminar on Michigan murals and a key site for an in-development digital humanities project about rural Michigan murals. Informed by my experiences teaching a seminar on environmental art history, this paper will discuss Bounty as an “object lesson” for students developing an environmentally focused visual analysis. Lopez’s mural invites environmental questions about farm labor and agricultural land use. Obvious research avenues include the environmental and labor histories of the depicted crops, but the mural also introduces questions about how to move beyond booster representations to ask about the histories of Indigenous land dispossession, racialized agricultural labor, and environmental degradation. Of course, these histories reverberate today, and they open onto a consideration of our present environmental realities and imagining future possibilities. I posit that local and regional public art, outside of the art historical canon, is a particularly effective way for students to encounter these ecocritical topics. As part of my seminar and digital humanities project, students are also invited to expand their web of ecocritical analysis to include archival and on-site material, environmental humanists, and scientists. Ideally, this learning experience will not only sharpen a student’s ecocritical lens but also open up the wider possibilities for that lens.

Elizabeth Hutchinson | Teaching Thomas Moran’s Yellowstone: water, color, and ecocriticism

I discuss of the pedagogical value of using ecocritical and material feminist tools to analyze Thomas Moran’s watercolors of Yellowstone from 1871. In addition to shifting students’ perspectives about the works themselves and how they were produced and perceived, I argue that this approach breaks through anthropocentric tendencies in art history that may help push them toward creating a more equitable future for human beings and nonhumans.
Object Lessons: Teaching Ecocriticism via Visual Culture, Part 2

Delia Byrnes | Sensing the Anthropocene in Louie Palu’s Melting Arctic

This short presentation will consider an image from Louie Palu’s 2019 photography installation Arctic Passage, titled Canadian Airman, Resolute Bay, Nunavut, Canada, 2017 (see image on next page). Part of an exhibit co-sponsored by The University of Texas at Austin’s Harry Ransom Center and the SXSW Art Program, this project by the award-winning photographer explores the polar region’s shifting geopolitics amidst neoliberalism, militarization, and climate change. Installed on March 12, 2019, the time-based Arctic Passage consisted of a series of photographs frozen in large blocks of ice and displayed on the Ransom Center plaza in central Austin. Over the course of the day, the ice blocks melted to reveal the underlying images, which depict the Indigenous peoples, military trainees, and environments affected by climate change in the Arctic Circle. This presentation will specifically discuss the ways that the spectacle of a melting Arctic subject on view in Texas, the birthplace of oil modernity, interpellates the viewer’s body into the spaces of globalized climate change. Teaching this image in the interdisciplinary environmental studies classroom has provided an especially rich opportunity to engage students in dialogue about both the material realities of climate crisis and the value of subjugated forms of environmental knowledge, such as affect and embodied experience. Students are invited by the melting exhibit to explore the ethics of witnessing; the relationship between embodied experience and the globalized scales of climate change; and archival production via the visual culture of the Anthropocene. This work contributes to the expansion of art history and visual culture studies by centering the climate-based vulnerability of both art and bodies.

Daniel Finch-Race | Vincent Van Gogh’s “Factories at Clichy” (1887)

This paper, inspired by Jessica and Allison Hayes-Conroy’s concept of “visceral geographies,” focuses on Vincent Van Gogh’s “Factories at Clichy” in terms of stimuli (sight/smell/sound/taste/touch), dimensions (depth/height/width/time), and materiality. The goal is to consider three aspects of “sensing” with regard to visual culture: 1. how an image appeals to the senses beyond vision; 2. how an image expresses information in a scientific sense; 3. how an image can give sense to the long-term challenges of pollution.

Gretchen Henderson | Spiral Jetty: Resisting Reduction by Visual Reproduction

This object lesson revolves around the iconic Land art of Spiral Jetty by Robert Smithson (1970) that resists reduction by visual reproduction. There is much to discuss in relation to ecocriticism and aesthetics through an image of Spiral Jetty: given restrictions on photographically reproducing the artwork, given its material evolution through environmental impacts, among other considerations. For the past few years, I have accompanied the Great Salt Lake Institute (one of the local stewards of Spiral Jetty that partners on its care with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Dia Art Foundation, and Utah Department of Natural Resources) that scientifically studies the evolving environmental (de)composition of Spiral Jetty. The artwork is literally steeped in microbial life that constantly changes its aesthetics, edged by tar seeps (pools of raw oil, or natural asphalt, so-called “death traps”) that were key to the artist’s selection of his site, which also lies near the intersection of two of the four major bird migratory flyways of North America. Geology, hydrology, ornithology, paleontology, meteorology, and other environmental forces continually reshape this artwork — even obscuring it from view for decades underwater — and, in turn, the artwork invites viewers to pay closer attention to an overlooked corner of the American West. Through the natural agency of the living landscape, the tar seeps assert themselves relationally to reveal the reputedly “dead sea” of Great Salt Lake as deeply alive, a watershed for thinking about any overlooked place. A single, static image of Spiral Jetty does not capture that and indirectly reveals the site’s resistance to being reduced by visual reproduction, exposing the limits of human views.
Jennifer Garcia Peacock | Visualizing Latinx Food Justice: Art, Activism and the 21st Century Environmental Studies Classroom

In this paper, I will discuss how art and practice-based food justice initiatives in my Latinxs and the Environment course at Davidson College have helped students create a more nuanced “picture” of decolonial Latinx environments. I will show how these collaborations—focusing on the visual and material culture of food—have produced a wide-range of material, including a mural, an exhibit, a cookbook, a garden, and a children’s book. I argue that this set of collaborations offer important insights into developing arts-based environmental justice material in the twenty-first century environmental studies classroom.

Emily Gephart | Winslow Homer, *Life-Sized Black Bass*, 1904

This paper is an ‘object lesson’ about how the study of Visual Culture in the classroom can enrich the fields of Art History and the Environmental Humanities. A 1904 watercolor by Winslow Homer enables the analysis of multispecies entanglements and ecocritical approaches to historical images, and introduces students to the value of such scholarship.

**Make Kin, Not Capitalists: Imagining Collaborative Futures**

Erik Fuhrer | The Syllabus as a Model of Kinship

As the instructor of record for The Gender Justice and The Environment Course that this panel grew out of, I will focus on leveraging theories of kinship as activism and as storytelling for worlds both real and imagined so that we can provide care for, and open up realms of thought opportunities for, care, even if this care is entangled and messy. I will discuss the ways that the assignments and readings I assigned formed theoretical kinship networks that produced ethical collaborations for students to draw from in their own individualized work.

Elsa Barron | Paradise Imagined: Environmental Education in Carceral Spaces

Through a sustainability curriculum focusing on access to nature and environmental justice at DePaul Academy, an organization that serves as an alternative to incarceration for youth, we witnessed the meaningful connections that traditionally marginalized students were able to make between their life experience and the nature they encountered, establishing a concept of kinship. This kinship inspires different kinds of thinking about what kind of communities we want to create in an imagined future world.

Lidya Abreha | Consequences of Design: Kinship Models in Engineering

Engineering that does not center humans, empathy, and intention will drive us farther from a better and safer future. We have to challenge models of looking away (convenience / capitalism) toward looking at (kinship / connection). Only then, are we better equipped to both repair harm already done to vulnerable communities and prevent such harm from occurring in the future.
Pedagogical Contributions of The Latin American Ecocultural Reader to the Classroom

Gisela Heffes, Jennifer French, and Jeremy Larochelle | Pedagogical Contributions of The Latin American Ecocultural Reader to the Classroom

This panel will follow the format of an interview/conversation between Dr. Jeremy Larochelle and co-editors of The Latin American Ecocultural Reader, Dr. Jennifer French and Dr. Gisela Heffes. Some of the issues we will be discussing are: What are the pedagogical contributions of the Reader for teaching classes both in Spanish and English? How can we organize our curriculums in a way that incorporates a myriad of voices that are representative of the Global South? How can the Reader help students to better engage with environmental knowledge and concerns? What are the challenges and opportunities that emerge in an environmental or ecocritical studies classroom and how does the Reader facilitate several responses and better outcomes? We are hoping to further a conversation that incorporates, as well, the goals that guide our teaching practices, including questions of inclusiveness and diversity, different methodologies of learning, and the cultural, political and socioeconomic processes and complexities that lead towards the exacerbation of environmental problems. In addition, the Reader offers a great opportunity to teach, especially to those coming from other disciplines than the Humanities, how art and literature can enhance our understanding of the climate crisis and environmental (in)justice. We thus look forward to discussing how a broad selection of texts (from excerpts of novels to short stories, poems, speeches, memoirs and interviews) coming from all regions of Latin America (including Brazil) can serve as a tool to develop different responses to the ecological crisis and to re-envision our relationship with nature and the built environment.

Ecocritical Pedagogies and Western Literature: WLA-Sponsored Panel

Daniel Clausen | Reading the Nebraska Sandhills: Teaching Literature and Environment at Cedar Point Biological Station

In the early summer of 2018, I taught the first ever English course to be offered at the University of Nebraska’s Cedar Point Biological Station. Located just outside of Ogallala, NE on the southern edge of the unique sandhills bioregion, Cedar Point has been used by UNL since the 1970s for biology courses. For this literature course, in two intense weeks, my students and I read eight books about the region that included novels, essay collections, memoir, and nonfiction. This talk will reflect on the experience of conducting a literature class “on the ground” and the mutual enrichment of the texts and the places that resulted.

Karen Roybal | "Place-Based Learning: Moving Outside the Traditional Classroom & So Far From God"

At Colorado College, I typically teach a field-intensive Environmental Justice (EJ) in the Southwest course. COVID restrictions in fall 2020 altered our abilities to conduct fieldwork. This talk focuses on how I incorporated place-based learning in my virtual EJ in the Southwest course by drawing on a combination of ecocritical theory, literature, including Chicana author Ana Castillo’s novel, So Far from God, and a series of oral history interviews conducted with women of color feminists, local farmers, and activists. I will share tips that might be useful for others interested in place-based pedagogies that incorporate interdisciplinary methods and that account for virtual limitations.
Surabhi Balachander | Teaching Western Literature to Midwestern Students I Will Never Meet in Person

In this talk, I discuss several activities that fostered engagement with place in my online courses in 2020-21. In my first-year writing class in the fall, my students had a land acknowledgment project that ran all semester, as well as an extended unit on Leah Sottile’s Bundyville podcast that helped many of them frame right-wing uprisings across the country. In my literature and environment class this semester, I taught Tommy Orange’s novel There There and found some creative ways to get us into the Bay Area, as well as foster a shared exploration of a distant place by organizing a pen pal project with Mika Kennedy’s class at Kalamazoo College, who read the novel at the same time as we did.

Will Lombardi | Among Burnt Trees: A Cultural Natural History; or, Public Scholarship and Catastrophic Fire

I’ll be discussing my part as a public scholar as I organize a “Fire Footprint Lecture Series” on behalf of Friends of Plumas Wilderness. Our group is collaborating with the Pacific Trail Association, Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, US Forest Service, and the University of California Cooperative Extension to bring community members into the burn scar of the Bear Fire, 5th largest and 6th most deadly wildfire in California history. I’m imagining an intersection of environmental humanities and the sciences, in which experts and everyday folk listen to and learn from each other about the personal, ecological, and social trauma related to catastrophic fire in California landscapes. Our aim is to engender long-term ecosocial involvement from the rural communities in our watershed and to promote long-term, ground-level advocacy and protection.

Storytelling for Interspecies Compassion

Patty Born | Using Environmental Literature to Nurture Multispecies Relations

My research seeks to decenter the human and challenge traditional notions of environmental education which has traditionally been grounded in a presumed nature/child split, with a focus on child development and child-centered pedagogies. My approach responds to the profound need for a redefined and reconfigured approach to multispecies relations as we move toward a more hopeful and ecologically just future. For this panel, I present a paper aimed at the potential eco-pedagogical implications of nature and environmental stories. I offer a framework for how environmental literature can be used to help young children develop a sense of agency, support their relational ways-of-being in the world, and rethink their own responsibilities and connections with animal and the natural world.

Heidi Lawrence | Kinship Between Human and Nonhuman in Madeleine L’Engle’s A Ring of Endless Light

Vicky Austin, female protagonist of L’Engle’s novel, A Ring of Endless Light, learns to communicate with dolphins. Her ability to communicate with the dolphins is contingent on her active engagement with types of storytelling, specifically reading and writing fantasy and fairy tales. Readers are made aware of this through two conversations Vicky has. The first is with male antagonist Zachary Grey, who challenges Vicky’s aspirations for writing. The second is with male protagonist Adam Eddington, who contrasts Vicky’s ability to “kythe” with dolphins to his own, saying that Vicky has learned the skill much more quickly because of her engagement with storytelling through reading and writing fantasy and fairy tales.
Dona Soman and Renu Bhadola Dangwal | Exploring Pedagogical Possibilities of Stories: Revisiting Panchatantra towards Compassionate Living

Stories and oral tales are aesthetically equipped to ignite in children and young minds the capacity to imagine, decipher and exert influence upon their worlds and encourage them to participate and be responsible in the determination of outcomes of their actions. Panchatantra, the most famous and oldest collection of animal fables written as a treatise on political instruction to be taught to three slow learning princes of King Amarshakti in ancient India, disseminates numerous sustainability values like compassion towards the nonhumans, coexisting with other species, with mutual resource sharing on the planet. The paper is proposed to be an investigation of scope and importance stories of Panchatantra in enlightening and exercising the analytical skills of the children in species interdependence and recognition of inner vitality between the humans and the nonhuman beings.

Rodney Stephens | The Poetics of Empathy in Coral Reef Cultures

The Poetics of Empathy in Coral Reef Cultures explores the language, influences, and ideas of The Tale of Lusca. This poem emerges from the crisis of coral bleaching and serves as a bridge between marine biology and eco-poetics. The sea monster, Lusca, comes to embody elements of the mindset that contribute to the decimation of the vibrant life of coral reefs.

Approaches to Outdoor & Service Learning


The presentation will share an interdisciplinary experiential environmental and contemplative course at Kibbutzim College of Education and a research conducted on this course. Entitled “Nature and Me: Literature and Mindfulness in the Desert”, the course is exceptionally co-taught by an Ecologist and a literary scholar, part of students’ teacher-training-program. The course includes two-day base camping and hiking in the Negev Desert and on-campus meetings in the Kibbutzim Center for Contemplative Pedagogy. Combining Field-Ecology, Literature and Mindfulness, the course suggests a unique experience in which students read contemporary Hebrew Ecopoetry and American Nature-Writing, take individual short explorative excursions studying the geology, flora and fauna of the desert, practice guided mindfulness meditations in the field, and keep contemplative-writing journals. Students experience slowing down, creative familiarity with Literature, contemplation and dialogical culture – with oneself, with others, and with Nature. While presenting the course we will additionally share an on-going research we are conducting, aimed at exploring the effect of this unique course on the students’ perception of outdoor contemplative learning experience of literary texts within Natural Environment. For this purpose, we had asked the students to create drawings of their perception of the course both pre and post-course (Moseley et al, 2010; Ozsoy, 2012). Their drawings, alongside with their written explanation of their visual images are our primary research data. In addition, we use the students’ contemplative critical reflections and the course’s final achievement – workshops developed by students’ teams taught to their peers in other programs in the college. To be sure, preliminary results show that the course’s contribution to the students’ learning was expressed in their workshops and drawings. Indeed, they have internalized and applied what they had learned: interdisciplinary co-teaching, contemplative approach, critical thinking and a combination of Nature, ecology and literature. Additionally, pedagogical methods were acquired and implemented.
Can academic service-learning pedagogies deployed in environmentally focused courses across the curriculum substantially improve students’ pre-existing environmental attitudes? This research question assumes particular importance in the Gulf South region of the United States, where widely perceived anti-environmental attitudes coexist alongside a recent history of spectacular socio-environmental disasters—from Hurricanes Katrina and Harvey (2005, 2017) to the B.P. Oil and New Orleans Nurdle Spills (2010, 2020). Drawing on data collected through an ongoing study at the University of Southern Mississippi, this presentation highlights the potential for academic service-learning courses to improve undergraduates’ pre-existing environmental attitudes in statistically significant ways.

Yelizaveta Renfro | A Laboratory for Emerging Ideas: The Field Notebook in Nature & Environmental Writing

This presentation takes both a critical and a creative perspective in exploring the uses of the field notebook in the undergraduate writing classroom and in my own personal work as a writer of creative nonfiction. Rooted in my experience teaching a 200-level undergraduate writing course titled “Nature and Environmental Writing” during the spring 2021 semester that enrolled students across nine different majors representing STEM and humanities fields at a small women’s liberal arts college, I examine the benefits of assigning a field notebook that requires students to record their interactions with the natural world (via writing, drawing, sketching, painting, etc.) on a weekly basis over the course of a semester. My presentation first covers the specifics of the assignment and several smaller, supplementary assignments. The latter portion includes many examples of student work (both images from students’ notebooks and their written reflections on the assignment). I also discuss my own uses of the field notebook in my writing (as artist-in-residence at Denali National Park and Preserve and in other settings). As a generative laboratory for emerging ideas, the field notebook is a tool for writers and educators that can have lasting and meaningful impact.

Building Ecoawareness in Students & Teachers

Nina Goga and Lykke Guanio-Uluru | Ecocritical Dialogues

Drawing on theoretical and empirical research from the context of Norwegian teacher education, and based on the work of the research group Nature in Children’s Literature and Culture (NaChiLitCul), this paper lays out the theoretical foundations of ecocritical dialogues and asks: how can ecocritical dialogues enhance sustainability competency by creating frameworks for environmental awareness within teacher education? The paper is motivated by the claim that “the ecological crisis is not only a crisis of the physical environment but also a crisis of the cultural and social environment” (Bergtaller et al, 2014). Consequently, we must focus on reconfiguring the cultural and social environment, our teaching practices included. Such work is already underway. As a response to UN’s agenda 2030 and OECDS The Future of Education and Skills. Education 2030 (OECD, 2018a), curricula in higher education and schools across the world are up for revision to meet the current global environmental and climatic challenges. The revision can not only be a revision of themes and required learning outcomes but should also include consideration of ways to teach and learn. Developments in teaching practices are highly significant to the implementation of SDG 4.7, which is comprised of multiple objectives and may be approached in a range of different ways. By incorporating the basic thinking and practices from ecocriticism, dialogic thinking, and eco-oriented pedagogy, ecocritical dialogue, as the approach is outlined in this paper, is one viable approach to help implement the competencies related to sustainability called for by the UN. Our point of departure is the view that the development of sustainability competency may be aided by what we term environmental awareness, that is, an awareness of our own surroundings but also of the figures of thought that we employ in our interpretation of and discussions about
In recent times Ecocriticism and green cultural studies have evaluated and considered different genre and media in the process of formulating innovative pedagogical strategies for imparting environmental education through literature. This paper proposes that folklore be considered as a potential site of framing an effective environmental pedagogy, chiefly because we want to suggest an alternate rationality in contrast to dominant forms of rationality that determine our technocratic and economic reality. To illustrate this proposal, we have evaluated folklore from two communities of the North East Indian state of Tripura. In effect, we have chosen what can be called folklore ‘from the margins’ so that we can also address the problem of place-based pedagogy and we explain how this relates to the global. In the next section, we evaluate the folklore using the three-step model- “awareness”, “analysis and evaluation” and “participation” proposed by Hayden and Garrard for effectively using literature to teach about the environment to prove that folklore can be a plausible site of developing an effective ecocritical pedagogy. Through illustrative examples, we explain how this pedagogy could work in a real-life situation.

As the global climate crisis escalates unabated in the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly evident that environmental disaster and extreme weather will play a defining role in the lives of many of today’s children. Given this unsettling reality, Carlie Trott contends that “empowering today’s children to understand and take action on climate change should be an important goal, both to support children’s agency and to promote present and future community resilience in the face of climate change impacts” (43). Lauren Tarshis’s bestselling I Survived series takes up this challenge by using historical fiction narratives to teach middle-grade (8- to 12-year-old) readers about environmental issues. Each installment centers on a traumatic historical or environmental event retold from the perspective of a fictional child protagonist who inevitably, as the series title indicates, survives—unlike the real-life victims who frequently perished during the incident. For instance, I Survived the Attack of the Grizzlies, 1967 (2018) recounts a series of deadly grizzly bear attacks that took place in Glacier National Park. Similarly, in I Survived the Shark Attacks of 2016 (2011), a young boy narrates his escape from a fatal shark attack. These novels aim to educate children about environmental issues by drawing attention to the systemic problems underlying such events, like eco-tourism and climate change. Additionally, the books include informative paratexts that encourage children to engage in environmental activism. However, building on the scholarship of Clare Echterling and Simon C. Estok, I contend that the books’ illustrations and serial structure also sensationalize environmental disasters and promote ecophobic discourses that frame nature as hostile and threatening. Moreover, the series’ fictionalized retellings of historical environmental catastrophes also promote fantasies of exceptionalism by falsely suggesting that children can survive any natural disaster, as long as they possess the correct personality or skillset.

If, as John Berger has argued, “[i]n the last two centuries, animals have gradually disappeared from our lives and “[t]oday we live without them,” how can poetry reconnect us with the more-than-human world in ways that humble and inspire? How does moving poetry beyond human exceptionalism change poetic form and practice? What does it mean to write a poem such that both species life and also individual animal lives
matter? These are the questions I pose for an Animal Poetics in Modern Irish poetry class. I arrange the class in units by biological family, taxonomic order, and species, thereby following the nonhuman animal through the course rather than the more familiar approach of focusing on individual poets and their poems. In this way, the class attempts to mitigate an anthropocentric approach, unfolding not as Yeats, Longley, and Meehan, but rather lagomorphs, canids, marine mammals, and sea birds. The lagomorph unit of such a course might include Yeats’ “The Man and the Echo,” Longley’s “The Rabbit,” Muldoon’s “A Hare at Aldergrove,” Morrissey’s “Hanging Hare,” and Carson’s “The Hare Bowl.” The canid unit might include Paula Meehan’s “It is All I Ever Wanted” and Geraldine Mills’ “Foxwoman.” Moreover, the animal poetics I propose employs a critical ecofeminist ethic of care; such a poetics 1) refuses to reduce the non-human animal exclusively to a symbol for purely human concerns, 2) challenges human exceptionalism by addressing poems in which animal lives, including individual animal lives, matter, and 3) confronts the abyss between human and nonhuman animal lives, such that neither radical differences between species nor empathetic multi-species engagements are denied. The many creaturely lives who have found their way into Irish poetries bear witness to sensibilities as rich and nuanced as any I know for formulating such a poetics.

Alexandra Rahr | Concrete Forests: Pastoral Idylls in Urban Highrise Marketing

In April 2017, developers broke ground on a new ‘supertall’ skyscraper in Toronto, Canada. At 94 stories, ‘The One’ will soar almost a quarter mile above one of Canada’s busiest corners, where every day over 90,000 pedestrians and vehicles pass through the intersection of Yonge and Bloor Streets. Like many other high-rise developments, the fencing surrounding the construction site is also a visual installation. Street level cladding is wrapped in a photo-realist forest – lush, green and lofty – rising from the sidewalk to high above the heads of those ambling or rushing by. The forest’s Instagram aesthetic is instantly recognizable to students. Hyper-verdant and intimately close up, it immerses passersby in a two-dimensional greenery backdrop. It’s also an explicit cover up – the photomontage conceals only a little of the massive building site and none of its neoliberal investments. Cloaking a $1 billion development in a woodland opens up lively classroom conversation about greenwashing, urban visual cultures and the traditional consolations of both pastoral art and pastoral landscapes. It also encourages students to see material and artistic, historical and contemporary landscapes alike as politicized, and not just prettily descriptive. ‘The One’ also allows students – many of whom now live downtown but grew up further afield – to trouble conventional distinctions between urban, suburban and rural built environments. As one student asked, while our class clustered in front of ‘The One,’ “What’s the difference between a forest, a metropolis and a park? And why does that photo make it harder to tell?”


This presentation discusses the incorporation of Walden, A Game (PS4/Steam) into a U.S. History (Pre-Contact to 1865) survey course and the writing assignments associated with the gameplay. Referencing literature on video games and learning, it argues that the experience of “being” Thoreau at Walden Pond enabled students to connect well to Thoreau’s writing. Additionally, it contends that the assignments fostered a closely-knit classroom environment, a particularly welcome development during the pandemic.

Ecojustice Pedagogies I

Kyhl Lyndgaard | Bringing an Environmental Literature Survey to Justice

With a new general education curriculum based on themes and wicked questions came the need to adapt existing courses to match one of the thematic strands. Of course, even without such external motivation,
carefully scaffolding themes related to justice and anti-racism is well worth doing for any environmental literature courses. This presentation details how I built the theme of justice into an American Environmental Literature survey that is cross-listed between an English and Environmental Studies department. In addition, my college went to a block schedule and a hybrid delivery mode due to COVID-19, which carries its own questions of justice and access which I explored along the way as part of a holistic course revision process. With fifteen class meetings of three hours to plan for, I determined that each day would carry both a unique topic in environmental literature as well as at least one reading that was explicitly justice-oriented. This presentation includes design principles, accessibility concerns, and also features lists of readings and topics for the audience to use as they wish. Further, in order to honor the relevance of these topics in the lived experiences of my students, multiple days included connections to events and discussions happening on or near campus. We planned a trip to the Line 3 water protector camps only a short drive north from campus and discussed George Floyd's murder which took place only a short drive south of campus.

Alexander Menrisky | Interdisciplinarity and Community Engagement in the Environmental Justice Classroom: A Sample Assignment Arc

This paper will narrativize and provide resources for a service-learning assignment arc in an environmental justice course for a broadly interdisciplinary student audience that foregrounds conducting discipline-specific research and digitally presenting it for a general audience. In Spring 2021, I taught an (online) environmental justice seminar for sophomore- and junior-level honors students from numerous disciplinary backgrounds, from nursing and engineering to mathematics and political science. The challenge of the course was to design a community-oriented final project that supported local environmental justice initiatives while also remaining relevant enough to boost buy-in among a diverse student population. Working with a community partner (the New Bedford, Massachusetts Buzzards Bay Coalition), I developed a scaffolded service-learning assignment arc that asked students first to investigate how their disciplines have historically contributed to matters of environmental injustice, to argue for how their disciplines might also mitigate these very same issues, and finally to independently contribute discipline-specific research to a collaborative online educational research hosted by the Coalition. The goal of the arc is to emphasize for students how studying environment through a humanities lens cultivates an ability to think through their own fields’ roles in matters of environmental justice, so they begin their careers with potential solutions to these entanglements already in mind. Together, we selected a single environmental problem (the Acushnet River Superfund site). Individually, students investigated the site’s actual or potential impact on marginalized populations from the perspective of their own field (e.g., civil engineers examined racist city planning that pushed communities of color to the river). Collaboratively, they then drafted, peer-reviewed, revised, and collated their work as a web resource for the Coalition’s general readership. This presentation will not only trace the course’s challenges and successes, but also provide material for audience members to adapt to their own local and classroom situations.

Ecojustice Pedagogies II

Jessica Marion Barr and Erica Nol | Revelations in a Bird Course: Expanding Social Justice Awareness in Arts and Sciences Teaching

Jessica Marion Barr (artist and Assistant Professor, Bachelor of Arts and Science Program) and Erica Nol (ornithologist and Professor of Biology) will reflect on the experience of Erica’s guest talk in Jessica’s interdisciplinary arts-sciences course focused on birds. Asked to give a guest talk about birdwatching and ornithological research, Erica spoke with the students about racism in science, Black Lives Matter, #BlackBirdersWeek, and countering colonialism and white supremacy in ornithology and birding. Students expressed interest and gratitude for this unexpected social justice lesson; one student reflected that “birds are able to bring together the disciplines of art and science in a variety of ways. Most surprising, is the contribution
of ornithology to social justice issues. [...] The shared love of birds and the right of every individual to be able to appreciate these species has contributed to a collaboration and movement of social change.” Another student wrote that Dr. Nol’s talk reminded him that “every gender and race [should] be equally appreciated.” This class, conducted over Zoom in fall 2020, provided students and the two faculty with an opportunity for discussion, reflection, and revelations in a “bird course.” The experience invites reflection on possibilities for arts-sciences discussions and collaborations, and for ongoing efforts to enact anti-racism and decolonize teaching in the environmental humanities and sciences.

Matthew Bruen and Kristen Brown | Using Print Culture Analysis to Recover Black Experiences of Nature

In the Fall of 2020, the Department of Literature and Languages at Young Harris College offered an upper level English seminar entitled “African American Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century.” Dr. Matthew Bruen taught the class and Ms. Kristen Brown was one of the students who enrolled in it. Together, the two of us propose a talk on developing and performing print culture analyses aimed at recovering Black experiences of the natural world. Our proposed presentation will be split equally in half between the two of us. Dr. Bruen’s portion of the talk will cover the pedagogical implications of using print culture techniques in the undergraduate classroom. In particular, he will discuss how archival research can help students locate alternative, non-canonical Black voices who have interesting and unexpected things to say about the environment. Recognizing the burgeoning interest in Black representations of nature, Dr. Bruen will argue that print culture studies are uniquely suited to help grow this fascinating subfield. Ms. Brown’s half of the presentation will cover the results of her print culture investigation of “Theresa, A Haytien Tale,” a short story serialized in the Freedom’s Journal in 1828. Ms. Brown will argue that the story illustrates Haiti’s natural landscape as a spiritual and inspiring space for Theresa, a native Haitian attempting to escape the French military with her mother and sister. The story’s vivid imagery establishes the natural world as a sacred haven for Theresa—an development that alludes to the religious practice of Vodou and demonstrates the essential role it plays in rejuvenating and empowering Theresa as she fights for sovereignty over her native land.

Ji Eun Lee | Colonial Landscapes: The Emergence of Victorian Africa

In response to the recent transition in Victorian scholarship initiated by "Undisiplining the Victorian Studies," which has disrupted the assumed whiteness in readership and pedagogy, and by "The Wide Nineteenth Century," which has extended the purview of criticism to include geography and species beyond Europe and humanity, I propose to imagine how Victorian literature can help teach Victorian travel narratives through a race-, species-conscious standpoint unsettling the primacy of the white male spectatorship implicated in colonial landscapes. “The very idea of landscape,” Raymond Williams writes, “implies separation and observation.” The distance that elevates the “seeing-man” to an aloof position, however, may be challenged by the “transculturation” of “contact zones” (Pratt) and the “communication between the Human and the non-Human” (Mitchell) implied in colonial landscapes. Reading images such as “Victoria Falls,” “The Ma-Robert on the Zambesi,” and “A Woman Attacked by a Crocodile Emerging from the Water, in Central Africa” based on scenes from David and Charles Livingstone’s Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries; and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858-1864, I discuss how the materialization of indigenous nature and the abundance and centrality of animals complicate the colonial aestheticization of African nature and challenge imperialism. This unit plan (see undiscipliningvc.org) questions the nature/culture binary, which was used to support the imperial dehumanization of colonized natives and the capitalistic exploitation of indigenous labor and resources, rethinking (non)humanity implied in multi-species, entangled colonial environments of Victorian Africa.
Ecomedia in & Beyond the Classroom

Jennifer Atkinson | Dispatches from the End of the World: Coping with Existential Dread through Podcasts & Collaborative Storytelling

Podcasting can be an accessible and effective tool for helping students cope with difficult emotions like eco-grief, climate anxiety and social isolation as they build community through deep listening and collaborative storytelling. This presentation briefly discusses my own podcast series “Facing It” (which helps listeners navigate the existential dread many young people feel in response to our climate crisis) and offers practical strategies for helping students create podcasts of their own. Education research shows that emotions like fear, hopelessness, guilt, and despair not only compromise creative thinking and learning; they can also immobilize individuals from getting engaged in climate solutions. As such feeling become more prevalent within the Climate Generation, our challenge today is to ensure that students don’t just have the analyses and content they need to address climate injustice, but that they also have the affective, psychological, and existential skills to navigate the long emergency ahead. In 2020 I launched a podcast to help listeners build these very skills. But as the pandemic shut down our campuses, I made podcasting a centerpiece of my own classes to simultaneously help students overcome the isolation of remote learning. (Building solidarity through community is, after all, the single greatest resource we have for creating a just and livable future!) As podcast creators, students benefit from working on teams where they combine different skillsets in writing, editing, sound production, research, interviewing, narration and recording. Moreover, sharing personal testimonies helps them feel heard as they work through the emotional toll of today’s intersectional crises. Podcast-based assignments can also offer relief from the disembodied and depersonalized interactions of remote learning, particularly when students are encouraged to walk or sit outside while listening, giving the additional benefit of physical and emotional well-being enhanced by time spent outdoors.

Antonio Lopez | Ecomedia Literacy: Incorporating Environmental Humanities into Teaching Media

Media educators are well versed in the problems associated with stereotyping, propaganda, consumerism, and culture industries, but often have a blind spot about media and the environment. The ecomedia framework recognizes that media are embedded in the physical ecology of Earth. It combines this perspective with the ways media communicate about the environment. Teaching ecomedia literacy entails going beyond traditional textual analysis by applying a holistic approach that allows for the ecological exploration of “ecomedia objects” — anything media related, scaling from micro (text/gadget) to macro (ICT systems, hyperobjects). In this presentation, I introduce an integrative method of analysis called the ecomediasphere, which prompts learners to explore the ecomedia object’s use and meaning from four different perspectives (“zones”): lifeworld, ecoculture, political ecology, and ecomaterialism. Conceptually and theoretically, these four perspectives correspond with various lenses that inform media studies and environmental humanities. For example, the ecomedia object, Blade Runner 2049, has a common identity as a film released in 2017, but it also has different meanings and uses for the audience, critics, crew, actors, marketers, and studio that produced it. From a lifeworld perspective, the film is examined based on the affective experience of the audience. The ecomaterialist perspective explores the physical properties and impacts of the film on the environment, including where it was made and the technologies it was made with. The political ecology assessment approaches the film as a global media product and commodity that drives its environmental impacts and ideological perspective. The ecocultural approach examines the film’s ecocritical discourses, narratives, and cultural themes. Like cultural studies’ circuit of culture model, all these zones interact with each other and are iterative. This holistic methodology will be useful for any educator trying to combine the study of media with environmental humanities.
Orchid Tierney | Climate Change, Podcasts, and the Public Humanities

Climate Emergencies is a beginner to intermediate English literature course open to first and second-year students and taught at a small liberal arts college. The course engages with Anglophone writers, such as Keri Hulme (Aotearoa New Zealand), John Kinsella (Australia), and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner (Marshall Islands), through whom students interrogate race, empire, and environmental justice. Learning outcomes encourage participants to unpack notions of “sustainability” and “the Anthropocene” and to attend to the uneven distribution of climate burdens at both local and global levels. As Daniel Paiva and Eduardo Brito-Henriques have argued, podcasts are powerful tools for foregrounding local knowledge that might otherwise be erased in more traditional forms of research publication. To reiterate the close connections between the local and the literary readings, students are required to produce a research-driven podcast that must include an interview with a member of the local community. This paper examines podcasts as a powerful tool in community engagements during a global pandemic. In addition to exploring the practical tasks and assignments students need to plan and execute their projects while maintaining social distancing protocols, this presentation will consider the theoretical underpinnings of podcasts in the public-facing environmental humanities.

Teaching in Catastrophic Times

Anne Raine | The Inner Work of Climate Justice: Teaching Mindfulness as Ecopolitical Praxis

This paper contributes to a growing conversation about how contemplative pedagogy can help address the intersecting social and ecological emergencies of our time. These crises call for activist pedagogies that help students move from literary reading to more public and collaborative forms of action. Yet as Sarah Jaquette Ray has argued, mindfulness and emotional intelligence are as important for climate justice work as scientific literacy; as Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino put it, teaching and activism are more effective when they are more attentive to the affective dimensions of ecopolitical discourse and socioecological relations. My paper shows how mindfulness-integrated pedagogy can help students develop both the knowledge *and* the affective resources they need to live well as engaged citizens and embodied beings in catastrophic times. Too often, mindfulness is promoted as a trendy form of individual psychotherapy or privatized self-care. In contrast, I draw on recent scholarship on contemplative practices in social justice education to teach mindfulness as an ecopolitically-oriented response to unsustainable and exploitative socioeconomic systems. While ecocritical analysis helps students critique cultural narratives that normalize climate inaction and injustice, mindfulness practice can help them *embody* what they learn rather than understanding it only intellectually (Berila, 2016; Batacharya and Wong, 2018). By integrating ecocritical studies with mindfulness practice, we make space for experiential investigation of the affective expectations and habits of attention we bring to our work as students and teachers. And we offer tools for deepening students’ ability to process the emotions that can get in the way of climate action; to examine their own affective investments in the capitalist and colonialist systems that produced the climate crisis; to listen with compassion and collaborate effectively across differences; and to experience themselves not as isolated individuals but as co-emergent social-material actors with the capacity to contribute to systemic change.

Heather Ringo | Disaster Pedagogy: The Classroom at the End of the World

Wildfire, power outages, and a pandemic: once rare disruptions have become the norm in higher education. So…face to face or remote? Asynchronous or synchronous? Strict or flexible deadlines? Shared from a landscape blackened by ash, and from an educator at an institution that has been evacuated and served as an evacuation shelter during the increasingly frequent and deadly California wildfires, this presentation offers theoretical and practical insight into what teaching might look like in the Anthropocene: what might be called Disaster Pedagogy. This approach entangles existing best practices from teaching for equity, trauma-informed
teaching, and hybrid pedagogy with Anna Tsing’s The Mushroom at the End of the World (2015) to re-imagine emergent learning in the wake of disruption and destruction. To follow the imperative of Dr. Chris Emdin, educators need to “[t]each like the world is on fire” …because it is.

Elspeth Tulloch | Exploring Loss of Place in the Personal Essay: Some Pedagogical Considerations

In my ecocritical teaching, I have regularly given the option of writing a personal essay on an aspect of environmental change. I have been struck over the years by the number of students who have already experienced deeply affecting and occasionally traumatizing environmental change to places to which they, their families, or their communities were attached. These changes have marked not only the students as individuals, but often their families and local communities, sometimes in heretofore unspoken or unrecognized ways. With particular attention to the use of the “I”, this presentation briefly reviews the parameters and disciplinary purpose of this particular personal essay assignment, discusses the value of a retrospectively oriented exercise in the face of uncertain environmental futures, comments on the need for offering terminology that aids in the conceptualization and the validation of the environmentally inflected particularities of the emotions experienced, and concludes with a few remarks on how such an assignment might take into account some of the charges against personal writing, in particular its purported lack of objectivity and self-absorption. One caveat: I will not be dealing with the issue of traumatic loss after environmental disaster.

Disease and Health Humanities Abstracts

Ontologies of Nature, Indigenous Spirituality and Human/Nonhuman Health in Contemporary Latin American Cultures

Milton Fernando Gonzalez Rodriguez | Visual Healing –Circulation of Ideas about Indigenous Knowledges in Visual Culture

This paper explores how filmic cultural artefacts have disseminated alternative ways of understanding what healing and disease of the body and environment entail, and whom illness affects by engaging indigenous knowledge(s). Conclusively, it examines how filmic images provide cues about the interface between nature and (non)-human health from an ontological perspective.

Lucía Leandro Hernández | The days after the end of the world

“The days after the end of the world” analyzes the relationship between the environmental crisis and illness in contemporary Central American Cli-Fi by female writers. Short stories like Jacinta Escudos’ “La flor del Espíritu Santo” (El Salvador), Melanie Taylor’s “El capitán y la capitana” (Panama), María del Carmen Pérez “Eva nunca duerme” (Nicaragua) and Anacristina Rossi’s “Abel” (Costa Rica) offer scenarios such as the post-apocalypse, pandemic-induced mass death, relationships with non-human subjects, and posthuman subjectivities, which lead to a discussion about our current environmental/social chaos. They offer new ways in which to imagine human interactions with the other(s).
Nuno Marques | Epistemic Breathing and Suffocating in Brazilian Ecopoetry

Ecopoetry can bring our attention to aerial communities and to breathing and suffocating as forms of knowing and becoming aware of other atmospheres. Awareness to breathing is important to rethink relations between distant lungs in a time in which the pandemic evidences unequal access to oxygen, as in the Brazilian city of Manaus, and that important political struggles, as Black Lives Matter, evidence suffocation as political strategy. In this presentation I discuss breathing and suffocating in examples of Brazilian ecopoetry as forms of communal healing. I start with breathings as ways of con-spirin (Choy) in the breathing together of cows and women doula during labor in the rural communities of Rio Grande do Sul, in feminist poetry of Brazilian Marília Floôr Kosby. Breathing is here a practice of creating and mending communal ties. I then discuss the recreation of toxic atmospheres of Rio de Janeiro in performances by Brazilian Gabriella Mureb. Suffocating is here an example of acknowledging atmospheres as spaces of oppression where breathing is not possible (Firestone); and as settler spaces (Simmons). I propose that communities of breathing and suffocating in these works are ways of apprehending and resisting persistent colonial structures (Rivera Cusicanqui). Communal breathing can thus be a healing practice connected to an epistemic critique of prevalent North American and Eurocentric universal models of nature and the human.

Gianfranco Selgas | Canaima Reloaded: Slow Violence, Extractivism, and Sickness in the Venezuelan Amazon

The presentation addresses a symbiosis between the human body and the diseased natural body of the Venezuelan Amazon. It is my contention that by analysing sickness as contagion and becoming in “La Fortaleza” (Jorge Thielen Armand, 2020) the film equates polluted environments and intoxicated organic bodies as an assemblage of poisoned ecologies. By examining cultural media’s relationship to the deep legacies and processes of capitalist and industrial extraction in the Venezuelan Amazon, this presentation traces how cultural media situates itself in relation to the deep history of capitalism and its degradation of human and nonhuman bodies as well as environments.

Azucena Castro | “Don’t ask fire more than it can answer: Forest Fires and Biodiversity Loss in Argentinian Culture”

This paper, “Don’t ask fire more than it can answer: Forest Fires and Biodiversity Loss in Argentinian Culture” analyses the portrayal of burned human and nonhuman bodies in Argentinian literary and visual productions dealing with the devastating fires occurring in 2020 in wetlands and native forests. This paper examines how the short story “La isla” by Roberto Fontanarrosa, Marcelo Manera’ photography, the collective poetry book Humedal: poemas a cuatro manos and the performace “Tu fuego es cómplice” explore fire as a source of body purification and new life or as death atmosphere.

Multimedia & Education

Amy Weldon | OUR MALADY: Teaching Ecology, Society, and the Body

In OUR MALADY: LESSONS IN LIBERTY FROM A HOSPITAL DIARY (2020), historian Timothy Snyder connects his near-fatal illness with the larger “maladies” affecting twenty-first century America: multiple forms of isolation and dysfunction heightened by screen-based disinformation and a pursuit of profit that wrecks ecosystems of sustainable care from our waterways to our school and hospital hallways. Teaching a brand-new course, “Medicine in Literature,” this spring, I’ve found OUR MALADY to be a useful text for thinking about the human body in its environments – especially alongside a reckoning with the social-media-fueled disinformation networks making us sicker and sadder as individuals and a society. As the COVID-19 pandemic and a year of mostly remote learning draws to (what we hope is) a close, students and I are thinking anew
about illness, health, and systems health in a pandemic- and climate-change-challenged world, and I’d love to share what we’ve found.

**Caitlin Stobie | Abiogenesis: Cellular Environments, Poetry, and the Leeds Creative Labs**

This creative-critical presentation focuses on the Bragg Centre Edition of the Leeds Creative Labs, an arts-science program at the University of Leeds where artists are paired with researchers in various disciplines. I introduce my collaboration with Dr Paul Beales on Blurred Lines: Life, Matter, Poetry. Our ongoing project considers blurred lines between non/human bodies and scales of agency in microscopic research with medical applications (see www.blurredlinesleeds.co.uk for examples of previous outputs). I contextualise my collaboration with the Beales Research Group and our shared interests in life, matter, and life-like materials, focusing particularly on intersecting terms from the environmental and health humanities. Next I provide an overview of a new poem titled “Abiogenesis”, which uses the structure of DNA to inspire both its form and themes, speaking to the concept of emergence in biophysics and new materialism. This poem explores abiogenesis theory on the origins of life and its implications for advances in the development of artificial cells, drawing on findings and visuals from a forthcoming journal article by researcher Marcos Arribas Perez. The presentation concludes by featuring two versions of the poem: one read by myself, and the other interpreted by text-to-speech software. Both versions ‘visualise’ the text with original research videos of membrane fusion in artificial cells by Arribas Perez.

**Olga Timurgalieva | On relational pathogenicity in art and biology**

In 2015, Australian artist and then-doctoral student in biological art, Tarsh Bates, presented her work at a solo show titled “The Unsettling Eros of Contact Zones and Other Stories” at Gallery Central in Perth. The exhibition consisted of artworks with Candida albicans, a potentially pathogenic single-celled microorganism that belongs to the yeast and larger fungi family. One of the artworks at the show, installation “Surface Dynamics of Adhesion,” included custom-made Petri dishes on the wall with C. Albicans growing in a pattern resembling wallpaper. In this paper, I argue that Bates’ project Surface Dynamics of Adhesion in the context of broader reframing in the understanding of infectious diseases invites us to approach pathogenicity from a relational perspective (Hinchliffe, Bingham, Allen, & Carter, 2017) rather than a reductionist pathogen-centered approach. This alternative perspective can increase our understanding of disease as a complex state caused by microbial, socio-technological, ecological, economic, and other factors. Furthermore, a relational perspective on pathogenicity helps to understand our inevitable epidemiological footprint.

**Illness & Literature**

**Vidya Sarveswaran | Dying to Breathe: Solastalgia and Soliphilia as Diptychs in Charlotte McConaghy’s Migrations**

Ecologists and conservationists acknowledge the fact that we have entered an age of triage, where we might have to decide which species may truly be saved. This dangerous trajectory, if not checked quickly will only result in a further irreversible impoverishment of the planet earth. The denuded ecological patterns at all levels and the worldwide breaking down of ecosystems threaten not only the extinction of hundreds of species, but also ultimately our presence as a species of animal entwined in the ever-unfolding web of life. Paul Shephard while talking about ‘the relevance of the past’ believes that the reason prehistoric humans managed to remain within the rhythmic cosmos of the planet, was because they were autochthonous – in other words, native to their place. A gradual, but steady rise in anthropogenic activities, the loss of a mythical consciousness to a historical consciousness and a rapid revisioning of human life styles is a significant cause for the reduction of planetary solidarity. The Australian environmental philosopher Glenn A. Albrecht employed the term Solastalgia
(2003) to define this “lived experience of distressing, negative environmental change,” particularly when the environment is one that the sufferer has inhabited. (2003). Soliphilia (Albrecht 2016) on the other hand seeks to bring back the sense of responsibility and unity to a loved bioregion, through positive collaborative processes. This paper seeks to analyze the spatial, environmental and emotional dislocations in Charlotte McConaghy’s Migrations (2020), using these two ‘psychoterratic’ lens which are juxtaposed as diptychs and set against the backdrop of the Anthropocene Ocean.

Hilary Bedder | The Problematic Intellect: Re-engagement with the Natural World through Partial Sightedness in Thomas Hardy’s The Return of the Native

This paper explores how in The Return of the Native, Thomas Hardy offers disability as opportunity to re-engage with the natural world. I argue that in this novel Hardy suggests that intellectual endeavour is at least partially responsible for humankind’s separation from the natural world. He problematises consciousness, characterising thought as a ‘disease of flesh’ that makes humankind metaphorically blinded. Alongside this, Clym Yeobright, who becomes partially sighted through the strain of intellectual study, becomes a manual labourer. I contend that these two types of blindness enable Yeobright to rediscover his connection to the natural world. My new approach to this novel uses Michael Marder’s radical vegetal philosophy as a lens for exploring these ideas. I explore how Yeobright develops vegetal-like characteristics. He becomes rooted in his environment and gains a more heteronomous relationship to the alterity of the heath. He also becomes part of the heath’s own vegetal material spatiality, renouncing any reliance on a separate interior mental sphere. It is through engagement with his own embodiment that the blinded Yeobright is enabled to realise his material connection to other life-forms. In this new reading of The Return of the Native, I suggest that Hardy offers us a salutary lesson that our consciousness and intellect, rather than making us superior to other life-forms, divorces us from the natural world.

Isabel Lane and Alexander Brookes | Rewriting the Metaphors of Illness in Varlam Shalamov’s Gulag

Once again we face a pandemic, and once again many of us are returning to Susan Sontag’s seminal essay, Illness as Metaphor, to reflect on the intersections between language, the arts, medical science, and microbes. As specialists in Russian literature, we are also inclined to return to the works of Gulag author Varlam Shalamov — particularly to those works that pertain directly to disease, quarantine, and treatment — to see how these metaphors, in the broad and somewhat vague sense Sontag meant it, were there employed. Our first premise is, following Paula Treichler, that all biomedical discourse is political. The question is therefore, not whether we should use metaphor when discussing illness, but rather which metaphors we choose and how they are deployed, acknowledging that this is, fundamentally, a political question. We anchor our analysis in two stories, “Typhus Quarantine” and “The Lepers.” “Typhus Quarantine” traces the complex dynamics of concentration and isolation in the Gulag, demonstrating the inseparability of illness and incarceration as well as the counter-intuitive relationship between illness and freedom from work. In “The Lepers,” Shalamov turns the leprosy discourse of the nineteenth century — inherited from Coleridge, Kipling, Jules Verne and others — on its head, finding shreds of hope in nothing-left-to-lose sexuality, a theme which continues to resonate today, and the possibility of agency against narratives of victimhood. In the unique circumstances of the far northern Gulag — yet amid global structures of incarceration, labour, and disease — these stories retain the possibility of thinking against the logic and structures of prison and quarantine, and outside the debilitating inheritance of illness as metaphor.

Sonakshi Srivastava | Through the Looking S(l)ide: Configuring Relations between Humans and Microbes

The interaction between human and humans, and the environment is crucial to understand the “ecological assemblage, an interaction that is capable of contouring the somatic wholeness of the body- humans as well
as the environment’s. In this paper, I attempt to read the select short fiction of Mikhail Bulgakov, and H.G Wells in the light of the aforementioned statement. A particular strain in the works of both the authors is the emphasis on microbes and the associative looming threat. For example, in Wells’ ‘The Stolen Bacillus’, the cliffhanging ending marks the speculative beginning of the horror that is soon to be unleashed by the particular strain of cholera bacillus, and in Bulgakov’s ‘Fatal Eggs’, a similar incident unleashes havoc in the country. The paper considers within its ambit the ambition of overreaching humans who, in their folly to control environment, tend towards a Frankensteinian preserve. In the face of such experiments gone awry, and microbes wild, I seek to ground the paper in contemporary reality (Covid-19), so as to make more sense of the precarious dystopic times we are living in.

**Pandemics Past and Present**

**Ilan Kelman | Slow healing (shealing) for COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the world into emergency mode for over a year, leading to opportunities for emergence of long-term recovery processes which support long-term prevention of pandemics and other disasters. Given that both emergency and recovery modes are occurring slowly and simultaneously for COVID-19, the concept of ‘shealing’ could be applied. Shealing is a contraction of ‘slow healing’, encompassing slow recovery and later recovery from disasters, based on its etymological origins of ‘sheltering’, by using time to support and care for disaster-affected people. Shealing prompts the importance of taking time to emerge from a disaster, helping to process the traumas, difficulties, and changes which might have occurred throughout the emergence and submergence of the emergency. For COVID-19 as a chronic emergency, the extended and repeated lockdowns involving the curtailing of movement and interpersonal contact have epitomised shealing’s sheltering. However necessary it was, this over-sheltering (including through shielding, self-isolating, and quarantining) became part of the disastrous difficulties faced and the social ruptures experienced. Nonetheless, with the pandemic disaster and responses to it having become the everyday for the world, constructive and long-term actions to move carefully post-disaster also need to be engrained in daily lives, melded with prevention. Shealing ensures that the required time is taken for healing, recovery, and risk reduction together.

**Basak Almaz | "For whom the ancient bell tolls": Emergence of Past Diseases and Climate Justice**

Living amid climate crisis, all beings of Earth are suffering from climate change. Rising sea levels are invading Pacific Islands, polar ice and glaciers are melting, and thawing permafrost is unearthing ancient microorganisms residing in ice. A study in 2014 explored two “giant” viruses, which were later called Pithovirus sibericum and Mollivirus sibericum, in Siberian permafrost soils. A 12-year old child and approximately 2500 reindeer died of an unknown disease in 2016, which was revealed to be anthrax that had not been encountered for the last 75 years. The research found out that the bacteria causing anthrax disease revived as permafrost thawed, which eventually infected animals and people living nearby. It has also been proved that thawing permafrost emits carbon dioxide and methane forming a greenhouse effect that contributes to global warming, thus permafrost thaw creates a vicious circle. The warmer temperatures get the more permafrost thaws, which brings about more carbon emission. This study aims to explore the emergence of diseases from the past within the framework of climate justice. No crisis is limited to a specific area as it comes with worldwide consequences. All residents of the planet Earth, both human and nonhuman, have the right to live in a healthy environment and human-induced climate change is violating these rights. Therefore, climate justice is for all of us just as we are in climate change/crisis together.
The emergence of a planetary crisis tends to re–consider our role and perception of more than human life forms such as viruses in order to re–think our internship with them. The narration of pandemics maintains an interest about an interdisciplinary studying of the relationship among pandemics and environment, but it does so with the structures and functionalities in order to set narrations of pandemics in perilous times. The narration of pandemics are examined in terms of organization, focalization, spatiality and description by addressing the process of encountering variable pandemic environments in narratives which might affect our psychology and behavior. The pandemic appeals insights from the embodied and lived experience as well as the idea that our body is unseparated from the experience of the physical body within Nature. Our interaction with pandemics perceived as Others is structured on our senses with the world around us, including our perception and experience of the internship between different environments. The ‘ecophenomenological turn’ in the narration of pandemics provides us with more tools to analyze and further approach the notions of “flesh of the world” (: the elementary core of universe) and “chiasm” (: internship / interconnectedness), expressed by Maurice Merleau – Ponty. Through this turn the narration of pandemics assists us to restore, even heal, our ecosystems that have been in peril and precarity, in many places around the world, by setting a new novel in order to reconstruct a dynamic model of an evolving situation. In this sense, the planetary time asserts the need for a further re – modelling of the world. To sum up, the narration of pandemics discloses the ecophenomenological entanglements in order to unfold an aftermath of ‘imaginary’ in which we live in and alongside with pandemics.

Gender and Reproduction

Katrina Dunn | Aging Women and the Apocalypse: Three Dramatic Representations

Works of ecotheatre engage apocalyptic tropes to propel audiences into greater awareness of ecological destruction, and to warn against impending disaster, often adopting tragic forms to do so. This presentation explores three ecotheatre plays: Kayak by Jordan Hall, The Unplugging by Yvette Nolan, and Escaped Alone by Caryl Churchill. All three plays are set during or following apocalyptic catastrophes and all feature aging women at their centre. However, the plays differ considerably in their construction of aging and their detailing of how aging is intertwined with narratives about the environment. They differ depending on the degree to which the author draws on age-related stereotypes as revealed through character’s views about the environment, their treatment by others, their established chronological age, and their described physicality and actions. The plays also differ considerably in their dramatic forms and engagement of tragic structure, particularly in their construction of time and memory, and who is blamed, redeemed, and who gets to be the redeemer or savior. In this presentation we argue that the effectiveness of ecotheatre is intimately tied to its form – whether it truly challenges world order, or whether through familiar story structure and opportunity for catharsis, it restores it. This is tied to how the play creates portraits of female old age that not only challenge negative age stereotypes, but also protest the ideals of patriarchy and capitalism. Our analysis of these works shows an evolution from traditional story structure to highly experimental dramatic form. Ultimately, with Escaped Alone, we find a representation of female old age that yokes it to mutual connection and caregiving for other people, other species, and the environment as a whole.

Jenny James | (In)fertile Waters: The Co-Implicated Ethics of Queer Reproduction and Cetacean Die-Off

This paper centers on a self-reflective analysis of queer conception and the ecological crisis of cetacean infertility in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Through personal narrative and theoretical discussion, I attend to queer processes of reproduction, particularly queer women’s gestational use of assisted reproductive technologies, in order to better understand how LGBTQ “baby-making” is part of an
interdependent network of interspecies labors at creative kin-making. Considering the ethical and political consequences of queers taking up assisted reproductive technology in an era of massive species loss, I analyze the material and affective lines of co-implication that connect my own complicated journey of conceiving a child in August 2018 with the contemporaneous journey of orca whale J35’s maternal loss and grief that took place in the same month. I show how queer reproduction is deeply co-implicated in the differential distribution of fertility and survival of human and non-human species alike, here focusing in particular on the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale community and their unique cetacean culture. In my research I’ve learned that the rising rates of infertility in the SRKW community in the Puget Sound is primarily caused by chemical toxicity and warming waters, both of which can be traced, in part, to the hefty carbon footprint and biomedical waste produced by assisted reproductive technologies. Grappling with our complicity in SRKW infertility and potential extinction, I call for a queer ethic of conception that seeks to sustain interspecies community in the face of inevitable loss – an imperfect, and provisional strategy that combines embodied practices of attunement with structural efforts at a more equitable redistribution of life chances across species differences, as well as race, class and sexuality. To do so, I engage queer and ecological theorists such as Donna Haraway, Mel Chen, Alexis Shotwell, Laura Mamo and Catriona Sandilands.

Cassandra Galentine | “There’s nobody with common sense that can look down on the domestic worker”: Dirt, Disease, and Hygiene in Alice Childress’s Like one of the Family

Alice Childress’s novel Like one of the Family (1956), composed of humorous vignettes from the perspective of a Black domestic worker named Mildred, contests white racist assumptions of Black Harlem residents as dirty and diseased. In one instance, when Mildred’s wealthy white employer Mrs. Jones finds out Mildred lives in Harlem, she asks Mildred to provide a health card to prove she is free of disease since “one must be careful, mustn’t one?” (43). Mildred agrees and feigns relief, stating that she was wondering how to ask for the Jones family’s cards in return since she has to “handle the laundry and make beds” (43). Shocked and embarrassed by the suggestion that her wealthy white family could be a health hazard to Mildred, Mrs. Jones retracts her request with embarrassment. In this presentation, I examine how Mildred resists racial discourses of dirt, disease, and hygiene, such as the example above, throughout Like one of the Family. I argue that Childress’s focus on Black women domestic workers provides a vital lens through which to critique racial discourses of hygiene and to expose the racist assumptions about Black women relegated to the “dirty work” of domestic labor. I examine how Childress’s novel critiques racial capitalism and environmental injustice not by distancing Mildred from dirt and dirty work, but rather by reinscribing value in the work of domestic labor and deconstructing essentialist notions of race. In doing so, Childress’s text also critiques liberal individualist approaches to environmental justice, such as personal hygiene, opting instead for structural solutions such as unionizing domestic workers. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the text’s poignant critique of racial discourses of disease and hygiene continues to provide a valuable approach for interrogating how such discourses still serve racial capitalism today.

Toxicity, Coloniality, and Environmental Health

Michael Boyden | Environmental Illness and Biosociality

Recent environmental humanities scholarship has argued that the memoirs of people suffering from idiopathic environmental illnesses (EI) perform important cultural work by questioning strict divisions between subject and object, and between health and the environment. In my paper, I argue that EI autosomatography might more adequately be understood in terms of new forms of biosociality (Rabinow). Through their testimonies, biosocial communities – i.e. communities that define themselves in terms of their biology – possess considerable clout in defining health and directing resources to their condition. They also make extensive use of mass and new media to mobilize support for their cause. At least in part, therefore, their reliance on and
active use of the disembedding mechanisms of modern society belies the declared ethic of embodied experience and relationality that new materialist ontologies tend to emphasize. The article should thus be understood as an attempt to deepen current debates on transcorporeality by resituating them in relation to historical health regimes and their distinct rationalities. I will develop my argument by focusing on the EI memoir of Latina feminist author Aurora Levins Morales, included in her self-published collection Kindling (2016).

Siobhan Angus | A Visual History of Slow Violence: Photography and Environmental Health in LaToya Ruby Frazier’s Flint Is Family

Through a case study of LaToya Ruby Frazier’s Flint Is Family (2016), I consider what visual culture can tell us about industrial disease and environmental racism. I argue that Frazier’s photographs of the Flint water crisis function as testimony in the context of environmental injustice while forming an indictment of the neoliberal politics of abandonment. Frazier’s photographs of Black working-class life in the Rust Belt make the links between bodies, industry, deindustrialization, and unequal access to healthcare tangible. I read Frazier’s photographs alongside theory about toxicity and damage including Michelle Murphy, Eve Tuck, and Alexis Shotwell to develop an analysis of disease that does not reinscribe damage. An ethics of care threads through Frazier’s photographs which confront the neoliberal austerity that renders lives, landscapes, and histories disposable.

Film and Emotion

Robert Geal | Watching films about fictional pandemics: a masochistic illusion of control over uncontrollable real-world events

Realist films about fictional ecological disasters operate within the context of what Fredric Jameson calls the ‘political unconscious’: repressed real-world anxieties fictionally return in oblique ways that provide illusory resolutions to such anxieties. This paper positions films about fictional pandemics, and the phenomena of such films rising up the streaming charts during the initial COVID-19 lockdown, within this context. Films like Soderbergh’s Contagion, in which a bat-borne virus infects humans in China and then spreads across the globe, might seem like a wallowing in disaster that is too close for comfort, but such films also offer audiences what all Hollywood filmmaking offers – a sense of control over what are in reality uncontrollable events. Such films are masochistic in the precise Freudian sense, in which an unpleasurable experience is repeated so that it may be illusorily mastered. In the midst of real-world uncertainty the fictional certainty of cinematic perception generates a comforting sense of control – audiences can see threats coming, and can reassure themselves that they would survive those threats precisely because of the illusory nature of cinematic perception. Watching a pandemic thriller whilst in lockdown might appear to be a brave confrontation with reality, but the popularity of the genre during lockdown actually demonstrates how we use fiction to grant us illusory control over our worst fears. Watching these films isn’t a strange form of penance, but is rather a strange form of pleasure.

Fazila Derya Agis | The Eco-Emergency Calls Against the Viruses in The Andromeda Strain (1969) and Istanbul in Terror (1966)

This study aims to analyze and compare the ecological metaphors related to the concepts of “BIRTH,” “NATURE,” “VIRUS,” and “DEATH” within the framework of Arran Stibbe’s (2021) ecologically theory for finding a universal way for the protection of nature that appears as a police/detective that catches and arrests murderer viruses conceptually metaphorically in the American novel entitled The Andromeda Strain (1969) by
Michael Crichton that was adapted into a movie in 1971 by its producer and director Robert Wise, and the Turkish movie İstanbul Dehşet İçinde [İstanbul in Terror] (1966) directed by Ilhan Engin and produced by Kemal Demircioglu. On the one hand, in The Andromeda Strain (1969; 1971), just a homeless man and a baby get saved from a virus that has murdered every other inhabitant of a village in New Mexico after a satellite crash. On the other hand, in İstanbul Dehşet İçinde [İstanbul in Terror], a global gang called Mirak intends to contaminate the water resources of Turkey, Greece, England, France, Italy, and the U.S. with cholera and plague viruses to sell the injections its members may produce; however, the gang gets caught. To conclude, this study shows that both works address that evil humans try to destroy the earth’s resources via viruses with the following ecolinguistic metaphors that underline benevolent humans’ urgent need to stop these other malevolent humans who attempt to destroy the environment for being extremely wealthy, by leading to a massacre: VIRUSES ARE GUNS/BOMBS/MURDERES/THIEVES/ TERRORISTS/CRIMINAL TOOLS/MONEY, NATURE/WATER/SOIL/AIR IS A VICTIM/A JUDGE/A DETECTIVE/A POLICE OFFICER, HUMANS ARE DEFENDANTS, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IS A JAIL/DEATH, HEALTH IS A COURT, FRESH AIR IS BIRTH, and NATURAL EMERGENCY IS FIRE. Besides, metaphorically, more importantly, and alarmingly, VIRUSES ARE NOT PRODUCTS OF THE MOTHER EARTH. Both works can be used in environmental education for teaching that environmental resources must be protected.

Consoling Affects, Healing Ecologies

Sara Torres | Greening Pandemic Literature: Social Justice and Healing Ecologies

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced each of us to reflect upon our relationship with space, within our communities, our workplaces, and even our households. In the U.S., widespread deurbanization and increased use of green spaces have both emphasized the importance of parks and public lands and revealed the unequal access to such green spaces. This paper explores how pandemic literature produced in 2020 and earlier historical eras grapples with spatial justice and issues of access, and imagines the consolatory and healing potential of natural spaces. As writers such as Boccaccio, Defoe, Poe, and Camus all suggest, contagion alters and reshapes social bodies. From issues of isolation, enclosure, and insularity to emergent digital and affective communities produced in the time of pandemic, we have an opportunity to reflect upon how the health of the environment interacts with human health across a global, inter-species community.

Laura L. Howes | Grounding Gawain

As Sir Gawain prepares for the third strike from the Green Knight at the Green Chapel, in the Middle English poem, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,” he is compared both to a rock and to a tree stump. He is said to stand “still as a stone, or else a tree stump that is entwined in rocky ground with a hundred roots.” (SGGK 2293-94) At this moment, Gawain approximates the Green Knight most closely, a strange creature who is consistently associated with the earth. Aside from the Green Knight’s greenness, which suggests vegetative growth, lines about the Green Knight, lines about his Green Chapel, and lines referencing the natural world all use “ground” as well as “earth” seemingly as filler phrases or straightforward descriptive phrases for alliterative purposes. But when these same words are used for Sir Gawain’s traumatic encounter, late in the poem, they signal that the human knight’s development has resulted from his interactions with the Green Knight and the natural world. By means of the words “ground,” “earth” and “whole (intact, healed)”—all used strategically by the Gawain-poet—we can understand Sir Gawain’s transformation in this poem as a form of nature healing, the ecological accommodation of this human to the ground he stands on.
JuPong Lin | Poetics of Repair: Being Earth, Being Water

Poetics of Repair: Being Earth, Being Water responds to the climate catastrophe by creating a space of collective care, through poetry, papercraft and community performance. Poetics of Repair is an artistic response to what has been called the Anthropocene, which Heather Davis and Zoe Todd argue is the result of the most recent era of colonial violence in white supremacist North America. My project asks, how can poetics and socially engaged art decolonize the Anthropocene? I work with the question of how to decenter the Anthropos or the human. How can we awaken to our embeddedness in a world of other-than-human critters? I reclaim my ancestral traditions of paperfolding using joss paper burned to honor the ancestors; and qigong to connect with the energy of the five elements, earth, sky, wind, fire, metal. Reclaiming my heritage destabilizes the colonial dualisms that split mind from body, matter from spirit. These practices seek to disrupt ecocidal logics of colonial, capitalism and repair the wounds of the collective trauma of climate catastrophe.

Eco-Theory Abstracts

Red and Green Futurities

John Maerhofer | On Guerilla Ecology and the Eco-Communist Imaginary

Maerhofer’s paper begins with Ian Angus’s observation that “so long as it is profitable to destroy the earth...they will continue to do so, even if they undermine...the conditions that make the earth livable.” Angus emphasizes the need for action to halt climate catastrophism while criticizing the ethics of nonviolence that dominate the climate justice movement. Maerhofer relates the debate over violence to ecosocialist activities that challenge the inevitability of the Capitalocene. He then positions Andreas Malm as a mediator, arguing that Malm’s “intelligent sabotage” recontextualizes climate militancy as part of the evolving struggle to overthrow fossil capital. Maerhofer closes with a consideration of “guerilla ecology,” asking how we might envision the terrain of struggle as part of an emergent eco-communist project that integrates restorative and combative justice

Christian Haines | Planetary Utopianism: Kim Stanley Robinson, N.K. Jemisin, and Infrastructural Hope

This paper argues for a planetary-scale utopianism, one which responds to climate change by imagining the radical transformation of the human species and its material conditions. It explains how speculative fiction by NK Jemisin and Kim Stanley Robinson might contribute to this renewed utopian imagination and it emphasizes the significance of geoengineering as a topic for critical reflection.

Contemporary Latin American Ecocultures and Methods

Carolyn Fornoff | Digital Prophecy and Extractivism in “La máquina distópica”

Anticipation and prediction are dominant rhetorical modes for talking about climate change. From statistical models to cli-fi novels, myriad cultural forms offer ways to speculate about a future in which greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed, and the planet is governed by rising sea levels and extreme drought. At the heart of these complex models are simple, anxious questions. What will the future look like? And what can be done to
change it? This talk discusses how these questions are staged by “La máquina distópica” or The Dystopian Machine, an interactive web oracle designed in 2018 by Mexican artists and programmers Verónica Gerber Bicecci, Canek Zapata, and Carlos Bergen. I analyze the Dystopian Machine’s use of the algorithm as literary form to argue that the controlled digital environment serves as an anticipatory narrative method that underscores the constraints that the past imposes on the future, at the same time that it shows how contingency and more-than-human collaboration produce unexpected, non-teleological meaning.

Ashley Brock | Twenty-first-century Pastoral: Embodiment and Non-human Perspectives in Aboio and Sweetgrass

This paper compares two experimental documentaries about herdsman and their embodied interface with the non-human world: Marília Rocha’s Aboio or Cattle Callers (Brazil, 2005) and Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor’s Sweetgrass (UK, 2009). While depicting ways of life on the verge of extinction, these films depart from classical ethnographic and narrative conventions and instead call for embodied modes of spectatorship, drawing the viewer’s attention to interspecies relationships and histories sedimented in the natural landscape. Though these are not explicitly environmentalist films—in fact they give voice to the views of ranchers whose interests conflict with those of conservationists—they de-center the human perspective and, I propose, make an implicit case for a working-class eco-politics grounded in intimate cohabitation and interdependence between human and non-human subjects.

Victoria Saramago | Reimagining Hydropower: Ecofeminist and Transnational Perspectives on Belo Monte

This paper investigates how a writer and a visual artist have engaged with the traumatic experience of the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant, built in the Brazilian Amazon in the 2010s, by focusing on the perspectives of indigenous women and female characters. It analyzes arpilleras produced by the Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens, the accordion fold artist-book, Serpent River Book (2017), by Colombian visual artist Carolina Caycedo and Maria José Silveira’s novel, Maria Altamira (2020). Both works place Belo Monte in a larger South American framework in which extractive zones have been steadily expanding under global capitalism. In this context, this paper aims to understand the politics of visibility in a space that, like the Amazonian rainforest, is often understood in abstract, idealized ways, and that, for the same reason, can be easily erased by the discourse of progress undergirding many facets of Brazilian developmentalism.

Decolonial Ecocriticisms in Latin America and the Caribbean

Ilka Kressner | Introduction Decolonial Ecocriticisms in Latin America and the Caribbean

This panel explores diverse forms of decolonial ecocriticism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its focus is on minor, indigenous, alternative forms of ecocriticism and ecological activism, that include ways of being and living on this planet that transcend Western logics. It builds on the idea that cultural production in Latin America is deeply committed to the representation of environmental issues; and through its decolonial approach (Quijano), it is also attuned to the voices, bodies and habitats of those who had been excluded from hegemonic Western ideologies. Our roundtable consists of five presentations by Alethia Alfonso-García, Elaine Savory, Victoria Garrett and Tiffany Miller (joint presentation), Katja Higgins and Giovanna Montenegro.
Alethia Alfonso-Garcia | Confluence of Ecological Thoughts in Alejandro Albarran and Hubert Matiuwaa

I will explore the relationship between humans and nonhumans in the poetry collections Xtâmbaa/ Piel de tierra (2016) by Hubert Matiúwàa and Persona fea y ridicula (2017) by Alejandro Albarrán. Each one proposes different approaches to ecological thoughts. Key to the paper are Gloria E. Chacón’s term, kab’awil or double gaze; and Timothy Morton’s mesh, that substitutes the concept of nature.

Elaine Savory | The Complex Journey of the Breadfruit

An examination of the journey of the breadfruit from the Pacific to the Caribbean, with a focus on the history, cultural place and botanical identity of the plant. Elaine Savory has published widely on Caribbean and African literatures in English, is a scholar of Jean Rhys and Kamau Brathwaite, and works on Caribbean theater and history. Most recently she focuses in environmental humanities and ecocriticism (including essays on Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Jean Rhys, Kamau Brathwaite, Chinua Achebe, Helon Habila, Derek Walcott and postcolonial environmental humanities pedagogy). She guest edited the first ecocritical issue of The Journal of West Indian Literature and is working on an ecocritical book on Caribbean literature.

Victoria Garrett and Tiffany Miller | Cultivating Collaboration: Ecocriticism, Indigeneity, and Gender in Recent Latin American Cinema

This presentation discusses the complex interweaving of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental concerns in El abrazo de la serpiente (Ciro Guerra, 2015) and Ixcanul (Jayro Bustamante, 2015). These films were made in close collaboration with indigenous peoples (the communities of the Amazonian Colombian state of Vaupés and the Kaqchikel Maya of the Guatemalan highlands, respectively), star local indigenous actors, and include dialogues primarily in indigenous languages. Their indigenous protagonists negotiate with Western capitalist systems such as rubber extraction and the coffee finca, which are exploitative and destructive of both cultures and the environment. In contrast, these films reframe humans, animals, and the Earth as deeply interconnected beings linked through material and cultural interdependencies within contemporary contexts of capitalist exploitation. Filmmakers and characters alike establish cross-cultural alliances and maintain respectful relationships with Earth beings (Marisol de la Cadena) who are recognized as agents: the volcano and the jungle. We argue that their emphasis on interconnectedness, which manifests through a variety of formal devices as well as the plotlines, posits the need for respectful collaborations to redress such violent legacies. Given the often inextricable connections between human experience and nature in indigenous understandings of the world, we address how native epistemologies, or ways of knowing, are central to the construction of meaning in the films. At the same time, our analysis of the films lays bare the pitfalls of such projects that place the onus on indigenous characters to solve ecological crisis.

Giovanna Montenegro | From Taki Onqoy to the Scissors Dance: Cultural Heritage as Environmental Resistance

Andean rituals performed yearly through many towns in Peru provide a lens through which to view Quechua people’s relationship to its water resources. The performance of Andean cultural heritage that accompany irrigation rituals and canal cleanings function as a decolonial response to climate change. From about May through September rural communities in the Peruvian Andes begin to prepare for planting seed by gathering together to clean the irrigation canals that will deliver water to their fields. The ritual is known as Cequia Aspiy. A scissor dancer, or dansak, usually performs rites and extreme feats meant to appease the closest snow-capped mountain deity (Apu). The “scissor dance,” named because the dancer performs while clanging two individual sharp pieces of steel in harmony with a violinist and harpist, may have been performed since the Spanish conquered the Inca Empire. Today, the performance blends Andean spiritism with Catholicism.
Andean communities have resisted the detrimental effects of colonization by maintaining a communal relationship to the environment through syncretist performance and worship practices that seek to connect directly with mountains, known as Apus. The dance in 2010 became recognized worldwide as Intangible Cultural and Human Patrimony by UNESCO. This paper argues that despite the dance’s recent commodification, the dansak’s attention to natural resources of his community make him an increasingly important figure during a time when Andean rural communities face the challenges of climate change and years of unjust water distribution practices. I analyze the figure of the dansak in Peruvian anthropologist and author José María Arguedas’ novel Ríos Profundos (1958, Deep Rivers). Then, I investigate the relationship between the dansak and the Andean environment as shown in the documentary Danzay Yakupak (2015) as well as the problematic ways through which UNESCO commodifies indigenous land and culture.

### Exploring Experiment: Ecopoetics in the Anthropocene

**Julia Fiedorczuk, Marta Werbanowska, and Joanna Mąkowska | Exploring Experiment: Ecopoetics in the Anthropocene**

Panel summary: This panel takes a look at contemporary experimental poetry together with the categories of Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Plantationocene as potential conceptual lenses for ecopoetic study and practice. We will open with short presentations on works by M. Nourbese Philip, Forrest Gander, and Jennifer Scappetone, and continue on to a broader discussion on poetic experiment in the age of unprecedented environmental crisis accompanied by ongoing economic, racialized, and imperialist violence. Ultimately, we are interested in (1) probing the many ways in which poetry “invites otherness” by questioning anthropocentric and Eurocentric modes of thinking about politics, ethics, and aesthetics, and (2) examining the promises as well as the limitations of narratives of the Age of Man/Capital/Plantation as frameworks for such exploration.

Panelists: Julia Fiedorczuk, Joanna Mąkowska, Marta Werbanowska (all at the University of Warsaw)

Keywords: ecopoetics, slow reading, ecopoetic practice, decolonial, poetic experiment, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, crisis, poetry

### On the Other Side of Horror: Alternative Affects to Environmental Despair

**Joshua DiCaglio | On the Other Side of Horror: Alternative Affects to Environmental Despair Roundtable**

As is becoming increasingly clear, horror and despair are not the only affects possible in reacting to environmental crisis, nor are they necessarily the most productive. From environmental educator Christopher Uhl’s search for pedagogies that teach new modes of engaging with the environment to the various feminist, indigenous, queer, and similar approaches that seek new modes of response-ability—of staying with the trouble as Donna Haraway puts it—we are in search of alternative ways of navigating our ecological connections. How do we teach ourselves to feel these connections not as terrifying but as something to be embraced and worked with? What forms of writing and inquiry help us to find our way to these alternative affects? How might they lead to different actions and perspectives? Through this conversation we hope to continue to expand and clarify the topology of affects possible in the face of crisis.

Presenters:

Rick van Noy is Professor of English at Radford University where he teaches courses in the environmental humanities, creative nonfiction, professional writing, and American literature. He is the author of Surveying the Interior: Literary Cartographers and the Sense of Place (2003), A Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting Kids with Nature through the Seasons (2008), and, most recently, Sudden Spring: Stories of Adaptation in a Climate-
Changed South (2019).

Donnie Secreast is a Ph.D student in English at Texas A&M University, where she studies environmental literature. Her article, "Carson's Can of Worms: Grotesque Satire and Abjection in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring" was just published in the April 2021 edition of ISLE.

Josh DiCaglio Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University, where he teaches and studies the rhetoric of science and environmental humanities. He is the author of a forthcoming book, entitled Scale Theory: A Nondisciplinary Inquiry, due out with the University of Minnesota Press this November.

Nicole Seymour is Associate Professor at California State University, Fullerton, where she teaches environmental humanities. Her first book, Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination, won the 2015 scholarly book award from the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). More recently, her book Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2018.

David Gessner is Professor and Department Chair of Creative Writing. University of North Carolina Wilmington. He has been called “one of the most provocative and engaging voices in contemporary environmental writing” – his many books of environmental writing include My Green Manifesto, All the Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner and the American West, and The Tarball Chronicles. His most recent work Leave It As It Is: A Journey Through Theodore Roosevelt’s American Wilderness was just released June 1.

Anthropocene Eco-Poetics

Moe Gamez | Anthropocene Eco-Poetics Introductions

Sean Collins is a Ph.D. candidate in Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Utah. Sean will be a Tanner Humanities Center Graduate Fellow during the 2021-2022 academic year. Sean’s interests include modernist studies, ecocriticism, new materialism, and historical materialism. He is currently working on his dissertation project that explores modernist formal experimentation as a form of ecological discourse.

Veronika Arutjunjanova is a PhD candidate at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Hamburg, where she is currently writing her dissertation with the working title “Beyond Human Elegy: Conceptions of Ecological Loss in Contemporary Ecopoetry.” She is the recipient of the University of Hamburg doctorate scholarship supporting her research in Anglo-American ecopoetry and its treatment of pastoral elegy—in particular, the revisioning of the ancient genre within the current environmental crisis and the limitations of elegiac conventions.

James Sherry is the author of 13 books of poetry and prose, most recently The Oligarch (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017) and the poetry book Entangled Bank (Chax Press, 2016). His essay Selfie: Poetry & Ecology is forthcoming from Palgrave in 2021. Since 1976, he has edited Roof Books and Roof Magazine, publishing more than 200 titles of seminal works of language writing, flarf, conceptual poetry, new narrative, and environmental poetry. He started The Segue Foundation, Inc. in 1977, producing over 10,000 events of poetry and other arts in New York City.

Sean Collins | Problems in Paradise: Marianne Moore and Eco-Poetics

I argue that that ecopoetics and contemporary environmental discourse are at somewhat of a critical impasse for proceeding: should ecopoetics serve as critique or should it work to develop attachments? My argument
seeks to bridge “old” and “new” materialisms by arguing that the two positions are in fact interrelated in eco-poetics. My presentation uses Rita Felski’s distinction between “post-critical” and “suspicious” reading to explore formal questions in modernist eco-poetics to examine the tension between nature-as-commodity and nature-as-object. The argument focuses on Marianne Moore’s “An Octopus” precisely because of its formal ambiguity and its subject matter: Mount Rainier National Park.

Veronika Arutjunjanova | “How to move from settle on top to inside:” Posthuman Turn in Contemporary North American Eco-elegy

In countering established cultural representations of nature current trends in eco-poetry align with critical posthumanism that “combines critique with creativity in the pursuit of alternative visions and projects” (Braidotti 45). Posthumanism’s rejection of inherent dualisms and endorsement of the nature-culture continuum brings a new understanding to poetic sensibility. This paper discusses the shortcomings of inherited models in elegiac genre proposing a posthuman, “ecological” turn. Contextualized within the environmental crisis, elegiac eco-poetry performs loss portrayed as material deterioration and a conceptual loss of nature “as the figurative resource that regulates the mourning process” (Ronda 96). Subsequently, eco-elegy moves from symbolic nature and naturalizing human death towards organic forms of the environment acknowledging material loss. Elimination of the culture-nature dualism leads to an awareness of the precariousness of lives and deaths of the exploitable Other, extending elegy’s concerns to the non-human and the marginalized. Although traditional elegy strongly clings to the idea of nature’s alterity, the destabilization of its major paradigm—man’s central position framed within nature’s regenerative cycles—leads to alternative constructions of ecological mourning. Despite its human-centered conventions, the mode of elegy is necessary due to its power of community creation through the experience of grief that, in eco-poetry, originates from other-than-human losses. I argue that eco-elegy’s awareness of interrelatedness of all organisms emerges from a materially embodied language that links linguistic structures with the exterior world in a zoe-centric poetics. Such structures inform compelling eco-elegies by Allison Cobb. This paper traces the emergence of an elegiac aesthetic that draws on the resources of language to expose the interdependence of ecosystems and convey the emergency of our co-existence in search of a more sustainable elegiac poetics. Braidotti, Rosi. The Posthuman. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2013. Ronda, Margaret. Remainders: American Poetry at Nature’s End. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018.

James Sherry | Against One Model Alone

It is unlikely that those controlling the industries that cause climate change will easily change their processes and supply chains without changes in the corporate and general cultural biases. This talk, “Against One Model Alone,” addresses how poetries may alter cultural views about climate change through three methods: the social construction of nature that clarifies different perspectives on climate, inclusive hierarchy to substitute in part for personal and group evaluation, and externalized cognition where thinking takes place not only within the brain but between people and external processes. The speaker addresses the problem as a poet linking different ways of thinking about climate change though metaphor.

Creature Kinships

Keri Stevenson | Creature Kinships Introduction

This is the introductory video for our panel, of which I am chair. It contains three introductions for the three panel members: Keri Stevenson, Addie Hopes, and Moe Gámez. Addie and Moe have approved the video, and the video itself includes the necessary transcript and captions. It is a little more than two minutes long.
**Moe Gámez | “To be / the pig of dreams, the pig / any of us could be:” Ludic Affect and Radical Kinship in Denise Levertov’s Pig Dreams**

Denise Levertov’s Pig Dreams, while at first glance might be perceived as an animal-friendly illustrated children’s poetry book, actually produces a radical kinship with more-than-human beings suitable for all audiences. By means of a more radicalized form of kinship, Levertov indirectly undermines the notions of more-than-human beings as “pets.” Levertov relies on her utilization of “inscape” and “instress,” essentially all sensory phenomena from their shared environment, to illustrate their bond. The vitality affect or perception of the ludic take precedence, and the existence of kinship hierarchies fall into a sort of decorative role that do not appear in their inter-communication; Sylvia may be a pet in normative interpretation, but she clearly embodies so much more than that interpretation allows. This relationship based on kin with more-than-human beings remains a timeless imperative, one that I assert is necessary for humans to “emerge” in a more just planetary collaboration. The transference of joy from She-Human to Onlypig to Catpig to Dogbrothers to He-Humans matters most; each being teaches another new ways of activating joy, and they cofacilitate an ethics of care amongst one another. What stays in the foreground in almost all of the poems are moments of joy in being together, and joy in experiencing the world together. The ability to hold climate anxiety in tension with joy and ludic creatures remain integral to present and future world(s).

**Keri Stevenson | The Emergence of Winged Things: Avian-Centered Memoirs as Arenas for the New Ethology**

Recent discoveries in ethology about other-than-human animals’ cognitive, problem-solving, and similar abilities have inspired some memoir writers to reflect on the kinship between humans and other species that comes from sharing a life with them, and nowhere is this clearer than in memoirs centered on human experience with avian beings. Such memoirs present a unique “bird’s-eye” view on kinship between humans and animals that is not provided by those which focus mostly on companion species (dogs and cats) already presumed to be familiar and akin to humans. Birds, with a preconception of alienness built into the relationship between them and mammals, force human memoir-writers who share lives with them to search for that kinship instead of assuming it. Scientific discoveries about the intelligence, singing ability, and material cultures of birds as diverse as chickens, starlings, and crows provide a path to appreciation in avian-centered memoirs. This paper argues that, though often written by ornithologists, wild bird rehabbers, and others whose “expertise” centers on birds, these texts facilitate the emergence of a new kind of relation with birds, centered instead on kinship, humility, and wonder—and when taught in classrooms, the possible emergence of a deeper assimilation of the ethological discoveries by students. From H Is For Hawk to Mozart’s Starling, these memoirs are worth a second look as both kinship-promoting and science-promoting texts.

**Addie Hopes | Wolf-Girls in the Feral Archives: Documentary Poetry & (Eco)Somatic Healing in Bhanu Kapil’s Humanimal: A Project for Future Children**

In 1921, a Christian missionary found two feral children living with wolves in West Bengal, India. He spent the next few years attempting to “humanize” them through a series of “corrective”—often violent—therapies. Bhanu Kapil’s volume of documentary poetry, Humanimal: A Project for Future Children, is an act of (eco)somatic witnessing in which she slips between the “facts” of the archive, speculation, and her on-the-ground investigation of places where the captive girls lived, died, and were buried. “This is a text,” she writes, to “vivify” the photographic record—the static world frozen within a colonial frame.
Animal Semiotics

Kate Judith | Oyster Semiotics: the questions of tides and the answers of filter-feeders

Semiotic materialism finds meaningfulness and matter become together as a result of change. Interpreters, interpreted, relations, logics, differences, perceptual and cognitive processes, durations, and spatialities are emergent within the becoming meaningful of matter, within processes of mattering which fold semiotic and material together. Matter and meaning ‘emerge together in the world’s process of becoming’ (Iovinno and Oppermann) as ‘an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation’ (Barad). Within an estuary, tidal flow asks questions of the shore. ‘What can you become with endless rhythm, sea bodies and salt?’ The shore becomes in response and asks in return; ‘What can you become with nutrients, shallows, porous mud and roots?’ Oysters ride the tide as infants, then hold on tight, resisting the force of the flow and utilising its energy, risking their questions to the tide as a deliverer of sustenance, becoming filter-feeder. Experimentally, over evolutionary time, bivalve bodies have become in response to the characteristics of viscous flow. Beyond this, their bodies have become engineers of flow, able to work experimentally with it, to design flow so the complex three-dimensional movements of cilia and cirri direct particles towards mouths or sweep them towards expulsion as pseudofaeces. Cilia, mucus and the shapes and smoothness of shells and bodies are attuned to viscous tidal fluidity. Flow and bodies change together over both very long and very short time durations, in response to each other’s capabilities. Pseudofaeces accumulate as the geobiome of the muddy substrate of the estuary, writing the microbial character of the estuarine mud. The semiotic criteria for sorting shore from water are continually being refined through and within the bodies of oysters. This paper follows the performance of the estuary as semiotic material text as it is written and read through the responsive bodies of oysters.

Willy Smart | Interspecies Consent, Dirty Hands, and Collective Fantasy

This paper considers the circulation of discourses of consent in the environmental humanities at large through a reading of Radhika Govindrajan’s 2018 ethnography, Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India’s Central Himalayas. Questioning the appearance of liberal forms of subjecthood in critical attempts to describe animals “as they are” this paper argues that a politics of consent cannot not actually be made to meaningfully serve a politics of anti-violence. The logic of consent is transactional, founded on the primacy of the individual—a figure which in its propertied, possessive form was fortified by racialized expropriation and dispossession. To invoke the animal’s inability to consent then is to traffic in the racialized apportionment of reason. However, an ascription of the ability to consent to nonhumans does not meaningfully transform the individualized and legal frameworks on which the term’s coherence relies. Rather than reinforcing the conceptual tidiness of consent, this paper forwards the argument that the project of elaborating inter- (and intra-) species relations cannot be defined by an implicit valorization of clarity and purity. The paper forwards the argument that the concepts that have normatively inscribed themselves in genres of writing about the nonhuman must be reflexively examined and unsettled—not as a means to a purification of critical discourse, nor as the means to the invention of a better or truer language, but as means to account for the collective fantasies that animate such critical projects in the first place.

Jeanne Dubino | Virginia Woolf and “Fur Consciousness”

“Virginia Woolf and ‘Fur Consciousness’” offers a semiotic analysis of fur in the fiction and nonfiction of Woolf’s writing. It considers these 3 forms of signification: 1. the bourgeois; 2. middle-class femininity and female sexuality and 3. men's status and privilege. Interestingly, there seems to be little evidence of consciousness, in all of her representations of fur, of what Carol J. Adams calls the absent referent (ix), of the nonhuman animals themselves who originally bore the skin now worn by their human counterparts. Woolf, as I
conclude, may demonstrate animal consciousness in her representation of mammals, birds, fishes, and insects throughout her work, as numerous critics have noted. Yet, given the era in which she lived, I argue that it is not surprising that she does not show this same consciousness in her representation of the wearing of nonhuman mammal skins.

**Theorizing Forests, Rivers, and Gardens**

**CW Johnson | The Forest and the Ruins: Jim Harrison’s True North**

Our Anthropocene century has brought multiple books concerning the life of the forest. Various writers, including Robert MacFarlane, Ann Patchett, Richard Powers, among others, have told versions of the stories of our forests, extinct and extant, across the Old World, North America, the Amazon. This literary work is often an attempt to reposition our understandings of the forests that have sustained us, and which we exploit or destroy. Such narratives counter and problematize grand narratives of forest history told through the colonizing lenses of history, where forests are viewed as mere resources, and fuel for the master narrative of inevitable progress. This paper will consider Jim Harrison (1937-2016), a lifelong native of northern Michigan, and a frequent traveler in forests, and his 2004 novel, True North. Harrison tells the story of a fictional family tragically bound to the forest history of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It is a story of a family in decline as the 21st century commences, and the story of a descendant’s attempt to understand his family’s part in the epic logging exploitation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Great Lakes states.

**Meng Wang | The Plants in the Chinese Classical Garden: The Blending Landscape of Nature and Culture**

In this article, I will analyze the gardening art in a well-known Chinese classical garden called “The Yan’s Garden” to showcase how the beauty of the plant landscapes visualizes the fundamental principles of the design of Chinese classical gardens, which perfectly combines the local plant community with the aesthetic traditions to form a harmonious relationship between nature and humans. Firstly, I focus on describing a variety of plant landscapes associated with the style and structure of the architectural space in Yan’s garden to present the picturesque beauty of the combination of nature and culture. In particular, I will pay more attention to portraying the different types of plant compositions to highlight the significance of both the selection of the local plants and the application of the horticultural techniques in the Yan’s Garden. Secondly, I will explore how natural elements or objects integrate with the dominant cultural values through examining the formal beauty and symbolic meaning of the plant landscape. A variety of plant landscapes, which are designed and constructed to illuminate the aesthetic features of the architectural style and structure of the Yan’s Garden, inspire me to contemplate the interrelation and interaction between nature and culture from the angle of the art of gardening. Moreover, I will argue that some American scholars attempt to break the binary opposition between nature and culture established by human-dominated environmental ideology. In particular, they deconstruct the metaphysical hierarchy between nature and culture based on European religious beliefs to reconstruct a new environmental aesthetic and ethical mode to blend various local plants with the architectural complex by creating an intermediate space between the wilderness and human society. The art of gardening can bridge the material and ideological gaps between nature and culture in terms of the combination of local plant communities, horticultural techniques, and aesthetic ideas.

**Julia Escobar Villegas | To Think with the Magdalena River’s Flow: The Metaphor of the National Fluvial Tree in Grávido Río by Ignacio Piedrahíta**

The Greek first philosophers, the Presocratics, investigated the world through natural elements such as water, air, and fire. How can we similarly investigate the world nowadays? For instance, how can we think with water
today? More specifically, how does thinking with rivers can change our perspective about the world? I explore these questions in Grávido río (2019) by Ignacio Piedrahíta. Grávido río narrates a journey along the Magdalena, Colombia’s main river. This travel writing devises a reading of Colombia’s natural and cultural history by thinking with the Magdalena River’s flow. In this book, the confluence of geology, philosophy, and literature shows how nature and culture are intertwined, how they are reciprocally shaped. I argue that Grávido río challenges the myth of Colombia as the violent nation by crafting the metaphor of the national fluvial tree. The Magdalena River is not a single river, but a course in a vast aquatic net that flows all over Colombia’s territory connecting communities across the country. The understanding of the nature of things, in this case the river’s flow, makes us think differently about Colombia’s natural and cultural history, and therefore promotes a change in the way we relate to nature and society alike.

**Sound and Attunement**

*Isabel Sobral Campos | The Ecology of Listening: Emerging Soundscapes and the Limits of Audibility*

Eco-aesthetics entails listening as much as seeing, but while seeing has been privileged as the primary mechanism of aesthetic apprehension—the silent reading of the page that requires a fastened, concentrated eye, the silent observation of the artwork, listening lurks in both of these scenes of enjoyment, and when heeded, it provides a epiphanic integration of human and environment. To apply deep listening practices to reading is to cause the forgotten backdrop of non-human life to emerge and the strategic distinction between foreground and background to disappear: the human is no longer standing before the spectacle of the world, but as Pauline Oliveros reminds us, becomes “a part of the environment.” This paper stresses the centrality of listening and sound for an understanding of the lyric, underscoring how the lyric becomes attuned to nonhuman, overlooked beings. It draws on the work of John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, Jean-Luc Nancy, Roland Barthes, and others, to theorize reading as listening, and to show how the sounds of the world—of animals in motion and in flight are “earlids” that explore the “limits of audibility.” As with the “holy fly” in ancient Sumerian tablets about the goddess Inanna, which reveals the location of a corpse, or the speaking firefly in Alice Notley’s epic poem The Descent of Alette, unexpected vibration yields revelation. If Barthes places listening in the “back-and-forth movement” at the juncture between “body and discourse,” what embodied discourse emerges from the animals whose sounds change perception and transform the course of events? What do those sounds reveal about the aesthetic experience?

*prOphecy sun | Atemporal Meditations on Attunement in the Tidal Flats*

JK Gibson-Graham (2011), Dylan Robinson (2018) and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) write about the political imaginary, settler modes of perception, and how care and attunement practices are entangled in dynamic processes of becoming. This collaboratively shaped research explores these tensions and introduces intertidal: Compositions for the Fraser Lowlands (2021), a series of artistic movements in the Fraser River Delta salt marshes on the west coast of British Columbia. As a meditation on Bracha Ettinger’s (2014) notion of Carriance, we suggest that physical, visual, and sonic traces are evidence of many layers and moments of carrying and lifting. Asking the questions: What does it mean to shift and attune? How can we explore, engage, care for and listen differently?

*Logan Ramsay | [echo]logram — imaginary and the whale*

Echologram is an experimental project inspired by the bodily-experienced community-communication of sperm whales. Combining the words echo and hologram conveys my method for opening an extract of Mani Rao’s (Rao 2018) Echolocation into a relational experience. Exploring Edouard Glissant’s (Glissant & Wing 1997)
definition of imaginary and a stream-of-consciousness poetic practice, I will use what would seem to be the opposite of embodied experience, the excel spreadsheet, to collaboratively read a poem through the sensory perspective of the sperm whale. In this presentation participants will be invited to inhabit and move across the space of a curated spreadsheet in a free dive of association and entangled imaginary. Audience responses are recorded and processed as live thinking around the work — shared perspectives, responses and reads swimming through, finally revealed as a new poem or poetic "sonar" print. Guided by spoken word poetic stream and using the spatial dimensions, natural movements and seemingly ‘false’ depth of the multi-planar excel document, a hologram emerges out of the group’s live associations. The poem becomes re-animated, voluminous, shared and extended by the dynamic framework of echoes, experienced as a sperm whale might. Through the interactive and relational body of the Excel spreadsheet, Echologram seeks to evoke an intimate and dynamic in-between ocean of readers, imaginary and the magnificent more-than-human sperm whale.

**Encountering Alien Otherness**

**Michael Gormley | The Astropocene is Mathematical and Fleshy: Biotic in the Universal Ecosystem**

Granting that we are already, multitudinously posthuman, this paper investigates human bodies in the extraplanetary environments where (post)humaness will imminently circulate. Framed by Haraway’s description of humanity as “mathematical and fleshy” (Haraway 2016), this paper interrogates our species in two ecocritical contexts: as biotic bodies in the red dirt of Mars and as organisms in spatiotemporal nature. This paper reads Andy Weir’s The Martian to interrogate the strange doubling of a biotic human entangled with otherworldly environs. Biotic identity—that identity contextualized by organic relations—implies abiotic environmental contours; bodies ecometonymically express inorganic features like soil, climate, atmosphere, and gravity. Stranded, Watney utilizes his microbiome to terraform Martian dirt into an arable earth simulation. Critical kin, Watney’s gut bacteria decay soil components to nutrify plants and help digest the Martian potatoes. Borders between Watney and soil become indistinct as bacteria traverse the simulated Earth system. Moving in Martian wilds, spacesuits and vehicles similarly mediate Earthly and Martian environs, and Watney’s tracks express his amalgamated, multiplanetary biotic identity. Locating Watney in Martian dirt describes a biotic identity that precedes ontological constructions and can be recirculated to frame ecoethical entanglement with and beyond Earth. Humans entering the universal ecosystem will find that interrogating our relation to nature requires the findings of physics. Configuring science fact fiction—a cross-section of SF narratives diligently attuned to scientific accuracy—this paper imbues the waves of ecocriticism with reciprocating action. By this method, ecocriticism extends its innate interdisciplinarity to interrogate nature as spacetime. Performing readings with entropy and general relativity, this paper progresses ecocriticism as a framework for witnessing the paradigmatic moment when humans become a species no longer mandatorily bound to the blue planet on which we evolved. Reading nature as spacetime enables ecocriticism to ecoethically shape the end of the Anthropocene.

**Matthew Moore | Tracing the Entangled Bank and ‘Brown Ecology’ in H.G. Wells’s Fiction**

Unquestionably, H.G. Wells has proven to be visionary, but his work has often been overlooked in terms of his engagement with ecological issues. In this paper, I argue that H.G. Wells adumbrates many of the current ecological concepts, such as notions of ‘Dark Ecology,’ ‘Slow Violence’ and the notion of the ‘Mesh.’ In particular, I argue that Wells’s fiction directly engages with the ideas surrounding Darwin’s ‘Entangled Bank’ alongside the idea of ‘Brown Ecology’ in that his fiction demonstrates the importance of symbiosis between humankind and the natural realm. His fiction, I posit, emphasises that when barriers are placed between a harmonious relationship between the two, a path of destruction follows. It will also suggest that Wells explores how Enlightenment thinking has triggered a sense of ecophobic tendencies towards the natural. In particular, this paper will consider how Wells’s ‘The Time Machine,’ ‘The War of the Worlds,’ ‘The Island of Dr Moreau’ as
well as the short story ‘The Sea Raiders’ exposes the ecological concerns that only seem to be apparent in our present context with the growing fears surrounding environmental decline.

Mia Chen Ma | Liquid Modernity: The Polluted Ocean and Mobile Community in Han Song’s Red Ocean

As a genre dedicated to depicting alternative futures, science fiction is an intrinsically space which nurtures the imaginations of posthuman. Chinese science fiction writer Han Song’s novel Red Ocean presents a future world in which humans transform into aquatic humans through technology, in order to adapt to the collapsing ecosystems. Whether as posthuman or human, the aquatic human is always in a fluid state that is subject to contradictions, transformations, and boundary-crossings. It can be seen as both the embodiment and the condemnation of our contradictory views on both the human and posthuman world. While the fluid state of their body and mind epitomizes Zygmunt Bauman’s conceptualization of “liquid modernity”, it also points to the fundamental instability of almost every aspect of human society in face of the escalating degradative ecological changes. Han highlights how such a fluid state of modern society is fundamentally subject to the fluidity of the ecosystem. In this instance, Han further develops Bauman’s idea of “liquid modernity” by introducing the “prehuman perspective”: the aquatic human and the red ocean eventually integrate with each other and travel against time, with the hope of rewriting human history and restoring human intimacy with nature. It encourages us to start anew by discarding all illusions toward a more advanced and technologically-saturated world and reconnect with nature. The ultimate transformation of the aquatic humans into water underlines the liquidity of modernity is deeply affected by the fluidity and mobility of nature. By depicting how the representation of aquatic humans shifts from posthumanity to prehuman perspective, Han proposes a rethinking of the connotation of the image of posthuman, particularly its role of eliciting the real ecological thought.

Katharina Donn | A Monstrous Future: Metamorphosing Bodies in Speculative Fiction

The monster embodies both breakdown and emergence. While it is traditionally read as a symptom of collapse and chaos, fulfilling its etymologically prescribed role as a dark omen, I am interested in the alternative root from which these hybrid, changeable creatures emanate. The monster not only evokes the Latin ‘monere,’ giving warnings, but also ‘monstratre;’ to speak with Donna Haraway, monsters ‘de-monstrate.’ In speculative fiction, this future-oriented thrust of the monstrous is often of an ecological nature. Given famous precursors such as Mary Shelley’s monster, whose proposals of a vegan lifestyle in harmony with his fellow creatures receive a rather hostile reception on the part of this human creator, such a re-evaluation has a long tradition, which writers including Larissa Lai re-work in the 21st century vein of a bio-punk posthumanism. My paper proposes that hybrid biopunk bodies offer figurations not only of survival on a toxic and wounded planet, but of human life lived according to the principles of enmeshment and porosity rather than dominance and exploitation. On a narrative level, this points to a pathway beyond the dead-end of the hero-villain patterns which shape conventional science fiction. Yet on a political level, this also raises the possibility of a different kind of future-oriented imagination that is not based on the ‘no-place’ isles of conventional utopia but on the rhizomatic currents running through a ‘dia-topia,’ a literary and ecological space defined by transversal and border crossings.

Emergency, Toxicity, and the Boundaries of the Human

Derric Ludens | Subverting the Human-Nonhuman Divide in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide

Emergencies are first and foremost affective events—events that amplify the affective force of connatural crises and/or transduce their affective potential to other spheres. Over the last two decades, this pattern of
resonance, feedback, and transduction has become increasingly problematic as social and ecological crises have intersected not only geographically but also chronologically. This concurrence of both environmental and humanitarian emergencies has required governments to navigate the (often) conflicting interests of the “human” and “nonhuman” world—a navigation that has been complicated by Western discourses’ reification of an ontological divide between these groups. However, in addition amplifying our perception of “crisis,” the affective forces produced by emergencies can also serve as a catalyst for the emergence of the new. Through an analysis of Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide, I explore this tension between emergency as crisis and emergency as potential by comparing three of the novel’s foundational events. Specifically, I illustrate how these events create—what I term—an affect of emergency wherein the border between “humans” and “nonhumans” is problematized. However, despite these similarities, the participants’ responses to these emergencies differ greatly. While some reassert the dominant human-nonhuman discourse, others use the affective potentials created by these emergencies to pursue new modes of being. Ultimately, drawing upon Brian Massumi’s concept of an “animal continuum,” I argue that The Hungry Tide emphasizes the productive power of emergencies and prompts a reconsideration of how social, political, and environmental policies can be more holistically considered when the interests of various groups are seen as mutually inclusive rather than distinct (4).

Daniel Raschke | Risk and Toxic (Neg-)Entropy in Samanta Schweblin’s Fever Dream (Distancia de rescate)

Drawing on an ecocritical method intersecting the theoretical frameworks of Bernard Stiegler, Niklas Luhmann, and Ulrich Beck, this paper approaches Samanta Schweblin’s 2017 debut novel “Fever Dream” (Distancia de Rescate) through the lens of cybernetic systems theory. Set in rural Argentina and initially framed as a family vacation, Fever Dream’s distorted dream logic after a toxic encounter with an unspecified pesticide turns recreation into pastoral nightmare. Under the guidance of toxin-transformed local boy David and via protagonist Amanda’s intoxicated mnemonic explorations, ‘natural’ orderliness gives way to the monstrous unnatural as signals become increasingly ambiguous. I position Fever Dream explicitly as a meditation on the failures of risk calculability, particularly in considering Amanda as a reflective second-order observer. Specifically, I suggest that approaching narrativized toxicity as a technology of perception reconfigures entropic noise toward the creation of negentropic information. Identifying toxins and noise in the biosphere and approaching them through narrativization consequently allows for a systemic engagement with the aftereffects of the Anthropocene with a redirection toward a Neganthropocene.

Frank Fucile | Emerging from Emergency: Eco-Materialist Aesthetics in Times of Plague, War, & Collapse

While the interlocking crises of the twenty-first century present uniquely dire stakes for both human civilization and the ecosystems of the earth, they are also quite obviously the continuation of problems that we have deferred solving for a very long time. Looking back to a period of plague, war, and revolt from a century earlier, this paper seeks to find aesthetic and philosophical modes that will be useful to our ongoing climactic, political, and economic emergencies. This paper will use an eco-materialist framework to compare the Dalton Trumbo novel Johnny Got His Gun with the Katherine Anne Porter novel Pale Horse, Pale Rider in an effort to draw lessons that will be relevant to Americans emerging from catastrophes of war and plague into a century that must overcome these crises. Both novels force us to consider and reconsider aspects of material ecocriticism and how they might be applied to extreme situations of mental and physical isolation, developing aesthetic and political conclusions that are relevant to our current emergence from emergency. Then, I will turn to the recent speculative fiction story “When Robot and Crow Saved East St. Louis” by Annalee Newitz to consider how the circumstances of crumbling state infrastructure, economic deprivation, and epidemics of novel diseases can be countered by mutual aid extending across boundaries between species. Thus this paper will propose an approach to aesthetics and politics that will respond to our emergence from the isolation and trauma of the past year and will be capable of responding to the ongoing emergencies of our world by drawing on the interconnectedness of humans, non-human animals, and objects we build and use.
André Krebber | Redeeming the Crisis: Living With Environmental Guilt From Alien Trauma to Promethean Redemption

It is difficult not to feel a sense of defeat in relation to societal efforts to amend our current environmental crisis. In a way, the elevation of the “crisis” in the 1970s to talk of an environmental “emergency” in more recent years is an apt expression of such feelings. Likewise, it manifests within the cycle of hope, urgency and disappointment that accompanies every new UN conference on the environment since 1972. When one furthermore traces these conferences over time, they deflate to Glasgow 2021 as last chance to avert climate catastrophe. The history of the environmental emergency comes into view then as a history of paradoxical inertia: all global efforts lead straight into the crisis’ exacerbation. In my talk, I will approach this history of inertia by way of a critical reading of Ridley Scott’s alien movies. In the three movies in the franchise directed by Scott – Alien (1979), Prometheus (2012) and Alien: Covenant (2017) – especially the atmospheric aesthetics can be read, I will argue, as a Western mediation of our environmental experience. By tracing and comparing this mediation from the original to Scott’s reengagement with the material thirty-odd years later, it becomes possible to trace the societal response to the experience of the crisis: Whereas Alien’s claustrophobic technoscientific atmosphere of desperate survival represents ecological trauma, the shift to a lush primary forest environment and rationalization of the alien threat as a conscious creation in Prometheus and Covenant signals a societal retreat to hopes for redemption. This turn to redemption may then provide an explanation for our current busy environmental inertia; UN conferences as rituals for appeasing the environmental gods. Connecting this cultural diagnosis finally with some of Walter Benjamin’s thoughts on the redemption of history, I aim to offer a response to this inertia.

Vegetal and Fungal Agencies

Jemma Rowan Deer | Mycorrhizal Metaphors: The Buried Life of Language

Fungi generate and demand subterranean thinking: thinking beyond the visible, thinking that makes connections between things previously supposed to be separate or individual. This talk traces an extended subterranean metaphor that likens (or lichenizes) human language to fungal networks, showing how thinking fungally can transform how we conceive of the strange, underground life of language and our entanglements in it.

Patricia Vieira | Plants as Environmental Activists: Amazonian Vegetal Expression in Frans Krajcberg’s Sculptures

In this paper, I use New Materialism and Indigenous, peasant and riverine Amazonian thought as theoretical frameworks to interpret the work of naturalized Brazilian artist Frans Krajcberg (1921-2017). Krajcberg saw his art as a way to give voice to forest plants that are being systematically destroyed through fires and logging, to give way to agribusiness ventures. He used burnt trunks of Amazonian trees he collected after forest fires to create a series of sculptures that denounced the environmental crimes taking place in the region. I interpret Krajcberg’s sculptures as a human/plant collaboration that questions species divides and even the boundaries between living and non-living matter. The import of his pieces is clear: the bodies of the dead and charred trees are given a new life in Krajcberg’s work that incorporates them and turns them into art. I argue that his artworks are a fusion between the bare physically of the dead trees that speak to us through their materiality and the artist’s craft. The trees are very clearly inscribed into the sculptures that allow them to speak from beyond their grave, as it were, and to become living symbols of the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.
Melinda Backer | What Is It Like to Be a Tree?: Emerging Personhood in Richard Powers’ The Overstory

Driven by an urgency common to dystopian fiction, speculative ecofiction suggests that for humans to live fully and non-destructively in the world, they must acknowledge the agency of nonsentient life. This fiction’s provocative characterization asks readers to think upon and accept forms of agency that are markedly different from prototypical examples of human and animal agency. In The Overstory the agency of trees is the driving force of the plot and their attempts at communication lead the readers to question if and how trees act as agents. I wish to examine how The Overstory makes a case for nonhuman agency beyond the human/animal and what the implications of that agency are for established legal discussions of nonhuman personhood. The agential status of trees and the impact of giving trees rights and protections under human law is examined by critics such as David Haberman, Steve Pavlik, and Christopher Stone (whose 1972 essay “Should Trees Have Legal Standing” continues to inform such discussions). Certainly, their legal lack of rights is contested, but the philosophical implications of tree subjecthood is left unexplored. Thomas Nagel’s seminal essay, “What is It like to be a Bat?” discusses consciousness as a state only possible if one can consider “what it is like” to be that particular being (439). While he uses bats as an example to suggest that all knowing is subjective, he also implies that these thought experiments are important. Although a human cannot truly know what it is like for a tree to live as a tree, we can imagine the experiences that shaped it. As a foundation for ethical relationality between humans and nonhumans, speculative fiction likewise shows readers what it is like to inhabit the consciousness of other beings by answering questions about nonhuman agency and questioning the status of humanity itself.

Ecological Subjectivities Beyond the Human

Sarah (Sadie) Warren | Experiential Poverty and the Pandemic Present: An Ode to our Axiological Invisibles

Biodiversity is a major term in environmental discourse, and for good reason—it represents one of the areas of crisis in which we have most to lose. From the creeping waves of kudzu rolling across the American South (and beyond) to the purple loosestrife that threatens the elegant lady's-slipper of the Great Lakes region, non-native plants suppress and overtake native growth; anthropogenic factors exacerbate these trends; as a consequence, a spectrum of diverse ecosystems come to increasingly resemble our agricultural monocrops. Yet, while these words are stated descriptively, they are spoken with a clear normative edge. This is partially pragmatic: biodiversity supports the healthy functioning of complex ecosystems, curbs disease outbreaks, contributes to emissions reductions, preserves promising resources, and protects socially valuable cultural symbols. But is there something further, more existential, at play here, too? Using John Dewey’s naturalistic metaphysics—his neutral monism, wherein the ontological categories of “physical” and “mental” are elided in favour of functional distinctions that discriminate between relationships in situated contexts—this presentation explores the idea of experiential poverty. Experiential poverty seeks to explain how experience can never properly be said to belong to a human agent nor a mechanistic universe and its cogs and wheels, but rather exists in an affectively-charged liminal space between it and me—how a reduction in the its, no matter how seemingly innocuous, correspondingly diminishes the mes. Using our pandemic present and its spatial limitations as a focalizing illustration, drawing briefly on the poetic works of Pablo Neruda’s Odes to Common Things, I demonstrate how human subjectivity is indelibly marked and constituted by innumerable shining threads of materiality and its sensualities. While this adds a weakly anthropocentric argument in favour of biodiversity, it does so in full recognition that anthropocentrism can only ever be, in a certain sense, an ecocentrism.
As ecocritics discuss the challenges of representing climate change, they often call for a decentering of the human experience. In the context of the Anthropocene, fiction – with its typical focus on human action and the Bildung of the protagonist – must innovate in order to overcome its anthropocentric thinking, as argued by literary scholars such as Claire Colebrook, Adam Trexler, and Timothy Clark. Drawing on Stefan Helmreich’s distinction between the human life form and human forms of life – social, symbolic, and pragmatic ways of thinking and acting that organize human communities – and Jon Hegglund’s discussion of the indirect anthropomorphization of space in Here, I argue that pushing humans from the center of narrative may not be the answer to the representational challenges of the Anthropocene. This paper discusses Here by Richard McGuire, a graphic novel lauded for its formal innovations and its non-anthropocentric narrative. Here focuses on one corner of a room and what happens, happened, and will or could happen there from three billion years ago until the year 22,175 AD. With the spatial setting of the room as the protagonist, the story weaves together snippets of human and non-human lives. This paper argues that even in this work of fiction, which ostensibly decenters humanity, the reading experience is ultimately centered around human characters. Consequently, this paper makes a plea for recentering the human, albeit a human 2.0: a posthumanist version in which humans are deeply and inextricably interconnected to each other and the environment. The human 2.0 of Anthropocene fiction negotiates the active role of a previously passive setting and the essential role of the interactions between this environment and humanity, without discarding the centrality of the human experience.

K. Elaine Lysinger | Dissipating in the Sublime: Recovering Our Mattered Vitality for a Posthuman Ethic

In Material Feminisms, the editors state that “taking matter seriously entails nothing less than a thorough rethinking of the fundamental categories of Western culture” (17), however one fundamental category has been overlooked time and time again: the mind/body dualism. The mind is that thing which we, as a species, have traditionally believed defines us and sets us apart from and above the nonhuman world. Understanding the seemingly immaterial, intangible, and ineffable components of the human condition as material phenomena is necessary for understanding how to truly exist as material beings in a material world. To deconstruct the mind/body dualism, I propose focusing not on the vitality of matter, but on discovering the materiality of our own vitality by exploring experiences of mind dissipation. Mind dissipation occurs during interactions with the sublime, when particularly lively and agentic matter overwhelms the (seemingly) bounded individual with such extreme affective force that the barrier separating the mind and body temporarily evaporates to produce a material mindbody which “dissipates in the sublime.” To dissipate in the sublime is to embody the contact zone of mind/body and to feel the materiality of the immaterial, the nonhumanity of the human, the leakiness of the borders, and the flow of becoming-with the posthuman community. Dissipating in the sublime in our material mindbodies can become an ethical and political engagement that combines scientific, hedonistic, and spiritual modes of inquiry in an ecstatic and subversive practice. A salient example of mind dissipation is the consumption of hallucinogenic substances; you, dear reader, might think of hallucinogenic experiences as dreamy and abstract, but I argue that not only are they the most materially-grounded experiences a person might have, they might actually be the most effective method for developing a material and posthuman environmental ethic.

Jane Battisson | Pierre-Albert Jourdan and the Transitional Space of Nature

Pierre-Albert Jourdan remains a relatively obscure author, even in his native France. Despite having composed an abundance of texts ranging from paintings, poems, prose, and fragments, few were published during his brief life. And yet his influence endures amongst his admirers. As his translator, John Taylor, puts it: “His writings pass from one amicable hand to the next. They are like passwords among readers, writers, poets, and scholars who are interested in the self and subjectivity (that is, in the possibilities of surpassing the self, of ‘de-
selfing’ or ‘de-subjectivizing’), in observing and questioning Nature, and – not least – in intimating what might lie beyond certain ‘thresholds’ of or putative ‘limits’ to rational comprehension.” What Taylor calls a process of “de-selfing” is rather, I propose, a breaking down of the seemingly impermeable limits that the ego erects around itself. Jourdan’s project of surpassing the confines of the ego is not a destructive operation, for it leads to the opening of a complex, transitional space between inner and outer worlds. I borrow the notion of a transitional space from Winnicott, who defines it as a third and constitutive space of intersubjectivity, which predates the separation of inner/outer, self/other as two seemingly distinctive, self-enclosed entities. The transitional space is an in-between space “to which inner reality and external life both contribute.” But my use of this notion is not limited to this specific psychoanalytic sense. It extends to the ternary thought of Taoism, a thinking of the in-between that Jourdan invokes. His writing offers, I will argue, a variation of the transitional space: nature, the space within which he meditates, opens up a transitional space of interconnectivity that he reproduces in his texts to create a new poetics, an in-between space within which to dwell.

**Time and Scale in the Anthropocene**

**William Bowden | Time-Space Expansion and the Problem of Place in Hari Kunzru’s *Gods Without Men***

This essay adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the concept of “place” as it is dynamically rendered in Hari Kunzru’s novel *Gods Without Men* (2013). By translating Geoff Bailey’s method of “time perspectivism” in his approach to environmental palimpsests into literary-critical terms, I read Kunzru’s novel as a fictional embodiment of the concept of the palimpsest. In particular, I focus on Kunzru’s vision of a palimpsestuous or layered sense of place, as fragmented narratives from remote points in time are woven together in a spiritualized location within the Mojave Desert. Kunzru’s experimentation with several genres such as Native American myth, magical realism, psychological fiction, and the epistolary form estranges readers from the conventions of realist narration. Moreover, these formal experiments reorient readers’ sense of place by drawing attention to the “sedimentation” of memories, experiences, and losses occurring over time.

**Lena Pfeifer | Scaling Deep Time: On the Ethical Perception of Temporality in Richard Powers’s *The Overstory* (2018)**

Since the early 2000s, the concept of the Anthropocene has elicited questions about what constitutes the human in relation to his or her environments in a globalizing world. Grounded in knowledge systems of the Earth System Sciences, the Anthropocene constitutes a framework of thinking that extends both spatially and temporally into vast space and deep time (scale), thereby conflating the time scales of human and natural history. One of the prime challenges has been to conceptualize the relationship between geological and deep time and the human history of capitalism and globalization. This tension fundamentally challenges how we think about ethical categories such as justice and responsibility. Richard Powers’s ‘environmental epic’ *The Overstory* (2018) is a particularly prominent example of a novel dealing with the extended temporal dimensions of the Anthropocene. By endowing trees with narrative agency and placing them at the center of the story, Powers questions the boundaries between human and non-human, and between the time scales of human and natural history. This paper takes Powers’s novel as an example to look at the relevance of scale and what can be called scaling temporalities, as well as the ethical implications of scaling temporalities in the Anthropocene. I show to what extent ethical and, for that matter, political implications change when we shift scales. The Overstory, I argue, invites its readers to ponder ethical questions on a historical scale and on the scale of different temporalities. By decentering the human subject and scaling temporalities, the novel works towards an ethics of interconnectedness that can arise if perception is opened up onto temporalities other than one’s own.
David Shaw | The Crisis of Scale: Allegories of The Anthropocene in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* and Ben Lerner’s *10:04*

Since Dipesh Chakrabarty’s influential essay “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” the problematics of scale have been a central focus of the discourse of Anthropocene literature. This paper examines the deployment of allegory as a means of bridging the scalar divide between the individual and the planetary in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* and Ben Lerner’s *10:04*. In *Flight Behaviour*, the looming threat of environmental change is allegorically represented through a swarm of monarch butterflies who’ve had their migratory pattern disrupted by climate change. While Kingsolver makes space for the literal significance of the monarch migration on both the local and global scale, the monarchs also play a significant role as an allegory for the domestic drama that is really the crux of the novel: Just as changing environmental conditions trigger the monarchs to find a new winter home, the novel’s protagonist’s own migratory leap into an uncertain but hopeful future, as the changing environment creates a disjuncture that pushes her to end her stable but unfulfilling marriage. Conversely, Lerner’s *10:04* deploys allegory as a means of interrogating the inherent instability of attempting to describe the fallout from Hurricane Sandy from an individual perspective: For Lerner, allegory functions as a means of tracing the limits of the individual, and offers a broad gesture to a vast terrestrial network on a planetary scale, of which the individual is an active but my no means central participant. In this way, Lerner provides a model for realist literature’s ability to interrogate the representative limits of the Anthropocene.

Nathaniel Sikand-Youngs | The Machine is the Garden: Landscaping an Energy Theory of Value in nineteenth-century Californian literary naturalism

Scholars identify the representation of global environmental crises as a defining cultural imperative of the current era. Eva Horn wonders ‘how to conceive of an aesthetics of the Anthropocene’, while Nate Hagens in the journal Ecological Economics asks ‘what sort of new stories do we need’ for this new epoch. I propose that we find those ‘aesthetics’ and ‘stories’ in late nineteenth-century California. There, the naturalist novel responded to historical and social conditions highly reminiscent of those that concern Horn and Hagens: the absorption of an undeveloped nature into an extractive capitalist system with the closing of the ‘frontier’, and the dominance of corporate monopolies that followed only ungovernable market forces, impervious to any human agency. To convey this new modernity, naturalist writers in California represented the settler-colonial capitalist economy as a biotic machine, simultaneously natural and artificial. I identify this in two novels of land dispossession and environmental exploitation: the canonical naturalist epic *The Octopus* by Frank Norris (1901), and *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) by Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton—the first Mexican American woman to publish in English and a figure hitherto absent in scholarship on naturalism. I argue that their invocations and indications of a metaphorical, semi-organic machinery intuitively evoke the inseparability of economy from ecology, anticipating Hagens’s recent theorisation of globalised capitalism as ‘an energy seeking Superorganism’. Instructively, Norris and Ruiz de Burton show that writers can navigate the oft-mentioned problem of the scale of anthropogenic climate change by instead focusing on the qualitative transformation from an individual component (a person or place) into the whole mechanistic system (the social and the planetary). Despite its conventions of predetermined fate, then, this naturalist model of society is a starting point for contemporary literature to imagine the reengineering of the machine-like ‘Superorganism’ of today.
Responding to Catastrophe

Holli Flanagan | Create, Destroy, Refigure: Capitalocene Identity in Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy

This presentation looks to Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam trilogy to gain insight into the ways that our current point on the Capitalocene timeline can be projected into a speculative future and what this means for potential alterations to the traditionally recognized human identity. This inquiry developed into a year-long project in which I interrogated the presence of what I have named “Capitalocene identity” in Atwood’s narrative. Capitalocene identity, which I define as “the compilation of climate crisis and late capitalism-altered experiences, available social roles, and economic and physical spaces that influence the formation of human identity,” incorporates understood components of identity creation such as memory, relationships, and class status. However, I propose that these identity aspects undergo changes through an inescapable relationship with the late-stage climate crisis and capitalist society in Atwood’s trilogy. That relationship, I argue, tailors the above identity aspects to create elements such as pre-pandemic and post-pandemic memory, relationships built and broken in the name of survival, and a dying capitalism-in-climate-crisis system that further upsets an already precarious class hierarchy. In discussing the novels, this presentation examines the presence of emerging terminology and diagnoses such as “Pre-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” “ecological grief,” and “Anthropocene horror” as they inform Atwood’s speculative developments through our current understanding of how climate crisis extensions, pandemics included, are already altering our human identities.

Elizabeth Giardina | The Gimmicks and Poetics of Geoengineering

Geoengineering may turn out to have been a fad. As Holly Jean Buck hopes in her 2019 book, After Geoengineering, “geoengineering” will be an unrecognizable word to future generations “because it’s a weird artifact of the early twenty-first-century” (24). In this paper, I trace the history of the idea of a human-designed Earth System in order to describe how the aesthetics of geoengineering reflect and disguise the lived, contradictory experiences of climatological crisis, much like how the aesthetics of the gimmick emerge from the lived experience of capitalistic crisis, as Sianne Ngai claims in Theory of the Gimmick (2020). Ngai’s gimmick develops in the shadow of capitalism’s volatility, and so it is both banal and extreme, both too much and never enough. Geoengineering is likewise both a god-like, planetary-scale project and a risky, inadequate answer to the human and nonhuman costs of climate change that have already been incurred. I take the work of Erasmus Darwin—inventor, physician, natural philosopher, and poet—as a case study to consider how poetry negotiates the contradictions of geoengineering. Writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, Darwin valorizes contrivances like the steam engine through his highly formalized epic poems, including The Botanic Garden (1789, 1791) and The Temple of Nature (1803). In one passage, Darwin suggests a project in which “the nations who inhabit this hemisphere of the globe” artificially relocate Arctic icebergs to the equator, which would improve the global climate for human comfort. This moment, through its formal aestheticization of human Earth System design, reads as a triumphant solution, while its accompanying footnotes quietly mention its violent risks. I claim that the temporal contradictions of geoengineering necessitate a poetics that is capable of occluding them. In the midst of a climatological crisis, however, these tensions never remain unseen for long.
Ecological Apocalypse

Heather Milligan | ‘The totality of this mid-Collapse condition’: The Plurality of Jeff VanderMeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy

Jeff VanderMeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy (2014) centres on a mysterious force that envelops a stretch of coastal wilderness in Florida known as Area X. Unable to fully comprehend, decipher, or navigate the phenomenon, VanderMeer’s human narrators encounter a disorienting world with multiple viable interpretations. Area X is the site of an anthropogenic ecological disaster. Area X is a collective hallucination instigated as part of a secret government experiment. Area X is a wormhole to an obliterated alien planet. It is a crisis with many faces, simultaneously ecological, social, political, epistemological, and temporal. Most existing scholarship on the Southern Reach Trilogy advances an ecocritical reading of the text based on only the events of the first instalment, Annihilation, and a single interpretation of Area X. This paper argues that the multiple interpretations offered by the trilogy as a whole demand greater attention for two main reasons. Firstly, VanderMeer states that the value of Anthropocene fiction lies ‘in conveying the totality of this mid-Collapse condition’ (‘Hauntings in the Anthropocene’). This ‘totality’ includes concerns beyond the climate crisis, extending to corporate pollution, toxicity, settler colonialism, surveillance technology, military states, and ‘post-truth’ conspiracies. An aesthetic of plurality better captures these human, alien, and abnatural entanglements: the mesh of overwhelming, contradictory hyperobjects that constitutes the Anthropocene. Secondly, the multiple interpretations of the Southern Reach Trilogy serve an ethical function in their depiction of unfixed futurities. A dynamic network of competing meanings not only destabilises the authority of any one human perspective, it also undermines the certainty of a final Collapse scenario. In the text’s open spaces and grey areas of meaning, the possibility of agency can be grasped from the jaws of inevitability.

Priscilla Jolly | “When Londyon ys Forest” Medieval Ecological Apocalyptic in After London

This presentation intervenes in the recent scholarly conversations that have surrounded one of the early exemplars of climate fiction, the Victorian novel, After London; Or Wild England by Richard Jefferies. The existing scholarship on the novel discusses the text with regard to debates around the Anthropocene, genre fiction and Darwinism. This paper approaches After London by bringing the medievalism of the text into renewed focus. Without resorting to the binary of industrialism and romantic peasant life which characterises Victorian neo medievalism, this paper introduces a hitherto unexplored dimension of influence in Jefferies, that of medieval political writing. This essay suggests that reading After London in conjunction with two medieval texts, the prologue of Piers Plowman and Erceldoune prophecy, could yield new perspectives that account for the evolution of the apocalyptic in Jefferies, from 1876, when Jefferies wrote the fragment ‘The Great Snow,’ to 1885, when After London was published. The presentation will develop the concept of the ‘ecological apocalyptic,’ found in medieval prophecies, and situates it with conjunction with the development of Darwinism in Victorian times.

Race, Semiotics, and the Posthuman Subject

Emery Jenson | Blood Like Dew: Ecosemiotics and Interpretation in The Confessions of Nat Turner

Published just after Nat Turner’s execution in 1831, The Confessions of Nat Turner has long elicited readings focused on problems of authorial attribution. This talk shifts critical attention away from historiographic problems of attribution to focus on the meteorological and astronomical landscapes central to the text, considering what practices of reading such landscapes might engender. I argue that Turner understands the violence of the plantation as materially inscribed in plantation terrains and atmospheres. These landscapes
are themselves semiotically active and give off signs in the form of thunder, lightning, and dew. Elaborating Turner’s interpretive mode, this talk hones in on the phenomenon of condensation, which functions to entangle historical, meteorological, and affective events in Turner’s reading. In addition to engaging scholarship on the centrality of non-print media to Black resistance and environmentalism, this presentation contributes to new, post-Saussurean accounts of signification. Instead of Saussure’s “arbitrary” signs, Turner shows the complex dialectical relation between earth systems and human history that registers in nonhuman and human signs. Read in this way, I propose that The Confessions offers a novel understanding of both nature and signification, one in which natural phenomena emerge as “hieroglyphic characters” inflected by the dominant political order. Ultimately, this talk argues the importance of Turner’s interpretive system for an expanded account of semiosis, one attentive to the mutual imbrication of word and world. In our current moment of environmental crisis, such an expanded account contributes to ongoing attempts to read the weather in all its political and ecological affordances.

**Primrose Primrose | The Racialized Posthuman body in Hanif Kureishi’s The Body**

This paper investigates the resignification of the posthuman subject with the critical vector of race in Hanif Kureishi’s The Body. Detailing the plight of a white playwright named Adam, who is in his mid-sixties, the invitation to migrate to a new body becomes actualized as he trades his old body to have a young body, which previously belonged to a man named Mark. I investigate the profound racial ambiguities that the text maintains around the identity of Mark/Adam’s new body: the body is ‘neither white nor dark but lightly toasted,’ and speculations about the racial appearance of the body permeate the novel (Kureishi 27). The racial ambiguities mark Adam as a ‘global abject,’ subjecting him to both sexual and labor exploitation. As such, the novel juxtaposes the speculative possibility of body swapping and the material reality and experience of racism through the material re-embodiment of a racialized posthuman body, from which a certain tension emerges. This tension, I posit, registers a contradictory impulse in posthumanism to pivot upon a historical break, coterminous as it is with the postcolonial and the post-industrial, while its methodological positioning often occludes a historicizing approach. To this end, I employ Rosi Braidotti’s idea of the posthuman body, Derridean theorizations of hospitality, particularly the way the site of hospitality is one of profound ambivalence, and Fanon’s notion of bodily schemas as the object of racial categorization, in order to investigate how The Body expands the premise of posthumanism through the possible accounting of race and its historical contingencies.

**Marisa Mills | Re-Writing Medieval Wales: Empire and Ecology in the Lancelot-Grail Cycle**

English chronicles frequently defined the topography of Wales as treacherous, describing it particularly in ways which emphasized its inaccessibility to horses. This same “treachery” came to also characterize the Welsh people, who were often subject to negative stereotypes and treated disparagingly by the conquering Normans, and yet Arthurian literature—which sprang from Welsh folkloric tradition—was incredibly popular. This paper analyzes how the chronicles’ portrayal of both the topography and the relationships between humans and non-human animals emerges in a text like the Estoire de Merlin portion of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle, which tries to be “authentically Welsh” despite being—in fact—French.

**Thinking Beyond the Human**

**Aidan Tynan | The Anecological Thought in Deconstruction and Schizoanalysis**

This paper argues that two of the most important traditions of twentieth-century Continental theory, Derrida’s deconstruction and Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis, conceptualise what can be called the ‘anecological’.
That is to say, they offer us ways of thinking beyond the foundational role of the oikos (the Greek root of ecology and economics, meaning the house, home, or dwelling place). Ecology enjoins us to think the interconnectedness of everything, but this is often done by making the oikos an ontologically secure foundation. This is what we find in Heidegger’s poetics of dwelling, for example. Bruno Latour’s recent work on what he calls the new ‘climatic regime’ argues that political ecology should become synonymous with a politics of dwelling places, and he has advocated a Schmittian politics of territory on this basis. What we might call, paraphrasing Timothy Morton, ‘the anecological thought’ helps us to explore the dangers and shortcomings of this kind of ecopolitics by insisting on the view that the oikos tends to deconstruct itself—to speak like Derrida—or that life moves between sedentary and nomadic poles—to speak like Deleuze and Guattari. In this way, it becomes possible to argue that dwelling places and territories should never be given the kinds of ontological centrality that thinkers as different Heidegger and Latour have sought for them. Thinking the anecological as part of the ecological facilitates more encompassing accounts of insecure planetary life.

Kelly Gray | The Octopus and the Other: Capitalocene Contradictions in the Symbolic Order

“The Octopus and the Other: Capitalocene Contradictions in the Symbolic Order” exercises a Marxist-psychoanalytic intervention into contemporary ecocritical discourse through embracing the contradictions of the Capitalocene within Frank Norris’s 1901 novel, The Octopus. Drawing upon Jason Moore’s dialectical framework in the Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism (2016) as well as Philip R. Polefrone’s argument on its fundamental contradictions in “The Stock Ticker in the Garden: Frank Norris, American Literary Naturalism, and Capitalocene Aesthetics,” this essay reads for the contradictory naturalization of capitalism in nature within the novel’s depiction of the wheat and railroad industries in California. Even more, this essay reads for the resonances between the characters’ search for others to hold variously accountable and the larger search for the big Other to stabilize an ideological vision of non-contradiction. Regarding Vanamee’s specific search for the other who assaulted his late lover, this essay explores the novel’s further pairing of Angéle’s assault with the industrial assault of the land in the same chapter. Read together through this framework, the assaults in the novel illuminate how the search for the other effectively obscures the psychoanalytic understanding that there is no big Other, or the understanding that the symbolic order is inherently contradictory. Whereas contemporary new materialist thought often reflects an attempt at rejecting anthropocentrism, this paper instead argues that the push away from philosophies of subjectivity instead forestalls our ability to reckon with the libidinal economy’s centrality to issues of ecology today. In this way, Marxist-psychoanalysis bridges dialectical materialism and new materialism in embracing the contradictions of the Capitalocene’s world-ecology.

Nicolai Skiveren | Plastic Bags are Good to Think With: A Meta-Critical Investigation of Aestheticized Waste

This paper explores two contrary readings of the (in)famous plastic bag scene in Sam Mendes’ film American Beauty (1990) in which the character Ricky plays a recording of a plastic bag being lifted into the air by swirls of wind. What this scene means – and, more importantly, what it does – has been subject to debate. In her lucid description of the scene, sociologist Gay Hawkins writes that “the bag signified much more than the beauty of ephemera; it signified a major environmental problem rendered sensuous and enchanted. This scene invited me to change my feelings about plastic bags, to delight in something I have been trained to hate (2010: 22). By contrast, literary scholar Maurizia Boscagli writes about the same scene: “This image portentously reiterates the numbing power of aestheticization: the plastic bag becomes an allegory of metaphysics colluding with consumption to produce a new type of intransitive aestheticism, a one-way image of beauty which precludes any form of critique” (2014: 244). These contrary readings/experience beg the question: How can the same mediation of a plastic bag result in such radically different appraisals, and what critical criteria underlie these ecocritics’ divergent evaluations? In thinking through this question, the paper presents a meta-critical analysis of Hawkins’ and Boscagli’s film analyses, focusing on the attitudes they bring to the filmic
depiction of waste, their divergent methodological approaches, and their different views on waste aesthetics. Whereas Boscagli equates the film’s aestheticization with anesthetization on the basis that it reproduces the plastic bag as a fetishized commodity, Hawkins locates the plastic bag in the micro-political realm of the sensual and the affective. By investigating this disagreement, the paper seeks to demonstrate the scope of ecocritical perspectives and reflect on the assumptions that drive materially-oriented ecocritical film analysis.

Jean-Thomas Tremblay | Homeostasis and Extinction: Ted Chiang’s *Exhalation*

This talk turns to breathing—a process both toxically and discursively saturated amid protests against anti-Black asphyxiation and during the ever-stretching COVID-19 pandemic—to articulate a radical epistemological shift critical to the project of ushering in nonexploitative climate futures. The talk’s disciplinary and sociopolitical argument is woven into a close reading of Ted Chiang’s short story “Exhalation” (2008), wherein a humanoid species previously presumed immortal slowly becomes extinct as a result of a diminishing difference of air pressure. Chiang’s story proposes a thought experiment: What if inhalation and exhalation were distinct processes, rather than inseparable phases of an autonomic, autopoietic, and ecological cycle? Chiang severs inhalation from bodies, rendering it strictly mechanical. Exhalation, by contrast, remains the province of bodies; individuals partake in this activity whatever else they may be doing. Chiang’s inhale literalizes resource extraction, and his exhale literalizes a process of extinction coextensive with the achievement of an equilibrium or homeostasis. More so than the extractive inhale, the extinctive exhale holds the key to a future that deflates operas of total destruction and annihilation. “Exhalation,” this talk proposes, unlocks a horizon of human persistence contingent on the exhaustion of the figure that the Black feminist scholar Sylvia Wynter calls “Man”—a figure who conquers and occupies in the name of rationality, whose thought is (self-)destructive. The homeostasis in which the exhale results is not nothingness; it is instead nothing legible to Man. Chiang’s extinctive exhale activates the process of thinking humanity anew or, as the Asian American studies scholar Kandice Chuh might say, illiberally.

Elemental Rhetoric Abstracts

Emergenze: Elemental Narratives in Italian Studies

Danila Cannamela | A Binding Language: From Simaetha’s Recipe to its (Eco)Feminist Remake

Plants are physically anchored to the soil, and figuratively, to the culture and language that has contributed in shaping that soil. Their binding properties are featured in everyday cooking, as root vegetables and grains are commonly used as thickeners or binding agents to make soups, stews, gravies, and sauces. What is far less common today is the use of starchy plants to cast a binding spell in which matter and words, vegetable and human life intertwine. This is precisely what happens in Theocritus’ *Idyll 2*, in which sorceress Simaetha makes a spell from scratch to address a love emergency. The ritual is meant to bind her former lover, Daphni, to her by depriving him of his agency. In this presentation, I return to Simaetha’s ancient recipe to explore an overarching question: how could we reinvent her binding spell—a curse collected in what is considered the first work of pastoral poetry—to suit an environmentally-conscious palate? To update Simaetha’s original recipe, I draw from a ‘cooking technique’ of Italian feminism, namely, the practice of using language as an element that simultaneously binds us to our origins and grants us freedom. Language acts as a binding agent that is grounding and liberating at once, and, as a thickener of natural-cultural discourses, it can reframe the way we retell and address narratives of environmental crisis and emergency.
Enrico Cesaretti | Spectral Tales and Real Disasters: Re-Emerging Traumas in D. Atenzi’s I morti di Alos

Two of the questions asked in the ASLE conference CFP are: “How is crisis emplaced? How does it make and remake place?” My presentation suggests a potential answer by building on ecocritical work that investigates the nature and mediatic representability of catastrophes, on trauma studies and on theoretical insights about the notion of spectrality’s capacity to illuminate the violence historically imposed on specific places and subaltern communities. It argues that Daniele Atzeni’ film I morti di Alos [The dead of Alos]—in its melding of documentary and fiction, gothic literary suggestions and evocative cinematic images, an imaginary place (Alos) and an actual Sardinian ghost-village (Gairo Vecchio)—brings to light the underlaying links that often exist between spatio-temporally distant, and only apparently different environmental disasters (i.e. a toxic cloud and deforestation practices) and, in the process, invites us to pay attention to the testimonial, revelatory role of ruins as material-discursive sites of “elemental memory.”

Serena Ferrando | Vegetal Existences in Italian Poetry: Daria Menicanti and Andrea Zanzotto

In La vita delle piante Emanuele Coccia envisions a world where “everything is fluid, everything exists in movement, with, against or in the subject” and where being-in-the-world means the absence of any “material distinction between us and the rest of the world.” (2018 45, 46) In this physical and metaphysical environment, permeability is the ruling principle that presupposes that “everything is in everything,” or the world and the subject interpenetrate each other, and the reality of matter and that of the living meet in the fluid nature. (2018, 46, 44) In this world of “immersion” where nothing is fixed, not the subject nor the object, I am interested in what type of language or communication can exist and what forms, if any, they could take. According to Coccia, the experience of listening to music is an example of this type of communication since it provides an amalgamation of ourselves with the universe where soundwaves and sensitivity “perfectly amalgam with each other.” (2018, 47) This type of communication then, based on a “relationship between the living and the world [that] cannot […] be reduced to opposition (or objectification),” would have to transcend the traditional tenet of language that presupposes an interlocutor and, most commonly, an “other” or a subject and an object. (2018, 47) The poetry of Zanzotto and Menicanti provides examples of this intra-mingling that Coccia calls mescolanza or “mixture.” Zanzotto’s does so especially stylistically and idiomatically, while Menicanti’s – never an experimenter – does so thematically and philosophically. Both, however, converge in a vision of overlaps, cohabitation, and entanglements. My presentation is a preliminary foray into these poets’ vegetal narratives. I isolate some instances from their work and share some reflections on poetry, language, and vegetal life that emerge from them.

Elemental America: The Emergent Aesthetics of Exposure and Pollution in Water, Earth, and Atmosphere

Moritz Ingwersen and Timo Müller | Emergent Aesthetics: Mobilizing the Elemental Turn in Contemporary Ecocriticism

This paper, held by Moritz Ingwersen and Timo Müller, offers a theoretical framework for thinking about the concepts of “the elements” and “the elemental” in contemporary ecological criticism. Introducing the concept of an “emergent aesthetics,” we illustrate what an elemental analysis may be able to achieve in examining the climate emergency, extractivism, relations to place, and environmental embodiment. With a particular focus on American literature and culture, we outline 5 paradigmatic arguments that relate to the dimensions of elemental structures, elemental imagination, elemental materialism, elemental exposure, and elemental placemaking. This presentation is conceived as preface to the panel “Elemental America: The Emergent Aesthetics of Exposure and Pollution in Earth, Water, and Atmosphere.”
In my presentation, I analyze Bill Morrison’s 2016 experimental documentary *Dawson City Frozen Time* through the lens of ecocriticism. Morrison uses rediscovered silent film reels that had been preserved by the permafrost of Yukon Territory for decades, but which show considerable water damage. I argue that the film’s material dimension is not additional but fundamental to Dawson City’s narrative as it brings to light significant connections between filmic elements, “natural” elements, and American cultural myths. In my reading of the film I focus specifically on the elements of gold, earth, and water.

This contribution focuses on the American visual cultures of rocket plumes to examine the epistemological gap between their aestheticization as large-scale atmospheric objects and their toxicity as micrologically distributed substances. Drawing on elemental media theory and ecocriticism, it apprehends the combustion and dissipation of rocket plumes as a crucial nexus where the real and imaginary dimensions of elemental American identity continuously intersect.

Considering the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Spill, the largest marine oil spill in history, this contribution examines the elemental intermixing of oil and water via the chemical agent Corexit, the incredible effects submerging oil into the water column has had on ocean life, and the aesthetic translation of these dynamics by the poetry platform “Poets for Living Waters.” Functioning as a space of grief, of remembrance, and a demand for change, “Poets for Living Waters” brings together the work of over 250 poets, figuratively raising oil’s toxic specter to the surface by challenging America’s petrochemical dependence and failure to protect ocean ecosystems.

The presentation builds on recent publications such as Paula Farca’s collection *Make Waves: Water in Contemporary Literature and Film* (2019) to attempt a preliminary mapping of what we may call the hydro humanities. With particular focus on the literary stream of this larger field, I will identify key texts and associated scholarship to give greater clarity and definition to this robust body of work attuned to hydro-narratives.

In 2005, a decades-long drought revealed the landscapes that had been submerged under Lake Powell, some of which were only recognizable from the photographs in Sierra Club’s 1964 coffee table book, *The Place No One Knew: Glen Canyon on the Colorado River*. The restoration of Glen Canyon inspired a new generation of coffee table books; these texts remind us of what the cost has been for interfering in ecosystems, but also illustrates the complexity of climate change’s impact on their recovery. This paper examines their role in the
controversy of the water politics governing the Colorado River basin.

Matthew Henry | “The Wrong Side of the Levee”: Sea Level Rise and Racial Coastal Formation in the Decade of the Green New Deal

What might the Green New Deal mean for communities vulnerable to sea level rise in the coastal U.S.? I explore sea level rise narratives like Kim Stanley Robinson’s New York 2140 and cultural responses to Hurricanes Katrina and Maria to consider how ‘racial coastal formation’ – the racialized dimensions of climate policy in coastal regions – present challenges for the design and implementation of a Green New Deal, which at present remains a malleable policy goal.

Rasina Tanvir | Haunted Waters: Racial and Environmental Justice in Toni Morrison’s Beloved

My presentation uses close readings of Beloved to explore Morrison’s condemnation of racial capitalism from an intersectional perspective; I extend Morrison’s critique of racial capitalism to the environmental racism of the Flint Water Crisis (FWC) through scholarship in environmental justice, urban geography, and racial capitalism, and critical race theory. I situate the themes of memory and witnessing in the novel to a legacy of Black women’s roles in racial and environmental justice movements.

Lubna Alzaroo | “A River Dies of Thirst”: Hydropolitics in Raja Shehadeh’s A Rift in Time

In A Rift in Time, Palestinian writer Raja Shehadeh retraces his great uncle’s journey fleeing from Ottoman authorities. The narrative ties mapmaking to the remaking of the land through dams as Shehadeh pieces together family stories from the past and their implications for the future. This paper will explore Shehadeh’s discussion of the intersections of politics and water rights/ownership as mechanism of settler colonial infrastructure.

ASLE As Strange Attractor

Barbara Mossberg, Ryan Laws, Zealon Gentry-Lear, Hannah Lesti, and Zoey Bailey | ASLE As Strange Attractor: First Year Undergraduates do a DIY ASLE Conference Panel and Reveal a Finger on the Pulse of Next Generation Scholar Activists

In my eco literature class at the Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon, I have students from every major, but whether in business, law, biology, journalism, or economics, all of them want to help save the world. I made our final project a real-world assignment towards that end. We modeled the ASLE Conference. I asked them to identify an “emergent/emergency” cause, issue, or topic in our world today that most concerned them personally in their academic and life values and goals, and to examine eco literature of every genre that dealt with that issue. Instead of writing this up as the traditional five-page research paper, which they, their roommate, and I would read, and file away, I asked them to write a proposal for the actual ASLE 2021 conference. They were to write the abstract, accompanied by a paper to read at the conference, and works that ground their presentation. We then met in break-out rooms and each group considered how their individual papers could be organized thematically into a panel. Our ASLE panel describes the resulting panels from individual papers, providing insight into how our world and its needs are understood by next generation activist leaders. The analysis, including discussion by students themselves as real-world ASLE panelists, constitutes a taxonomy of our world emergencies and materials across disciplines that speak of, for, by, and to today’s students in environmental humanities and eco literature. – an emergent deep structure of environmental red
Fire and Water

Barbara Leckie | Alarming!: The Rhetoric of Warning and the House on Fire

This paper will address the rhetoric of warning and alarm with a focus on the “house on fire.” While climate warnings in general are ubiquitous in a range of media, there are very few studies that offer close analyses of the structure and function of the climate warning. Greta Thunberg’s now oft-cited invocation of the fire alarm, for example, has a history that has largely gone unaddressed. While alarms are made to incite both “action” and “an anxious awareness of danger” (OED; J. L. Austin), I will illustrate how, to date, climate warnings and alarms have produced anxiety without action. To do so, I will turn to two recent critics—Naomi Klein and Bruno Latour—who offer anatomies of the climate warning and reflect on its impact. I then will turn to Walter Benjamin and his call for a “real state of emergency” via what he terms “interruption.” Interruption, I will argue, can offer a third reading of the alarm that is neither action nor anxiety alone. Instead of the meta-warnings that communicate the warning’s failure, the interruption holds the failure, the anxiety, and the action together in a pause that has the potential to articulate new possibilities for climate change action at this time.

Francis Ittenbach | "Where the fire is still burning": Elemental Time in Romeo Oriogun’s Sacrament of Bodies

In Nigerian poet Romeo Oriogun’s collection Sacrament of Bodies (2020), the recurring elemental force of fire affects and invokes human experiences both physical and mental. Fire’s appearance in the collection often indicates violence against physical bodies, while also holding its metaphorical relation to passion along the text’s periphery. The poems also call to mind the human body’s relationship to its experience of time contrasted with the elements, the immediacy of physical (and elemental) experiences in the text constantly calling to mind traumatic pasts and unsettled futures. This paper examines the poet’s usage of fire throughout the collection in order to unpack how its manifestations offer a portrait of the human as existing in an ever-evolving present, informed by both the seemingly fixed past and conceptions of the future. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert write in their introduction to Elemental Ecocriticism (2015), Empedocles’ elements of fire, water, earth, and air are “never inert”; in these poems, neither is the human. My approach engages with a recent body of critical work examining fundamental natural forces particularly in light of the ever-looming threats of climate change and humans’ growing awareness of our impact on the planet.

Octavia Cade | The Urban Reef: Metaphor and Transformation in Conservation

The long, slow emergency of climate change comes with visions of vulnerable ecosystems, ecological impoverishment, and marked decrease in environmental resilience. Some of the impacts of the climate crisis have the potential to be more affecting than others, but the imagery of these well-known emergencies may be transformed, through existing association and rhetoric, to encourage strategies of restoration and resilience in other ecosystems. The devastation of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, for instance, is a well-documented phenomenon. Warming waters have caused multiple bleaching events, and the colonisation of the Reef by such organisms as the crown of thorns starfish (Acanthaster planci), is causing significant damage to the coral ecosystem. That the Reef is an iconic, charismatic ecosystem ensures that this ongoing destruction garners particular attention – an attention that can be exploited when associations with that system achieve wider currency. Reef systems are well-known as biodiversity hotspots, and a large part of their public appeal lies in the perception of this extraordinary species diversity. Given that diversity within ecosystems is correlated with ecological resilience, the concept of “reef” can be usefully applied to other ecologies. Urban
environments, for instance, lack the public perception of ecological diversity that is so associated with reefs. Like corals, however, cities—with their enormous concentration of buildings and infrastructure—provide a three dimensional substrate which can potentially provide a wide range of ecological niches, thereby encouraging species diversity and a subsequent increase in ecological resilience. Future-proofing urban environments against climate change will require increasing urban biodiversity, and presenting the city through the metaphorical lens of the reef is an exercise in rhetoric that may encourage public engagement with the ecology of the cities in which they live.

Alison Maas | Erosion: The Vanishing Coast in Muriel Rukeyser’s “The Outer Banks”

“Erosion,” etymologically traced back to the Latin “erodere”—conjoining of ex “away” and rodere “to gnaw”—is defined as a wearing or gnawing away. Not a passive disappearance but the eating away of one entity upon another, erosion as a natural phenomenon materializes over time both in slow progression and immediate crisis. In his 1985 study of coastal changes, E. C. F. Bird estimated that 70% of sandy shorelines worldwide were currently experiencing accelerated coastal erosion. Despite the general understanding that most global shorelines are currently in crisis, wide-ranging scales and differing environments make quantitative studies of coastal erosion few and far between. Engaging current work in coastal studies, his paper tracks the temporally long residues that have shaped coastlines through cycles of weather and tide but also the temporally instantaneous fallout of clashes between elements in dynamic interplay. To do so, I look to the vanishing coastal setting set forth in Muriel Rukeyser’s poem “The Outer Banks” from her 1969 poetry collection The Speed of Darkness through its role in the contemporary crisis of coastal erosion. North Carolina’s Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, one of the primary symbols in the poem—which Rukeyser calls “the spiral lighthouse”—has been in continuous retreat since the mid-twentieth century due to sea level rise and coastal erosion. Examining this site’s earlier literary representation and its contemporary rhetoric of risk, I ask how terminology such as “weathering,” “vanishing,” and “disappearing” has been used to imagine past erosion events and vulnerable coastal futures.

Theorizing the Elemental

David Lombard | The Rhetorics and Narratologies of the Sublime in Contemporary American Memoir: Mountains, Alaska, and the Farm

Traditional theories of the sublime center on a fraught and unsettling experience of overpowering natural phenomena. Such an approach seems difficult to reconcile with theories of the Anthropocene, which generally tend to question the nature/culture divide. From Longinus to Addison, natural landscapes were deemed sublime because of their overwhelming size and ethereality, which were commonly associated with the divine or sacred. Burke later theorized the sublime as provoking feelings of “awe” and “horror” while Kant claimed that mountains symbolized the “infinite”, “inaccessible” and “unknowable”. Contemporary avatars like the “stuplime” (Ngai 2005) and “haptic sublime” (McNee 2016) have more recently repositioned the sublime into an embodied and more participative relationship with non-human otherness. The memoir is a privileged genre to explore reappropriations of the sublime and related affects: the genre deploys a range of imaginative, rhetorical and narratological techniques in an inevitably human-centered approach, which allows it to dramatize the senses of excess, overwhelm, and disorientation (Purdy 2015, 421) as components of human life whereas they typically characterize the classical sublime’s transcendent realms and the Anthropocene. This paper examines three sublime sites as they figure in three memoirs: mountains in Jon Krakauer’s Into Thin Air (1997), Alaska in Ernestine Hayes’s Blonde Indian (2006), and the farm in Kristin Kimball’s The Dirty Life (2010). In different but related ways, these memoirs help us to assess the affordances and limits of using recent notions of the sublime to represent so-called “wilderness” landscapes as well as Anthropocene entanglements.
Eve Nabulya | Explorations in Ecocriticism and Rhetoric

Many recent studies, have called attention to the activist facet of eco-literature, yet the persuasive motive which pervades the respective literary works in those studies, and is manifest in their form, remains under theorized. This paper, therefore, reflects on the prioritization of message over style and some subsequent theoretical implications. Drawing on an oral story told by the Luhya of Kenya, the paper demonstrates how a rhetorical criticism can bring the eco-activist potential of a story to the fore. At the same time, the Luhya story reveals stylistic strategies, not uncommon in environmentally committed literature, that might destabilize the divide between literary and non-literary texts. The paper argues that the activist value of the story can be effectively appreciated through Kenneth Burke’s notion of ‘persuasion to attitude,’ under a rhetorically informed literary criticism. The paper also draws attention to Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of artistic answerability and literary dialogism as an anchor for a literary rhetorical approach to the reading of eco-literature.

Martin Schauss | The Problem with New Materialisms and “Anthropocene” Literature

This paper poses two entangled questions: Why have so many studies of literature and the environment turned to new materialism and object-oriented theory to frame their inquiries? And why at the same time has the notion of “Anthropocene” been so readily adopted to categorise climate literature? The marriage of these trends should strike us as counter-intuitive: as theories of matter and objects seek to dislodge the human from the centre of agency, arguing for human-nonhuman hybridity and inter-object relationality, “Anthropocene” puts the limelight squarely back on “the Human.” The metaphorical, prosopopoeic language used by new materialist and object-oriented philosophers arguably indicates a theoretical unease, but it also registers the contradiction implied above: these philosophies may wish to “decenter the human, but as a language [they expand] the human into all relations” (Cole 2015). This paper proposes that the problematic double-recourse to new materialism and the notion of “Anthropocene” is less a contradiction than the corollary of a certain reading method: it reflects the temptation to view literary production and the poetic imagination as a deep, speculative object, a (human) language projected into the future. Furthermore, the paper argues that both object-oriented and “Anthropocene” thinking are grounded in universalist and “objective” ideologies that conceal the historical, uneven ways that tie the climate emergency to the colonial, racial and gendered structures of the capitalist world-system. The paper suggests, finally, that the study of literary production and the poetic imagination is in fact exceptionally well-placed to highlight the theoretical problems outlined above.

Jason Young | Lithopoiesis: Memory, Persistence and Deep Time

Our current time is one of apocalypse. Perhaps not terms of an ending, but rather in a sense that alludes to the word’s original meaning as apokalyptein – an uncovering, disclosure or revealing. What the environmental crisis is revealing in particular is the obstinacy of earthly process that while capable of creating and destroying life, does not privilege any of its particular manifestations. This ongoing emergence/y challenges anthropocentric assumptions of “environment” as the static backdrop for human affairs and has thus been characterized by Stengers as the intrusion-of-Gaia. To name Gaia in this way is to identify a new possibility for thinking-with planetary processes, a task that requires learning to compose with the voices of many knowledges, and earthly practices. This essay responds to this invitation by speculatively considering elemental earth not in terms of the composition of natural objects, but as the from which of their manifestation. When earth is rendered as stone/mineral in particular, we may understand this form of worlding in terms of its persistence and creatively interpret this persistence as a kind of earthly memory. Gaia we might say, re-members through an enduring corporeality that enables particular materio-semiotic patternings including headstones, cave paintings, and the imprints of previous extinction events. Through what Cohen refers to as “time’s most tangible conveyor”, stone/mineral can thus be understood as conveying meaning
across temporal spans in ways that air, fire and water are not similarly capable. As an act of creative lithopoiesis, this essay seeks to look beyond what elemental earth “is” towards what it does/enables and to thereby provide novel opportunities for “reading” earth.

**Apocalyptic Fictions**

**Barbara Mossberg | Pigeons on the Grass, Alas: A Theory of Literature’s Deep Structure of Eco Guilt from 2700 BCE-Present**

“It’s the truth even if it didn’t happen”—Ken Kesey In which we probe fiction for evidence of its greenery and its orange cones and yellow tape of eco crime scene. In terms of “history of the crisis of now,” as the ASLE Conference Team brilliantly sets out this year’s themes, this paper presents a sense of doomed consciousness of earthly destruction beginning in our earliest recorded stories and texts: later-day science fiction is revealed as grounded in reality. For this conference theme of earth’s 911 call, I draw a historical framework to emphasize the degree to which literary writers are literalists whose prescient consciences on how we treat earth are expressed from earliest times to our present day. Chanted around fires as origin stories, etched in cuneiform, scripted in Latin, typed in vernacular texts, the sense of what-have-we-done-to-earth evolves into the Anthropocenic what-are-we-doing-to-ourselves? Taking a note from another realist, Einstein, if e=mc2, we realize we really can’t separate the fate of earth and ourselves. Science says. And literature. For our purposes, like Shakespeare’s plays in 45 minutes, putting the Western canon into our green sleuth sights in 20 minutes, we can see a blur of mythology, Gilgamesh, and the Bible, Shakespeare, Robert Burns and William Blake, eco classics of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge, the American litany of James Fennimore Cooper, Herman Melville, Nathanael Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Helen Hunt Jackson, Chief Joseph, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Edgar Allen Poe, and Walt Whitman, the burgeoning so-called science fiction (including Walter M. Miller’s Canticle for Liebowitz), Douglas Adams’s witty eco grief, Roger Zelany’s clever tragedy, through the present day’s Wendell Berry, W.S. Merwin, Scott Sanders, Barbara Kingsolver, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, and other ASLE Exemplars.

**Phillip Polefrone | 2040, 2140: Reference Years, Environmental Policy, and Climate Metafiction**

By what year will climate change have “arrived”? By what year will it be too late? When climate scientists invoke reference years like 2040, they engage in an act of rhetorical speculative fiction, with genre (utopic or dystopic), tone (galvanizing or despairing), and character (activist protagonist or corporate antagonist) determined by the choice of year and the context. When authors of speculative fiction choose a temporal setting, they make a parallel series of choices. Is the story “grounded” or set in a distant future? What does this temporal setting imply about action in the year of publication? How should real-world environmental policy and activism be addressed, if at all? I will consider reference years as acts of speculative narration in environmental policy by examining works of AF that expose the heuristic instability and rhetorical impact of reference years in the context of climate change, using primarily the 2018 IPCC report, the Hetch Hetchy debates of 1913, and Kim Stanley Robinson’s New York 2140. I will argue that New York 2140 uses techniques of historiographic metafiction to expose everyday acts of narrative-making in climate change discourse and discussions of time. The novel’s own titular reference year comments on acts of temporal speculation that such reference years entail, deriving from the work of climate researcher James Hanson. Is the choice of a temporal setting the same comparable to choosing a reference year in environmental policy? How does this temporal setting imply about action in the year of publication? How should real-world environmental policy and activism be addressed, if at all? I will consider reference years as acts of speculative narration in environmental policy by examining works of AF that expose the heuristic instability and rhetorical impact of reference years in the context of climate change, using primarily the 2018 IPCC report, the Hetch Hetchy debates of 1913, and Kim Stanley Robinson’s New York 2140. I will argue that New York 2140 uses techniques of historiographic metafiction to expose everyday acts of narrative-making in climate change discourse and discussions of time. The novel’s own titular reference year comments on acts of temporal speculation that such reference years entail, deriving from the work of climate researcher James Hanson. Is the choice of a temporal setting the same comparable to choosing a reference year in environmental policy? How does this temporal setting imply about action in the year of publication? How should real-world environmental policy and activism be addressed, if at all?
Largely in response to ongoing waves of eco-catastrophe, the contemporary era has produced an astonishing number of apocalyptic imaginings. While the professed purpose of many such works is to offer a transformative warning about the consequences of current cultural-environmental conditions, such texts often instead implicitly frame humanity as incapable of altering such deadly paradigms; as being, in other words, already inevitably lost. An emerging branch of speculative fictions I categorize as forming the lively catastrophe genre, however, have in their playing with more traditional forms of apocalyptic thinking produced a branch of imagination that eschews conventional narrations on the “nature” of humankind in favor of an actively unbounded, and thus actively consequential, framework. Like other texts on looming eco-apocalypses, these fictions operate with explicit recognition of the pain, violence, and loss that have already defined landscapes both on and off the page. Their narratives, however, also grant their protagonists a sometimes-surprising amount of autonomy and possibility in their deliberate creations of human—more than human—relationships. The futures they narrate are not final, but instead position the Anthropos in Anthropocene as not an inevitably destructive component, but one capable of intentionally behaving with a moral center understood as an imperative element for survival. Drawing on the violent, tender, and necessary human/creature/transhuman fictional relationships in literary creations such as Marlen Haushofer’s The Wall and Hayao Miyazaki’s Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind—as well as works on thing theory, ecocriticism, and apocalypse’s self-fulfilling narratives like Rebekah Sheldon’s The Child to Come—this paper aims to analyze fictions focused not on what the final catastrophe will be, but on how we (and this we includes a plethora of creaturely life) might actively choose the intentional, compassionate wielding of power necessary to encourage the potentialities required for a survivable, even flourishing, world.

**Forests of Change in Africa and Appalachia**

Valentina Acquafredda | Farmers and natural resources in Ethiopian green plans

In recent years Ethiopia has implemented environmental policies and launched campaigns, aimed at facing climate change’s effects, in particular at protecting and increasing the forest cover. Starting from the analysis of Climate Resilience Green Economy plan (CRGE) and GreenLegacy campaign, the paper intends to highlight how the environmental sustainability of farmers’ activities and the natural resources conservation have lost centrality and rather, are subordinate and functional to other goals: economic growth and political message. Agriculture is Ethiopian GDP first sector and employs about 65% of the workforce, but there is no mention of taking charge and defending farmers’ environmental rights per se in CRGE plan. Indeed, in CRGE plan, green efforts are by no means placed in an ecocentric perspective but designed to build a green economy. Its pages are filled with the rhetoric that farmers must be converted to resilience, as they are wary and reluctant not to obtain an easy and immediate gain. Even in the case of the GreenLegacy campaign geared towards regreening Ethiopia with the motto “Let’s Adorn”, nature remains in the background, being primarily a celebration of PM Abiy’s political plan for Ethiopia’s renaissance. The campaign pushes for the country reforestation, a theme that has international appeal, but overshadows the need for structural transformation of agriculture and peasant livelihoods, seen instead as complementary to forests in the CRGE plan. Thus, natural resources and farmers paradoxically end up alienated from institutional environmental discourse and practices.

Leila Braun | Ann Pancake’s Appalachia, Literary Regionalism, and the Extra(ctic) Ordinary

The past five years have seen a slate of critics, including Amitav Ghosh, Timothy Clark, and Adam Trexler, advance a sense of skepticism regarding realism’s ability to represent environmental disaster. These skeptics condemn realism’s reliance on individualism and predictability, arguing that such generic constraints cannot adequately engage the deep temporalities and material assemblages of the Anthropocene. This paper, which
takes such skepticism as a point of departure, argues for the necessity of identifying particular and historically grounded strands of realism instead of glossing the genre writ large. In order to do so, I engage the legacy of “local color” regionalism so as to suggest its capaciousness as an Anthropocene realism. While regionalism is typically associated with episodic structures, intensely local plots, and temporal stasis—all features that seemingly make it unsuited to engage a contemporary moment of planetary crisis—I suggest that these very features in fact distinguish its capacity to engage with a multitemporal model of environmental harm. My case study is Ann Pancake’s 2007 novel Strange as this Weather Has Been. Pancake’s novel, which implicitly engages the historically close relationship between Appalachia and literary regionalism, is set among strip mines and mountaintop removal sites in West Virginia. As it engages such cataclysmic events as the 1972 Buffalo Creek Flood in addition to subtler temporalities of anticipation, attrition, and residue, Pancake’s novel recognizes extraction as a form of environmental violence that shuttles between the catastrophic and the ordinary to forcefully reveal the imbrication of these two modes. The extra(CTive) ordinary, then, demonstrates that regionalism’s close attention to the everyday introduces a literary multitemporality and gestures to the surprising vitality of Anthropocene realism.

Bob Craven | The Greater Appalachian Forest: Logging as Extraction

In the time since European settler colonists began to occupy Appalachia in the eighteenth century, the region’s ancient hardwood forest has been reduced by about ninety-five percent. The mountain region, once thickly wooded with oak, pine, and chestnut, was denuded of its old-growth timber in a compressed period between the 1880s and the Depression. This talk defamiliarizes a familiar American landscape. I suggest that in the broad scale, the denuding of the Appalachian highlands was a seminal event in the history of American extractivism. As such it historically preceded, as an infliction of profound cultural and biological loss, today’s ongoing destruction of the Amazonian rainforest. And yet this loss is rarely acknowledged or appreciated for what it is: a world-historic event. As ancient hardwoods crashed down, modernity was fashioned. The path of Pennsylvanian trees as they were converted in the 1920s into roller coasters, gives us one viewpoint on that process.

Extracting Elements

Lisa Han | Perilous Plumes: Mediations of Turbulence and Environmental Risk

Over the past fifty years, speculations about the emergence of a global deep sea mining gold rush have fueled international regulatory frameworks, scientific research, and environmental activism around deep ocean environments, the most unknown region of Earth. As mining technologies approach viability, anticipated waste and sediment plumes have become the privileged object of anxiety for understanding the environmental impacts of this new industry. Specifically, scientists have been sounding the alarm about the likely catastrophic impacts of mining plumes to a range of midwater filter feeders that help to regulate nutrients and carbon in the global ocean. Our ability to model plume behaviors and represent their impacts on the water column and deep seabed dictates economic and political investments in deep sea mining, as well as poses existential questions about fate of our oceans as a whole and the role of extractive capitalism in fueling climate change and extinction. Mobilizing an environmental and elemental media studies perspective, this presentation will examine efforts to visualize, model, and predict the behavior of underwater plumes. Taking into account the politics of visibility around buoyant fluids and aerosols, I consider how the figure of the plume uniquely dictates our imaginaries of terms like disruption, turbulence, and catastrophe. This requires looking back at efforts to track the plumes created by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as well as recent in-situ experiments around sediment plumes. Ultimately, I contend that plumes mediate our imaginaries of environmental risk across temporal and spatial scales, feeding into a broader biopolitics of extraction and planetary disorder.
Artistic Expressions of the Elemental

Yi-Chen Lay | Remembering the Tohoku Earthquake: Visual Art, Narrative, and Anthropocenic Crisis in “Behind the Waves”

On March 11th, 2011, the Tohoku Earthquake struck northeastern Japan, not only causing widespread destruction, but also triggering a tsunami that travelled up to ten kilometers inland and a nuclear meltdown often compared to Chernobyl. The disaster was produced by an unprecedented combination of natural and human factors, testifying to the violence that could emerge from human-nonhuman cohabitation in the Anthropocene. This paper is interested in how the anthropocenic implications of the Tohoku disaster are represented in art—more specifically, visual art. In the past ten years, countless works of photography and video art have been made on the disaster, and iconic images of towering waves and demolished towns continue to live in public memory. Amitav Ghosh has discussed how literature should adapt to the Anthropocene in The Great Derangement; what about visual art? How could the creative forms and multisensory engagement afforded by visual media be harnessed to not only narrate the epoch’s violence, but also find solutions, facilitate healing of the land and the people? To answer these questions, this paper looks at “Behind the Waves,” a multicomponent visual art project on the Tohoku disaster by video artist Jawshing Arthur Liou. In the spring of 2014, Liou spent a month walking in the Tohoku region, and later created a cluster of interrelated works—nearly a hundred hours of video documenting the walk; “Horizon,” a video art piece consisting of footage filmed by thirty-five local participants; and a photobook titled Behind the Waves. By examining how the project experiments with different visual forms, how its components function on their own and work with one another, and what narrative it ultimately produces, this paper aims to articulate visual art’s representational and reparative potentials, in the context of not only the Tohoku disaster and its aftermath, but also the volatile Anthropocene.

Sasha White | FIRST-AID KIT FOR THE FIRE-PRONE

FIRST-AID KIT FOR THE FIRE-PRONE is an art-centered project that explores the slippages between art, ecology and medicine within the context of Oregon’s fire-prone landscapes. In these landscapes, many plants that thrive with the recurring disturbance of fire can be used for the injuries and illnesses acquired in proximity to fire; the plants’ medicinal properties have emerged out of the long-term, multispecies dynamics that include fire. FIRST-AID KIT FOR THE FIRE-PRONE considers a broad implication of “fire-prone,” beyond spectacular devastation, as a relationship with embodiment and with flammability that encompasses (more or less willingly) whole ecosystems and whole ways of being/becoming. The Kit builds from the intimate connections between land and health emphasized within vernacular medical systems, as well as from the historical interchangeability of aesthetic and medicinal substances. It comprises a set of Object Medicines, which engage plants and earths of Oregon’s fire-prone landscapes as colors, medicines and participants, and a set of intertwining poems and protocols, which serve as Instruction Manual. While a standard first-aid kit implies the repair of a discrete, autonomous body, and the possibility of entering a landscape intact, exiting it untouched, this project centers the sympoietic processes of tending and harvesting, ingesting and propagating, relinquishing and renewing. In both the Manual and the Medicines, Tall Oregon Grape, Balsam Root, Blue Elder, Ceanothus, Clay, and other denizens of the fire-prone landscape converse with the global materialities that have, directly and indirectly, altered these landscapes: alcohol and glass, beeswax and aluminum, cotton and wool and silk. Embracing fire as medicine, medicine as aesthetic provocation, and aesthetic provocation as ecological process, FIRST-AID KIT FOR THE FIRE-PRONE asks what it means to heal through and with others, and how attending to these fire-prone, multispecies materialities might inflect differently the contemporary discourse of environmental crisis and emergency.
Jonathan Knapp | From Cutting into the Ground to Cutting on Celluloid: Cultural Techniques and the Intersection of the Human and Nonhuman in Film Location

One of the most influential recent developments in media studies has been research into cultural techniques, which emphasize the ways in which humans are always embedded within technological chains of operations, an idea that connects it to posthumanism and to Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, as Geoffrey Winthrop-Young has pointed out. Cultural techniques overlap with posthumanism insofar as both always define the human in relation to the technological. What this equation leaves out is the natural elements that make the human and the technological possible. Cornelia Vissman has located the roots of cultural techniques in agriculture, and specifically in the act of a plow drawing a line in a field: an act of violence that fundamentally transforms a place. This line cut into the earth defines the human subject (as a farmer), just as it defines the field as property. But to cultivate this piece of property, the farmer must work with nature: they must account for, and adapt to, climate and topography. This paper uses Vissman’s insight as a departure point, looking at the ways that various land use practices (from farming to land surveying) are always, to borrow a phrase from John Durham Peters, rooted in “practices of know-how, handicraft, and corporeal knowledge that interact with bodies or instruments” (90). The paper extends this discussion to filmmaking practices by looking at the concept of film “location,” the site where aesthetic practices meet land use techniques. Location scouts work to identify spaces that can be controlled, transformed into malleable images. The work of location scouting and location management can be understood as an attempt to minimize and adapt to environmental contingency. Thus, a film’s “location” is a sort of hybrid landscape, a site where the human and nonhuman interact and intertwine.

Emergent Environments Abstracts

Emergent Ecologies and Urban Futures in the Global South

Sritama Chatterjee | Monsoon Forms in Mumbai

In this presentation, I focus on Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha’s book Soak: Mumbai in an Estuary consisting of detailed commentary and artefacts such as design plans, handmade drawings, photographs and paintings, that was published in conjunction with the exhibition in 2009 to argue for a shift from the vocabulary of ‘urban flooding’ around the Monsoons to talking about specific ways in which the Monsoon can be accommodated within the architecture and design of Mumbai to envision sustainable cities of the future.

Vaibhav Dutt | Urban Governance as Participatory Dialogue: The Case of India’s 74th Constitution Amendment Act

In order to build sustainable cities for the future, it is critical to examine the relationship between citizens and urban governments. A robust association between increased participation in governance processes and improved sustainability outcomes has been previously established (Lyons 2001; Mitlin 1997; Gaye 1997; McArthur 1995). Of particular importance is the accessibility of public institutions. While governments have been shifting to a greater regulatory role with regards basic services, they continue to administer a model of providing ‘public utilities as a corporatized service’. Herein, certain private or public institutions are viewed as service providers and managers of resources while citizens are considered consumers and customers with demands. Any emergent challenges are framed as discrete events causing an interruption in regular service delivery. In such a framing, law is relegated to a mere tool for overseeing this contractual relationship,
inhibiting any proactive planning towards urban sustainability. By using law as a process for priority setting and decision-making, we argue for a shift in this relationship – from a service-delivery perspective to that of ‘governance as participatory dialogue’, in which there is constructive and critical engagement between all actors. Institutionalising such a relationship is crucial to ensure an everyday practice of sustainability. We illustrate our alternative framing in light of the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India, which brings in formal participatory planning to Indian cities. We consider the case of access to water and solid waste management in Bangalore, India, and explore how citizens, as active participants, can impact the use of natural resources and can help collaboratively imagine diverse scenarios for urban sustainability.

**Sumera Saleem | City as the Barometer of Crisis and Imagining the Future**

This paper reads City of Sin and Splendor: Writings on Lahore (2005) and argues that Lahore acts not just as a barometer of crisis but also as a material symbol of an advanced future. Edited by Bapsi Sidhwa and hailed for having offered a poignant historical account of Lahore by Anglophone Pakistani writers, the memoir configures the ideas of development and crisis in relation to Lahore in a manner that involves shedding the past and layering the present through the vision of the future. Relying on Moir’s concept of “sustainability” as a theoretical prism and Beswick’s speculation of the postcolonial city as the spatial topography of alternative modernities, this essay argues how the account of Lahore in Sidhwa’s City of Sin and Splendor underscores the city as the ecology of development and responsiveness to crisis, both of which are respectively built around the imagining of future.

**Mahasweta MD | The Urban Ecogothic in Deepa Anappara’s Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line**

In Deepa Anappara’s 2020 novel, Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, nine-year-old Jai and his friends navigate a smog-covered, desolate landscape of an unnamed Indian city to investigate a series of kidnappings that have taken place in his slum. Flanked by a vast garbage dump on one hand and a dazzling skyscraper on the other, Jai’s slum provides us with an example of an urban ecosystem that is undercut by the characteristic inequalities of neoliberal urban space(s) exemplifying the characteristics of what Linnie Blake calls the ‘neoliberal gothic.’ Furthermore, in the novel the anthropogenic space of the slum and its neighbouring areas is a ‘novel ecosystem’ marked by the ubiquity of animals such as dogs, rats and bandicoots feeding on the accumulating mounds of urban waste. The organic and the inorganic merge in the sensory excess characterising the experience of the slum, giving rise to continuums which unsettle the segregations of the neoliberal cityscape. This ‘entanglement’ is ambivalent at best. The dynamic, shifting ecosystem of the slum manifests itself as a malicious djinn which lurks behind the smog and makes children disappear, both symbolically and literally. As such, this paper explores the insistence of the ecoGothic in the emerging ecologies of an unnamed but representative Indian city. It also explores conditions of precarity and the implications of what Donna Haraway calls, ‘staying with the trouble.’

**Surojit Kayal | Metabolic City: Ecology, Infrastructure and Emergence in the East Kolkata Wetlands**

This paper tells the story of the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW) as an ecological and infrastructural emergence in the shadow of a colonial and Anthropocene city. The EKW is a massive 12,500 hectare wetland area located at the fringes of the Indian metro city, Kolkata. The wetlands receive the majority of the wastewater from the city and treat it in a bioecological process thus obviating the need for an expensive energy intensive wastewater treatment plant. The farmers of the wetlands use their traditional knowledge to treat the wastewater through the bheri (fishponds) system. The bheris produce fish and the adjacent lands are used to grow vegetables. Due to its close proximity, the produce is easily transported to the city, sometimes on bicycles, without the need of any major transport infrastructure. This circular flow of waste turning into food and returning back to the city almost from within keeps food prices low in Kolkata thus making it “an
ecologically subsidized city” (Ghosh 2005). In this paper I read the EKW as an example of “smart ecology” which is characterized by multispecies world making. I trace its emergence from its colonial history and geography as a form of “patchy Anthropocene” (Tsing 2015). In course of this historiography, I develop the heuristic of metabolic infrastructure as a way to critically read metabolic practices of global cities. Metabolism, I argue, gives us a novel analytic to radically reimagine the future city by breaking down existing binaries such as organism/environment, food/waste, inside/outside, city/country, and ecology/technology.

Plants and People, Together in Precarity I

John Yargo | Fugitive Mothers, Cervantes, and Dendroidal Refuge

This essay takes up “eco-fugitivity” as a potentially emancipatory practice for Feliciana in Cervantes’s The Travails of Persiles and Sigismunda (1617). I argue that the characters’ fugitive conditions offer an alternative to a place-based environmentalism, which is concerned with both nature-preservation and filial piety. Against that meaning, Feliciana, an unmarried mother, is a fugitive from her socially repressive village and aided by itinerant shepherds. As Cervantes has it, Feliciana’s tree-dwelling allows the audience of shepherds to imagine the utopian reconstitution of contemporary Spanish society. The shepherd spreads animal skins on the inside of “hollow of a live oak” and hides the fugitive in the safety of the tree. Tree-dwelling offers a retreat from the constraints of an oppressive future or an (also) oppressive past. Though life in the tree circumscribes physical liberty, it extends a narrow, but important, liberty to this character—a personhood that might speak and understand trauma privately. Through this trope of “eco-fugitivity,” I argue that the restrictive dimension of tree-dwelling remains suspended in dialectical tension with its more emancipatory affordances.

Sophia C. Jochem | Scarlet Runner Beans and Insurgent Citizenship in Charles Dickens’s London

Especially since Woloch’s The One Vs the Many, the many working- and lower-middle-class people characterising Dickens’s London tend to be read as grotesque personifications of their dispossession and exploitation by a ruling capitalist class. This focus problematically obscures forms of proletarian resistance in Dickens. My paper examines guerilla gardening practices as one such form of resistance to the precarious conditions capitalism had created with an urban proletariat in mostly rented accommodation. It follows a favourite of Dickens’s urban gardeners, the scarlet runner bean, from Mr Mould’s windowsill in the ward of Cheap in Chuzzlewit, via a Camden slum in Dombey, to Tartar’s Holborn hanging garden in Drood. I argue that the way in which its copious tendrils—bearing highly ornamental flowers and fruit—forge new social bonds and claim undeveloped and underused city spaces is emblematic of what Jeffrey et al. term ‘commoning’: the active participation in the ‘production of the city as a lived reality.’ Bringing the plant’s habit in conversation with Dickens’s vision of its social use, my paper highlights the role plants played and can play in envisaging peaceful proletarian disobedience within the context of urban density.

Rebecca Olsen | Plants as Family in Victorian Houseplant Gardening

Nineteenth-century gardening author Elizabeth Kent writes in Flora Domestica, or The Portable Flower-Garden that “like a fond and mistaken mother” she has “destroyed” houseplants, casting her plants as her children, herself as their mother, and her fellow gardeners as “nurses” caring for their “vegetable nurslings.” She narrates familial closeness between humans and plants, locating the plants in question as members of their gardener’s household. Yet she also “destroys” these plant children with little remorse or consequences. Gardening texts fictionalized human-plant relationships, in what Elizabeth Chang describes as the “radical fictionalizations” of Victorian amateur garden writers who created lives and personas for their plants. Gardening texts authored by women, however, create a much more radical reimagining of family structure. In their gardening instructions, they might think of the plants in their homes as family members or companions,
or might describe a garden where “mothers” of plants have complete power over their “children” and face few consequences for neglect or abandonment. In this paper, I explore how irrespective of their own family situations, women garden authors reimagine relationships through their houseplants, navigating and negotiating the roles of family member, caregiver, and mother, forging bonds with plants to subvert gendered domestic identities and create new plant-human hybrid families.

Alicia Carroll | Gentians Between the Wars: Plant and Human Precarity in Maud Grieve’s A Modern Herbal and D.H. Lawrence’s “Bavarian Gentians”

In 1931, two crises, the ongoing British agricultural depression (1870-1939) and the tuberculosis epidemic of the early twentieth century, prompted texts charting human and plant precarity: Maud Grieve’s A Modern Herbal and D.H. Lawrence’s “Bavarian Gentians” (1931). Both works find that crisis lends a new potency to common plants such as gentians in modernity. While Grieve’s text remains an immense boon to humanity, reclaiming the medicinal power of plants like the gentian for modernity, Lawrence’s poem accelerates the temporal transformation of alpine gentians, smoke-blue guests in his German sickroom, into carbon. Famously, his gentians becomes a “torch,” guiding his exploration of the underworld and his own coming transformation to carbon as he nears the final stages of death by TB. As human and more-than-human crises coalesce in these works, their meetings reveal that human precarity, biodiversity loss, and climate change are entangled cultural processes, intimately involved with our aesthetic and utilitarian extraction of the lives and after-lives of plants, who are our vibrant companions, agentic beings in their own right. Grounding these works in an ironically tangled “modern” botanical world in which plants are paradoxically a “source and sink of carbon,” I seek to engage and challenge our readings of plants’ lives (Grieve; Ryan 67). Their complex and sensuous materiality, often reduced to instruments in human representations may “counter balance the immense scale of climate change,” challenging anthropocentricism, binary thinking, and heteronormative environmentalisms we have found to be particularly harmful during our own recent Covid crisis (Ryan 67).

Plants and People, Together in Precarity II

Mia Alafiareet | Black Planters/Black Panthers: Plants and Precarity in Contemporary Black Wellness Culture

In February of 2021, the founders of Plant and People—a Black-owned plant shop and wellness center—posed for a promotional photograph. Dressed in leather jackets and Black berets, the shop’s mother-daughter team nestled themselves within an arrangement of houseplants and clenched their right hands into Black Power fists, drawing explicit connections between contemporary Black planters and the Black Panthers of the twentieth century. The photograph, which would reverberate across Black Plantstagram in a series of re-posts, encapsulates a growing attention to botanicals in contemporary movements for Black Lives. Contextualizing Plant and People’s photograph as part of this emerging botanical iconography of Black Life surfacing across social justice art, literature, and social media, this paper explores the legacy of the Black Panthers in botanical framings of Black health and wellness, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Using Alondra Nelson’s history of the Black Panthers’ health activism in Body and Soul as a critical framework, I ultimately argue that contemporary conflations of Black planters with Black Panthers modernize the Black Panther Party’s conception of “social health” to combat the precarities of a pandemic whose racism is intimately bound up with ecological crisis.

Lyn Baldwin | An Unquiet Botany

This illustrated, creative essay will explore how the unquiet botany of a pandemic garden cultivates care. I’ve long been wary of my garden. Unruly and small, it is, like many in North America, rooted in contested soil. It is, like many in British Columbia, inhabited by species selected more by the Columbian Exchange than by soil or
climate. For more than a decade I tilled its soil, yet my attention as a botanist rarely lingered. That is, until first the native bees and then a novel virus arrived. Monitoring native bees, I found myself schooled in others’ desire. Yet, even as I replanted my garden, I neglected its totality, never listing its complete flora. Only when my garden became my only botany, was I forced to consider what it might teach me. In retrospect, I was right to be wary. Nothing in an Anthropocene garden is simple. My garden is both caring and complicit. But within its small rectangle, each act of intimacy—human thumb to leaf, bee abdomen to pollen, fungal hyphae to plant epidermis—envelopes me in a vegetal crucible of change. How many ways, I wonder, as I start a new list, could my garden cultivate care?

Kathleen Burns | Cultivating Breath, Creating Shelter in the Pandemic Garden

Pandemic gardening has emerged in the American public imagination as a mode of “sheltering in place”: a return to the soil in a bid to ease, and perhaps escape, a historical moment marked by the struggle to breathe against the twinned pandemics of COVID and racial injustice. Yet as Jamaica Kincaid evinces in My Garden (Book), equating gardening with escapism erases its relationship to legacies of the plantation and settler colonialism, genealogies of domestication that divested breath from Black laborers and subjugated peoples by instrumentalizing plants. Drawing upon recent Black studies scholarship that interrogates plantation afterlives, I show how contemporary Black visual artists including Cauleen Smith, Kehinde Wiley, and Kadir Nelson (re)turn to the garden through what I term the “cultivation of breath”—a commemorative praxis of gardening that bears witness to and yet resists the material legacies of plantation-based violence. Extending Nathaniel Mackey’s and M. NourbeSe Philip’s articulation of circular breathing, the cultivation of breath draws attention to racialized precarity even as the act of breathing situates the body within the shared inhalations and exhalations of a larger environmental community.

Kiley Kost | House/Plant: At Home in Juliana Kálnay’s Eine kurze Chronik des allmählichen Verschwindens (A Short Chronicle of Gradual Disappearance)

In her 2017 debut novel Eine kurze Chronik des allmählichen Verschwindens (A Short Chronicle of Gradual Disappearance), German author Juliana Kálnay depicts several surreal occurrences within an apartment building. In one unit, an entire family disappears. In another, a man transforms into a tree, enticing his wife with a green thumb who places him in the sun on the balcony. A young homeless man quietly moves into the elevator, adding a rubber plant and lounge chair to the small space. As each chapter moves throughout the building, from the second-floor apartment on the left, to the stairwell, and the basement apartment, the reader is invited to eavesdrop on personal stories. Indeed, some narratives are told through snippets of dialogue, as if overheard from behind a wall. Sharing a space with people, plants, and stories, the novel is a commentary on the concept of the home. In this paper, I ask what it means to live and grow together, considering the entanglements between the occupants of a place and the space they inhabit. Following the shelter-in-place orders of the COVID-19 pandemic, the book becomes a poignant narrative of being together, illuminating several precarious domestic situations for humans and nonhumans alike.

Apocalyptic Mixology: The Queer, Weird, and Downright Moist

Fernando Varela | Extraterrestrial Intimacy and Social Injustice in Amat Escalante’s La región salvaje (2016)

Amat Escalante’s film La región salvaje (2016) centers on the arrival of an extraterrestrial lifeform with tentacles that both sexually pleases and violently kills a number of residents in a small rural town in Mexico. The main character who intimately engages with this creature is a woman in a sexually frustrated marriage, with a husband who is publicly homophobic but who secretly has sexual intercourse with her brother. Escalante’s film provides a thought-provoking depiction of extraterrestrial intimacy while also shedding light
on unaddressed social problems including homophobia, misogyny, hypocrisy, and sexual assault. This presentation discusses La región salvaje’s take on the urgency of addressing social injustice and the urgency of redefining what it means to be human at an interplanetary scale.

Nicholas Reich | Les garçons sauvages: An Inter(s)extual Ecology of the Wet and Wild

Bertrand Mandico’s Les garçons sauvages (2017) does more than lambast plants as eco-horror hormone monsters (e.g., “They’re turning the frogs gay!”). With wildly citational humor and revolting seriousness, this film interrogates the use-value of binaric gender in catastrophe mitigation, posing questions environmental humanists might read as: Can the Gynocene really save us from the Anthropocene? Will the white Human survive a gender apocalypse? Mandico’s inter(s)extual mise-en-scène cultivates a complex ecology of texts through formal and diegetic gestures while scrutinizing that textual network’s claims on images of ‘natural’ ecology. This intertextual synthesis likewise reveals certain cinematic conceptions of racialized gender as a particularly ecological idea and already deeply citational.

Darin Graber | “William Burroughs’s The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead as Neo-Victorian Ecoliterature (the Violent Kind)”

Though often unrecognized, William Burroughs’ The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead constitutes a rewriting of the Victorian serial, The Wild Boys of London, which ran from 1864-1866 before a banning under the Obscene Publication Act. As my recent ISLE article shows, the original Wild Boys implicate both human and environmental impacts of London’s industrial drainage via watershed pollution and the city’s classist, patriarchal governance. Simultaneously, the Boys’ movement through London’s infrastructure imitates cholera’s incidence there, exposing the failure of this governance by mirroring a contemporary cholera outbreak that killed thousands in poor and wealthy districts alike. Recognizing Burroughs’s source material adds insight to reading his Wild Boys as an ecoliterary text, as he exploits The Wild Boys of London’s most compelling aspects for contemporary readers. Burroughs’ Wild Boys retains, rather than instills, violence both as an aggressive act that brings pleasure and as a defensive act required for surviving environmental and disciplinary violence. By surviving via their collective, anarchic social system in the dumping grounds of the “first-world,” the Boys’ lives constitute resistance to an industrial-capital-consumerist paradigm, making Burroughs’ Boys enemies of the CIA and American Cold War culture, where the original Boys served as enemies to the Metropolitan Police and the upper class. Burroughs also retains a fear of the Boys as a moral and physical “contagion,” while heightening the original Boys’ recovery-based survival in a militant way that presages Will Stockton’s “Beige Ecocriticism”—including their fashioning of weapons directly from discarded trash and the smearing the deadliest Wild Boy warriors in “rectal mucus,” as if they emerge from their Victorian predecessors’ feces-filled sewer. In total, the history shared by the novels offers an enduring narrative of combined environmental, social, and political resistance that pushes us to consider what more aggressive resistance to ecocide might look like.

Extinction in American Literature, Art, and Culture

Sarah E. McFarland | Inhabiting Extinction in American Climate Fiction

As Rebecca Solnit observes, it is the responsibility of writers to “go into the dark with their eyes open.” This presentation uncovers what climate fiction’s novelistic structures often hide from readers, refusing to go into the darkness: what might it be like to go extinct? Exploring the various ways several works imagine near-future worlds of ecocollapse, this paper illustrates how the narrative experience of a human endling can provide empathetic intelligibility to the experience of millions of species facing extinction in the current climate emergency.
Nicole Merola | Close(ly) Reading Great Auk Extinction with Walton Ford

In dialogue with extinction studies scholarship and debates in literary studies about methods of reading, in this presentation I explore how contemporary U.S. artist Walton Ford asks viewers to engage with extinction stories via his painting "Funk Island ~ or Good Conduct Well Chastised (1791)" (1998). In this work, Ford stages the death of the island’s great auk colony, once the largest breeding colony in North America. By attending to the content of Ford’s painting and socioecological contexts of great auk exploitation and extinction, I argue that Ford employs and critiques the conventions of natural history illustration to present anthropogenic extinction as an explicitly colonialist and violent form of loss.

Timothy Sweet | Indigenous Nations’ Treaties with Animals and Latour’s ‘Parliament of Things’

The paper takes a 2019 UN-sponsored report on the global biodiversity crisis as a point of departure to compare Western theoretical programs for promoting biodiversity—including Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic,” E. O. Wilson’s “biophilia,” and Bruno Latour’s “parliament of things”—with traditional indigenous practices of treaties with animals, as formulated by Linda Hogan and Leanne Simpson and modeled in traditional stories. Primary texts will include a traditional story, retold by both Basil Johnston and John Borrows, in which the disappearance of the animals threatens the extinction of the Anishnaabe people, with brief mention of Blackfoot, Pawnee, Cherokee, and Penobscot stories. Grounds of comparison between Western and indigenous programs include the figuration of a common language among humans and nonhumans and the organization of environmental relations as political relations. While Leopold, Latour, and Hogan use governmental figures to prescribe relations between humans and nonhumans, Western and indigenous frames bear different implications regarding human and nonhuman sovereignty. The paper suggests that each is useful in its way in addressing the present extinction crisis and proposes a treaty-oriented reading of the UN biodiversity report.

Helena Feder | Fast Extinction, Slow Art

While nonhuman animals are still often figured as ahistorical creatures, or creatures whose history is “coded” biologically, many Americans now struggle to live in the present, particularly as living in the present means facing the possibility of our own accelerated extinction. In the midst of rapid technological and ecological change, the Slow Art Movement has emerged as one response to the flight from consciousness of the present. This paper considers the way in which art might help us sustain our attention and ourselves.

Emerging Pollution, Decomposition, Death

Patrycja Austin | The end is a wild beginning – fungal inflections in the 21st century novel

Fungi thrive at the time of crisis. They are masters of decomposition, assisting in the final stage of life. And yet, just as kenosis is always followed by plerosis – the end is always a new beginning, a wild, fruitful excess – there is no closure or finality to death and decomposition, all matter is transformed and gives birth to new life. A mycelium is an activity, a neverending process of growth, expansion, change and connection. Its experiential, physical existence might be seen as bearing a resemblance to what Heidegger explained about the nature of Dasein. Heidegger understands being, or Dasein as a process, not an entity or substance. In fungi, the substance of ousia is lost. Being a network, mycelium is made up of holes and empty spaces connected with forever growing and irregularly expanding passages, meeting up and forming new points of connection, or nodes, always ready to enter symbiotic alliances. In my paper, I look at the ways fungal possibilities are
explored in the novels by M.R. Carey and Jeff VanderMeer portraying moments of crisis. In my analysis, I begin with Heideggerian hermeneutics which I adapt to 21st century knowledge in botany and science.

**John Wedgwood Clarke | Terrible Beauty: A Poetry Exploration of Acid Mine Drainage**

The Red River in West Cornwall has been described as the most ‘unnatural’ and ‘modified’ river in the UK. No part of it has been left unaltered by the tin-mining industry. Once described as a Cornish ‘Pactolus’ and ‘Klondike’, immense wealth was extracted from its sediments. After the collapse of mining, the industrial area through which it runs became one of the poorest in the EU. Successive waves of environmental remediation have been made to clean up the water, but it’s still toxic and the area neglected as ugly and damaged. This creative writing presentation will use poetry written for the Red River project (www.redriverpoetry.com) to think about a site along the banks of the Red River known as the Great Wheal Seaton settlement tanks. Each tank—once used to recover tin ore lost during processing to the river by the mines up stream—has evolved into a unique micro-environment determined by water depth, light, flow rates and water acidity. Heaps of overburden leak acid mine drainage onto the site leading to copper-white and red-ochre sediments precipitating over aquatic plants, as if snow had fallen through the crystal-clear waters. Bacterial films snag on twigs; bacterial mounds rise like miniature coral reefs through water. Frogspawn seems out of place, like outsize bunches of frozen grapes. This presentation places the tanks in the context of the river’s industrial past and future, and the export of destructive mining techniques developed in the Red River valley across the globe. Within this resonant context it will dwell on metaphors for the tanks’ vibrant and strange human/more-than-human hybrid subjectivity. It will think through the aesthetic paradox that such a damaged, ugly/beautiful, poisoned site should now exhibit the greatest biodiversity of anywhere along the river.

**Haley Laningham | The Dilapidated Orchard: Theorizing Pollutions of Description**

Theorizing consumer-oriented rhetoric and litigious acts of bordering to be themselves a kind of human pollution, the author wants to reflect on the precarious life of a vast olive orchard currently between formal human uses. She has come to a previously impossible intimacy with this space by daily walks throughout the quarantine year. Neither the “ideal wilderness” nor, now, an economically productive space, the dilapidated orchards press against the borders of what the “natural” is in an already ending moment of non-identity. This multi-genre inquiry is made of: 1) interviews with its acquisition company already obtained, including a driving tour with the marketing director of the development company that owns the orchardland 2) archival work as questions emerge, most likely on indigenous relationship to this land, 3) theoretical analyses of the definition of pollution and of public literature concerning the land, and 4) interludes of poetry/memoir about her walking relationship with it. These seek to culminate in observations of legal description and marketing-centric ideological maintenance as if polluting acts themselves; they are in fact logics which, like any polluting force, contain their consequences from the beginning. Adding to this, what is possibly more insidious is how these forces abstract their role in displacement and destruction. Even a salvaging effort, which the author believes the acquisition company to imagine itself due to its “green marketing” attempts, we must keep accountable—not only with our best efforts but also with our best interdisciplinary practices. This requires theorizing and creating across disciplinary borders in order to bridge and shatter affective habits of relation not only with grandiose spaces such as natural parks, but also with those already a result of human use—such as a “wasteland” of monoculture crop trees.
Floods/Emergent Waters

Hatice Bakanlar Mutlu | Carol Donaldson’s *On the Marshes*: From a therapeutic journey to a political call

The term ‘nature writing’ might still evoke pastoral and idyllic images no matter how much it has branched off throughout history. In contemporary Britain, however, nature writing has gone far beyond rosy depictions of the non-human nature and expanded into a comprehensive genre that allows writers to offer an environmental critique by using diverse forms of writing such as memoirs and travelogues. On the Marshes: A journey into England’s waterlands (2017) by Carol Donaldson is a good example of “new nature writing” in Britain not only because of its hybrid structure that combines memoir and criticism but also because of its focus on the marshes considered as edgelands. On the Marshes is the transcription of Donaldson’s one-year journey from Gravesham to Whitstable in the wetlands along the River Thames and River Medway in the south-east of England. On the surface, this 80-mile walk in the estuary looks like Donaldson’s confrontation with who she is, what she wants to do in life and whom she wants to be with after she has lost her caravan, where she had been very happy to live, her job, which she had enjoyed doing very much, and her boyfriend, with whom she had been together for a long time. During this reconciliation walk, Donaldson brings together her observations of the place and her memories living and working on this part of the coast. As this therapeutic journey unfolds, Donaldson’s concerns about herself are gradually intermingled with her worries about the marshes and diverse lives they host, which adds a critical viewpoint to her memoir. This paper focuses on On the Marshes with the aim of discussing how a personal therapeutic journey can offer a critical perspective and urge readers to look at marshes from a new standpoint.

Rituparna Mitra | Re/Emergent Tidal Urbanisms in Pitchaya Sudbanthad’s *Bangkok Wakes to Rain*

A part of sites located around the Indian Ocean that are undergoing rapid climate-related changes, Bangkok or Krungthep has watery origins located in marshy swampland, webbed with lower deltaic systems that combine mud, humidity, silt, and salt. It is predicted to be on the frontlines of submergence due to sea level rise in the next three decades – while powerful storms, flooding, waterlogging, and other extreme pluvial events are commonplace now. Yet, projects of urbanization have been predicated on an overvaluation of land and a deliberate separation of land from water. Urban Design theorists Anuradha Mathur and Dilip Da Cunha remind us that the exigencies of colonization, modernization, overurbanization, and real estate speculation have made the river and the ocean recede from planning and design-thinking, and indeed from dominant urban practice and imaginary. In Design in the Terrain of Water, they ask us to think, instead with water and of water as a terrain of settlement. Taking their provocations as a point of departure, I would like to rethink Bangkok as a terra-aqueous urban assemblage through Pitchaya Sudbanthad’s *Bangkok Wakes to Rain* (2019). Sudbanthad’s radical novel urges us to reimagine Bangkok or Krungthep as a tidal, watery home. What city emerges when we look and remember with water? How can we harness the delta as a reading methodology for the emergent Anthropocene city? Located at the intersections of literary urban studies and ecocriticism, my paper explores tidal and webbed urbanisms to conceptualize both an Anthropocene reading methodology as well as methods of collaborative survival in the context of climate crisis in the Global South. Urban planners, designers, and architects emphasize the significance of a new way of seeing and designing these emergent landscapes that are rapidly changing. Literary spaces may perhaps accompany these epistemological and re-building drives in remaking emergent Anthropocene cities.

Rosanne van der Voet | The Sand Motor – Emerging Liminal Entanglements on the South Holland Coast

This is a presentation and reading on the Sand Motor, an experimental new measure against coastal erosion and emerging hybrid environment on the South Holland coast. Given much of the Netherlands lies below sea level, constant beach nourishment has traditionally been necessary. In an effort to work ‘with’ rather than ‘against’ nature, in 2011 an artificial peninsula of sand was created on the coast. The wind and waves are
employed to spread this sand evenly along the coastline, requiring no further human intervention for decades. In the presentation, I explore the various ecological and cultural significances of this new form of coastal management. In the context of contemporary Dutch water management, I read the Sand Motor as the embodiment of a culture of ‘watery thinking.’ This strange liminal landscape is a human-constructed, yet autonomous mass of sand, slowly winding itself around the coastline. It is a symbol of Dutch water management, as well as a time machine making fossils of different eras emerge out of the sand taken from the bottom of the North Sea. In addition, the Sandmotor is a symbol of the artificialisation of the coast, given the fact that sand suppletions disrupt life on the beach and on the seabed. However, this unique liminal landscape between land and sea also creates new ecological opportunities. Moreover, it inspires people to create sense-altering art projects specifically adapted to local conditions. Against this background, I argue that the Sand Motor provides an alternative to common environmentalist narratives of either apocalyptic collapse or utopian solution. Instead, with its endlessly diverse meanings and fluid identity, the Sand Motor opens up new ways of living that may emerge beyond the current environmental crisis. This presentation ends with a short reading of a passage that explores these various significances of the Sand Motor.

**River Emergences**

Mark B Hamilton | The Art of Eco-Poetry: Strengthening the Dynamic in Response to Environmental Crisis

Mark B. Hamilton, Poet, Eco-Editor & Activist, and Scholar of the Lewis and Clark Expedition presents “The Art of Eco-Poetry; Strengthening the Dynamic in Response to Environmental Crisis.” This talk proposes that the true value and power in Poetic Prosodies are in their strength and ability to internalize the shifting of the paradigm away from the Anthropocentric to an improved environmental perspective. Mr. Hamilton was witness to the polluted Ohio River while rowing a fifteen-foot dory down its entire length—from Pittsburgh to Cairo, a 981-mile journey. With Readings from his new eco-poetry volume, OYO, The Beautiful River, Mr. Hamilton argues that there is an urgent need to formulate and enact new and better cultural imperatives. And that these can be created through the expressed valuations experienced with our relationships with the Earth. And that the purpose of Eco-poetry is to articulate these organic relationships of body and mind, the tangible and intangible, and between a person and their environment. “If you would change the world, change yourself first,” might be the appropriate credo for this presentation that values literature as an active-learning tool for the participation in responding to global warming and climate change.

Alexander Kucich | Relating to the River: Fish, fishers and the politics of assemblage in the Cannon River

The Cannon River flows through the industrialized landscape of southern Minnesota, a product of entangled relations between human and nonhuman actors that bring politics and nature together in a single current. Following the river downstream through the City of Northfield, this paper (based on my undergraduate thesis for Carleton College) draws on the scholarship of multispecies ethnography to envision the Cannon River as a site of multispecies assemblages, focusing especially on the relations between humans, fish and the material landscape. Based on four months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I explore the ways that people and fish are shaped together by ongoing histories of settler colonialism, responding to dynamic changes in the landscape and the social relations in which they are enmeshed. I argue that the multispecies assemblages of the Cannon River are continuously reshaped according to settler colonial politics of relation to place and the multispecies “Other,” marginalizing certain human and nonhuman actors while also creating spaces for resistance within the ecosystems of southern Minnesota. By better understanding how settler colonial politics are reproduced in multispecies assemblages, we can reimagine how to engage with our natural-cultural environment in more equitable and sustainable ways, a crucial task as we look towards the perilous waters ahead.
Emergent Futures

Helga Braunbeck | Smart Cities, Server Forests, and Wild Animals: Visions and Realities in Niklas Maak’s Novel Technophoria

The idea to solve global environmental problems caused by the rise of technology by employing even more technology is tempting. Flooding the Qattara depression in North Africa with water from the Mediterranean could turn the desert’s deadly heat into a mild climate perfect for human habitation; and it would reverse global sea-level rise—or it might bring six hundred years of rain to Europe. The megalomaniacal vision of the Qattara project is framing German contemporary writer Niklas Maak’s “anti-science-fiction” novel Technophoria (2020), which narrates both the seductive appeal of technology—especially digital technology—and also its dark side, the accidents, malfunctions, and unprecedented effects on human relationships and even “wild” animals. It takes place in the here and now, as the author sends his protagonist Turek, PR officer and lobbyist for the builder of future “smart cities,” around the world to track down the most advanced androids in Tokyo, engage in greenwashing by selecting a gorilla in a Rwanda reserve for sponsorship by the company, and finally to promote a gigantic server farm being built in the Nevada desert. I analyze Maak’s novel about geoengineering and the ambiguities of the digitization of the world as a climate change novel, risk narrative, and socio-economic narrative articulating the realities and visions of humanity’s and the planet’s future. Reading it together with social scientist Shoshana Zuboff’s theory of “surveillance capitalism” contextualizes Maak’s portrayal of artificial intelligence developments and their impact on human and animal behaviors, and discusses both their utopian and dystopian aspects.

Abiodun Oluseye | ‘Ecocricism’ and the Banal Artificiality of African City Space: A Reading of Chibundu Onozie’s Welcome to Lagos

Abstract The city until recently is often perceived as the antithesis of nature. This is because of the crusted images of the city space defined by a quaint artificiality and materialities such as wood, steel and glass mega architecture. Also are the urban culture of ‘sophistication’, the hidden putridity, the blasé attitude and the crass individualism of city dwellers which contrasts sharply to the originality and the communal nature of rural dwellers and the serenity of rural enclaves. The city however, has become a major signpost of modernity and the rate at which people gravitate towards it, is ever amassing. This presages the city as a permanent feature of modernity and humanity. Much of eco – criticism projects on the city, tend to create a binary between the city and nature concentrating most of the time on the ‘unnaturalness’ of the city. This thus creates a limitation for eco – criticism from seeing the city as a unique other but as a counterpoint to nature. ‘Ecocricism’ is therefore an attempt to espouse a persuasion that focuses on seeing the city as a unique other of interaction with the environment. The term portends that urbanization should not be figured as just a linear departure from nature, rather it should be reckoned as a process through which new and complex environment is initiated and interacted with. In studying the city, ‘Ecocricism’ makes the city its focal consideration, dwelling on its ecology, artificiality and its future environmental concerns. This paper will therefore among other things explore Chibundi Onuzo’s Welcome to Lagos to demonstrate how artificiality can be a unique part of the city and how the city itself constitutes another and an ‘other’ environment. Keywords: ‘ecocricism’, ecocriticism, city, nature, modernity, landscape, environment, poems.

Conrad Scott | Post-Antropocene Futures: The Ecocritical Dystopian Posthuman in Bacigalupi’s “The People of Sand and Slag” and Lai’s The Tiger Flu

What will specific near-future places look like, and which social elements will persist? Issues like landscape alterations accompanying resource extraction and technological advancements prompt asking how humanity will adapt, and which posthuman elements will emerge. These outcomes involve fundamental changes to a sense of place, and recent speculative narratives about the future imagine the detriments involved, but also the
potentialities for more environmentally-conscious societies emerging. By engaging with Paolo Bacigalupi’s “The People of Sand and Slag” (2004) and Larissa Lai’s The Tiger Flu (2018), I will examine a recent subgeneric development that hinges on environmental changes to place. That is, since Tom Moylan and others categorized the “critical dystopia” for narratives written in the 1980-1990s, sf writing has more recently been engaging with the realism of what I term “ecocritical dystopianism” in a manner that entangles social concerns with environmental crises for both near-future, and therefore present, societies. This paper focuses on ecocritical dystopianism and the posthuman in Bacigalupi’s and Lai’s narratives, exploring how the characters in each storyworld engage with a sense of environmental place as non-human agents who prolong their lives beyond human possibility. In Bacigalupi’s text, previously-human characters have “transcended the animal kingdom” (58) while all other life is driven extinct. These near-future beings persist, horrifically expanding current resource hyper-extraction while reshaping landscapes recognizable today. Lai’s narrative also presents a dystopian world where vestiges of our current overconsumption linger in forms like acid rain storms, while different groups fight a zoonotic pandemic. Still, in one of these communities, more-than-human women attempt to live in concert with an altered environment. In both stories, posthuman characters supersede the efforts of humans to survive changed landscapes, creating their own niches that respectively work to bypass or complement the natural world—while also prioritizing the longevity of the group’s lifespan.

Emergent Plants

Catherine Bush | Invasives: Finding the Language to Narrate a Relationship to Invasive Plant Species

In this talk I will examine my relationship to a series of invasive plants in two locales in southern Ontario: the drumlin-shaped countryside of eastern Ontario and the remains of black oak savannah in High Park in Toronto, my two home habitats. I will consider invasiveness as a story of entanglement between humans and plants. I approach the invasive plant species – garlic mustard, dog-strangling vine and wild parsnip – as a form of invasive myself, child of immigrants, living within a violent history of colonial invasion. I’m interested in how we give literary representation to invasive plant species. I will consider the plants’ potential value as planetary life-forms despite their local monocultural massing as I learn to move beyond narratives of eradication to one of recognition and co-existence.

Renée Hoogland | Citizen Sensing in the Garden, and the Genre of the Emerging Event

This talk zooms in on two contemporary citizen sensing projects that take place in the garden. As gardeners from around the world turn their eyes to an ecologically compromised world, they experience their local backyard less as a passive background setting against which the pastoral unfolds and more as a complex ecological sphere that—in its animate materiality—mediates and is mediated by human relations with the environment. Citizen sensing involves the practice of taking up low-cost technology to sense one’s direct ecological surroundings. In this presentation, I understand the practice of sensing the garden, which inhabits what Lauren Berlant calls a “genre of the emerging event,” as necessarily defamiliarizing and speculative. By arguing that the discussed sensing projects are committed to a narrative of alterity, I attempt to demonstrate how the garden in an ecologically damaged world—including its plant life and soil ecology—cannot be translated into a figure of control and commensurability.

Lenka Filipova | Time, Temporalities and the Work of Worlding in Ecocriticism

The paper is concerned with the notion of ‘worlding’ in world literature and environmental temporalities. It examines two novels, Annie Proulx’s Barkskins and Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide, with respect to their depictions of place and its spatio-temporal relations. Working to unsettle notions of the ‘world’ based on concepts of centre and periphery as well as various forms of ‘world systems’, it foregrounds the novels’
representations of more-than-human forces. As creative processes, both texts are shown to create and foreground new relationships and networks between non-human and human actors, establishing connectivities whose material effects make up both the past and future vector of time. While they 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. As such, 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’.

**Emergent Disasters**

Sarah Hopkinson | Talking Trash: *Salvage the Bones* and the Space of Disaster

Hurricane Katrina strikes on the eleventh day of Jesmyn Ward's novel *Salvage the Bones* (2012) and yet Ward titles the novel's tenth chapter—and the narrative's tenth day—“In the Endless Eye,” rearranging the storm’s logic so the “eye” arrives before the storm itself. The Batiste family, the poor, Black protagonists of Ward’s tale, have passed through the eye and emerged into disaster's wake before the hurricane even makes landfall. Drawing from feminist geographer Doreen Massey, as well as the writings of contemporary Black scholars on plantation geographies, I look to the disastrous landscapes of Ward’s novel to re-think the disaster as a persistently inhabited space rather than as a singular and temporal event. The salvaged detritus and excavated ground which defines Ward’s novel make visible and material past acts of white supremacist violence normally hidden by time, framing Katrina as merely a disastrous ebb in the wake of plantation history. Moving beyond the oppressive discourse of the spectacular disaster narrative, *Salvage the Bones* attends to the alternate possibilities for intimacies, relations and futures that disastrous geographies might afford, refusing to define disaster only as the space of Black death. Inside the non-normative spaces of disaster, Ward’s protagonists salvage alternative kinship networks from the detritus of racial capitalism, relations which involve both human and non-human, animate and inanimate, recovering not just survival but livelihoods inside seemingly unliveable realities.

Daria Kozhanova | "Looking for Life in This Ruin": A Tsingian Reading of Chiara Mezzalama's *Dopo la pioggia*

In this presentation paper, I will analyze Chiara Mezzalama’s novel *Dopo la pioggia* (After the Rain, 2021), which can be classified as a climate fiction book. In the text, an adultery drama and a conflict between motherhood and womanhood unfold in the scenario of eco-catastrophe in the Anthropocene, and the writer swings between reality and dystopia. In Rome, heavy incessant rainfall causes floods, so that the capital of Italy is almost destroyed by the natural disaster. Trapped in the rural areas between Lazio and Umbria, the protagonists (Elena, Ettore, and their two children) have to deal with the end of the world on a small scale. The main female protagonist, Elena, is translating Anna Tsing’s book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015), which becomes a clue to interpret the novel. Therefore, I will read the text through the lens of Tsing’s thought, but I will also use the framework of feminist ecocriticism. In particular, I will focus on the interactions between protagonists and the local communities, whose members try to find a new way to live on a damaged planet, “making worlds” between humans, the environment, and non-humans. This “assemblage” is based on diversity: the community unites people of different ages, sexes, and nationalities. I argue that mutual relationships between protagonists and the community are examples of “unpredictable encounters”, which “contaminate” people and bring about new forms of collaboration since it is the only way to survive in a global state of precarity. I will demonstrate how these encounters transform protagonists, especially Elena who finally rediscover the woman’s identity and female genealogy, and how they manage to find a new life in the ruins of our world.
Katrina Maggiulli | Speculative Species: Evolutionary Imagination & the Future of Life

In an age of catastrophic biodiversity loss paired with a pop culture penchant for apocalypse, imagining the future of life on Earth can be a daunting prospect. Creative endeavors broadly termed “speculative evolution” are one innovative entry point into envisioning what these future worlds—beyond apocalypse—might look like. Speculative evolution imaginaries allow us to consider materially what the Anthropocene as a geologic epoch might mean for organismal life thousands, if not millions, of years from now. I argue that these imaginaries are also instructive about different environmental values as the worlds they create frame what futures are deemed desirable or undesirable and what role is considered acceptable for humans to play in the production of these futures. Analyzing speculative evolution imaginaries thus allows us to critically assess varied ethical frameworks into the future. In this paper I look at two speculative evolution texts, After Man: a Zoology of the Future (1981) by Dougal Dixon and Beyond the Sixth Extinction: A Post-Apocalyptic Pop-up (2018) by Shawn Sheehy to contrast idyllic visions of human extinction with Anthropocenic “Age of Weeds” imaginaries. These speculative evolution texts each operate affectively, generating longing and revulsion as they navigate potential species futures (both wondrous and haunting) in relation to the divergent roles they envision for humanity. They present us with a compelling conundrum: how do we live in relation to both the deaths wrought by human excess and the new life evolved in its wake?

Ziba Rashidian | Proximate Futures: Animal Presences in Alexievich’s Voices of Chernobyl

Alexievich’s polyphonic oral history functions as a kind of requiem for all that was lost as a result of the Chernobyl disaster. It presents the grief and mourning of the survivors, survivors who know their own future is limited by the invisible radioactivity that has appropriated their bodies, their lives, and their ties to a transgenerational futurity. My paper will examine a less noted element of Alexievich’s text: the persistent reference to and presence of nonhuman animals in the observations and narratives of her interviewees. I argue that the narratives present an altered understanding of the human-animal relation. While many of the speakers were or are small farmers and while their “before Chernobyl” relation to nonhuman animals (at least domesticated animals) involved a mutuality of exchange, with the human provision of “care” to the animals and the animal provision of sustenance to the humans, in the “after Chernobyl” perceptions of survivors and of the new immigrants to the exclusion zone, nonhuman animals—both wild and domestic—are seen as surviving within the same horizon of bodily appropriation and temporal dispossession as the human beings who co-exist with them in the exclusion zone. My analysis will demonstrate that this new mode of relating to nonhuman animals (and to their own bodily and existential being) by the inhabitants of the exclusion zone goes well beyond Judith Butler’s notion of “precarity,” as it has been deployed by scholars working in the field of animal studies. In part, this is because the relation is profoundly marked by the shrinking of the temporal horizon not only of individual human and animal lives, but of species being as well.

Bodily/Place Transformations

Laura Fumagalli | Neglected landscapes: understanding the concept of landscape to preserve the environment

One effect of the environmental crisis is that many landscapes are turning into neglected areas, which we hardly consider worth of appreciation. Many suburban areas, for example, have partly undergone a process of rewilding after abandonment but they still bear the signs of human intervention. Processes of desertification made many natural areas unwelcoming or inaccessible. These landscapes are rarely considered aesthetically valuable and seldom enter the public debate: hence their preservation is even more in danger. I argue that the dismissal, which is primarily aesthetic, of these landscapes lies on a wrong definition and visual representation of the landscape. The landscape is often understood as the scenic view of an area of land surface. Consequently, we are less inclined to appreciate a landscape when it lacks formal and scenic qualities. Moreover, many representations of the landscape provide an improper aesthetic experience of it, in that they
reduce the landscape to a static, visual scene and to a trivial, stereotyped experience. This makes the experience of the landscape an objectified and detached one, depriving it of its traditional aesthetic values. It also means that many complex, lived-in landscapes are marginalized in favour of antiseptic, museum-like ones. Hence, a new understanding of the concept of landscape is needed. First, the experience of landscape cannot be reduced to the sense of sight but needs to include all five senses. Secondarily, the point of view on the landscape is not a fixed one but it is moveable, so that it can include all the variations and meteorological processes that occur in a living environment. Finally, the landscape is not a separate image from us spectators but it is instead the place we inhabit. Following this account of the landscape, it then appears easier to appreciate and preserve the landscapes that are not scenic views.

Kathleen Ibe | Nonhuman Agents Reclaiming Human Space in Karen Duve’s Regenroman

Karen Duve’s novel Regenroman tells the story of the Hamburg writer Leon who finds his dream house on the edge of an East German moor. Everything seems ready for him and his wife to settle down. However, the new environment the couple moves to, is complex and deceitful. Not only does the protagonist have to adjust to life near an ominous marsh, but a snail plague and relentless rain attack the foundation walls of his house. In analyzing Duve’s novel, German literary scholarship has previously largely focused on boundaries. The crossing of boundaries in terms of gender roles, the connection between nature, animals, and femininity, or the porosity of boundaries in connection with femininity in Duve’s novel are some of the perspectives that scholars looked at. In this paper, I will pay attention to the more-than-human world in Karen Duve’s novel. On the basis of Stacy Alaimo’s work Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self., I want to concentrate on the interactions between the different nonhuman actors in Duve’s novel and how they shape the narrative as water and moisture “reclaim” Leon’s property turning it into a hybrid human/nonhuman environment. This process of interaction involves looking at the components of water and its smallest elements. By focusing on the element water as part of a constant interchange, in which manifold types of agencies engage, this interpretation shifts the scholarly critique of the novel towards a material-ecocritical analysis. By looking through a material-ecocritical lens, we can increase our awareness of natural-cultural processes. Through focusing on the description of the nonhuman world in Duve’s book, this analysis shows how material agency recalibrates the reader’s attention to focus on water and moisture, arguing that these elements actively interact with and shape the narrative.

Delzi Laranjeira | Dangerous environments: Eco-anxiety in Lauren Groff’s “Ghost and Empties” and “Snake Stories”

Though not officially, the term “Anthropocene” is now widely used to designate the epoch in which human action became a powerful force upon the Earth. Climate change fiction has emerged within the Anthropocene framework by the end of the last century to provide representations about anthropogenic climate change and how its consequences can affect the present and the future of humanity and the biosphere. What can happen to both has been a source for increasing anxiety, or eco-anxiety, as defined by Usher, Durkin, and Bhullar (2019). Lauren Groff’s short stories are analyzed within this context of uncertainty, in which the ecological and social consequences become unpredictable (Heise 2008). Those suffering from eco-anxiety feel anticipated and intense anxiety about the future. Such feelings can be identified in Groff’s protagonists. In “ Ghosts and Empties,” the main character roams through the spaces of her neighborhood as a way to escape from pervading anxiety triggered by the perception of both environmental and relationship degradation. In “Snake Stories,” the narrator mingles her experiences about her marriage, motherhood, a previous relationship, a raped girl she finds in her way with a reflection on how Florida’s white middle-class neighborhoods swarm with snakes. They have become part of their landscape and lives, literally and symbolically. Like the woman in “ Ghosts and Empties,” she also fears for her children’s future. Thus, the question: “what kind of world will we leave for future generations?” becomes a keyword to understand the anxiety process linked to environmental issues these characters undergo. In this sense, Groff’s stories are dystopian since their protagonists see their spaces as devoid of future under the dark perspectives of the Anthropocene.
Jeff VanderMeer’s The Southern Reach Trilogy (2014) has often been described as ecohorror, but that descriptor emerges from the reader’s position that the trans-corporeality of the human body is a space of horror. The trilogy focuses on a place rather than a specific character: Area X, an expanding area of transformation where biological elements are nearly unrecognizable. Set on an undisclosed coastline, a government agency has been sending in teams of people to crack the mystery of Area X. Anything that enters Area X is transformed, including the human investigators. Thus, the horror is born more from fear of adaptation and transformation into the nonhuman rather than from fear of the place itself. By the end of the trilogy, Area X’s expansion is unstoppable. It will continue to expand until the whole planet is transformed. Indeed, much of the scholarship on VanderMeer has centered on the horrific changes demonstrated in his fiction. In this paper, I reconfigure this idea of “horror” by examining how VanderMeer writes of transformation from human to nonhuman as necessary rather than terrifying.

Animal Emergences

Rebecca Jordan | Cheetos and Too Many Fingers: Human Illness and the Search for Animal Empathy in Cyborg Spaces

My paper addresses such concern for purpose concerning human illness and the desire for animal flourishing. I read this “animal flourishing” in human occupied spaces as part of a larger discussion regarding the impact humans have had on the planet, often associated with the Anthropocene. However, I offer an additional lens with which we may read this tension between human illness and animal flourishing; namely, utilizing Donna Haraway’s conception of the cyborg, I argue that the cyborg is not limited to bodies but may extend to spaces. Humans are never fully absent from the environment; just as dolphins swim in Venetian canals, so do the animals in the texts I study occupy human spaces. For the scope of this paper, I focus on fictional representations of human extinction in Dietmar Dath’s Die Abschaffung der Arten (The Abolition of Species, 2008) and Kira Jane Buxton’s Hollow Kingdom (2019). Both novels focalize animal interactions in a post-human worlds, though the animals are living among human-crafted spaces and human-oriented interests (such as Cheeto consumption). The cyborg space in literature thus serves as a framework to understand the “reason” for human suffering without ever fully eliminating the human, something we perhaps have come to retweet often during our own real-world pandemic.

Agata Kowalewska | Of Deer, Wolves, and Men: Emergent Nonhuman Cultures in Spaces of Conflict with Humans

Deer herds are usually led by an older, experienced doe, who knows how to navigate human-transformed environments and how to safely cross the road. But current hunting practices often disregard social structures of deer, and these leaders get shot before they can pass on their knowledge. Without it, younger deer panic when crossing roads, getting in more accidents with humans in cars. Changes in animal cultures and disruptions of knowledge transfer impact both the nonhuman animals themselves, and their interactions with humans. As novel ecosystems emerge from changing environments, and nonhuman animals adapt to living in these changed worlds, their cultural practices, social relations, and material cultures change. I am particularly interested in the feral processes emerging in the spaces of human-nonhuman encounters and conflict, and look to some examples of animal cultures and practices to argue that they are crucial not only for conservation efforts, but also navigating spaces of conflict.
Joanna Lilley | Behaving like animals

While it's our ability as a species to create complex languages that so conspicuously separates us from other animals, writing is also one of the profoundest ways in which we can explore our beyond-human identities. How can we use language to emerge from ecological and social crisis into a future in which we can bear to exist? Through her poems and creative research insights, author Joanna Lilley will share her investigations into seeking other ways to be human – resisting the restraints of gendered, geographical and family norms, transforming from the terrestrial to the amphibious, and shapeshifting into other species. Joanna is the author of Endlings, a collection of poems about extinct species which was published by Turnstone Press in 2020 just as the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. Her essay, 'Do We Have the Right to Write About Animals?', was published in Writing for Animals (Ashland Creek Press) in 2018.

Thakshala Tissera | The Elephants in the Garbage Dump

The winning entry of the 2020 Royal Society of Biology’s international photographic contest depicted a heard of elephants foraging food in a large garbage dump in eastern Sri Lanka by Tharmapalan Tilaxan. Titled “the story of Pallakaddu elephants,” the image depicts a herd of elephants set against the backdrop of a grey sky dotted with crows. The photograph provides a powerful and bleak narrative of the Anthropocene evoking altered ecosystems, megafauna on the brink of extinction, and the overwhelming detritus of human consumption. However, a 2021 comparative study conducted by Dulmini J. Liyanage et al. between forest foraging elephants and garbage foraging elephants in southern Sri Lanka found that not only were the latter highly selective in avoiding anthropogenic items such as polythene, but they also demonstrated better overall physical health than the former. Moreover, the majority of elephant arrivals at the garbage dump were observed to be in response to the arrival of the garbage truck indicating that the elephants had grown accustomed to the presence of the truck and developed a regular pattern. Juxtaposing Tilaxan’s photograph with the findings of Liyanage et al., I propose a reading of the elephants in the garbage dump as both indicative of an emergent environment, and as a provocation to reconceptualize our understandings of the natural, garbage or waste and elephants as active co-creators of environments. The garbage foraging elephants thus provide a means of understanding both the problems and the possibilities of a seemingly bleak environment of the Anthropocene.

Emergent Representations

Michelle Menting | Questing: How We Amble, How We Converge – Poems

When we live in the woods or immerse ourselves in ecosystems relatively absent of human presence—even when we enter spaces, however small—we create an emergence, a duality of place, sometimes even of route or path that diverges, sometimes connects. In this collection of poems, the speaker either realizes this moment of connection (or disconnection) or the reader is witness to the convergence of species—of the wake our species (and others) create—while the speaker in the poem is not. These poems then strive to bring greater awareness of those intersections, the plurality of them, in fact. These convergences can be difficult, as in the the poem, “Porcupette,” where a dog is at an animal hospital, seemingly wounded by a baby porcupine: we love our canine pals and we love the adorableness of porcupettes, but the two have separate dwelling places. Except when they don’t, and then, in that sense, all bets are off. Or consider the tick (the poem, “Questing”)—it just wants to be close, and ticks—as grotesque as they are—are needed. They feed on us and other creatures, yes, but they are also food (and an effective human deterrent—trails full of ticks are not popular to human foot traffic, thereby allowing the nonhuman world to dwell further). The realization that as much as we want to be part of something, sometimes we cause more harm than good. And that creates an inconvenience, a damper to our well-meaning intentions. We want to take part in the wonder of our natural landscapes, but we have to bear the knowing that doing so does come at a confluence of both positive and negative emergences. We
need to do the hard work of realizing this, so we can address how best to move forward.

Maximilian Hepach | Waking up from climate dreams: A spatial phenomenology of climate and its changes

Do we experience the climate and its changes? Yes, we might be inclined to say in light of the extreme and unseasonable weather events we increasingly face. Yet climate and its changes cannot be experienced in principle, at least according to authoritative definitions of climate offered by organizations such as the IPCC or the WMO. Beyond climate science, such a view on climate and its changes has taken hold in the Humanities and Social Sciences as well, most influentially in Morton’s work Hyperobjects. Instead of projecting climate into a realm categorically set apart from experience, I aim to show that our understanding of ourselves and our surrounding world is mediated through and interwoven with climate and its changes. To do so, I draw from recent work on spatial phenomenology and media theory in order to account for climate as an inconspicuous medium of experience. On this view, the climate is not a statistical abstraction nor some visible object of experience. Rather, climate mediates or correlates certain possibilities of experience and existence. Climate change hence not only describes physical reality but more principally a shift in the possibilities of correlation through which the world is given.

Richard Kerridge | Climate Change, Realistic Fiction and the Creative Writing Workshop

Novelists and critics have observed that realist fiction has been slow to engage with the climate emergency as a subject. Science fiction and speculative fiction, dystopian or optimistic, have done so more readily, with futuristic scenarios. To explain this disparity, critics have usually pointed to the difficulties of representation that environmental problems present to conventional narrative perspectives ('hyperoject', 'scale derangements', 'transcorporeality', 'distributed agency' and new scientific discoveries of networks that challenge conventional selfhood), and beyond these difficulties to the failure of consumerist culture more generally. Now, in debates about creative writing pedagogy, a challenge is emerging to realism itself, or at least to the styles, methods and aesthetic values usually identified as realist. Two recent works of pedagogical theory – Craft in the Real World, by Matthew Salesses, and The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom, by Felicia Rose Chavez – have argued that concepts of plot-arc and narrative viewpoint commonly taken as norms in writing workshops are consistent with white masculine colonial traditions of power-derived individuality. Chavez and Salesses propose changes of narrative perspective and teaching methodology that have the potential to transform ecocritical thinking about literary realism. Realism is in crisis, due to its failure to confront the climate emergency, and to this challenge from anti-racist and decolonizing movements. How should it be redefined, to equip it to face dominant assumptions that are deeply ‘unrealistic’ about likely futures, while conventional political ‘realism’ seems to block transformative action? I will attempt to give a critic’s answer, a writer’s and a teacher’s, by charting emergent narrative forms in conventionally non-realistic literary works.

Sara Grossman | Emergent Disability Strategy as a Tactic for a Just Transition

Disabled communities in the United States have a unique history of adapting to, as well as working with and against, the built and natural environment for the purpose of survival. Every day, we employ strategies to utilize, engage, modify, and repair a world that is not is not made for our body-minds. Drawing on disability narratives, such as those from Disability Rag and my own experience as a disabled person, this hybrid, creative-critical, contribution centers the multiple strategies and adaptations that disabled communities have employed historically in order to exist, thrive, and find joy in hostile environments. “Emergent Disability Strategy as a Tactic for a Just Transition” illuminates a twentieth-century history of repair and care that should be central to climate change and resiliency planning. Bringing the emergent strategies of disabled communities
into the climate change movement has the capacity to strengthen local and global resiliency tactics, as well as unpack what it means to live in a broken and breaking world.

Energy Humanities Abstracts

Virtual Extraction: YouTube, Video Games, and Digital Mining as Ways We Imagine Natural Resource Extraction

Brian James Leech | New Timey Prospecting: Mining as Tech Metaphor and Environmental Consequence

Scholars like Nathan Ensmenger (2018, 2021) have argued that the language we use to describe the digital world (like the ethereal “cloud” or information “flows”) camouflage its physical properties and environmental impact. This presentation will continue this kind of analysis by examining the use of mining metaphors. While seemingly ephemeral, digital tasks like bitcoin mining and data mining actually require immense amounts of real minerals and energy. This presentation will showcase how real mineral extraction makes digital mining possible, as well as some of the reasons why we use mining metaphors to describe virtual tasks.

Brandon J. Galm | (Un)Real White Survival: Red Dead Redemption 2 and the Play of Nature

The 2018 video game, Red Dead Redemption 2 tries to balance realism throughout its narrative and gameplay mechanics. In embracing this realistic representation, it calls attention to its limitations, whereby the player is positioned problematically towards, and within, the environment of the game. In doing so, the game—and by extension the player—are forced into environmental interactions that mirror ecological supremacist ideologies in three primary ways: first, by perceiving the natural world based on standards of purity directly tied to Manifest Destiny; second, by the game’s systemic separations, namely the foregrounding of the human-nature binary in which humans stand in opposition to nature; and third, how these first two lead towards a playing experience in which nature is an unending resource designed to serve and facilitate the player.

Jessica M. DeWitt | "Most of it's Mental": Extractive Nostalgia, Virtual Adventure, and White Masculinity in the Abandoned Mines Exploration Corner of YouTube

This presentation looks closely at two popular abandoned mines exploration channels on YouTube; the Canadian-based Exploring Abandoned Mines and the American-based Abandoned and Forgotten Places. This presentation analyzes these abandoned mines through the lens of adrenaline adventure narratives and museumization of work. Once places of backbreaking, working-class exertion, the exploration of these underground spaces on YouTube transforms the formerly mundane into places of wonder and adventure that can be wrapped in nostalgia and consumed. Relatedly, this presentation looks at the ways in which these spaces are described and explained to viewers by the mine explorers, specifically addressing the disconnect between these descriptions and the lasting ecological footprint of these mines. The aura of nostalgia that enables this disconnect is closely related to the domination of this physical and online space by white masculinity. This presentation examines the portrayal of white masculinity in these videos, paying particular attention to representations of masculine care. Finally, this presentation concludes by reflecting on the "bad environmentalism" of these mine explorers.
Reading Energy Cultures

Brad Buckhalter | Making Violence Visible: Extractive Capital and Social Depredation in Helon Habila’s *Oil on Water*

Dominant petro-discourses often occlude the fact of oil’s physical extraction, an activity that—particularly in the Global South—frequently leads not only to environmental violence but also to social depredation. By naming the sites and consequences of extractive capitalism, petrofiction unmasks petro-discourses, making legible the forms of social violence hidden within them. In *Oil on Water*, Helon Habila interrogates extractive capitalism by taking the reader into the Niger Delta, the largest oil-producing region on the African continent. Framed as a roman noir—a search for a kidnapped white woman—it soon becomes clear the novel is about more than this. The novel’s true story lies hidden within the Delta itself, invisible to the reader whose daily life is always already situated within petro-discourses that laud progress and development while suppressing the facts attending oil’s extraction. As Habila’s protagonist follows the trail of the kidnapped woman, he tells of the indigenous villages and peoples he encounters, describing how oil’s extraction has destroyed their material, social, and cultural environments. By focusing the reader’s attention on the social violence occurring out of sight in the Niger Delta, *Oil on Water* confronts the realities of extractive capitalism as it operates in the Delta’s extraction zone. The novel thus reminds us that our understanding of the operations of global oil is mediated—and occluded—by discourses that are, in turn, shaped by forces of capitalism, economic policy, and state power. In making legible the often-illegible capitalist substrate and the often-invisible but violent consequences of globalized extractivism, *Oil on Water* makes space for a reconceptualization of the discourses around not only oil but also capitalism, globalization, and environmental justice—all of which collide in the hidden spaces of the Niger Delta.

Max Karpinski | Excavating the Oil Sands: Archaeology, Polyvocality, and the Aesthetics of Extraction in David Martin’s *Tar Swan*

This presentation turns to David Martin’s *Tar Swan* (2018) to probe the contours of an ecological thought that emerges from an engagement with histories of extraction in the Alberta oil sands. Martin’s poetic text alternates and intermingles four voices, in the process fictionalizing historical figures: Robert C. Fitzsimmons (1881-1971), an early oil sands developer; Frank Badura, a worker accused of sabotage by Fitzsimmons; Dr. Brian K. Wolsky, an archaeologist who digs up early oil sands sites; and the eponymous swan, a seemingly magical non-human figure “ignored” (11) by the rest of the cast, yet influencing their actions. Martin’s “Notes” at the end of the text gesture to his appropriation of archival sources, such as “letters, telegrams, advertising pamphlets, photographs, company or archaeological reports, and personal histories” (91). In its shuttling between scales—the movement between historical and geological time, or human and non-human subjectivity—*Tar Swan* formalizes the question of ecological relations. By choosing to enact a variety of barely traceable modes of textual reproduction, Martin eschews a traditional, lyric subjectivity and opts instead for a poetic utterance confected of the strange, the other, and the unoriginal. In the process of estranging the histories of oil sands development, I argue that Martin’s poetics of appropriation makes apparent the entanglements—self/other, local/global, past/present—that define life in the Anthropocene.

Kent Linthicum | “Coal and Chalk: Race, Energy, and Geology in the Nineteenth Century”

Today, fossil fuels, especially coal, are often linked with whiteness—from the overly masculine trucks that ‘roll coal,’ to the pleas for working class jobs in coal country—but in the eighteenth and nineteenth century coal was more often analogized to Blackness. For instance, in _The Woman of Colour_ (1807) a very rude boy argues to the biracial protagonist, Olivia Fairfield, that he could become Black merely “by rubbing myself with coals.” She retorts, “And so can I make mine white by rubbing myself with chalk.” Olivia ends the argument by noting that these markings would eventually wear off, an optimistic view of the relationship between these fossil rocks
and race. But the links demonstrated here, especially between Blackness and coal, were more durable and would repeat elsewhere during the period of fossil-fueled industrialization and expanding slavery. For instance, in the deeply racist minstrel song, “Coal Black Rose” (c. 1840s) the narrator sings to a Black woman, Rosa or Rose, about his desire. A dominant focus of the song is the fire in Rosa’s home, and the song’s refrain goes, “oh, Rose, de Coal Black Rose, / I wish I may be burnt if I don’t lub Rose, / Oh, Rose, &c.” And in _Phrenology_ (1851) James Grimes argues that Black peoples have underdeveloped capacities with “Constructiveness, Acquisitiveness, Experimentiveness, and Perfectiveness” compared to whites, all traits he says developed after the Carboniferous period, after the development of coal. In this presentation, I will argue that connections between Blackness and coal in the nineteenth century were not incidental, but rather part of representational system of energy. This analogy allowed the developing fossil fuel system to symbolically draw on the system of enslaved labor, so one system of violence and exploitation could grow out of another.

**Jana Giles | “The worn out earth of our possession”: Environment, Empire, and Modernity in Conrad’s ‘Falk’**

In his novella “Falk, published in 1902, Joseph Conrad compares Hermann’s niece, object of the eponymous protagonist’s romantic interests, to “an allegoric statue of [...] a young Earth, a virginal planet undisturbed by the vision of a future teeming with the monstrous forms of life and death, clamorous with the cruel battles of hunger and thought,” not “the worn-out earth of our possession.” The novella has long been considered a meditation on Darwinian survival of the fittest, but it also comments subtly on the hubris of modernity’s technological innovations before the sublime power of nature in the context of the global migration of imperial capital. Conrad takes his cues from Schopenhauer’s philosophy—the world as Will (blind life force) or as Representation (individuated phenomena), ethics as compassion rather than rational duty, and a vital materialism that rejects anthropocentrism—to critique the racialized presumptions of European colonialism, blur distinctions between human and animal, and implicate patriarchal social norms as foundational to imperial economies. By reducing the stakes to the elemental aspects of reproduction, eating, and territoriality (sex, cannibalism, and business monopolies), and then overbuilding these drives with a baroque edifice of gossip, social hypocrisy, and linguistic misdirection, Conrad examines how humanity can neither escape its earthly dependence nor experience pure Arcadian Nature. We do, however, have the power to reconsider our cultural ideologies and their consequences. For instance, Conrad suggests that the logocentric and Orientalist impulses of Christianity only amplify the misprision of language. And Western culture’s ideologies of “possession” that produce the “whip hand” of commerce can, instead of producing anthropocentric triumph, end in our annihilation by overwhelming natural forces, like the sea, which has no “respect for decency.” Only an ethics of care based on a contextualized compassion can make human life both procreative and environmentally and socially tolerable.

**Alternative Energy Imaginaries**

**Harry Pitt Scott | A Transitional Utopia: Energy, Finance, and Democracy in Kim Stanley Robinson’s Ministry for the Future**

The climate emergency and transition out of fossil capital means thinking through energy as a site of political, economic, and cultural contestation, because energy systems are constitutive of wider social patterns and relationships, political institutions, psychic experiences, and cultural forms. What will life after fossil fuel look like? Perhaps more importantly, how will we get there? The urgency of these questions is matched only by the need to reflect on the antagonistic impediments to a just energy transition: capitalist social forms deeply invested in the reproduction of oil and coal infrastructure, from states to stock markets, petrodollars to pipelines, the ways of life and the sedimented habits, feelings, and comforts of petroculture. Focusing on Kim Stanley Robinson’s Ministry for the Future (2020), this paper argues that, in the climate emergency, the vocation of utopian writing is to demonstrate our individual and collective capacity to imagine transitional forms: elements of the present that can be retrofitted and repurposed toward an alternative society. Calling the
novel a ‘transitional utopia’, I argue it is less concerned with what a post-capitalist, decarbonised world-system will look like, and more with describing how the transition to a utopia is actively created and lived in the present. Fundamentally a meditation on an emergent transitional culture, the novel describes a community in the process of democratically transforming itself and its social environment, while reflecting on what contemporary energetic, technological, economic, and political forms are useful to this social transformation. I focus on the novel’s speculative currency, the ‘carbon coin’, as a means of thinking through the material and technical entanglements of energy, finance, and democracy. I will end with some provisional remarks on the modification of the utopian form in transitional utopias, as periodisation, interpretative procedure, and a formal response to the historical situation of energy transition.

Tom Lynch | Loren Eiseley: Prophet of the Pyrocene

This paper suggests that although writing in the mid-20th century, Loren Eiseley anticipated many of the ideas that have come to be identified with Anthropocene theory. In particular this paper examines two features of his work. The first is scale-framing, which, given that he was an anthropologist, is a pervasive feature of his writing. And the second, related to Stephen Pyne’s suggestion that we now live in the Pyocene, is Eiseley’s idea that humans are “fire apes,” who, through our control of fire, have radically altered our world. These features of his work provide a sense of continuity rather than rupture between our Anthropocene era and earlier periods of human existence, such as the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene.

Energetic Forms & Genres

Ruby Niemann | California Girls: Petro-cultures, Nuclear Horizons, and Extractionist Feminisms in Joan Didion’s Play It As It Lays

In Joan Didion’s 1970 novel Play It As It Lays, the car and the post-war spread of highways and superhighways connecting much of the United States, become potential offerings of freedom that ultimately result in a blank (irradiated, desertified) horizons where “nothing applies”. This echoes Dipesh Chakrabarty assertion that “the mansion of modern freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil fuel use”, indicating the precarity of a feminist ideology built on resource exploitation. This paper explores the ways in which Didion’s classic novel of female disenfranchisement and disaffection engages with two of the most significant energy sources of the twentieth century – petroleum and nuclear – to show the complex history of what I call ‘extractionist feminisms’, a twentieth century gender politics that rests upon both the exploitation of non-renewable energies and the regimented class systems they both create and uphold. In this paper, I trace both the emancipatory promise of petrol and nuclear power (freeing carbon, freeing the atom) and the limited and limiting realities of these destructive and toxic approaches to ‘cheap’ power that promises freedom and comes at an incalculably high cost. Using Timothy Mitchell’s Carbon Democracy, the theoretical work done in Oil Culture (edited by Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden), as well as theories of the Atomic age put forward by Gabriele Schwab in Radioactive Ghosts and Infrastructures of the Apocalypse: American Literature and the Nuclear Complex by Jessica Hurley, I explore the ways in which it is possible to recontextualise Didion’s novel through a theory of resource fiction and the lens of petro-culture and nuclear criticism.

Maria Matilde Morales | Humanoil: Organicizing Oil in Contemporary Russian Culture

The notion of the oil encounter has been a central theme in studies of petrofiction since Amitav Ghosh’s 1991 provocation. While Ghosh’s oil encounter was geopolitical in nature, encounters with oil also take place daily, at a personal level. Many Russian literary texts and artworks from the post-Soviet period showcase a process of organicization of oil, by foregrounding the relationship and interconnectedness between oil and the human body. Artistic strategies for presenting oil as part of a human or planetary organism vary, ranging from
anthropomorphizing oil to fossilizing the human body. Viktor Pelevin’s fictional essay “Macedonian Critique of French Thought” (2003) introduces the idea of humanoil, a conglomerate that suggests the possibility of oil as a renewable resource—though one that depends on mass death and the decomposition of human remains. Drawing on Pelevin’s term, this paper examines the Russian imaginary of humanoil in the context of Marx’s idea of environmental metabolism that was at the heart of late Soviet ecological thinking. Humanoil echoes throughout different artistic mediums, including in the conceptual artist Andrei Molodkin’s project to make oil from human remains (around 2009), and in Lyudmila Petrushevskaya’s “Ararat Island” (2008), a dialogue between the Earth and Mars where oil is discussed as a renewable resource thanks to the fossilization of human bodies. Thinking in terms of humanoil has fruitful theoretical implications beyond the context of Russian Studies: it offers a new way of understanding the blurred boundaries between oil and the human species.

Spencer Robins | Narrative Infrastructure in Always Coming Home

Recent work in infrastructure studies extends "infrastructure" to describe discursive as well as material practices: words, as well as roads, shape where people can move and where they want to move. Following Caroline Levine’s claim that aesthetic and material forms operate together to shape power and experience, this paper that the narrative forms circulating in a given society constitute a significant determinate of its energy consumption. Ursula K. Le Guin’s speculative ethnography “Always Coming Home” provides a model for how ecocritics can read chronotopes as an element of energy infrastructures.

Jada Ach | Off the Grid: Power Lines and Alternative Energies in Ethan Frome

At the turn of the twentieth century, “the idea that electrification created exclusively modern experiences” pervaded, leading many American writers to experiment with the cultural, political, and aesthetic possibilities of this expanding energy infrastructure in their work (Jennifer Lieberman). Narrated in the voice of a stranded electrical engineer, Edith Wharton’s ‘Ethan Frome’ (1911) is no exception. Just as soon as the novel begins, the nameless engineer-narrator disappears into the structure, as engineers often do, and we almost forget he is there. The engineer is granted the privilege of not having a body and of presenting the bodies of others as curious objects of study. In this talk, I will draw from maintenance and infrastructure studies to argue that the engineer’s attempts at redirecting stories of bodily failure and “sluggish pulses” into a well-ordered narrative system reflect modern management’s anxieties about the unharnessed alternative energies that quiver queerly off the grid.

Sites of Contestation: An Exploration of Energy Struggles in Canada

Alexandra Simpson, Laurence Butet-Roch, & Isaac Thornley | Sites of Contestation: An Exploration of Energy Struggles in Canada

Conflicts related to pipelines and energy infrastructure have emerged as crucial sites of material-discursive contestation over what the future will hold for climate justice, labour, and decolonization movements. Pipelines are symptomatic structures grafted over the inherent contradictions that animate fossil capitalism, settler colonialism, and ecological crisis. Interrogating the politics of energy infrastructure as both a matter of environmental justice and as a multiscalar problem of space and time, this panel will attempt to make infrastructure “legible” by offering a range of case studies and interdisciplinary perspectives on fossil capitalism in Canada. Laurence Butet-Roch will share reflections on “Essential Oil: Canada’s Extractive Priorities in Pandemic Times,” a visual essay produced in collaboration with Amber Bracken and Sara Hylton. Isaac Thornley will present a paper titled “Trans Mountain Pipedreams: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Pipeline Politics,” which discusses how psychoanalytic concepts (such as fantasy and disavowal) can be integrated
with historical and political-economic analyses to examine pipeline conflicts in Canada. Alexandra Simpson’s presentation, “Along Line 9: (un)masking along the Line 9 pipeline” uses a performance studies lens to investigate camouflage as a material and conceptual framework to understand the role embodiment plays in contemporary activism against pipelines and how visibility and invisibility are crucially connected within pipeline debates. Taken together, these presentations demonstrate the necessity of the humanities for understanding and challenging the contemporary Canadian energy economy, which remains dominated by extractivist and settler colonizing fossil capital.

**Landscapes, Resources, & Relations**

**Nathan Schmidt | Enclosure of the Wonderlands: John Muir’s Journey to the Surface of the Earth**

In this paper, I will argue that the infrastructures of enclosure inaugurated by the National Parks at the turn of the twentieth century create a space for the fabulation of prehistory. Park infrastructures do not simply inscribe a particular landscape as set apart for preservation; they are, in fact, speculative machines for the production of mythologies. At roughly the same time as the theme of fantastic immersion was popularized in stories like Twain’s Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court and H. Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines, Yosemite National Park offered itself as a site for immersion in a prehistoric fantasy world—what John Muir would famously call the “Wonderlands.” Following Leo Marx’s statement that American scenery “invites us to cross the commonsense boundary between art and reality, to impose literary ideas upon the world,” I will compare the speculative park infrastructure put forward by the likes of Muir and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted with the speculative vision of prehistory Jules Verne offers in Voyage au centre de la Terre, in which the narrator walks through antediluvian plants “as lofty as the giant trees of California.” Both Muir and Verne were inspired by contemporary geologists to create and promote imaginative work. Muir envisioned a virtual reality, mediated by networks of enclosure, in which park visitors could marvel at ancient geological phenomena; Verne wrote a novel. This interpretation contributes a better understanding of infrastructures as networks that tell stories, and also has important ramifications in deconstructing the myth of “untouched wilderness” that is still promoted by the parks, especially insofar as it overwrites the parks’ Indigenous, human history in favor of a ahuman prehistoric landscape mythology.

**Manasvini Rajan | "From my-shit-just-sits-there-until-it-rains-poverty-to-which-of-my-toilets-shall-I-use-affluence": On Water, Neoliberalism, and How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia**

The first description we get of a water body in Mohsin Hamid’s How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013) is of a dirty stream, polluted by a mix of industrial and human waste. It is also the only textual description we get of a sizable water body—a significant choice in a novel steeped in water and its associations. The novel follows a protagonist referred to only by the pronoun ‘You’ over seven decades as he moves to the city and makes (and eventually loses) a fortune in the bottled water industry. Apart from the initial description of a polluted stream, we encounter water in dirty puddles and plastic bottles, in the playful imaginations of children and in metaphors. Open water is hard to find; clean water even more so. In my paper, I consider Hamid’s engagement with the milieu-specific images and associations that surround water in “rising Asia”, emphasising the discursive and culturally-rooted understandings of the resource. I argue that, despite the glaring absence of water bodies stemming from the consequences of hydromodernism, the novel’s engagement with the materialities of water—its attentiveness to water as clean or polluted, as free or enclosed, as real or imagined—allows us to grasp the extractive logics of the neoliberal state. I posit that Hamid’s novel contributes to the recent turn in Blue Humanities scholarship towards freshwater from an earlier focus on seas and oceans. In doing so, it compels us to pay attention to the unnaturalness of the natural, to understand water as an element constituted, mediated, and shaped by its interactions with social, cultural, and political processes.
Darren Fleet | "You are Now Entering the Mission Field": Petrol Landscapes through a Religious Lens

In recent years there has been a flourish of environmental scholarship and activist communications looking to religious practice and faith perspectives for insights and teachings about how to act in an age of ecological crisis and extreme energy (Marshall, 2020; Dochuk, 2019; Hern & Johal, 2018; Ghosh, 2017; Stoknes, 2015; Speth, 2008). Likewise, there has been an environmental turn in many Christian traditions to read religious texts in the context of climate change (Jenkins et al., 2018; Fair, 2018; Hulme, 2016; Taylor, 2015; Veldman et al., 2013). These writings often focus on how to engage with faith communities, or how to draw upon faith practices, in order to motivate religious and non-religious publics toward energy transition (Hayoe, 2018; Klein, 2014; Marshall, 2014). Amidst this emergence of scholarship, however, there are important avenues of faith that have yet to be explored. In particular, few scholars have examined the ways that the cultural landscapes of energy are made legible through the lens of faith. This paper looks at two evangelical Christian faith congregations in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Through a series of focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews, it explores how petroculture manifests through the language, metaphors, and practices of belief. In particular, it considers how the flow of bitumen and the financial riches associated with industry are articulated through parallel spiritual logics of proselytization, progress, and spiritual blessing.

Energy Imperialisms, Colonialisms, & Nationalisms


Chilean author Victor Domingo Silva’s 1905 poem “Bajo el sol de la pampa” (“Under the Desert Sun”) dramatizes a time in which Latin American agricultural fertility was shipped overseas to sustain the expanding populations of an industrializing Global North. Offering what Jennifer Wenzel calls a “commodity biography,” Silva traces the journey of Chilean nitrates from the rocky crust of the Atacama Desert to European agricultural fields made abundant from nitrate-based fertilizer. This paper will explore how Silva uses nitrates as a symbol of the potential for life and prosperity to demonstrate the disastrous repercussions that an intensive, extractivist model of natural resource exploitation has on the land, workers, and the nation. In narrating the analogous extraction and export of bodily, financial, and ecosystemic energies, Silva denounces the nitrate industry as a neocolonial force that saps the Chilean nation of its “fertile energies,” fueling a bucolic pastoral paradise in Europe while leaving behind a barren hellscape in Chile. As a joint presentation between a Spanish professor and an undergraduate student from a course in Latin American literature, this paper seeks to model a research process that celebrates the interconnections between pedagogy and scholarship and embraces the value of collaborative intellectual inquiry.

Mary Galli | Learning How to Live After the End: The Destruction of Uranium Mining in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony

To stress climate change’s urgency, one prominent strand of ecocriticism advances the idea that the world is ending, or at least the world as we know it. Building on these doomsday narratives, my paper asks: how has literature imagined survival through past destructions and amid the threat of future catastrophe? Specifically, I look at the language of destruction in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony (1977) and situate it in the Cold War-era context of “mutually assured destruction.” Even though “mutually assured destruction” seems imminent at times or “this civilization is already dead” as Roy Scranton claimed in 2013, life has somehow continued, albeit in altered states of health and security (Scranton 388). At the end of the novel, the narrator, Tayo, paradoxically returns to the origin of the destruction—the Jackpile-Paguate uranium mine that helped fuel the American nuclear weapons frenzy—where he reclaims his agency over the ending. Tayo looks up at the stars above the mine and realizes, “[A]lways there were these stars. Accordingly, the story goes on with these stars of the old
war shield; they go on, lasting until the fifth world ends, then maybe beyond” (Silko 235). Like Tayo, I argue that even though humans might eliminate themselves from the earth through either nuclear war or environmental destruction, the earth would still continue to orbit the sun, and the universe—apart from humans—would exist. Tayo’s addition of “then maybe beyond” to his reflection further implies that it is possible for cultures and stories to survive through destruction, beyond the end. And this preservation of culture is precipitated in some cases because of the threat of its ending. Those very traditions and cultural resources—those ceremonies—will ultimately help people better understand, cope, and endure amid the rapid acceleration of environmental destruction and the climate crisis.


Oil is central to our lifestyle: it fuels our cars, heats our homes and – converted into plastic – holds our drinks and food. Yet, despite its omnipresence in our daily lives, oil remains largely invisible, hidden in pipelines and barrels. “Oil is everywhere and nowhere” (Wenzel 2014, 156). This invisibility is suspended when an oil spill occurs. The oil – literally – comes to the surface, and the disaster forces governments and companies to act. However, not all oil spills are equally visible: despite the 9-13 million barrels which have seeped into the Niger Delta over the past five decades (Alberta et al. 2018, 1055), this has not sparked significant media attention. In this paper, I argue that Helon Habila’s Oil on Water uses tropes of spectacular, sudden disasters and their effects to make visible the ”slow violence” (Nixon 2011) of oil extraction and oil spills in the Niger Delta. Firstly, the novel manipulates the temporal structure of the ongoing environmental destruction into a clear “before” and “after” structure, which imitates the rupture that is commonly associated with disaster. Secondly, the strikingly visual and apocalyptic descriptions of the ravaged environment and abandoned villages evoke dystopian disaster narratives, and highlight the urgency and extent of the pollution of the Niger Delta. Lastly, the novel uses a spectacular image of an explosion to underline the unequal timelines of disaster. As I will show, however, the tope of “disaster as an event” is not simply used, but complicated and undermined. Thus, by strategically using the tropes of disaster narratives, the novel stresses the urgency of the effects of oil extraction on the Niger Delta while simultaneously underlining the limitations of thinking of disasters as events or sudden ruptures.

N.A.J. Taylor | Ecologies of extraction and accidents: Fukushima as Australia’s nuclear heritage

On March 11, 2011 a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and resultant tsunami caused a full meltdown of the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant located on the island of Honshu, on the east coast of Japan. It took four weeks for the radionuclides to circumnavigate the Earth and descend into the Southern hemisphere. Although scholarly activity has continued apace in relation to different aspects of Fukushima as an event and site, very little of this work has examined the implications of Australian uranium being found inside several of Fukushima Daiichi’s reactors at the time of the disaster. This paper explores Fukushima as a central, yet heretofore neglected, artefact of Australia’s cultural and environmental heritage.

Extractive Materialities

Chesta Yadav | The Impact of Extraction and Generation of Electricity on Environment

The uncontrollable pursuit of growth and benefits has dominated our society. In the developed part of the planet, people live in the energy phase of modernity but it is marked by the instability of social situations and cultural forms. The extreme climate flux that human beings face today can be linked to the human continuous need for energy. The constant appetite to consume more and more energy has resulted in environmental degradation, like collapsed impoundment dams, floods, dead zones in forests. It has not only affected the
environment but also people. It has given rise to unemployment, crippling poverty, and diseases such as black lung disease. This paper operates at the intersection of energy humanities and environmental justice to study the impact of dam construction in India. While most of the work in energy humanity deals with Oil and Fossil Fuel this paper focuses on energy by electricity. Although electricity is a relatively clean and safe form of energy when it is used but all power plants have a physical footprint. Generating and then extracting electricity affects the environment. “The coffer dams” by kamala Markandaya . Highlights the effect of Dam construction and energy generated from them on ecology and culture. Dams are used to produce and extract electricity for water. By applying the theory of ecocriticism, this paper will study and highlight how these places are rich in resources but are places of environmental degradation, public health issues, poverty, and social conflict.

Katrin Pesch | From the Extraction of Natural Resources to the Harnessing of Human Energy: Embodied Debt in Claire Denis’s High Life

Taking a feminist materialist perspective, this paper analyzes how Claire Denis’s film High Life (2019) exposes the exploitation of bodily energy that underlies global power relations. Denis’s first film with an environmental premise, High Life tells the story of a group of prisoners sent into space to extract energy from a black hole. The film is told in flashbacks from the perspective of the last surviving prisoner on the spaceship who takes care of his daughter, the product of rape and artificial insemination experiments conducted on the prisoners. Though set in space, High Life is firmly grounded within contemporary debates about environmental exploitation and can be read as a commentary on the extractive politics of Western industrialized nations and their impact on the global commons. In Denis’s film, however, the ecological debt accrued by natural resource extraction is displaced onto the body of the prisoners. Through its focus on the harnessing of the prisoners’ bodily energy, High Life offers itself to a reading through the lens of embodied debt, which refers to “the harnessing of physiological or endosomatic energy in the context of unjust power relations” (Salleh, 2009). Conceived as critical concepts to contest the power structures at the core of economic debt, ecological and embodied debt call out the debt accrued through the exploitation of natural resources and reproductive labor. I argue that High Life exposes the fraught equivalency of debt relations by calling attention to the embodied debt borne by the prisoners, whose bodily energy is extracted to assure the continuation of the energy-finding mission after their demise. Beyond its implicit critique of environmental exploitation, High Life ultimately renders the ecological as a matter of embodiment.

Rianne Riemens | Accounting for extraction: Place and placelessness in tech-on-climate discourse

Digital platforms are companies that structure online everyday life have taken explicit positions as actors in the “fight” against the climate crisis. These companies legitimize their own environmental impact through discursive practices that emphasize their efforts for an energy transition and downplay their use of raw materials and fossil fuels. This presentation aims to contribute to the ongoing debates in media studies and the energy humanities about the materiality of media infrastructures and the environmental consequences of their physical presence. I argue that a focus on spatial representations helps to understand how environmental impact is framed within green platform discourses. In response to critiques about the false imaginary of platforms as cloud-like entities, tech companies no longer only account for the digital extraction of data from user behavior, but also for the physical extraction of raw materials and energy sources that fuel platform capitalism. However, their energy infrastructures are not evenly represented. While digital platforms proudly describe and locate their green energy sites through maps and photographs, raw materials and fossil fuels remain abstract entities that are only shortly mentioned or pictured in a sterile setting, not tied to specific locations. I discuss this paradox through four examples from Apple and Google: sustainability reports by Apple and Google (2020) that present information about the green efforts made by the companies and the Apple ‘Better’ commercial (2014) and Google datacenter gallery webpage (2021) that serve as promotional material for these green efforts. I argue that green platform discourses give a partial view of platform infrastructures, strategically placing ‘clean’ infrastructures within local landscapes while keeping ‘dirty’ forms of extraction
placeless and thus, invisible. Google and Apple present their ‘green techno-landscapes’ as romanticized, sublime landscapes in which technology and nature naturally merge together.

**Paul Schmitt | “On Cyber-Pastorals and Joystick Georgics: Agriculture, Data Infrastructure, and Video Games”**

This paper focuses on the advent of capitalist precision agricultural technology and, more specifically, farming simulator video games that replicate its logic. Powered by apps and IT, farming begins to look more like a desk job or mid-level management. To be sure, some management and accounting are integral to any agricultural operation. But the separation from the land and programmatic processing of information enabled by drone- and sensor-collected data, self-driving GPS-guided tractors, and software suites entails as much of a cultural as an ecological shift in the way our food is produced. Information about the land through nitrogen read-outs and satellite spectrometry images is far afield from embodied, on-the-ground knowledge and practice. As such, this paper appreciates that the logics of agriculture, as a material foundation of so many cultures, necessarily affect those cultures and their relationships to wider ecological and world systems. I argue that examining video games that replicate precision-agricultural logics to varyingly evident degrees—sometimes by content but always by algorithmic form—is one way to begin explicating these ecological and world systemic shifts. While video games typically rely on a degree of uncertainty for their appeal (and such uncertainty can be found in games like Farming Simulator and Stardew Valley), they more importantly offer the opportunity to engage in simulated agricultural practice without, or with far fewer of, the uncertainties typical of real world agriculture that IT-driven precision technologies claim to eliminate. Between labor and automation, plough and play, land and laptop, farmers real and virtual alike interface with the earth. What is at stake is the degree to which these interfaces provide false senses of financial, climatic, and, ultimately, food security in an era of widespread capitalist market volatility, climate collapse, and famine.

**Dark Petrocultures**

**Maureen Salzer | Extracting the Past: Robert Macfarlane’s Underland Travels and Petroleum Tragedies in the Anthropocene**

Robert Macfarlane searches out the interfaces between worlds in his 2019 book Underland: A Deep Time Journey. The entry and exit points explored there link the upper realms of the visible world to hidden places below these surfaces, as Macfarlane investigates deep sea oil drilling and nuclear waste entombment as well as caves and catacombs. In the underland, he travels throughout geologic time and takes along Poe, Carroll, Aeschylus, the Kalevala, and other literature and folklore. Present throughout the journey are the history, legends, people, politics, maps, and wonders of the upper and lower worlds. Macfarlane’s work provides the backdrop for analyzing two texts that detail alienated labor associated with the extraction industry. Michael Patrick F. Smith reports on his 2013 employment as a roughneck in the North Dakota oil fields during the fracking boom in his 2021 book The Good Hand: A Memoir of Work, Brotherhood, and Transformation in an American Boomtown. And, in her 2008 biography of a young Wyoming cowboy, The Legend of Colton H. Bryant, Alexandra Fuller tells the story of the brief life and tragic 2006 death of Bryant, who was an oil hand on high plains drilling rigs. Together, these three works illuminate and populate the remote and somewhat mythical world of petroleum exploration and extraction and its many ramifications for our culture, our environment, and our future. The land and underland written about and the labor thereon/in performed intertwine with the substances and revelations brought to the surface, making visible what has been hidden: the human costs of extraction. The paper considers remote landscapes, plastics, greed, consumer comfort, opportunity, destruction, salespersonship, and dangers of many kinds as these connect to 21st-century late capitalism, global cultures, and threatened environments. Related popular culture references to mythologized American heroes are also included.
Catherine Sarah Young | The Ghost of Rain: A Proposal for Petrichor as a Companion Molecule in The Australian Bushfire Crisis

This paper is a proposal of petrichor—the scent of wet earth when it rains—as a set of companion molecules that human and non-human species alike have evolved to associate with survival. Specifically, it illustrates how petrichor is metabolised into ash through the Australian bushfire crisis using two art projects. In "The Weighing of the Heart", human heart sculptures are cast out of ash and other organic remains from the Australian bushfires. It references the scene of the "Weighing of the Heart", a spell in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. In casting the ashes with resin, the artist arrests metabolism of the remains back into the soil, creating objects of memory in a political landscape that forgets the bushfire crisis periodically. In “Burned Lines”, extracts from climate change denier tweets and press written to or about the artist are rewritten with ink made from the same ashes. This series explores the power we bring to words and how appropriating these to examine the role of misinformation and hate can potentially make these words lose their intended meaning. Furthermore, the project investigates the use of ash as a way to bring a sense of poetry and irony to discussing difficult issues of misinformation, post-truth, hate, and misogyny. Both these art projects use the residues left from environmental catastrophe as a tool for conversation about climate change in the field of environmental humanities. Beyond the actual scent of petrichor, our memories of it are also being altered by the energetic underpinnings of climate change. How scent relates to various narratives will enhance our understanding of what Ursula Heise refers to a “sense of place and sense of planet”.

Wenjia Chen | Symbolic killing or killing symbols: with a case study of Fractures

This paper examines the way symbolic language makes and/or unmakes anti-oil politics in Lamar Herrin’s novel Fractures. Centering on a fractured family on the Marcellus Shale that is fatally involved in the scheme of fracking, the story can be read as a slow process of “emergence” of the final “emergency”—i.e., the erection of an oil derrick on the family estate, and the suicidal fall of an anti-oil family member from the top of that derrick. Interestingly, instead of a typical diatribe against the industry, Fractures is told in a peculiarly paradoxical language: despite many realistic details about the frustrating monotony and foulness of drilling, the narrative meanwhile highlights certain alluring aesthetics of fracking that placate possible anti-fracking forces in a way irrelevant of politics or morality. This means we have descriptive harshness about oil’s destruction on one hand, and strangely beautiful and enthralling metaphors that endow the same destruction with almost transcendental wonder. Most characters fall for this wonder at certain points, including the one who kills himself and claims his suicide a “symbolic act”—presumably against fracking. My argument is twofold. First, I contend that Fractures reveals the deceptive incongruity between the captivating imageries of extractivism and its disastrous political ecology—i.e., the danger of these imageries being hijacked to disarm anti-oil commitments. But I would also ask, to what extent is the story itself a form of hijacking? Has the metaphorical language made extractivism more visible or less so? If the “symbolic act” of the protagonist kills himself, does this mean symbolism can be a form of violence? To what extend does the novel as a symbolic act “kill” its anti-oil message through symbolic rhetoric? By encouraging contemplation on these various possibilities, I hope my talk will inform the search for proper literary forms for anti-oil expressions.

Karl Emil Rosenbæk | Offshore Nordic Noir

For decades now the brand Nordic Noir has swept the world. This particular type of crime fiction set in a sombre Nordic atmosphere with a socially indignant detective has intrigued a wide audience. This talk presents a reading of the danish writer Peter Høeg’s internationally acclaimed noir Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow (1992) in an effort to combine Rob Nixon’s concept of slow violence with Petroculture studies and a growing ecocritical attention to noir sentiments in the Anthropocene. I propose the concept Offshore Nordic Noir to critical engage with geo-local petroculture and slow violent noir sentiments in the North.
Energetic Affects, Energetic Senses

Madeleine Bavley | CRUDE: Cultivating Pleasure in (spite of) Petroleum Culture

We pleasure in petroleum. It is a pleasure cheap and easy. It is a pleasure indifferent to cause or effect. It is a pleasure predicated on fantasy. Indeed our relationship with petroleum is complicated. It provides us convenience, comfort, and commodity. It is also cause of our climate crisis. But, as Stephanie LeMenager remarks, “living in oil, through injury and pleasure is . . . not easily transmissible as story.” And as the stories told by the mainstream environmental movement tend toward the sober, the straight-edged, the straight, the movement is perceived as serious, sincere, sometimes sanctimonious. This can be a turn off, rather than a turn on. My research invokes alternative environmental affects and aesthetics that aim to appeal to, to turn on, a broader audience. Informed by the theories of adrienne maree brown and Nicole Seymour, who both consider pleasure a mode of resistance, I contend that pleasure can be a means of reconfiguring our energy epistemologies. Petroleum pleasureways result in pleasures that are uneven, unsustainable, and in, many ways, unsatisfactory. Petroleum pleasureways privilege certain categories of pleasures and certain classes of people. And as a result of these petroleum pleasureways, the planet has been drastically altered, disproportionately by some. The consequences, current and coming, are disastrous, deadly—entirely displeasurable. Though as the pursuit of pleasure is constituent to human and more-than-human naturecultures alike, the relinquishing of petroleum requires a reframing of—rather than a refraining from—pleasure. It requires a remaking and a redistributing of pleasure, expanding access to pleasure and expanding the accepted forms of pleasure. Indeed reconfiguring our pleasureways is requisite for reimagining post-petroleum futures just and joyful. Through a mixed medium approach, my research endeavors first) to investigate how petroleum produces our present pleasureways and second) to imagine potential post-petroleum pleasureways.

Environmental Justice Abstracts

How We are Human: Reclaiming Home

Allison Cobb | How to be human now

Systemic racism and systemic pollution are manifestations of the same phenomenon. They arise out of settler colonist and colonist structures organized and sustained by a violent consume-and-dispose logic. Industry and the state consume “resources”—including racialized bodies—to extract economic value. They dispose the byproducts—waste and pollution—into those same bodies, and into the commons of land, air and water. This maximizes profit by erasing the economic costs of waste. It also disrupts and damages complex relationships of survival and sustenance among human communities and the land, and destroys connections to “home.” These power structures maintain themselves by eliminating obstacles to their sovereignty, including the attempted genocide of Indigenous communities, the perpetuating of slavery in various forms, and the removal of self-reliance and self-determination from exploited bodies. One form of resistance to settler colonist logics is to reclaim and redefine kinship relations—motherhood itself can be an act of resistance, as can multiracial, nonbiological and queer motherhood and forms of kin that extend beyond the human and reject the binaries of a white supremacist, heterosexist power structure. Another form of resistance is to reclaim and reconstitute spaces of home and belonging. This includes nurturing liminal spaces and those rejected as “worthless” in capitalism, and identifying diasporic versions of home that transcend the boundaries of nation-states. These writers each bear witness to and live out these acts of resistance in their work. Each will perform an excerpt of current writing and the panel will discuss the interconnections among their projects.
Ecofascism as Heuristic

April Anson | The Suffocating Atmospherics of American Ecofascism

On August 3, 2019, a self-identified ecofascist murdered 23 people and injured 23 others in El Paso, Texas. Minutes before the murders, the perpetrator posted a manifesto to the online message board 8chan detailing his motives for targeting the “Hispanic invasion” supposedly precipitated by climate change. Taking climate change as the new frontier condition, the manifesto exemplifies ecofascism’s use of environmental concerns to justify the sacrifice of certain populations. More vitally still, it shows how the suffocating and self-reinforcing logic of ecofascism depends upon and extends a distinctly American environmental literary tradition. Its title, “The Inconvenient Truth,” revises the general article from Al Gore’s infamous documentary into a totalitarian “The,” manipulating that film’s concern with extinction into a fear of white genocide clarified in the first sentence. The opening line cites the manifesto penned by the mass murderer in ChristChurch, New Zealand, which takes its title and content from the white nationalist conspiracy theorist Renaud Camus’s 2011 The Great Replacement, which itself updates Wilmot Robertson’s 1992 The Ethnostate, a text that spins white genocide conspiracy theories from the actual endangerment of the American redwoods in a rhetorical move popularized by early 20th century American conservationist, eugenicist, and white-nature lover, Madison Grant. Echoing an environmental tradition obsessed with the “replacement” of the white race, the El Paso manifesto merely mimics a template long laid out in American environmental thinking where fears of white race suicide fuel conservation concerns. American ecofascism takes themes of ethnic replacement, the ever-present threat of extinction in a once empty but now besieged wasteland, and a nation and nature demanding taming through wholesale slaughter and, more often than not, sexual violence, straight from American fiction. The suffocating atmospherics embedded in this self-referential intellectual tradition are the analog for the apocalyptic environmentalism accompanying climate concerns.

Kai Bosworth | Heartland melodrama and settler empire: Pipeline Opposition and Energy Independence between Canada and China

Central to desires for security expressed by some pipeline opponents was a sense that the heartland, taken to be a particularly important and threatened part of the nation, was being exploited by foreigners. This talk scrutinizes how populist rhetoric structured an interior part of the US in opposition to a foreign power through melodramatic affect. The pipeline corporation TransCanada and the Canadian government alike represented the corrupt power of foreign oil, while the export of oil to other parts of the world—especially east Asia—seemed to betray “energy independence.” Pipeline opponents in the 2010s brought “the foreign” into heartland melodrama in new ways, focusing on new regions like Canada and new arenas of the supply chain, like consumption and transportation rather than simply production. Opponents compared the supposed invasion of foreign oil corporations to colonialism and the defense of the American revolution. At the same time, they reconstructed an image of the rural Midwest as a geopolitical and economic breadbasket of the nation. Ultimately, I argue that heartland melodrama in progressive populism relies upon and reproduces anti-Asian sentiment as a symbol of abstract capitalism, thus securing the concrete grounds of opposition in national settler colonial control of land whilst forming the latter as a global, competitive project with other settler nations.

Alexander Menrisky | Everyday Ecofascism: A Response

This paper generally responds to the narratives my co-panelists trace across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by considering the scope of American ecofascism today. Their papers home in on ecofascist logics in a number of arenas, all of which illuminate the reach of what we recognize as right-wing ideology into
environmentalist art, politics, and ideas. To my mind, however, what links their arguments is less the presence of right-wing actors themselves, and more the sheer pervasiveness of ecofascist ideas: their structural rather than overt persistence. As the challenges posed by global climate change have become increasingly apparent, right-wing figures have more frequently framed anti-immigrant, anti-Indigenous, and otherwise white-supremacist sentiment in terms of environmental as well as national survival, many of them explicitly claiming the term ecofascism to describe their position. To what extent, and to what end, does such rhetoric circulate in casual utterances as well as overtly political writing on both the right and left? Given ecofascism’s mutability, as well as the term’s varied history of use both as an epithet and a badge of pride, this response will consider ecofascism not as a staple of right-wing political ideology, but as a persistent, broadly available cultural narrative about environment and identity. Specifically, I will suggest that it is a motif of consumption that animates ecofascism’s narrative logic, and in turn makes ecofascism itself consumable by a variety of environmentalist stakeholders. If explicit, right-wing ecofascism fundamentally rests on settler-colonial consumption of land, then implicit, everyday ecofascism is the displacement of that consumption onto other, often seemingly innocuous objects. What I ultimately suggest is that just as implicit expressions of structural white supremacy require as much if not more attention than overt racism, implicit expressions of ecofascism—read through this motif of consumption—require as much scrutiny as overtly white-supremacist environmentalism.

Rebecca Evans | Ecofascism in the Emergent Cli-fi Corpus

In response to the roundtable’s call for thinking ecofascism as a heuristic, this talk approaches the corpus of climate change fiction through the heuristic lens of ecofascism, considering questions such as: What latent and explicit threads of ecofascism run through this emergent literary field? What happens to our understanding of climate fiction if we experiment with defining the genre in terms of its relation to ecofascist thought? Conversely, what happens to our understanding of ecofascism when we approach it through the particular textual field of cli-fi? What are the productive affiliations and distinctions that we can trace between ecofascism as a cli-fi heuristic and other lenses commonly applied to the genre, such as climate justice and climate literacy? The material on which I’m drawing for this presentation will largely have been generated through a collaborative research project I am leading this summer with a small team of undergraduate researchers from my home institution, a small liberal arts college in Texas. This research project is itself somewhat experimental, seeking to create models both for collaborative humanistic research and for the application of literary research methods beyond literary-critical scholarship—for instance, in a public humanities, creative, or pedagogical artifact. Ecofascism and climate justice are among the major themes which I will guiding the undergraduate researchers to engage, particularly as they begin to form their own models of interdisciplinary inquiry and production. Thus, my remarks will not only survey what happens at the analytic intersection of ecofascism and cli-fi, but will also draw on my own recent experience to consider ecofascism in relation to interdisciplinarity and undergraduate pedagogy.

Shane Hall | Last Lost Causes and New Kinds of Underground Railroads: Literary American Civil War Reenactments and Eco-fascism in Recent Cli-Fi

In this working paper I explore the connection between fascism’s need for salient nationalist mythmaking and the prominence of Civil War and Antebellum South iconography in climate fiction. Both Octavia Butler’s Parable duology (published in 1993 and 1998) and American War (2017) depict dystopian narratives of climate chaos fueled by characters and societies embracing eco-authoritarian beliefs and actions. Both heavily present these eco-authoritarian, militaristic responses to climate change through the ostensible trappings of the American Civil War and antebellum abolition and pro-slavery movements. What makes the climate chaos and ecofascist violence within Parable of the Sower, Parable of the Talents, and American War so plausible is the historical resonance of these novels within the framework of the US’ “unfinished civil war.” In the work of Octavia Butler and Omar El Akkad authoritarian responses to climate impacts unleash political violence that symbolically
reenacts America’s Civil War. These text provide us with a chance to more closely examine the ways our collective memory and mythmaking around that Civil War may elide with the “myths” that all forms of fascism, including ecofascism, require to take root in the 21st century.

**Narratives of Childhood and Environmental Justice**

**Andrea Casals | A Latin American Reading of The Hunger Games**

In this presentation I propose that the insights of 20th century Latin American intellectuals on environmental injustice and their early understandings of its connection to colonialism and neocolonialism can be applied as a reading apparatus to expand and even subvert the symbolic meaning of popular dystopian narratives such as *The Hunger Games* (2008). I assert that reading this narrative as an allegory of Global South-North exchanges – and not only as a cautionary tale of a postapocalyptic US – raises awareness of the roles we play, which is a precondition for the emergence of radical hope (Freire’s esperanza crítica). Keywords: environmental injustice, radical hope, The Hunger Games.

**Clare Echterling | Silver People: Voices from the Panama Canal, Colonial Violence, and the Anthropocene**

The slow violence of colonialism is foundational to genocide and dispossession in the Anthropocene. Even so, few works of youth literature connect these dots. “Silver People: Voices from the Panama Canal, Colonial Violence, and the Anthropocene” details how Margarita Engle’s novel-in-verse exposes the violence the U.S. inflicted upon Panamanians, migrant workers, and the environment during and after the canal’s construction. This presentation explores how Silver People rejects triumphalist narratives, decolonizing the canal’s story and showing the consequences of colonial oppression.

**Lara Saguisag | Winds of Change: Reframing The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind as a Story of Energy and Climate (In)Justice**

In the picture book edition of The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, the narrative emphasis is on how the young protagonist responds to an emergency with grit and ingenuity. When Malawi suffers drought and famine in the early aughts, teenaged William Kamkwamba constructs a windmill from scrap metal and junk. His do-it-yourself effort results into a wind generator that provides his family and community electricity. William’s story, framed as that of an exceptional individual who overcomes great adversity, has been embraced in the United States, most likely because it closely parallels the American success story. But story of William is not so unique. Many impoverished people, who live off-grid because of inequitable systems of energy distribution, often have to hack their way to survival. Malawi remains one of the world’s poorest nations, and climate change has only exacerbated its economic crises. Some readers may celebrate The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind for its buoyant image of a young person who experiences but refuses to give in to despair, who strives to generate “clean energy” for his community and nation. But perhaps it is worth recasting William’s story not as a tale of individual triumph but as an account of how the poor respond to and resist global inequality. It is a narrative that can be used to expose energy inequities and the global scale of environmental injustice.

**Nathalie op de Beeck | Born in a Burning House: Greta Thunberg and Childhood as a Community**

Iconic individuals become aspirational subjects for picture book biographies, and 2019 saw several homages to activist Greta Thunberg. “Born in a House on Fire: Greta Thunberg and Childhood as a Community” considers Thunberg’s rallying cry (“our house is on fire”) and its implied collective “we/us/our.” This presentation reconsiders literary conventions that revere exceptional leaders like Thunberg and notes how
contemporary youth movements replace singular change agents with coalition-building.

Marek Oziewicz | 'It was just a few bad people': Exploring Questions of Responsibility for Climate Change with Geoff Rodkey’s *We’re Not from Here*

In Geoff Rodkey’s middle grade novel *We’re Not from Here* (2019), a group of human survivors seek asylum on the planet Choom. The refugees are viewed with suspicion, though. How can you be peaceful, the Choomians ask, if you destroyed your home planet? The twelve-year-old protagonist protests, “it wasn’t us! It was just a few bad people”—people, he adds, whom we weren’t able to stop (81). This fumbling defense, I suggest, is not about our future in space. It reflects the most common helpless reasoning in response to eco-anxiety young people feel today. To empower students to become agents of change, children’s literature must find ways to interrogate the reasoning that capitulates to the status quo. This presentation recounts the results of a survey and conversations with my students about the opening premise of Rodkey’s book. It suggests that creating opportunities for students to critically engage with questions of responsibility and agency in story-rich contexts is crucial for the development of their climate change literacy. The argument starts from the proposition that students often have a better grasp of the systemic drivers of climate change than they realize, yet they also tend to blame people—or human nature—for what they had earlier correctly identified as outcomes of the way our socio-economic system is organized. The suggestion is made that the students’ climate guilt is a cultural construct manufactured by institutions of our petronormative status quo. To grapple with climate guilt, I suggest, students should be given opportunities to interrogate the ecocidal operations of the Capitalocene in specific narratives. Geoff Rodkey’s novel is shown as helpful to introduce the notion of manufactured deflection and interrogate the students’ climate guilt.

**Colonial Theft as Homemaking and Ecological Disaster**

Kyle Keeler | Settler Theft and Indigenous Resistance in the Kleptocene

This presentation recontextualizes the Anthropocene as “The Kleptocene,” as the philosophies that underpin the Epoch were founded in colonial theft of land, lives (both human and nonhuman), and materials. It focuses on theft in New England through the U.S. Early National Period, as founding U.S. figures warmed the continent’s climate in the name of comfortability and familiarity through deforestation, farming, and genocide, seeking to create a new home and identity for themselves and their descendants.

Esme Murdock | The Underneath of Home

This talk examines the hidden agencies of settler homes made with stolen Indigenous lands, labors, and lives through a close analysis of Fleur Pillager’s revenge upon the colonizer who stole her tribe’s wooded territories in *Four Souls*. Specifically, I examine how Fleur uses her tracking skills to repossess her homelands through her navigation of the house itself and through inscribing a familiarity within the domicile that is illegible to settlers.

Wayne Wapeemukwa | Local, Dweller, Settler: The Settler-Colonial Underpinnings of Bioregionalism and Localism

This presentation critiques environmental bioregionalism’s proposal to become ‘native to place’ as a solution to anthropocene catastrophe. I argue that such calls for neophyte autochthones comprise what Shari Huhndorf and Philip J. Deloria call ‘playing Indian.’ Self-described ‘localist’ Wes Jackson (1993) epitomizes this when he explicitly calls for a new ‘white-autochthony’ as a solution for the urbanization of white farmers. I conclude that unless bioregionalism is coupled with decolonization it will merely exacerbate our ecologically precarious age.
Paul J. Guernsey | The Infrastructures of White Settler Perception: A Political Phenomenology Ecocide and Emergency

This presentation critiques environmental bioregionalism’s proposal to become ‘native to place’ as a solution to anthropocene catastrophe. I argue that such calls for neophyte autochthones comprise what Shari Huhndorf and Philip J. Deloria call ‘playing Indian.’ Self-described ‘localist’ Wes Jackson (1993) epitomizes this when he explicitly calls for a new ‘white-autochthony’ as a solution for the urbanization of white farmers. I conclude that unless bioregionalism is coupled with decolonization it will merely exacerbate our ecologically precarious age.

Re(creating) the Latinx Outdoors: Testimonios and Activism in the 21st Century

David Vazquez | “Latinxs and the Outdoors: Leisure, Colorblind Racism, and Learning to Love the Natural World”

According to recent data from the 2019 Outdoor Participation Report sponsored by the Outdoor Industry Association, Latinxs make up only 11% of outdoor participants. But industry surveys and trade press often focus on understanding Latinxs as lacking something that limits outdoor participation. Instead of treating this lack as natural, this paper argues that low Latinx participation in the outdoors results from what sociologist Eduardo Bonilla Silva describes as colorblind racism. Through auto-ethnography of the author’s participation in sports like mountain biking and fishing and textual analysis of industry media, the author makes the case that there is an implicit aspect of white supremacy in outdoor supports that limits BIPOC participation.

Priscilla Ybarra | “Telling a Better Story: Exposing American Conservation’s Racist Roots”

What comes to the forefront when telling the story of American conservation? Priscilla Solis Ybarra presents an auto-theory narrative on taking up natural history alongside an exploration of the “hidden” Mexican American identity of the Aldo and Estella Leopolds, one of the leading families of American conservation. This anti-linear history dismantles existing disciplinary divides to continue a redefinition of human relationships with one another and with the Earth. Ybarra puts identity at the center of one’s relation with the Earth to learn how stories can help negotiate this challenging terrain.

Sarah Wald | Stories of Birdwatching in the 21st Century

This talks draws from my current monograph project examining the creative non-fiction, poetry, film, graphic novels, blogs, tweets, and other forms of storytelling that are central to the Outdoor Equity Movement. Diversifying representations of outdoor recreation and public lands use is one of the movement’s primary strategies for change. Attending to these forms of storytelling helps us understand how the Outdoor Equity Movement offers different models of the relationship among identity, nation, and nature than the mainstream white environmental movement has historically provided. In this talk, I focus on birdwatching narratives. Specifically, I discuss J. Drew Lanham’s essays and the Mapping Migraciones Project. Like the other texts in my archive, these texts both intervene in the culture of white supremacy. They disrupt and displace the whiteness of birdwatching. They also draw parallels between the violence of white supremacy that constrains Black and Brown life in the Americas and the experiences of birdwatching while Black and/or Brown. They claim a space in birdwatching for people of color. They also emphasize a birdwatching that is about joy, wonder, and identities that exist independent of white narratives of racial suffering and victimhood. They find in birdwatching connection, connection to birds, to nature, to family, and to home. They open possibilities for thinking about nature outside of the nation state and the potential to confront the settler colonialism at the heart of US conservation.
Gabriela Nunez | (Re)Creating Fitness: Decolonial Running Justice

In this presentation I suggest that running justice is a growing movement that athletes use as a platform for social activism. I situate running justice as a decolonial practice that athletes use to call attention to the ongoing violence against people of color, especially against indigenous communities and their environments. In the practice of decolonial endurance running, athletes not only call attention to these dire problems but enact community change as activists. Additionally, athletes promote self-healing from the ongoing traumas and legacies of colonialism through the act of feeling the physical and emotional pain of endurance running. By analyzing the running justice projects of indigenous activist Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel and Latinx author Noé Alvarez’s autobiography Spirit Run (2021), I discuss the following research questions. What makes endurance running decolonial? How is decolonial endurance running distinct from other forms of running? What does it mean to embody activism, literally and figuratively, while participating in challenging physical exertion?

Geopoetic Meditations in an Emergency

Joshua Schuster | Clamorous Personifications in Brenda Iijima’s Remembering Animals

My aim here is to learn from the human-animal poetical densities of Brenda Iijima’s Remembering Animals (published in 2016). I discuss Iijima’s poems in connection with the recent ubiquity of devices associated with personification in poetics means for conceptions of poetry, personhood, and animality. Recent studies in ecopoetics tend to celebrate the usage of these devices, I think rightly, as means by which poems cultivate overlapping human and animal worlds. But poets and readers of poetry have often raised questions about what constitutes a convincing or appropriate use of these tropes. I examine some passages in Remembering Animals in the context of these debates on what personification means in contemporary ecopoetics.

Jonathan Skinner & Tom Crompton | Dialectical Sonorities: Carbon Footprints in Peter Culley’s Climax Forest

In this presentation we turn to the work of Vancouver Island poet and photographer Peter Culley to explore how poetries from the abandoned sites of primary resource extraction register and respond to different kinds of damage across local and global scales, and to make the case for why poetry such as Culley’s should not be overlooked for what it has to offer the study of a combined and uneven modernity and its ecological frontiers. Culley’s Hammertown trilogy invites collaborative and collocative readings across a range of media, and in our presentation we accept this invitation to track a participatory methodology. Drawing on Mirko M. Hall’s concept of “dialectical sonority” (an adaptation of Walter Benjamin’s “dialectical image”) we demonstrate how reading the “real place” of petro-capitalism entails not so much new narrative strategies as new acoustic techniques: the “dialectical sonority” offers an acoustics for listening to Culley’s verse in relation to his focus on technological obsolescence as ecological succession embedded within deindustrialized landscapes, his approach to the poem as a kind of recording studio, and his practice of the intertextual and intermedial remix. It also allows us to audit the “multi scalar” relations his poetry mobilizes and the “scalar dissonance” of the so-called Anthropocene that Culley’s Hammertown is particularly well-positioned to sound. As we listen for another kind of future from the remixed present of Culley’s poetry, we intuit landscapes through images of degeneration as well as possibility, we touch history as the escape from history, and in so doing we stay with the trouble of our damaged present. Our multi-media presentation features, projected alongside the commentary, a recording of Culley reading the opening poem to his Hammertown trilogy, “Greetings from Hammertown,” as well as a slideshow of Culley’s photographs of Nanaimo, B.C. landscapes, and supplementary video and audio context.
Lynn Keller | Choral Collage of the Corporate Dump

In the current cultural moment that I have dubbed “the self-conscious Anthropocene,” awareness of the myriad ways in which human lives are intertwined with more-than-human creatures and materials has motived in eco-poetics diverse strategies for avoiding or modifying the traditional lyric speaker. Exemplifying this trend, in her richly polysemous, multi-genre book, The Republic of Exit 43: Outtakes and Scores from an Archeology and Pop-Up Opera of the Corporate Dump (Atelos, 2016), Jennifer Scappettone has created collective versions of the poetic speaker that are suited to representing current “ecochemical calamity.” This paper examines Scappettone’s inventive deployments of choral voicing, which, as they extend the functions of the chorus in Greek tragedy, contribute crucially to her dramatizing the results of her extensive digging into the history, material impacts, and legal battles surrounding several massive toxic dumps in the neighborhood where she was raised. Sample texts from three choral sections of the book—“A Chorus Fosse,” one of the visual collages from a “POPs-Up Interlude,” and one of the “displacements” made from text on salvaged trash that compose the “Post-Consumer Confessional Sonnet”—demonstrate different versions of what I call “trans-vocality.” That is, they deploy multiple voices from literary tradition, bureaucracy and corporate powers, legal battles, popular culture, medical studies, journalism and advertising, from victims of chemical pollution and the industrial pollutants themselves, in ways that convey those voices’ interpenetrating environmental embeddedness. Reaching far beyond the Syosset and Fresh Kills landfills that were the focus of her research, Scappettone’s adaptations of the chorus yield an ethnically crucial re-conception of poetic voice that is capable of registering our trans-corporeal entanglements in the often invisible, globally disseminated “corporate dump.”

Jennifer Scappettone | Choralizing the Copper Lyre: A Translingual Geopoetics of Undermining

This presentation attempts to reconstruct some scenes and soundscapes of global protest that have emerged from laborers and other “externalities” of the transnational copper extraction economy over the past century. In seeking to map the connections, ecological and geopolitical, between one scene of exploitation and another, I aim to invoke the smothered, uncollected, and untranscribed voices or noise that eluded the archive in the production of global telecommunications technology: a stringing of underground, undersea cables and wires—from the first transatlantic telegraph line laid in 1858 through the evolving network of global telecommunications—that I have come to performatively figure as an immense, and collectively soundable, copper lyre. Exploring the intersectional organizing efforts of unions like the IWW to unite workers across a panoply of languages and cultures in the nineteen teens, I argue that the translational soundscapes of their activism should alter the way we imagine US political discourse, presenting a politics of direct action in linguistic stereo—one characterized by listening, attunement, and revocalization (like the human mic in an expanded linguistic field). I close with a poetic invocation of this condition through demonstration of “Pennies from Nether,” an AR app I developed with artist/technologists Judd Morrissey and Abraham Avnisan for a collaborative installation titled “LAMENT; Or, the Mine Has Opened Up Well” to sound the conflicts embedded within our devices.

Tyrone Williams | Failed States as Dump Sites: Reading Somalia Through As Iz

In this talk I propose to read through some of the ecological reports that have been generated about the exploitation of so-called ‘failed states: as dump sites for freighters and trawlers in and near the Indian Sea and the eastern coasts of the African continent. I will explicate. Tease out, some of the buried references to these reports (issued by WHO and other international watch-dog organizations) in two or three poems by my 2018 book, As Iz. The point here is that ecological racism accentuates and conjoins political and economic racism however “invisible” it may be to American (and perhaps more generally, Western) myopia. Moreover, the concept of “failed state” obviates the ways that the history of Western European colonialism eviscerated, when
not openly expropriating, crucial resources in/from these “states” during the premodern period. The “failed state” is here a moral (as well as economic, political and cultural) judgment projected onto peoples whose lands made it possible for Western European countries to sustain themselves as “successful” states.

**Multispecies Justice: Emergency, Action, Theory**

Danielle Celermajer | Writing Climate Catastrophe through a Multispecies Lens

Human exceptionalist ontologies have their counterpart in narrative styles that locate the human knower and narrator outside worlds populated by others. Indeed, they do so even when they explicitly seek to deconstruct hierarchical orders of being. Writing from the midst of the Australian black summer fires both demanded and offered up another way of writing, one where I was sufferer amidst other sufferers, and also amongst them as we sought to navigate and inhabit this world in rupture. In this presentation, I will focus on the intimacy of rhetorical and political questions in relation to the more than human and pose some of the challenges for writing otherwise. How, for example, do we write in ways that infuse the more than human with all of its animacy without evoking the magical other to modernist realism? How do we write the complexity of animals and trees without anthropomorphism? How do we write catastrophes that are discontinues with our realist imaginaries while tethering our words to actual worlds? How do we move between the human scales of the particular where affect can be provoked and also convey the scale of what is unfolding? Drawing on my book Summertime, I offer some thoughts of how I grappled with these questions by way of opening a larger conversation for writing climate catastrophe in ways that speak of and with all earth beings.

Harlan Weaver | Queer Affiliations and Multispecies Justice in Pit Bull Politics

Celebrations of queer kinships run rampant in discourses of both broader animal rescue and pit bull adoptions in particular, with cross-species claimings serving as the vehicle through which ever more queer families are imagined. Challenging both the hetero- and homonormative logics of these moves, this talk takes up what I term the “queer affiliations” innate to a range of pit bull-related spaces and which, through sensory connections and labors to keep pit bulls out of animal shelters in the first place, challenge the white supremacy and settler-colonialism of more normative imaginings of multi-species families and kinships. Through these “queer affiliations” I propose a means of both connecting and recognizing connections that works to the side of the violences inherent in terms such as kinship, family, and population, facilitating the imagining otherwise necessary to doing multispecies justice.

Nathaniel Otjen | Resisting With: Human-Species Coalitions and the Pursuit of Multispecies Justice

This presentation argues that resistance never occurs in isolation. Drawing from Donna Haraway’s evocative phrase “becoming with,” I develop the phrase resisting with to describe a mode of resistance that happens when collections of multispecies actors come together to defy shared harm. I examine how Lars Eighner’s Travels with Lizbeth and Julia Butterfly Hill’s The Legacy of Luna practice forms of resisting with by challenging the shared harms of heteronormativity and extinction. As these memoirs demonstrate, resisting with is a multispecies practice, one that brings people and species together to fight for common worlds. Resisting with creates spaces where multispecies justice can take hold and where multispecies alliances can flourish.
Racial Ecologies and Collaborations in Livable Futures

Charles and Tammy Reeves, Alex Imbot, and Bethany Wiggin | Futures Beyond Refining

Futures Beyond Refining is a collaborative research experiment to explore the historical relationship between the South Philadelphia oil refinery (last operated by Philadelphia Energy Solutions, or PES) and its surrounding neighborhoods and engages Philadelphians to imagine alternative uses for the site—literally a “future beyond refining.” Thinking with Roane and Hosbey’s “Black ecologies,” the project takes inspiration from local strategies of resistance and survival to develop pedagogical, creative, and activist practices that open up cleaner, healthier, and more equitable futures.

Amy Balkin and Bethany Wiggin | Writing Climate Catastrophe through a Multispecies Lens

A conversation between Bethany Wiggin and PPEH remote artist-in-residence Amy Balkin on the collaborations and process that contributed to new public artwork Area of Interest: Former Sunoco/PES Refinery Site Billboard. Over June 2021, a billboard along I-76 situated research materials for alternative just futures for the land adjacent to the now-closed site-formerly the East Coast's largest oil refinery—as community activists continue to demand transparency and raise environmental justice concerns about remaining chemical contamination.

Kristy Guevara-Flanagan and Maite Zubiaurre | Águilas

Along the southern desert border in Arizona, it is estimated that only one out of every five missing migrants are ever found. Águilas is the story of one group of searchers, the Aguilas del Desierto. Once a month these volunteers—construction workers, gardeners, domestic laborers by trade—set out to recover the missing, reported to them by loved ones often thousands of miles away. Amidst rising political repression and cartel violence, as well as the eternal difficulties of travel in the Sonoran Desert, the Aguilas carry out their solemn task. Águilas lays bare the tragic reality of migrant death by venturing deep into the wilderness of the borderlands. The desert is a vast cemetery where the bodies and dried bones of migrants lie exposed under the scorching sun. This presentation will discuss the process by which the filmmakers worked with this organization to tell this story via an observational and poetic response to undocumented immigration and the hardships of the border crossing experience.

Radical Imaginations beyond the Anthropocene

Joni Adamson | Tracing Roots: From EJ to Global Syndemic, Building an Humanities Community of Purpose

In this presentation I examine what the Humanities for the Environment Network has learned about and is contributing to building local, regional, and international coalitions for knowledge and action. I call for the Environmental Humanities ‘Community of Interest’ to become a ‘Communities of Purpose’ as we work with the United Nations, UNESCO, and others to strengthen the world’s ability to achieve the United Nations’ 17 Sustainability Goals for the “Decade of Action” (2020-2030).

Tsemone Ogbemi | How Climate Storytelling Can Generate Hope and Lead to Action

Qualitative facets of climate data are useful for making the quantitative facets meaningful, and they also help us to develop an awareness around our own experiences with climate change. The Penn Program in Environmental Humanities’ My Climate Story project lies at the intersection of those functions, guiding people
through the practice of articulating their own observations and reflections about the changing climate. Through working on My Climate Story, I've learned that giving expression to these stories is a crucial step toward imagining safer, alternative futures.

Stephanie LeMenager | Welcome to the PNW Just Futures Institute

The PNW Just Futures Institute hopes to be a transformational regional platform for racial and climate justice with collaborations among the University of Oregon (Eugene and Portland), the University of Idaho (Moscow), and Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA). We propose research clusters that foster anti-racist futures primarily in rural areas through collaborative research, publications, outreach, pedagogical experiments, and academic incentives to increase access by under-represented Indigenous students and students of color, including first-generation, to higher education. Each partner institution offers specific programs and unique perspectives we will integrate into a set of shared products.

Shayla Smith & Giovanna Di Chiro | Sharing Soul-ar Stories: Gardens, Solar Panels, Murals

In our presentation, we explore how we engage with and document stories of resistance and regeneration focused on community gardens, solar infrastructures, and the arts through campus-community partnerships with organizations supporting environmental justice in North Philadelphia. We discuss how our work together as a professor and former student in collaboration with community organizations in Philadelphia and co-teaching environmental humanities courses at Swarthmore College has shaped our own engagements with environmental justice literatures and praxis. We speak of “soul-ar” stories to emphasize our commitment to keeping the soul, or our connection to the people and community, at the forefront of the “sustainability” transition and imaginings of just and sustainable futures. These soul-ar stories challenge the mainstream, technocratic narrative of environmentalism and sustainability, and underscore the necessity of creating a genuinely just transition to equitable, care-based, and ecologically sound energy futures. Through our engagement with soul-ar stories, we see how the connection to the sun, the soil, and the land help communities organize for environmental justice.

Jennifer Garcia Peacock | Visualizing Latinx Food Justice: Art, Activism and the 21st Century Environmental Studies Classroom

In this paper, I will discuss how art and practice-based food justice initiatives in my Latinxs and the Environment course at Davidson College have helped students create a more nuanced “picture” of decolonial Latinx environments. I will show how these collaborations—focusing on the visual and material culture of food—have produced a wide-range of material, including a mural, an exhibit, a cookbook, a garden, and a children’s book. I argue that this set of collaborations offer important insights into developing arts-based environmental justice material in the twenty-first century environmental studies classroom.

Radical Imaginations beyond the Anthropocene II

Juan Carlos Galeano | The Soul of Plants and Animals

In “The Souls of Plants and Animals,” Juan Carlos Galeano discusses how his poems, derived from historic processes of cultural exchange and hybridity in Amazonia, are strongly influenced by indigenous cosmovisions. He argues that the writing of the poems becomes an experience of feeling the multiple subjectivities of the nonhuman, an act of multispecies coauthoring through imagination.
Gisela Heffes | Radical Futures: The Semantics of Toxicity in Latin American Literatures

This talk addresses the emergence of new fictions that question the very notion of future. By portraying an unknown and an unheard of geography, these novels push the fate of humans and non-humans into a radical zone that showcase, through experimentation, as well as different literary devices and techniques, how the world could look like if we remain impassive. Furthermore, they explore the processes of environmental destruction that are not always immediately visible yet increase “in time and space and transcend the limits of our experience,” as Rob Nixon has remarked, in Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.

Vera Coleman | The Fiber of our Being: (Non)Human Corporealities and Indigenous Ecologies in Mexican Art

Using the fiber arts to make visible the many connections that traverse species lines, Mexican artist Alejandra Zermeño situates her work in relation to ancient traditions of yarn painting practiced by the indigenous Wixárica (Huichol) communities in Mexico. The works of Wixárica artists such as José Benítez Sánchez and Francisco Bautista constitute sophisticated forms of knowledge about humans’ relationship with nature and the cosmos, where we came from, and where we are going. In dialogue with indigenous ecologies, material feminisms and multispecies ethnography, I propose that these visual-tactile forms of cultural expression reveal the human body as embedded in a vast network of multispecies relatedness whole radically imagining the moment of encounter between different species as hopeful figurations of multispecies flourishing beyond global environmental crisis.

Nathalia Hernandez Vidal | Entangled temporalities and the problematization of “climate emergency” in movements for environmental justice and food sovereignty in Latin America

Movements for environmental justice and food sovereignty in Latin America have historically denounced the multiple ecocides, systematic killings of environmental activists, and slow death that the extraction ecologies bring with them. Yet, it is only recently that the UN and governments in the Global North have declared and agreed on the existence of a “climate emergency.” In this paper, I expand feminist scholarship on temporality and capitalism to critique the temporal regime of “emergency.” Based on long-term fieldwork with environmental justice and food sovereignty movements in Latin America, I discuss the concept of entangled temporalities as a political alternative that can potentially circulate other affective and political responses to socio-environmental destruction.

Gabrielle Francis | Reinventing Ancestry Through Mixed-Media Performance

As a recent graduate from The New School where I was a double major in both Visual Studies and Global Studies with a minor in race and ethnicity and a queer Indo-Caribbean decolonial scholar, writer, artists, organizer and healer my multi disciplinary work centers intersectionality healing ancestry and fostering our radical imaginations grounded and rooted in abolition and liberation. My presentation is a mediation on the work of contemporary artists and scholars of indenture descent including myself, Suzanne Persad, Andil Gosine and Renuka Maharaj and the possibilities our work opens up around memory and space. I use mixed-media art as a way to approach, understand and reimagine Coolitude ancestry.
Abigail Perez Aguilera | Radical Imaginations and Pilgrimages in the Capitolocene: Ecomedia in Times of Emergence and Resurgence

In "Radical Imaginations and Pilgrimages in the Capitolocene: Ecomedia in Times of Emergence and Resurgence" In this presentation, Abigail Perez Aguilera relies on the work of decolonial feminist Maria Lugones, and her work on pilgrimage as an ontological and epistemological movement, sensing multiple worlds and praxis to connect the radical imaginations born in times of Indigenous emergence and resurgence in the Americas and its diasporas. Perez Aguilera pays particular attention to ecomedia as a way to document radical imaginations beyond the Capitolocene and settler colonialism.

Militant Ecologies

Alexandra Campbell & Carter Fred | 'Follow the Teargas': Settler Atmospherics, Black Microclimates, & Insurrectionary Ecologies

On April 30th, 1992, NOAA weather satellites reported a ‘thermal anomaly’ across south-central Los Angeles. Later that day, 'Life & Times' described the event as ‘an earthquake of sorts; a social upheaval of immense magnitude.’ Viewers in the broadcasting range of local news, as one reporter noted, would already be breathing in the smoke clouds that hung over the city. In each of these accounts, the riots that followed the acquittal of the police filmed beating Rodney King register historically as a meteorological event. Against the ‘racist environment’ (Opperman 2019) and ‘antiblack weather’ (Sharpe 2016) of state violence, the uprising emerges as a microclimate. Following Christina Sharpe’s heuristic of the weather (2016) and the microclimate (2017), we trace the atmospherics of state violence through a constellation of militant poetries as material lines of inquiry that link the political ecologies of crowd control with more dispersive or durational forms of environmental slow violence that regulate and discipline the breath of Black, Indigenous, and Palestinian populations. Where environmental justice movements have revealed how the uneven distribution of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ air has long configured a ‘socio-atmospherics of power’ (Choy & Zee 2015), reading teargas and water cannons as the condensation and spectacularization of attritional ‘settler atmospherics’ (Simmons 2017) prompts a necessary reconsideration of insurrectionary action as a mode of environmental practice and resistance. In this paper, we ask what happens when we consider riots in and against their environmental history? How can we articulate the ecologies of teargas, choke points, barricades, and counterinsurgent tactics? How do antiblack weathers and settler atmospherics critically and materially intersect with one another? What problems arise from juridical and atmospheric framings of the riot as a ‘state of suspension’? And finally, what potentialities and what politics emerge from reading militant poetics through insurrectionary ecologies?

Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo | Eco-action and the Beat poem: Diane di Prima’s Militant revolutionary Letters

In Brave New Words: How Literature Will Save the Planet (2010) Elizabeth Ammons champions the, in her own words, “outrageously out-of-step, unpostmodern idea” of recognizing “the power of words to inspire us, to transform us, to give us strength and courage for the difficult task of re-creating the world” (p.14). Words definitely carried weight for quintessential Beat poet Diane di Prima. While for a long time the work produced by the poets and artists associated with the heterogeneous Beat generation was belittled as naïve or apolitical – see Burdick, 1959 or, more recently, Silliman, 2007 –many Beat poets used their work to not only denounce injustices, but to bring about action to effect change in the world. Di Prima’s Revolutionary Letters, a collection which she started writing in the early 1960s but expanded well into the 1990s, re-creates the world through poetry not to offer a romanticized escape from it, but to encourage anarchist militant action to transform it. Much of this action is centered around environmental concerns. This presentation argues that, as Lawrence Buell has theorized, understood as acts of environmental imagination poems “potentially register and energize four kinds of engagement with the world” (2001, p. 2) and can indeed impact the physical world by stirring
consciousness, changing attitudes or even calling people into action. Through close readings of poems in the collection and a contextualization within the poet's own activism, this presentation reframes Diane di Prima's ecological concerns in Revolutionary Letters in the context of political revolt and anarchist eco-action.

Lauren Nelson | Ruination & the Ruined Nation: Michelle Cliff’s Militant Ecologies

Scenes from a guerilla encampment bookend Michelle Cliff’s No Telephone to Heaven: a clandestine militia hide among the overgrown vegetation of the protagonist’s familial land in rural Jamaica, sleeping among the wreckage of an abandoned house, stockpiling arms, and preparing an assault on the neocolonial state. When Cliff describes the abandoned farm in St. Elizabeth Parish as “left to ruination,” she indexes the “exploding disorder” of the native vegetation and forecasts the use of the farm as a haven for the covert anti-government militia. Here, the movement toward ruination is a movement away from what Europe’s imperial project has designated as usable life, valid subjectivities, and the realm of the political: Cliff’s use of the term outlines a sense of survival and persistence in the wake of centuries of conquest, enslavement, and genocide. Because the land left to ruination comes to house the militia’s liberation struggle, “ruinate” refers also to the varied forms of redress that No Telephone to Heaven’s characters enact over the course of the novel. Cliff’s novel is also vexed by the question of political praxis in a nation that has been long plagued by imperial violence and its attendant environmental destruction, and, moreover, that the plot of No Telephone portrays a deep dissatisfaction with normative constructions of political action and resistance. I argue that No Telephone offers salient challenges to the central tenets of humanist discourse and thus recasts some of the central concepts that guide our understanding of colonial modernity, namely sovereignty, reason, revolution, and redress. I argue that No Telephone insists on the entanglement of fugitivity and ruination: by illustrating the twinned motives of both the landscape’s and the militia’s “exploding disorder,” the novel frames covert action and unruly forms of being as the only viable challenge to the global emergencies of our times.

Daniel Eltringham | Guerrilla (Eco)poetics: Militant Struggle & the Environments of Translation

This comparative paper reads translations of Latin American guerrilla lyric in terms of “guerrilla (eco)poetics,” taking its framework from current debates around ecopoetry and ecopoetics, understood as the theorization of poetry that addresses environmental crisis (Walton 2018). It focuses on ecopoetic dimensions of guerrilla poetry translated in avant-garde poetry networks and small-press editions, from Edward Dorn and Gordon Brotherston’s Our Word/Palabra de Guerrillero (1968) to Margaret Randall’s translations of the Bolivian guerrillera Rita Valdivia (2017). Drawing on the literature of insurgency, the paper interrogates the figures of “la montaña” and “la selva”, which served as idealized ciphers for semi-autonomous rural spaces beyond the state’s direct control. It argues that the anticipatory ecopoetic militancy of “the mountain” in guerrilla lyric, while often articulated at an uneasy distance from Indigenous resistance, indexes a social-ecological space distinct from that formulated in English-speaking ecocritical traditions. The paper explores intersections between four overlapping guerrilla ecologies: firstly, the interdependence of human and nonhuman liberation; and secondly, the romantic myth of the mountain, but also its pedagogy, dependent on situated and relational ecological knowledges, including epistemic decolonization. In doing so it draws on critiques of “the mountain” as guerrilla cliché by Filipa César (2018) and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2020). Thirdly, it considers environmental metaphors of form, swarm and strategy, which, fourthly, naturalize social reproduction through figurative language, encompassing the militant practicality of supply, infrastructure and subsistence (and their obverse, sabotage and counter-strike). These inferences make speculative connections between militant guerrilla ecopoetics and aspects of the environmental humanities as a theoretical framework. Finally, it asks whether the guerrilla ecologies it has identified add up to another variation of what Michael Cronin (2017) calls “eco-translation”, in the belated, uneven movements these texts make from material environments of struggle, to “translational” bibliographic spaces expressive of a more distant solidarity.
Environmental Racism and Racial Justice in the Anthropocene

Henry Ivry | Black Ecologies in the Long Anthropocene

In Allegories of the Anthropocene, Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues that the Anthropocene is often cast as a "discourse of rupture." This claim to novelty marking a caesura from the past, however, elides a much longer history of the Anthropocene. "The lack of engagement with postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives," DeLoughrey writes, "has shaped Anthropocene discourse to claim the novelty of crisis rather than being attentive to the historical continuity of dispossession and disaster caused by empire." Added to this list, is a lack of engagement with blackness that has reinforced a discourse of novelty and reified the singularity of the Anthropocene crisis. In this paper, I explore a much longer history of the Anthropocene by way of Black literature. I argue that the theoretical and material practices of a broader cross section of Black thought provide us with the tools to think through the asymmetries of a world where the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and a carbon level that sits at 416.46 parts per million at the time of this writing coexist and animate one another. Bringing together a nascent thread of contemporary Black studies with the early 20th-century writing of Zora Neale Hurston, I examine the ways in which problems of “scale” and “the human,” two problems now axiomatic of the Anthropocene, are, in fact, anticipated and critiqued in Hurston’s work. Although tentative and exploratory in nature, it is a goal of this paper to begin sounding out a much longer, and much blacker, history of the Anthropocene, specifically focusing on the possibilities opened up to us by using Black literature as a way to explore a world outside the twinned crises of environmental crisis and anti-Black violence.

Ryan Poll | Searching Through Racialized Soil: The Gardens of Racial Justice in the Work of Alice Walker and Leslie Bennett

This talk explores how Alice Walker’s In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens (1983) Leslie Bennett’s Black Sanctuary Gardens each thinks about the centrality of soil to understanding African American history and for recognizing the pregnant possibilities of the racialized present. For both Walker and Bennett, gardens are recognized as geographies of radical Black aesthetics. In the soil is the history of anti-Black racism, and conversely, the history of Black women working to create a more beautiful, diverse, ecologically sustainable world of racial justice.

Kevin Trumpeter | The Intersection of Environmental and Racial Exploitation in Ta-Nehisi Coates’ The Water Dancer

While the dramatic conflicts driving slave narratives typically rely on a white villain who terrorizes the protagonist and other enslaved characters through acts of abject violence, the white characters in the plantation society that Ta-Nehisi Coates imagines in The Water Dancer seem curiously devoid of such menace. The violence foregrounded in Coates’ novel tends to be slow and structural, emphasizing how a lack of proper care and concern for the nonhuman environment on the part of privileged whites intensifies their mistreatment of the novel’s enslaved characters. Specifically, Coates’ novel describes how decades of aggressive and highly profitable monocrop farming in Virginia entails ecological disruptions that are compounded by an engrained culture of white supremacist racism, a confluence of oppressive ideologies that results in the wanton destruction of sustainable farmland and black families. Such an ecocritical reading of the novel suggests that some of the most harmful and enduring effects of slavery were entangled with an unchecked desire to exploit what were wrongly perceived by white landholders to be an inexhaustible supply of natural resources in the new world. Like Annette Kolodny’s seminal study in feminist ecocriticism, The Lay of the Land, Coates’ book suggests that the will to exploit manifests itself in a variety of interrelated guises. With the surprising connections it draws between the white colonial settlers’ ecocidal exploitation of agricultural land and their racist exploitation of enslaved African people, the ecocritical reading of Coates’ neo-slave narrative offered in this presentation should appeal to those interested in issues of sustainable land use and environmental justice.
as well as teachers interested in examples of contemporary fiction that can be used to enrich and broaden students’ understanding of critical environmental issues.

**Justice in/for Distinctive, Threatened Environments**

Shiloh Green Soto | "Emergent Environmental Histories: Contextualizing EJ Activism in Suburban Orange County, CA"

In 2019, Rise Up Willowick (RUP), a coalition of working-class Latinx and Asian residents in Southern California, filed a lawsuit against the Cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove to prevent the sale of the publicly-owned Willowick Golf Course. Citing the 2019 Surplus Land Act in their defense, the coalition has worked to hold both cities accountable to their legal obligation to prioritize Willowick, as surplus public land, for open space and affordable housing. RUP’s story is part of a longer history that emerges from the postwar clash between white homeowners and racialized workers which, as I show, went on to shape Orange County’s contemporary built and natural environments. RUP follows a tradition of working-class folks of color who continue to resist resource extractors, land developers, and gentrifiers in the name of reasonable work commutes, affordable housing, and healthy environments. In this presentation, I contextualize Rise Up Willowick’s contemporary struggle within the longer tradition of Orange County suburban environmentalism. This work reveals the possibilities and limitations regarding dominant narratives about the white-washing of environmental movement and suburbia; overlapping realities in struggles against different forms of racism and classism; and the ongoing fight for affordable housing by working-class people. I demonstrate there is much to learn when we contextualize contemporary crises in historic narratives about seemingly disparate stories.

Aaron Pinnix | Poisoned Islands in the Poetry of Haunani-Kay Trask and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner

In this presentation I consider two poems written by Pacific native women: Hawai‘ian poet Haunani-Kay Trask and Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner. Looking at Trask’s 2002 poem “The Broken Gourd,” which addresses how foreigners have destroyed Hawai‘i’s environments and native people, and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s 2018 video poem “Anointed,” which addresses America’s nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and the long-term environmental effects and radiation-caused illnesses among the Marshallese people, I show how these two poems present the shore, that low lying interstitial zone between land and sea, as an intensely contested space between, on the one hand, contemporary colonialist-fueled environmental degradation, evocatively evoked via imagery of rot and destruction, and on the other, a history of environmental and indigenous people’s flourishing. Refusing the problematic trope of the beach as a paradise, these two poems present the border between land and sea as a space of cultural connection that unites different islands within the Hawai‘ian and Marshall archipelagos, but which has also become a space of rot, reflecting the cultural and environmental destruction that has affected these islands, these shores, and these archipelagos.

Senta Sanders | Narratives of Northern Exposure and the Power of Environmental Storytelling in the Arctic

A central trope of the Anthropocene Age, Nixon’s concept of slow violence captures the delayed effects of transnational environmental injustices that occur gradually and out of sight, mainly affecting marginalized people and ecosystems. Nixon highlights the utter failure of those not directly affected by the ongoing affliction to acknowledge these injustices because they are not accompanied by conventional spectacles of violence. However, while very insightful, Nixon’s work fails to address the calamities of the current climate crisis in the Arctic even though some of the most urgent accounts of unjust exposure to ecological threats either originate from or are connected to actual and allegorical environments of the Far North. Positioned within the intersecting spheres of environmental justice and cultural ecology, in this talk I will argue that by means of exposing the rest of the world to the fast-forwarded effects of environmental injustices that have been inflicted on the Far North and its human and nonhuman inhabitants for decades, narratives that are
connected to and deeply rooted in political, social, and ethical issues affecting the geographical region of the
Far North have the agency to not only make the imperceptible appear, but also succeed at translating the
consequential, drawn-out effects of northbound persistent organic pollutants and incidences of global
warming into accounts of experience that are recognizable as well as relatable. Using examples by indigenous
and non-native North American artists I will illustrate how narratives of—what I call—northern exposure
communicate global, local, and personal accounts of environmental urgency across art forms, media, and
genres. By bridging the gaps of time and space as well as self and other they firmly establish and compellingly
convey the atemporal interconnectedness that exists between the Arctic region and the rest of the world.

Harper Sherwood-Reid | Severed Relations: Reading Land Theft through the Genocide Convention

By reading Bartolomé de las Casas’ A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies through Indigenous
epistemologies according to which human and nonhuman beings constitute national groups, the colonization
of the Americas becomes a clearly genocidal project insofar as it has intentionally sought the destruction of
nonhuman beings and entities; by perceiving the colonial project in this way, moreover, it becomes possible to
see both the failures of these narratives to fully grasp the extent of the genocidal project and to conceive of
decolonial projects as originating in relations between the human and the nonhuman.

Animals, Altery, and Environmental Justice

Abilasha Kannappan and Dr. V.R.Jeyasala | Intersectionality and Inter-Species Justice in Deepak Dalal’s Select
Adventure Stories

“Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls…” Gitanjali 35. Tagore
aspries for the world that homes every being; where George Floyd can breathe and Malala Yousafzai can
study. Even in this age of artificial intelligence, the narrow domestic walls of race, class, gender, caste,
anthropocentric ideals dominate the people and endanger the lives of the subaltern who can’t speak which
includes animals too. Tigers that top the ecological pyramid and rare white beasts of the Himalayas the snow
leopards are poached for their skin and organs. Similarly rare hunter gatherer tribes of the Andaman Islands
are disturbed for their forests. This paper proposes to study Dalal’s Ranthambore Adventure, Snow Leopard
adventure, Andaman Adventure the Jarawa and Andaman Adventure Barren Island and state that
Intersectionality and inter-species justice is advocated by the protagonists through adventures inorder to save
them. By fighting for the survival rights of the animals, the stories exhibit an utopic future where acceptance
and understanding will prevail. The stories set in the wilderness of India broadens our conception of wild
life. Scientists and environmentalists foresee climate apocalypse in near future as a result of anthropocentric
policies of the humankind which proves to be true with the recent pandemic that has shut the whole world.
Limitations of the human and the power of nature is established beyond any doubt. Since this problem has to
be addressed on warfoot, remedial actions are being proposed, analysed, and discussed in academia more
than ever before. Replacing the unethical, dominant, anthropocentric values with ethical, loving, ecocentric
values that ensures intersectionality and inter-species justice can increase the probability of human survival in
the Earth.

Militaries, Toxicity, and Environment

Jessica Holmes | The Non-Emergence of a Radical Environmental Movement

This presentation highlights the consistent failure of the contemporary environmental movement, as well as its
academic allies and counterparts within the environmental humanities, to sufficiently critique the forms of
imperial militarism most responsible for destroying the earth. I then juxtapose that failure with the increasing
erasure and demonization of radical environmentalism in dominant or mainstream activist culture as well as environmental scholarship. Together I argue that these efforts work together to preserve the status quo at the expense of the planet and her inhabitants.

Nayoung Kim | Toxic Realities and Transgroup Empathy in Ocean Vuong’s On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous

In the face of historical atrocities and socioeconomic injustices, empathy seems politically feeble and even insubstantial. With Ocean Vuong’s novel as a guiding insight, this project is a beginning step to reimagine empathy as both a viable and crucial means to build solidarity with others scarred in toxic realities that are disparate in their social characteristics and geographical locations. While Vuong’s novel has been praised mostly as an ethnic and queer literature, I emphasize that it explores a possibility of a broader, progressive community through environmentalist empathy which crosses national, social, and linguistic borders. Unlike one that foregrounds understanding through extensive verbal interactions (often through Euro-American English), the novel’s largely non-verbal empathy is rooted in toxic bodily experiences entangled with multiple inequalities, including the physical and psychological pain of the Vietnam War, chemical intoxication and immigrant insecurity in workplace, postindustrial ruin in the rural Connecticut, and substance abuse. Deprived of the luxury of expedient verbal communication, the intoxicated bodies in Vuong’s novel slowly, intensely observe and physically mingle with each other to recognize the common wounds. I read these vulnerable, imprecise, and thus painstaking gestures as fierce, empathetic efforts to dismantle a safe intellectual distance and form a political community against the web of toxicities. If this project could start a conversation on practicing such empathy to tackle interconnected injustices, it would be the greatest reward.

Keri Stevenson | The Emergence of Winged Things: Avian-Centered Memoirs as Arenas for the New Ethology

Recent discoveries in ethology about other-than-human animals’ cognitive, problem-solving, and similar abilities have inspired some memoir writers to reflect on the kinship between humans and other species that comes from sharing a life with them, and nowhere is this clearer than in memoirs centered on human experience with avian beings. Such memoirs present a unique “bird’s-eye” view on kinship between humans and animals that is not provided by those which focus mostly on companion species (dogs and cats) already presumed to be familiar and akin to humans. Birds, with a preconception of alienness built into the relationship between them and mammals, force human memoir-writers who share lives with them to search for that kinship instead of assuming it. Scientific discoveries about the intelligence, singing ability, and material cultures of birds as diverse as chickens, starlings, and crows provide a path to appreciation in avian-centered memoirs. This paper argues that, though often written by ornithologists, wild bird rehabbers, and others whose “expertise” centers on birds, these texts facilitate the emergence of a new kind of relation with birds, centered instead on kinship, humility, and wonder—and when taught in classrooms, the possible emergence of a deeper assimilation of the ethological discoveries by students. From H Is For Hawk to Mozart’s Starling, these memoirs are worth a second look as both kinship-promoting and science-promoting texts.

Claudia Ledderucci | Sovereignty and Militourism. Military bases and processes of re-appropriation in French Polynesia

Despite the transition from French protectorate in 1842 to colony in 1880 to Overseas Territory following the Second World War, status changes in French Polynesia nominally gave ma'ohi, the local indigenous population, more rights, while continuing the asymmetry of power between the French empire and the Polynesian communities. In the 1960s, the French government decided to build a nuclear testing center in the Pacific, without previously agreeing with local and traditional authorities. The construction of the Experimentation Center and the first nuclear tests in 1966, a real nuclear colonization, were cleverly hidden through technicolor TVs by Marlon Brando and the arrival of the first tourists. All this meant the further disciplining of the Polynesian bodies, which began centuries before with the arrival of the London Missionary Society and
continued with the colonization. Military sites were progressively debunked at the end of the nuclear testings in the 1990s and are today at the core of meaningful restructuring, dismantlement and restitution processes. I argue that such an extremely dynamic situation could be inspiring to observe and analyze the development of contemporary and new forms of sovereignty, intended here not as a mere negative colonial bond, but instead an art of living and negotiating different relationships to the métropole.

**Ishtiaque Ahmed Levin | Encountering the Anthropocene: Insights from South Asia**

This paper engages with various ontological responses to environmental (in)justice in the subcontinent in the context of Anthropogenic climate change. Considering what it signifies to live in the Anthropocene, it engages with various struggles for social justice to understand the ethics of justice in the new climate regime. Through these intellectual encounters, the paper develops an ontological framework for addressing the question of human agency in the Anthropocene considering the long history of decolonization in South Asia which was shaped by figures like Gandhi, Ambedkar, Tagore, Phule, and so on. Many of them revivified indigenous spiritual traditions by popularizing concepts like ahimsa, swaraj, and satyagraha to counter western modernity. Listening to these swadeshi (indigenous) voices who are making themselves heard after generations of oppression enacted by colonialism would help us to identify western modernity’s prejudices, blind spots, and cognitive arrogance. In the Anthropocene, we may find ourselves at the beginning of the twenty-first century in a mirror image of those anti-colonial thinkers who countered the universal claims of modernity. Many of them tried to counter the universal claims of modernity with the integrity of their own vision. With the advent of the Anthropocene, we must again question the universal claims of colonial modernity which is the root cause of the Anthropocene. There is no reason to deny the fact that the condition of the global south is deeply unjust-still colonial. As western modernity can be identified as the cause of the Anthropocene, this connection marks the definitive end of the legitimacy of the history of colonial modernity. Therefore, the task of reading these anti-colonial thinkers in the Anthropocene is also a task of radical ecological imagination. The paper elaborates on this project of radical ecological imagination by drawing the works of contemporary thinkers like Dipesh Chakrabarty and Bruno Latour.

**Gender, Justice, and Environment**

**Reanna Kissell | Consciousness raising in the 1980s: Ecofeminism in Australian women’s short fiction**

This paper examines how ecofeminist ideas are represented in Australian women’s short fiction during the 1980s. Early ecofeminism developed as an extension of broader feminist studies in the 1970s and 1980s, working to articulate connections between the domination of women and nature. By the 1980s, the influence of the Women’s Liberation Movement manifested in Australia’s developing publishing sector that increasingly enabled women’s writing to reach a wider audience. Short fiction appeared in periodicals, single authored collections and anthologies providing a wealth of creative responses to the political, social, and environmental movements of the period. Environmentalism permeated these narratives through an engagement with the nonhuman that critiqued entrenched dualistic thinking, often alongside feminist expressions of domination. A shift toward diversifying representation to incorporate women and the nonhuman articulated the decade’s growing concern toward the mistreatment of the ‘Other’ in a patriarchal society. This paper seeks to show some of the ways the genre informs and reflects ecofeminism during this period to prompt a reconsideration of the significance of short fiction as a site of enquiry into early environmental justice and feminism in Australia.
Ji Yeon Kim | Uninhabitable Space for Men: the American West in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*

There is a beautiful scenery in Cormac McCarthy’s novel *Blood Meridian*, or the Evening Redness in the West (1985) that catches the readers’ eyes. A group of men rides across the barren landscape of the American West while a bloody sun rises out of the East “like the head of a great red phallus” (47) pulsing malevolently behind them. Many critics have acclaimed the novel for its sublime portrayal of natural landscape, and among the many this scene seems to address the issue of masculinity. *Blood Meridian* is a strange novel that does not give women any active role in the narrative. In a strictly homosocial environment, men interact with each other. Studies on the topic of masculinity in *Blood Meridian* have been focused on the psychological/physical interaction between men. However, I argue that we need to question why and how the overwhelming presence of the sun is compared to a ‘phallus’. This leads to careful observations on how main characters like John Joel Glanton and Judge Holden interfere with the natural environment to reassure their presence as phallic male figures. *Blood Meridian* demythologizes the American West as a site that is dominated by masculine culture, and my paper focuses on scrutinizing the lives (or deaths) of ‘the kid’ and ‘the old man’ that find the environment uninhabitable.

Kristin Jacobson | The American Adrenaline Narrative’s Performance of Heroic Environmental Justice

The modern American environmental movement and extreme sports both emerge in the late twentieth century. Extreme environmentalism, or eco-terrorism, also surfaces at this time. The formation of what Ulrich Beck terms “risk society” contributes to ways in which these distinct movements connect. Many post-1970 adrenaline narratives—my term for the accounts of these often-deadly wilderness adventures—at least mention pollution in passing. Increasingly, we also see the pursuit of extreme adventure connected to environmental causes, which serve in part to justify the adventure’s associated risks: the adventurer risks to save the planet. This paper examines and connects post-1970 American adrenaline narratives with the environmental movement through their related gendered and raced performances of risk and environmental activism. Like Erin James in *The Storyworld Accord*, I argue “forms can encode environmental meaning.” Two related themes emerge when we compare the protagonists and activist tropes found in the post-1970 environmental movement and the nonfiction adventure narratives the paper examines. First, physical risk polices female and non-white adventurers in ways distinct from their white male counterparts. Second, the environmental consciousness raised by these narratives depends on a narrow heroic model that limits their environmental impact. Both contemporary extreme adventure and the environmental movement remain embedded in the performance of white warrior masculinity. Together the two themes reveal the gendered and raced ways adventurers and environmentalists are socialized to negotiate risk and demonstrate how shifting this trope improves the efficacy of both feminist and environmental activism.

Food Justice

Leena Kuriakose | Resilience in Crisis: Critical Analysis of the Malayalam movie *How Old Are You*

The twenty-first century witnesses an emergency during this disparate and divergent time of the pandemic outbreak the Covid-19. The current situation has in many ways brought the world to a sudden halt and a battle of survival. Most of the countries across the world went into lockdown, situations became more complex, and the people were isolated and socially distanced. This unpredictable time becomes a period of emergency: sometimes the darkest phase in one’s socio-economic life situation. Yuval Noah Harari says, “Even crisis is also an opportunity”: learning to live in the world of crisis and to preserve one’s mental balance in an unfamiliar situation develops the skill, productivity, and employability of an individual. This paper is a critical analysis of the 2014 Malayalam movie “How Old Are You”, which has great significance in this emergency period. This study examines and explores the remarkable ability of an individual to adapt to the changes through resilience and diligence. And it equips people to overcome crisis through consistent attempts. “Who decides the expiry
date of a woman’s dream” through the succulent question the character inspires all women community to dream without any time restriction. The concept of bio farming is effectively promoted and introduced in the movie and it discloses an appropriate opportunity for the world to welcome a healthy lifestyle during the time of pandemic and social distance. In short, this is an attempt to foreground the importance of articulation and transformation during a time of crisis in one’s life.

Yiyi He | Subversive Sustainability in the Interstice: Urban Foraging in Ava Chin’s *Eating Wildly* and Rita Wong’s *Forage*

I explore foraging poetics and politics in Wong’s *Forage* (2007) and Chin’s *Eating Wildly* (2014) through a trope of “interstice” from both its racial and environmental aspects. I show how the two writers of Chinese background discuss urban foraging in a similar yet paradoxically different way. I argue that urban foraging and its variants discussed here, such as foraging all forms of food substance in the physical world or even words and an art of writing which feed our minds in a metaphysical sense presents the flaneur of Chinese descent. Chinese Canadian/American environmental thinking is creating an interstice in both diasporic narratives and ecocriticism. It reveals a relational potential for “subversive” sustainability against hegemonic capitalist food regimes as well as spatial and environmental/food injustice. I will investigate how foraging, as a daily practice, and as a metaphor represented in literary works, provides a guideline of resilient foodways for urban dwellers, regardless of race, class, gender, and generation. The rich connotations embedded in foraging further dismantle the nature/culture, human/other-than-human divides. Wong’s speaker and Chin’s narrator are situated in this interstitial space. Both foraging discourses in their aesthetic, ethnic, and environmental complexities challenge dominant white foraging narratives. In their texts, Chineseness is subtly revealed through specific food discourses that present urban foraging as a subversive act. Gradually, through a healing process of foraging art, the protagonists rediscover and reconcile with their true self fully. I aim to unveil the rich implications urban foraging has eth(n)ically, environmentally, and aesthetically.

Jessica Martell | Modernism and the Emergence/y of Industrial Food

The emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically underscored the industrial food system’s vulnerabilities, inefficiencies, and injustices, many of which have been inherited from the global food regime of the late British Empire. My talk links these two food regimes by drawing from my new book *Farm to Form: Modernist Literature and Ecologies of Food in the British Empire* (2020), which examines the cultural impact of the emergence of industrial food in the early twentieth century. To connect the economic with the artistic, my work takes an ecocritical approach to some of literary modernism’s high watermarks, revealing their entanglement with the food politics of empire and positioning them as a rich archive that can help contextualize our contemporary food emergencies.

Lindsay Stephens | “A Small Island in an Ocean of Generally Devastated Land”: Undoing Settler Conquest in Dan O’Brien’s *Bison Memoirs*

In his text *The Settler Colonial Present*, Lorenzo Veracini theorizes that decolonization in a settler situation would be very difficult because it would result in “further displacement” and instead advances the argument that “decolonisation should lie in undoing conquest” (103). In an ecological context, Dan O’Brien’s nonfiction works, particularly his bison memoirs, exemplify Veracini’s assertion in terms of restoring the colonized South Dakota landscape. O’Brien, recognizing the persisting direness of post-Dust Bowl Northern Plains ecology, attempts to restore his little piece of the Great Plains to pre-Dust Bowl, pre-cattle boom condition. His books *Buffalo for the Broken Heart* and *Wild Idea* chronicle his project of reintroducing bison to his little corner of the Great Plains and making humanely killed, grass-fed and -finished bison commercially available in South Dakota’s food deserts and beyond. In this presentation, I suggest ways that we could interpret both books as O’Brien’s attempt at enacting a corrective to historical mistakes and ecological injustices.
Temporalities of Environmental Justice

Grace Hayes | Slow Disaster and the Pursuit for High Ground in Ishmael Reed’s “Chattanooga” (1973)

Ishmael Reed’s “Chattanooga” (1973) is a site-specific poetic meditation on Chattanooga, Tennessee. Although Chattanooga has a history of being ravaged by floods, this poem is not typically read in the tradition of flood poetry. I, however, situate Reed’s poem alongside the contemporary poetry of Douglas Kearney and Patricia Smith which addresses Hurricane Katrina and its flooding aftermath. Unlike Kearney and Smith, this poem is not readily about any one specific flood event; instead, I suggest that the flooding in the poem is represented by the racialized violences and barriers the narrator encounters. In this way, serving as both the setting and “destination” of the poem, Chattanooga represents a physical and metaphysical “high ground” for the narrator. Gradually flooding the poem with Chattanooga’s temporally complex problematic history, Reed renders “natural” disasters as the outcome of a long history of unequal access to land, capital, and opportunity; and thus, as anything but natural. I show how Reed’s attendance to the environmental and geographical conditions of Chattanooga influenced the poem’s form. And how this form interrogates our definition of “natural” disasters by showing that they may not always be legible through one specific calamitous spectacle. By way of Nathaniel Mackey’s theory on breath and precarity in poetics, I understand Reed’s use of enjambment as influenced by a jazz technique, circular breathing. In so doing, I argue that the poem’s speaker experiences a constant interruption of breath and thus sounds the alarm for the disasters of Chattanooga’s precarious past which shape its present.

Melissa Poulsen | In Search of Refuge: Environmental Escape and Mixed-Race Belonging in Ruth Ozeki’s A Tale for the Time Being

This paper explores how Ruth Ozeki, in her award-winning novel A Tale for the Time Being (2013), writes within the tradition of pastoral retreat to critically examine and reimagine Asian mixed-race identity. Playing with conventional notions of place and nature, Ozeki carefully unpacks and critiques assumptions about Asian mixed-race belonging. Highlighting the interconnection of the human and the nonhuman—while bringing histories of settler-colonialism, nativism, and anthropocentrism to bear—A Tale for the Time Being complicates place-based constructions of identity, seeking to destabilize long-held understandings of Asian mixed-race.

Timothy Fosbury & Tanaka Shouhei | Barkskins and the Climate Colonial Epic

This paper investigates the macrohistorical forms and functions of Anthropocene fiction in relation to settler colonialism and climate change. We read Annie Proulx’s novel Barkskins (2016) as what we call a climate colonial epic, an Anthropocene novel that captures the conjuncture of settler colonialism and climate change across modernity’s long timeframes and global geographies. A hybrid work of settler colonial and climate fiction that articulates the longue durée of climate colonialism, Barkskins is distinguishable for its dialectical fusion of multiple historical scales and forces that link together the long apocalypse of climate change and the continuous present of North American settler colonialism. We delineate the new perspectives and problems that the climate colonial epic occasions by considering the novel’s narrative aesthetics and politics of articulating Indigenous decolonization, sovereignty, and futurity through three entry points: terrapolitics, transit, and collectivity.
Marta Puxan | Negotiating environmental criminality: spectacular crime vs slow harm in contemporary fiction

Our environmental crisis has made the cultural conventionality of crime emerge. One would certainly point to illegal whale hunting as an environmental crime, but then realize that trawling is mostly legal in spite of the fact that it devastates entire seabed areas. This apparent contradiction has led green criminologists to interrogate the limits between environmental crime and harm, and propose harm and impact as the measuring tool that establishes environmental crime. This change of perspective invites law makers to define crime in a more flexible way and to anticipate legislation of potential crimes that are already greatly damaging the environment. Literature contributes to the interrogation of the very notion of crime that unveils that when crime is slow and invisible it has been mostly considered harm rather than crime, even when its effects strongly menace sustainability and human lives. The redefinition of environmental crime is thus a hidden emergency. Many contemporary novels expose the ambiguities of environmental criminality and place it at the core of their fictions. I use the examples of Roberto Ampuero’s El alemán de Atacama in relation to toxic waste and Wajdi Mouawad’s Anima with regards to destruction of indigenous understandings of environment. In these cases, crime gains ambivalence by its combination with other spectacular crimes and through setting, which diffuses the lines between crime and harm. These narratives present main stories that leave the environmental crime as ambivalent and subjacent, though strongly interrogated.

Framing Solutions for Environmental Justice

Alexis Draut | Turning as Ecofeminist Methodology for Achieving Environmental Justice in Annie Dillard’s Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

In Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (1974), Annie Dillard combines human-to-earth relations with her spiritual methods in personal observations of the world’s beauty, horror, and mystery. One significant way Dillard moves her readers toward engaging with nature is through her use of biblical passages, which are used to exemplify humans turning toward – rather than rejecting, and furthermore, exploiting – the environment. Critics and scholars have long analyzed the ways in which various religious practices and mystical spirituality infiltrate into Dillard’s writing. Likewise, naturalists and environmental societies have also taken close looks at how Dillard discusses her relationships with creation. Yet, what makes Pilgrim especially captivating is her enchantment with the combination of both spirituality and environmentalism. This analysis builds onto the existing academic conversation to discuss how Dillard effectively combines religion with environmental consciousness in guiding readers to turn toward the natural world. This study dives into Pilgrim with an ecofeminist lens on Dillard’s proposal of “turning” to the natural world through biblical examples of historical figures and their personal connections to the land. Following Dillard’s framework, I will analyze Scriptural passages used in Pilgrim to support the claim for humans to turn to discover the world’s beauty, horror, and mystery. This study identifies how environmental injustice results from harmful patterns of turning away from nature and ignoring the damage being done to the Earth for the sake of personal or economic gain. I argue Dillard’s encouragement of readers to embrace nature works against environmental injustices by promoting full acceptance of the many intertwined relationships within a holistic ecosystem. By turning toward the natural world, I argue Dillard proposes a new methodology for environmental justice reliant upon acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of all things.

Eric Morel | Multi-Ethnic Collaboration, Storyworlds, and Environmental Justice: Book Objects and Modeled Encounters

This paper uses econarratology to call for more research on representation of multi-ethnic collaboration in literary research on environmental justice issues. It starts by surveying differences between social science and literary research on multi-ethnic collaborations within EJ efforts. In doing so, it finds that social sciences have ventured further than literary research in documenting and thinking about the impact of groups coming together. By contrast, the research from surveyed literary studies tends to focus on efforts, communities, and
texts within single racial or ethnic groups. Significant possible influences for these trends I identify include literary training, which often focuses on single racial/ethnic groupings as specialties for the job market, but also critical preference for prose genres, where narratives of environmental (in)justice usually arise from individual narrators’ storyworlds. One effect of this trend in literary studies is disproportionate focus on the circumstances of injustice rather than possibilities for coalitions or movements. Obviously, understanding the production and maintenance of injustice remains indispensable, but I argue that supplementing that emphasis is necessary and strategic for literary studies. After the survey, the paper offers its example, the bird illustrator Louis Agassiz Fuertes’s collaborations with late-nineteenth-century white nature writers. Arguing that the book Citizen Bird and other books that make cross-identitarian collaboration visible on the page put storyworlds and narrative viewpoints in conversation, I promote attention to book objects and book making within EJ pedagogy in particular, modelling collaborations’ necessity and possibility. Collaborative book objects are my proposed counter-balance to single-narrator texts, since single-authored texts necessitate a more bound storyworld, whereas collaborative book objects attempt a unified storyworld through the meeting of multiple speakers. I briefly situate my argument about Fuertes within the context of Latinx environmentalism scholarship to bind my example to the survey of scholarly literature in the first part of the paper.

Molina Klingler | The Elemental Strikes Back: On Justice and Earth Jurisprudence in N. K. Jemisin’s ‘Broken Earth’

The ecological science fantasy world constructed in N. K. Jemisin’s Broken Earth series can be read as a critical portrayal of colonial practices of degrading, expelling, or exploiting “other” living beings through forms of racism or speciesism and objectifying Nature as a commodity. In Jemisin’s trilogy, however, the Earth strikes back: the vengeful “Evil Earth” is depicted as an animate entity seeking revenge on humanity as the planet suffered from anthropogenic abuse. Embedded in the context of material-semiotic thought, this paper interrogates the agential capacities of Earth and its elemental forces. How can “thinking with the elements” contribute to understand and shed light on the inextricable links between environmental injustice and social injustice? The notion of planet Earth as a living organism is not a trope that we only encounter in fantasy literature or ecocritical scholarship. To consider and to protect the rights of other-than-human beings and the planet have become central questions of environmental justice. The resulting current movement of Earth Jurisprudence serves as a conceptional and inspirational framework to explore how notions of justice are anchored in social as well as material realities. Jemisin’s queer geocritique and “petric poetics” (J. Cohen) opposes the dominant societal and legal paradigm that recognizes humans as sole subjects of agency. It highlights the porosity of subject identities and being human(e), thus enabling a paradigmatic shift in the perception of environmental and social justice.

Rakibul Hasan Khan | The Environmentalism of the Poor versus the Environmentalism of the Privileged: A Comparative Analysis between The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and Gun Island

Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017) and Amitav Ghosh’s Gun Island (2019) foreground the environmental crisis of the present time. Both the novels engage with the effects of environmental degradation on humans and animals, but they adopt completely different approaches to the question of environmental justice. In Gun Island, Ghosh expounds the climate crisis from the perspective of privileged people, presenting it as a planetary crisis. He touches on the question of environmental justice by connecting the present-day refugee crisis of the Western world to the environmental crisis beyond the West, but the novel’s lack of concern with social justice and engagement with other concerns undermine the question of environmental justice. Therefore, the spirit of environmentalism that can be derived from Gun Island is essentially the environmentalism of the privileged. On the other hand, in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Roy is concerned with the effects of environmental damage on the people at the margins. She strongly raises the question of environmental justice for the victims of environmental destruction by connecting it to social justice. Thus, the environmentalism that The Ministry of Utmost Happiness posits can best be described as “the environmentalism of the poor”. In this paper, I engage in a comparative analysis of the spirit of
environmentalism in these two novels and argue that the environmentalism of the privileged in Ghosh’s novel undermines the question of environmental justice.

**Extraction and Environmental Justice**

Goel Gayathri | Emergent Subjectivities: From Metabolic Rift and Ruinate to Resistance in Jan Carew’s and Michelle Cliff’s Novels

The myth and metaphor of El Dorado that fueled the 16th-century expeditions of Spanish conquistadors across several parts of South America haunted the Guyanese landscape for centuries to come. Settler colonialism brought with it an insatiable appetite for natural wealth, leaving lands all over Latin America, including the Caribbean country of Guayan, ecologically depleted. In his work, MARX’S ECOLOGY, John Bellamy Foster explains that unsustainable extraction produces “a metabolic rift in the relation between town and country, human beings and the earth,” (141-2) creating a crisis in both environment and society. The rift impoverishes both human and nature, severing one from the other, with devastating ecological and psychological consequences in colonized lands and minds. Through fiction and non-fiction works of the Caribbean writer, Jan Carew, I show that the loss of autonomy of the colonized people is not an allegory for the underdevelopment of the land, but rather co-produced through systematic commodification of the natural world by capitalism. What resistance work is needed to mend the rift with nature? How do the colonized and the formerly enslaved re-imagine an allyship with nature that is mutually regenerative? In an attempt to answer these important questions, I turn to Michelle Cliff’s ABENG and NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN. In my analysis of Cliff’s novels, using Edouard Glissant’s theorization of “creolization,” I argue that a radical political ontology embodied by a creolized assemblage of humans and non-humans in a kinship relationship is at the heart of ecological liberation. The personal journey of the main character, Clare Savage, is transformed into a political one when she joins a guerrilla group to fight for the liberation of Jamaica. My analysis of the novels shows that human/nature creolized relationships, even when fleeting, delve into a traumatic history and retrieve liberatory knowledges for future revolutions.

Md. Amir Hossain | Ecocritical Studies of Manik Bandopadhyay’s Boatman of The Mighty Padma and Selina Hossain’s The High Tide: A Comparative Study

I would like to focus on the theory of ecocriticism through the famous novelists of 20th-century Bengali Literature. Selina Hossain is a feminist novelist, reflecting society and culture, community, environment, and struggle for existence against tidal waves and cyclone of 20th century South Bengal in the light of environmental issues; and traumatic and pessimistic elements are also found in her novel, Jalochchwas/ The High Tide (1972). On the other hand, Manik Bandyopadhyay is regarded as one of the most leading litterateurs of modern Bengali fiction. His novel, Padma Nadir Majhi/ Boatman of The Mighty Padma (1936), fosters a perfect image of the environmental crisis and the poor people’s truth. I would like to look at the practical social picture of the poverty affected people of the two mighty rivers, like Padma and Meghna of Bangladesh, livelihood and struggle for existence and the black paw of the natural calamity of Southern Bengal through having deeper understanding of similarities and differences between Manik and Selina, analysing the text through ecocriticism, examining Manik’s and Selina’s treatment of men and women, investigating the situations of economy, society, and ecology in Manik’s and Selina’s times. I would like to investigate the born poverty and born cyclone-affected men and women as portrayed by the fiction writers: the conflicts between death and birth, struggle and defeat, social alienation, segregation, marginalization, human right and voting, and fight against storm and tidal waves in the South Bengal. In this way, their subtle treatment of human life and humanity for the poor of the poorest is perfectly presented in Boatman of The Mighty Padma and The High Tide. The core philosophy of human life makes the novelists universal thinkers and legendary figures for their keen insight.
Kyle McAuley | Ecocriticism’s Hydrography and Conrad’s Gulf: Critical and Material Histories of Salt Water

This paper demonstrates that geologic depth has been privileged as the environmental humanities’ dominant epistemological framework, and argues for a new approach: critical hydrography. The Anthropocene concept has relied on what Kathryn Yusoff terms “White Geology” as well as what Neil Smith has called “the production of nature” wherein geologic origins are sheared from history. I argue for critical hydrography, bringing the racial and economic histories of water into lived ecological experience. Most currently, I respond to Tiffany Lethabo King’s brilliant theorization of “Black shoals,” liminal spaces that are both water and land, where multiple hermeneutic frameworks and histories correspond. I suggest that critical hydrography could be an umbrella term for approaches that embody an environmental-humanistic approach characterized by comparison, history, and attention to race and indigeneity. Such an approach would read for histories and peoples hidden by corpora or practice, as well as for hydrographic forms in literature that are, felicitously, consistently present and sometimes overlooked. As a case study, I analyze Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo (1904). In Nostromo, postcolonial self-determination depends on a coalition of mestizo and Indigenous residents seizing a silver mine from an offshore multinational. Troublingly leveraging the economic weight of their natural resources, a newly independent Sulaco ensures its sovereignty through control of its maritime trading infrastructure. This places the coalition of Sulaco residents in an impossible position: in order to satisfy international markets, Sulaco must destroy their local ecology and ally with the imperial financiers as a founding tenet of their coastal republic. A hydrographic reading of the novel reveals the ecological catastrophe encoded into Sulaco’s foundation. The governing coalition’s turn toward an extractivist economy to demonstrates how maritime mercantilism’s participation in the cultural-geological production of nature makes it available to global capital. Thus, the republic of Sulaco’s very existence presages its hydrographically-mediated collapse.

Jay Jolles | X Marks and Re-Marks the Spot: Slow Violence, The FEMA X-Code and Memorializing Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina—both the event itself and its aftermath—were disparately experienced in New Orleans. The ‘once in a lifetime’ storm, triggered by years of environmental violence exacerbated long-standing issues of environmental racism and worked to provide a glimpse into a potentially catastrophic future. Katrina was not an anomaly. It was the perfect storm, but it was also business as usual. As such, there has been a struggle to effectively commemorate and memorialize the event. This difficulty does not necessarily arise because of the trauma sustained by and reiterated through Katrina’s lingering aftereffects. Rather, the existence and execution of state-sponsored modes of memorialization do not satisfactorily memorialize the event because they fail to recognize the nuanced contours of the tragedy. Moreover, they fail to take into consideration the ways in which memory politics in the United States are both conceived of and practiced in ways that can perpetuate racial inequality, particularly within the context of environmental justice. In this paper, I argue that the rearticulation and reappropriation of the FEMA x-code following Katrina offers one way of imagining a memorial practice that both integrates and responds to the structures that created the event. Through the act of repurposing governmental iconography to serve a variety of memorial functions, citizens in New Orleans post-Katrina devised a new way of thinking about memorialization. One that attempts to tease out the structures of neoliberalism, climate change, and environmental racism that gave way to its cause. In general, cultural memory studies is in need of a rethinking of memory work along new lines which attend to the radical changes being brought about by climate change in the Anthropocene. This case study in particular helps serve as a way of understanding how we might begin to memorialize the continuous crisis that is our slow march towards total ecological collapse.
Environmental Justice in Asia and the Pacific

Vijay Kumar | Equal by Birth, Unequal by Caste: Socio-ecological Study of Baluta

Nature has done an indispensable job for every single creature on this planet. Man has also affected Nature in multiple ways and, in turn, affected by the same. However, in India, that cause-and-effect relationship seems to be disproportionally borne by different ‘caste groups’. On the one side, in the process of so-called ‘catching-up’ development, Nature has been appropriated and exploited by human beings whereas, on the other, Dalits, alongside various landscapes and spaces, have been stigmatized with impurity and pollution. Dalits have been marginalized and ghettoized into dumping grounds and garbage pits. They have been struggling to retain their land, forest, and water rights. Nonetheless, the culprit behind Dalits’ socio-ecological vulnerability and precariousness is the ‘caste system’, which has segregated Dalits from the rest of society and Nature. Dalit women are the worst sufferers in this tropic level of socio-ecological division as they face three-fold subjugation in the name of gender, caste, and class. However, this study seeks to scrutinize Dalit’s socio-ecological struggle in Baluta, the first Dalit self-narrative in Marathi Literature written by Daya Pawar. However, the study proposes an egalitarian and democratic ‘common pool’ resource use in India through ‘inclusive environmentalism’ envisioned by Dr Ambedkar. Dalits’ affinity with and understanding of nature is a blind spot in academia and literary and public discourses. Therefore, Dalit environmental vision has yet to make its appearance in ecocritical and environmental studies. Therefore, socio-ecological understanding of the select text will open up a new wave of Indian environmentalism, which lies dormant or has been unexplored by Indian and other environmentalists.

Sethunaryanan Nagarajan | Environmental Injustice: Water, Society and Development in R Murugavel’s Mugizhini

This article attempts to examine the different forms of development represented in the Tamil regional novel Mugizhini written by R Murugavel from an ecocritical perspective. The realistic novel, on the one hand, vividly describes the social and industrial developments taken place in one of the South Indian towns in Tamilnadu named Sirumgai; on the other hand, it narrates the painful encounters faced by the locals due to the effluent water let out in the Bhavani river by South India Viscose (SIV), a company that manufactured chemical fibers by employing the local people to deal with the deadly chemicals without considering the health of the people and more importantly the river Bhavani. As a result, people were affected by several diseases like cardiovascular and skin diseases; also, the industrial pollution directly affected the quality of the river water. It led to damage the agricultural land and aquatic life forms, which demaded people to seek a permanent solution to the issue. This paper investigates the social and environmental impacts caused in the name of development and interrogates the western ideologies of development from postcolonial context. In addition, the paper discusses the constructive and collective steps taken forward by people and various civil societies for years towards the closure of the industry judicially. In short, the paper tries to address not only the social and environmental issues, but the design of development and calls for finding alternative to development itself.

Fan Ni | Xiangchou, Nostalgia and Solastalgia: environmental Justice in Alai’s ‘Hollow Mountain’ series

Deforestation is perhaps one of the most salient features of the Anthropocene, brought about by the process of “modernization”, especially in places where ethnic minorities dwell. Through the lens of affective ecocriticism, this paper distinguishes and explores correlated symptoms of xiangchou, nostalgia and solastalgia in the Hollow Mountains series (《空山》2005-2007) by the Tibetan-Chinese author Alai. The epic novel series registers a series of ecological events of deforestation and life stories of the residents in Jicun, a small village sitting at the crossroads of Tibetan, Han, and other ethnic groups in Southwest China. In the backdrop of all these domestic dramas looms both state-led modernization and the commercialization of the once densely afforested landscape, which then consequently impinges on the fates of these villagers. The
novel shows us how modernization has changed human conceptions of time as well as space, which in turn redound on connected concepts such as those of dwelling and of home. While xiangchou is often seen as the counterpart of nostalgia in English, the paper demonstrates that it is a misconception to equate these two words for either of them is embedded in its disparate literary and cultural context. Draw from both the Chinese literary theories of xiangchou and Western theories on nostalgia such as that of Svetalana Boym, the paper takes these concepts, xiangchou, nostalgia as an analytical tool to interpret Alai’s writing of environmental distress. It argues that the literary motif of xiangchou has been transformed by Alai into a phycho-physical distress of solastalgia, an existential crisis that reveals the environmental injustice afflicted upon the marginal.

Keywords: deforestation, xiangchou, nostalgia, solastalgia, Hollow Mountain, Alai, environmental justice

Creating (for) Environmental Justice

Hannah Chalew | Petroplexus: imagining ecosystems amidst the ruins of fossil fuel infrastructure to help envision a collective livable future

Living in the age of the Anthropocene in Louisiana, where the oil and gas industry is a major part of the state’s economy and culture despite our ever more vulnerable coastline, I create artwork that explores what it means to live in an era of global warming with an uncertain future, and specifically what that means for those of us in Southern Louisiana. Materiaally I combine disposable single-use plastic with sugarcane, connecting fossil fuel extraction and plastic production to their roots in the white supremacy and capitalism that have fueled the exploitation of people and the landscape from the times of colonization and enslavement. My work often includes living plants to draw viewers into an experience that bridges past and present with visions of the future ecosystems that might emerge from our culture’s detritus if we fail to change course. In art pieces ranging from works on paper to large-scale installations, I bring together unlikely materials in combinations that are often beautiful; they draw viewers in to stay with the work that, on closer inspection, has a deeper burn that implicates them in our collective new realities—challenging them to think critically about their place in this greater network as we co-evolve together. My work creates space to imagine what else could be possible now and beyond; it inspires viewers to think about what individual and collective changes are needed for a just transition to a livable future. To connect my message with my medium, I’ve been divesting my practice from fossil fuels through my transportation and material choices and the way I power my studio and artwork. Believing that art has the power to make people question their perspectives, I use my artwork to reach and engage people on the issue of climate change in our oversaturated information age.

Ben Rutherfurd | Defensible Space: California Fire and the Carceral Realm

As “smoke season” becomes the new normal for much of the American West, it behooves us to ask how fire policies serve as vectors for racial capitalism and settler colonialism. To that end, I propose to read from my manuscript in progress, a book-length essay consisting of both prose and poetry that explores what the fire scholar Stephen Pyne refers to as America’s “war against fire.” While committed to archival research and historical specificity, my project is anchored by personal experience; my hometown burned during the Tubbs Fire of 2017, then again in the Kincade fire of 2019. Both were fought by free as well as unfree firefighters, and this fact prompted me to investigate the intersections between wildfire and California’s carceral realm. The scholarship of this work builds the writings of activists such as Bret Story and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, both of whom have shaped the discussion of carceral geographies as natural extensions of the modern prison. As a poet, I am influenced by the environmental writing of Susan Briante, Mariel Rukeyser, and Craig Santos Perez, all of whom infuse lyric poetry with an activist aesthetic. By following these models, I am interested in ways one can bear witness to crisis while also exposing crisis’ role within the solidification of state power.
Marisol Cortez | Luz at Midnight: Chicanx Cli-Fi for a Polar Vortex

In this creative presentation, I read from my novel Luz at Midnight (FlowerSong Press 2020), recently awarded the 2021 Sergio Troncoso Award for Best First Book of Fiction by the Texas Institute of Letters. Luz tells a climate change story unique to South Texas—belly of the beast for boom-and-bust extraction—challenging regional histories of environmental racism and colonialism while weaving a universal story of love and longing. Released just months before the polar vortex that devastated Texas, the story features two environmental subplots that came to feel “eerily prescient,” in the words of local arts writer Nicholas Frank, depicting a South Texas rocked by the rush for rare earth minerals and the threat of rolling blackouts amid accelerating extreme heat and cold. The excerpt I read here will draw on those parts of the story, framing this reading with some thoughts about what Chicanx cli-fi can offer current post-vortex discussions of recovery and resilience.

Indigenous Ecocriticism Abstracts

Reading Indigenous Rock Art

Jeremy Elliott, Gary Perez, and Matilde Telles | Gary Perez and Matilde Telles Interpreting Rock Art at Paint Rock, Texas

Matilde Telles is a member of the Moondance (a women’s only indigenous ceremonial group) in Austin, Texas. She brings her knowledge and experience of those ceremonies to bear on her interpretation of an indigenous birth scene painting at Paint Rock, Texas. Gary Perez is a member of the Native American Church and longtime participant in associated ceremonies. He, too, interprets indigenous rock art through the inherited knowledge of these ceremonies. Jeremy Elliott is an academic and ecocritic, and provides context to the interpretations Gary and Matilde offer.

Conner Strickland | Pictographs, People, and the Natural Order

In this presentation, I’ll be exploring what the rock art found near Paint Rock, TX can tell us about the people who made it, and how they viewed their role in the natural order. I’ll be making the case that the art is itself a literal element of nature, that the people created it to help orient themselves within the cosmos, and that they made the art as collaborators with nature, not tamers of it.

Jeremy Elliott | Indigenous Philosophy and Ancient Rock Art

Art is best understood when read through the philosophical world in which it was created. In this presentation, I apply a critical method based on the philosophical concepts of the indigenous southwest and Mesoamerica to paintings at Paint Rock, Texas. Concomitantly, the ideas expressed in that art offer something significant to ecocriticism.
Indigenous Narratives of Travel in Literature

Amit Baishya | Riddles of Sand: Sand as Agent in Jatin Mipun’s “Tarun Peguk Agom”

Hailing from the indigenous Mising community of Assam in Northeast India, Jatin Mipun is renowned for his short stories depicting everyday life among the Mising. “Tarun Peguk Agom,” (The Tale of Tarun Pegu, 2001), his masterpiece, braids the deleterious effects of multiple necropolitical assemblages (the shocking suddenness of sovereign political terror, the slow violence of environmental degradation and global warming, and the necropolitical effects of bureaucratic abandonment and governmental neglect). The protagonist, Tarun Pegu, often remembers witnessing human degradation caused by political terror when he was posted as a guard of an IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camp in Kokrajhar, Assam (The denizens of the camp are survivors of brutal bouts of ethno-national violence). However, these acts of witnessing are counterpointed by his experiences as he travels and returns home to his remote and severely impoverished native village, which is devastated by unseasonal, unexpected floods. Hunger, deprivation and squalor squarely confront Pegu as he walks through the village. The devastating effects of unseasonal floods precipitated by global warming is figured through the paradoxical juxtaposition of material-semiotic figurations of water and of the squalor of “desert”-like expanses of sand in the chaporis (sandbanks) near the river where the village is located. Focusing on the polyvalent and agential figurations of non-human elements like sand and water, this paper will explore how the indigenous subject redefines his relationship to the environment as he journeys through his natal village.

Joanmarie Bañez | Emergence Elsewhere: Third Space in Linda Hogan’s People of the Whale

Linda Hogan’s People of the Whale (2008) is a contemporary Native American text that centers the intersections of US–Indigenous history, transnational adoption narratives, and identity production. The novel’s protagonist, Thomas Just, endures trauma that emerges from a transnational adoption narrative, which complicates notions of race- and place-based conceptions of selfhood. I interrogate the onto-epistemological boundaries that complicate Thomas’s ability to exist in more than one culture at once. As a member of the fictional A’atsika tribe that resides in a Pacific Northwest community called Dark River, and later, as a soldier for the US Army in the Vietnam War, Thomas’s Indigenous identity takes shape through acts of transit that situate him “elsewhere.” It is in his attempts to renounce and later (re)integrate into two Indigenous communities of which he is a part that my research examines Thomas’s personal relationships (and consequent political implications) within and throughout the United States and abroad. People of the Whale illuminates how fictive kinship and identity occupies a third space, as Thomas represents a microcosm of larger sociopolitics that cannot be sufficiently defined or understood through the spatial limitations of the inside-outside binary. Thomas’s identity exists in a physical and sociopolitical “elsewhere” that, although it is of two places, is not confined in these places and further prevents him from wholly re-integrating into a community in which he was once a part. To this, I propose, how do we study identity and trauma that survive far beyond the spaces that initially contained them? Which identity/identities is/are more salient, and why does this come to matter?

Alok Amatya | Travel and Coming-of-Age in Novels by Linda Hogan and Kaine Agary

In this presentation, I study the conflation of travel narrative and the coming-of-age narrative in two novels: Linda Hogan’s Solar Storms (1995) and Kaine Agary’s Yellow-Yellow (2006). These two novels feature young indigenous women as their protagonists, with Hogan's novel set in the Upper Midwest region of the USA and Agary's novel set in Niger Delta region of eastern Nigeria. In both novels, travel across a contested indigenous landscape is integral to their coming-of-age narrative. The protagonist’s spatial journey fosters their social and environmental integration into their indigenous community and ultimately into a collective struggle against neocolonial resource grab. In both the texts, the young indigenous protagonists travel well-beyond their
hometown, and by doing so, learn more about the socioenvironmental issues facing their indigenous communities. Hence, the spatial journeys not only develop their cultural identity, but also interpellate the young women into ongoing natural-resource conflicts. To underline the socialization of young characters into environmental activism and resource struggles, I describe this motif in literature and media as “the inheritance of resource struggles.” More broadly, “the inheritance of resource struggles” helps us understand the rearticulation of indigenous identity in narratives of natural resource conflicts in various geopolitical contexts.

**Plant Relations**

**Mirja Lobnik | Vegetal Affinities in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Gardens in the Dunes***

Plants, in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Gardens in the Dunes, figure as a counterforce to the alienation, dislocations, and dispossession in contemporary global culture. This essay engages with the living essence of non-human beings, in particular, the world of vegetal being and with the possibility of a sensuous return to the earth in Silko’s novel. Informed by the writings of biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer, environmental philosopher Michael Marder, and sound scholar Salomé Voegelin, it draws on the figure of the plant for reimagining subjectivity in terms of explicit conscious agency and a becoming attentive to growth: physiological, spiritual, relational. Theorizing a vegetal poetics through the interlinked optics of botany and sound studies, it explores a notion of “sounding”—as investigating, fathoming, listening—that casts the vegetal world as a material medium of relational contact. It brings together poetry, philosophy, and science to argue for a rethinking of the human and the vegetal along the lines of interdependence and transformative possibility rather than mastery and self-preservation. By offering a communal ethics based on a sonic sensibility and oriented towards the growth and transformation of life and its sharing among sentient, living beings, it breaks away from dominant Western articulations of the human/plant binary and calls attention to the asymmetrical distribution of ecological vulnerability and dispossession in a time of global change and climate crisis. The essay sets the stage for an engagement with the vegetal world based on gratitude and the responsibility to reciprocate the gifts we receive—from breathable air to the rains that sustain us. What is at stake in such a reassessment is not only the ecological restoration of damaged areas but, as Kimmerer would put it, “the restoration of relationship between plants and people.”

**Amy Hamilton | Mouths Stuffed with Grass: Revealing and Re-storying the Blood-Soaked Prairie***

Grass covered prairies are central to representations of the American land, in particular the West. They beckon adventure and limitless possibility while verdant lawns serve as shorthand for upward mobility and economic safety. Lawns are the grassy plains in domesticated, conquered form. It is nature tamed, shaped, and perfected. Yet we know that both the domesticated lawn and the swirling prairie are highly mediated, controlled, raced, and gendered. These spaces are symbolically organized to welcome white men to experience the freedom of the prairies and to spend their weekends subduing their lawns. Indigenous authors Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), and Layli Long Soldier (Oglala Lakota) provide another lens through which to interrogate the complex legacy of grass in United States history and ideology. Their texts expose the violence covered by grass, but also offer a vision of grass that resists white masculine constructions of lawns and prairies. They remind readers that grass has been a defining feature of the land long before the United States existed. Further, their works insist that claiming grass as a symbol of white, masculine, settler ideology cannot uproot its deep presence in Indigenous cultures and stories, a presence which is inseparable from the presence of Indigenous peoples themselves. Authors such as Ortiz and Long Soldier draw attention to the violent histories settler colonial imaginings cannot obscure and the Indigenous survivance made manifest in the material and symbolic grass.
Through a close reading of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s 2013 collection of essays Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants, this paper explores Indigenous cosmologies, such as the Potawatomi Creation story, as immigration stories important to Indigenous ecological thought on invasive species, sense of place, and belonging. It examines Kimmerer’s explication of Anishinaabe values, morality, and spirituality, especially in relation to Indigenous ecologies and multispecies relationships (established and emergent), alongside her analysis of settler relations to place. Native science understands invasive species as resulting from settler colonialism and Western/colonial conservation, and work to mitigate impacts to cultural foods and practices, such as basketmaking. In contrast, most Western/colonial science promulgates a command-and-control response that considers ecosystems (and nation-states) as bounded; encourages increased pesticide use and border practices that produce policed, racialized natures; and frames invasive species as alien invaders, a move that impacts human immigrants to what is, for now, the U.S. If local plants and animals are considered kin, where or how do newly arrived plant and animals nations fit in (or not), especially if these newer groups overtake time-honored plant and animal community members? Should what Enrique Salmón has called a “kincentric ecology” that includes invasive species be cultivated? This paper argues that Kimmerer’s essays open possibilities for a kincentric ecology that could include invasive species. Focusing on Anishinaabe ecological thought rather than white environmentalists’ appropriation of these ideas, the paper explores these possibilities, and a few of the limitations, by analyzing Kimmerer’s recitation of Potawatomi cosmology as an immigration story, her examinations of both settler relations to place, and her portrayal of species as immigrants, in which there are immigrants whose behavior should be emulated and those whose should not.

Indigeneity in China and Taiwan

Robin Visser | Indigenous Waterways in Taiwanese Sinophone Literature

Maritime imaginations increasingly inform Indigenous speculative and historical fantasy, from North America (e.g., Rebecca Roanhorse’s Black Sun, 2020) to Oceania (e.g., Syaman Rapongan’s Eyes in the Sky, 2012). In Taiwan, a whole school of cultural study links Taiwanese indigenous studies to both the Native American transnational frameworks of “trans-indigenous” belonging and to a contemporary connection with oceanic frameworks (Huang 2014a). This talk interrogates the trans-indigenous maritime imagination in contemporary Sinophone eco-literature from Taiwan by comparing the Sinophone works of two indigenous writers: Syaman Rapongan (Tao) and Topas Tamapina (Bunun), with the depictions of indigeneity in maritime ecoliterature by two Han writers: Liu Ka-hsiang and Wang Chia-hsiang. One aim of the talk is to re-examine the ocean-centered imagination proposed by Hsinya Huang (2014a; 2014b) and other ecocritics (Adamson 2015; Bernards 2015) as a way to decolonize ecocriticism and reterritorialize trans-indigeneity from a South Seas perspective. Huang (2014a, p 2) argues that “the Indigenous bloodlines originating in Taiwan and spreading across the Pacific open up a large world in which Indigenous peoples intermingle along numerous, interconnecting water routes unhindered by the boundaries erected by imperial powers.” The fact that trans-indigenous connections predate imperialism was scientifically validated in 2020 by a high-density genome-wide DNA study showing that intermingling between Indigenes of Polynesia and the Americas (pre-Colombian Zenú people) occurred between 1150 and 1380 CE. Yet this genealogical and narrative recuperation of the sea as a trope intended to deterritorialize land-based epistemes of empire has also been challenged by ecocritics such as Chen Kuan-hsing (2010), Chiu Kuei-fen (2009), and Chen Sihe (2000), who suggest it rationalizes neoimperialist agendas. Thus, while celebrating creative expressions of indigenous waterways in Sinophone eco-fiction, the talk also queries the production of trans-indigeneity as a broader project in the Taiwanese imagination.
Xinmin Liu | Greenwashing and Its Discontent: Affect in Navigating a Chinese Muslim’s Root-Searching

As a critical term, “greenwashing” refers derogatorily to corporate-led publicity campaigns to promote their environment-friendly postures; as such, the color green is no more than a camouflaging label for them to cover up their greedy pursuit of profits in reality. My critique of greenwashing locates its rhetorical symbolism in a global vs. local context and seeks out a countering ethnic ethos and cultural mentalities towards green with all its shades of complexity. I focus on the human affect as the key cognitive venue in bonding with one’s biophysical environs; in exploring the intercultural transfer of this symbolism, I try to uncover the conceptual pitfalls of the Shanzhai (counterfeiting) campaigns in blindly copying and implanting Euro-American iconic landmarks in China’s urbanizing drive over the past three decades. In particular, I scrutinize the showcasing of “town greens” in many counterfeited foreign towns—all fertilized and manicured mechanistically—to entice visitors at home and overseas to revel in fantasies of middle-class status and leisure transplanted from Euro-America. Looking at them critically, I detect the shadow of encroaching settler colonialism in the guise of new technicist triumphalism. To counter it, I follow the ethnic root-searching of Zhang Chengzhi, a Chinese Muslim writer, who never hesitates to declare how he despises the color green and many of its vaunted claims. Instead he is “enamored” with the hardy and unyielding loess highlands where he seeks out the embedded ethnic ethos by working and living among communities of Hui Chinese in Northwestern China in search of his reclaimed Muslim root. Zhang openly rejects a disinterested perspective over the local “sites” that allows a technologized gaze of local cultures as collectable data and artifacts at the expense of the lived experience between humans and their surroundings. When he was invited to take charge of the new journal Humanistic Geography by Sanlian Publishers in 1998, not surprisingly, his editorial criteria ran counter to the real design of Sanlian publishers who were to market a Chinese version of the American mega-journal of The National Geographic for profit, and it cost him the editorship. To this day, however, Zhang’s sharp insight rings ever so loud and clear on the danger of “copycatting” the American-type of global outlook courtesy of National Geographic.

Anurag Bhattacharyya | Learning the Ecological Past: An Ecocritical Reading of Gao Xingjian’s Soul Mountain and Easterine Kire’s When the River Sleeps.

Gao Xingjian is a Chinese Nobel Laureate in Literature best known for his renowned novel Soul Mountain that traces the five hundred kilometers journey of the protagonist from the source of the Yangtze River till it meets the China Sea. The unnamed narrator makes a trip to the remote places of the eastern China bordering Tibet and highlights the ravages caused by Cultural Revolution under the leadership of Mao Zedong. In the name of development and in their bid to embrace modernity the Red Guards completely destroyed the people’s sense of rootedness to their land and place and imposed a kind of forced amnesia that compelled them to adopt a life that is artificial and alien to these people. On the other hand Easterine Kire is a contemporary novelist from Nagaland, an Indian state from the Northeast. The novel explores the dreams and oral folk narratives of the Naga community and also explores the various myths, beliefs, legends and rituals that are integral to their culture. The paper seeks to examine these two Asian novels and makes an attempt to represent the traces of the buried past under the critical political situation. It would further discuss how both these novels have been used to make a journey into the past of the nation and then used it as a source of imparting and preserving the ecological heritage of these indigenous people.

Indigenous Forests

Kevin Ennis | Temporal and Genealogical Intimacy in the Rainforests of Davi Kopenawa and Márcia Wayna Kambeba

The Yanomami community’s lands sit in the northwestern Amazon rainforest on the Brazil-Venezuela border. Despite a focus on the rainforest and on the environmental consequences of historic and present extractivism in the Yanomami community, Davi Kopenawa’s “The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman” (English translation 2013) is not a strictly ecological manifesto. Rather, the text challenges Western, non-indigenous
worldviews, and it is from Yanomami knowledge, worldview, and belief that Kopenawa's concerns for local and global environmental justice movements and environmental protections in the text stem. Kopenawa's genre-bending text functions politically and decolonially, in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2010) understanding of a decolonial project and in Catherine E. Walsh's understanding of decoloniality, through its centralization of Yanomami perspectives in addressing the longstanding environmental crises in the Amazon rainforest. Kopenawa further highlights direct links between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, an intimate, genealogical relationship with the Yanomami understanding of the genesis of the world, preempting any questioning of the place of the West in the text or in Yanomami ecological concerns based in their cosmovision. Márcia Wayna Kambeba's 2013 collection of poetry ““Ay Kakyri Tama: Eu moro na cidade““ explores the history of her peoples and her present understanding of being Indigenous vis-à-vis historical Indigenous decision-making for survival in relation to Western imperial interference. Kambeba’s poems traverse fragile Amazonian landscapes, from the city of Belém do Pará, whose pre-imperial Indigenous pasts are centralized, to Omágua and Kambeba lands in the Amazon River Basin, whose intimate timescapes coalesce in language, ritual, and life. Finally, Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (2015: 96) understanding of cosmopolitics underscores the communicative bridge-building of Kambeba’s poetics and the Yanomami systems of belief and knowledge in tension with Western histories that deny any such genealogical, temporal, or communicative relationships.

Ted Hamilton | Rewriting the Rainforest: History and Environmental Conflict in César Calvo’s The Three Halves of Ino Moxo

In César Calvo’s 1981 novel The Three Halves of Ino Moxo, a shaman reflects on the horrors of the rubber trade in the Amazon and declares: “And when I think that those genociders were men . . . I want to join the nation of snakes, or the palosangre tree, or rocks, anything . . .” The desire to disaffiliate from humanity is one example of the conceptual crisis produced by global environmental catastrophe, of which the Amazon — variously viewed as a pristine biosphere, redoubt of Indigenous knowledges, and center of ecological injury — is site and symbol. In this presentation, I consider one literary response to this crisis, examining how Eurocentric ideas of historical progress are adapted to the (neo)colonial reality of the Amazonian social environment. Calvo’s novel, with its digressive structure and intertextual play, subverts traditional non-Indigenous Latin American rainforest literature by proposing shamanic visionary knowledge as a means of decolonial liberation. At the same time, it forces readers to ponder the prospects for cultural exchange across historical and geographical extractive frontiers, imagining an Amazonian future built from the horrors and hopes of the past.

Mary Rosenberry | Metamorphosis and Fictional Forests in Contemporary American Novels

In the United States, cultural ideas toward forests are deeply imbricated with the process of colonization. From a colonial perspective, forests have been valued primarily either for what could be extracted from them — lumber — or for their potential to be transformed into a different sort of landscape entirely — such as farmland. Such a limited view ignores indigenous practices of forest management. However, recent literature written by natives and non-natives alike has portrayed forests in new light, reimagining what forests are and what they are for. This trend offers much needed avenues to rethink human relationships with the environment, but it also invites acknowledged and analysis of colonial attitudes and practices. Louis Owens’ Wolfsong and Jean Hegland’s Into the Forest complicate colonial, extractive mindsets toward forests and evoke tenets of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). In each novel, forests are the site where humans experience ontological disruption and, ultimately, metamorphosis. In time, the characters of both novels come to see the forests themselves and the many lives they contain as teachers. In learning from these spaces, the characters recognize that their own wellbeing is intimately tied with that of the forest’s. Although threats to forests and humans alike are presented unflinchingly, the novels imagine hopeful futures in which major ontological shifts have broken the colonial attitude that saw forests as economic resources to be exploited. In the wreckage left
by colliding ontologies, the possibility emerges for new communities of forests and humans to mutually thrive. This process of metamorphosis happens at multiple levels: diegetically, the characters are transformed by their interactions with forests and the many lives they contain; more broadly, the novels participate in and sometimes challenge the narratives and goals of the colonial project and the modern environmental movement that have too often ignored indigenous perspectives.

Settler Colonialism and the (non)Human

Melina Savi | What does it mean to be human and nonhuman in Thomas King’s and Ailton Krenak’s fiction and nonfiction works?

In the short story “Rendezvous,” Thomas King (2005) imagines an unnamed Canadian town where, to the dismay of its human dwellers, wild animals move to and take over the streets, public spaces, the private gardens and attics. Moose, wolverine, mountain lions, buffalo, among other wild animals, having lost their habitat as a consequence of the relentless advances of human “progress” into the forests, interrupt the “natural” flow of the city with their sudden arrival. The story makes evident the artificial and mostly idealized relationship urban, middle-class, Western populations have developed with nature. “Out there,” where it “should” be, the wild has its place as a site of contemplation and eventual enjoyment, but the wild is unwelcome in the city. The imaginative exercise King proposes can lead us to wonder that, if it is so outrageous to have animals invading the city, how should wild animals feel with the cutting down of their home for the construction of golf courses, roads, resorts, and the like? The ontological inversion that King plays with is comprehensively addressed by Brazilian indigenous thinker and activist Ailton Krenak, who has recently published two books, namely Ideas to Postpone the End of the World (2019) and A Vida não é útil (2020, “Life is not Useful,” not yet published in English). Krenak understands that human exceptionalism, or the Western idea of what is means to be human (which is not to be nonhuman), is at the heart of the misconception that leads us to understand that our livelihoods are not inextricably connected to the natural and nonhuman world. In this paper I intend to read Krenak’s ontological revision of what is means to be human alongside King’s story to ponder how these indigenous fiction and nonfiction works can contribute to the discussions about the Anthropocene.

Claudia Miller | Inuit Sentinels: Sheila Watt-Cloutier’s The Right to Be Cold

The impact of climate change on Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic has been widely documented in a myriad of scientific publications. However, the cultural and identity shifts attached to these changes have often been overlooked in mainstream portrayals that center on ice melt and animal species extinction to the detriment of the human factor. As many Inuit scholars and writers have stated (Shairi Fox 2002, Henry Huntington et al 2015), the risks embedded in Arctic climate change must be considered as directly related to a demise of culture, education and the social conditions of Inuit communities. This paper aims to examine the sociocultural effects of climate change on Inuit communities and individuals as represented in Sheila Watt-Cloutier’s memoir The Right to Be Cold (2015). Watt-Cloutier’s unique positionality, having worked within regional, national and international political spheres, testifies to the intricate relations of the Arctic, a region that depends on international mitigation measures to thrive internally. I propose to look at the ways in which The Right to Be Cold actively places the human being at the center of climate change, promoting Indigenous knowledge, personal experience and affectivity to the scientific debate. It stands to reason that Inuit life writings are crucial in any approach to environmental justice, contributing to the continued discussions of the connections between the vulnerability, adaptability and ingenuity of Inuit communities as sentinels of climate change.
Julia Siepak | Contesting Settler Colonial Extraction in North America: Indigenous Women Writers’ Literary Responses to the Anthropocene

This paper explores Indigenous responses to the Anthropocene as represented in the works by two contemporary North American Indigenous women writers – Cherie Dimaline (Métis) and Darcie Little Badger (Lipan Apache). The analysis centers on three recent novels, namely Dimaline’s The Marrow Thieves (2017) and Empire of Wild (2019), and Little Badger’s Elatsoe (2020), focusing on the emerging from them poetics of fossil and extraction that contest settler colonial extractive economies. All the selected narratives may be labeled as works of Indigenous futurism—a term proposed by Grace Dillon (2012)—describing Native writing that re-imagines the literary categories of speculative and science fiction. Informed by the experiences of the crisis provoked by settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples’ responses to the Anthropocene differ significantly from the mainstream visions of the environmental emergency. Therefore, I read the selected narratives as texts that envision Indigenous futurities based on the reciprocity of the human and the non-human, offering an alternative to the dominant apocalyptic visions of the future. To provide a broader socio-political context for the analysis of the selected works of fiction, I address the intersections of settler colonialism in the U.S. and Canada, economies based on extraction, and the environmental crisis. The paper outlines the Indigenous take on the Anthropocene as theorized by scholars, such as Kyle Powys Whyte and Zoe Todd. Thus, the reading of the selected Indigenous women’s writing is framed within the current scholarly discussion on the Anthropocene in the field of Indigenous studies and beyond.

Indigenous Semiotics

Charles Pigott | Re-writing the Land through Contemporary Maya Literature: “In lu’um / Mi tierra” by Javier Abelardo Gómez Navarrete

This paper will explore, from an ecocritical perspective, the bilingual poem “In lu’um / Mi tierra”, composed in Yucatec Maya and Spanish by Mexican writer Javier Abelardo Gómez Navarrete (1942-2018). The paper will discuss how, through the dialogue between the two versions of the poem, Gómez Navarrete rewrites the ancestral Maya homeland from Yucatán to lu’um, the Maya word for “earth”. While the former name is associated with incomprehension, allegedly deriving from the Maya phrase, “I do not understand your language” as the native inhabitants first addressed the Europeans, the term lu’um implies the opposite, namely congruity, fluidity and cyclicality, enabling the constant regeneration of life. Given that lu’um holds different possibilities for human development than Yucatán, by redefining the Peninsula the poem opens up a path for the redefinition of humanity itself. If, as I argue, place is best understood not as a physical location but as a semiotic constellation, then the dialogue between both languages in the poem can be seen as part of the evolution of land, the latter understood as an ecological network that stretches across human, nonhuman and more-than-human spheres. By examining the poem at linguistic, literary and cultural levels, the paper will reveal its ambiguity in terms of the co-presence of life and death. It will show how this ambiguity is an expression of cyclicality, whereby the co-constitution of earth and humanity (habitat and inhabitant) is realized as a process of constant emergence. The paper will also reveal the importance of engaging with indigenous languages themselves, given the semantic changes that occur when indigenous philosophical principles are translated into European languages. For ecocriticism to present a holistic and inclusive perspective of the relation between humanity and other species through literature, it must incorporate the linguistic diversity of our species within its wider ecological parameters.

Ned Schaumberg | Indigenous Ecosemiotics: Possibilities and Limitations

Ecosemiotics, or the study of sign-processes that connect individuals, cultures, and environments, sometimes engages with Indigenous epistemologies, but it does not generally engage with the theory and criticism emerging from within Indigenous literary and cultural studies, which more carefully attends to political and/or
aesthetic dimensions of specific Indigenous literatures. By examining patterns of water descriptions across multiple texts, I suggest nodes of commonality that are not exactly what Chad Allen would call “trans-Indigenous,” but which still suggest cross-cultural solidarities of resistance to colonizing understandings of water. If ecosemiotics can be a literary reading practice that includes the cultural and environmental epistemologies of authors and characters, it could offer alternative frameworks for analysis, while serving as a reminder of the non-binary nature of Indigenous identity, which is especially noticeable in Indigenous texts written in English.

Amit Mandal | The Untidy Poiesis of the Tide: a select reading of Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*

The presentation shall attempt to study the human/non-human relations through (de-)constructing the idea of ‘sympoiesis’ (Harraway) amidst a state of climatic emergency. In dissecting through the concept of the sympoietic self as (re-)presented within the narrative dynamics of Ghosh’s texts; the apparent, entangled and influential relations of non-human actants (Latour) comes to the fore. The Hungry Tide deals with the anthropocentric catastrophe of climate change upon the inhabitants of Sunderbans in the Bay of Bengal. Ghosh’s Gun Island on the other hand, deals with the forte of the non-human agent/environment and its symptomatic relations, both for being and becoming-with. Both texts criticize the neglect/denial of the non-human ‘other’ and argue about the potential of material vibrancy and agency of non-human agents, as espoused by Bennett. The non-human then, becomes animate in forms of tornados, earthquakes, floods to upend any sense of nature-culture dualism and turbo-capitalist essentialism. The paper shall try to account for the variant relations achieved and networked as based on the idea of ‘sympoiesis’, exhibited and delineated in Ghosh’s novels. In specifically looking at such moments brought within the narrative framework where the idea of the sym- in the poiesis is challenged and construed at the same time. The state of climatic insurgency as portrayed in the texts serve testimonial to the ontic of ‘thing-power’ (Bennett) as generated in the nature-culture confluences. The point then shall be to not only address the vibrant materialism of non-human actants but their various power-relations and dynamics as both effect and affect. By addressing the state of climatic emergency as climactic in symptom, the discourse of matter and materiality opens up on a wider political, cultural and ontological plane.

**Interrogating Apocalypse**

Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann | *The Dead Can’t Dance* and *Blood Quantum*: Contrasting Indigenous Visions of the Zombie Apocalypse

This presentation will reconfigure views of the comic eco-hero and narrative through readings of an unexpected sub-genre, the indigenous zombie film showcased by two divergent examples nearly a decade apart: Rod Pocowatchit’s *The Dead Can’t Dance* (2010) and Jeff Barnaby’s *Blood Quantum* (2019) Although varied in their genres, both *The Dead Can’t Dance* and *Blood Quantum* begin with the same question: what if a zombie virus infected everyone but Native people? In *The Dead Can’t Dance*, Pocowatchit takes a comic approach to the question, but in *Blood Quantum* Jeff Barnaby chooses a more tragic, if sometimes darkly comic, response. In this presentation, we assert that these two diverse genre films aptly illustrate conflicts between comic and tragic eco-hero types and evolutionary narratives, but they also complicate evolutionary visions by building them on the backs of environmental and colonial history. Although *Blood Quantum* illustrates a tragic eco-narrative, in the eco-comedy *The Dead Can’t Dance*, comic eco-heroes promote communal rather than individual pioneering exploitation of others and their environment, showcasing Joseph Meeker’s assertion that “it is the community itself that really matters, and it is likely to be an extremely durable community so long as balance is maintained among its many elements” (Meeker 163). With their comic answers to colonial exploitation, the films also condemn environmental injustice and racism.
Megan Kuster | The Labour of Lore: Moa Bones, Huia Feathers, and 19th Century Extinction Discourses

Examining the connections between the scientific and cultural aspects of Moa bones and Huia feathers in colonial New Zealand, my paper situates the labour of lore at the centre of nineteenth-century extinction discourses. Through an analysis of the published and unpublished archive of William Colenso (Church Missionary Society Printer and botanist, 1811-1899), the first 40 volumes of the Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute (1869-1908), and selections from The New Zealand Country Journal (1878-1888) and Huia Tangata Kotahi (1893-1895), it demonstrates how knowledge about the Moa and Huia was produced though interactions between missionaries, scientists, and Indigenous people on mission trips and in missionary schools. While nineteenth-century geology and historical geography offered some ways of measuring deep historical time, there was insufficient statigraphical and palaeogeographical evidence from the rock layers and physical landscape features to adequately test theories of Moa evolution and extinction. The first part of my paper, therefore, examines how the collection of Indigenous lore by European scientists and missionaries became a way supplementing the evidence base. At the same time as the racialisation of colonial settlement further marginalised the contributions of Indigenous brokers in accounts of knowledge production, scientific accounts of the Moa became increasingly linked to racist theories of human civilisation while the relatively muted demise of the Huia was connected to settler nativisation. In the second part, I draw on extinction studies frameworks to reopen nineteenth century debates that played out in the broad domain between the fields of biology and anthropology. Recontextualising the hitherto marginalised roles of Indigenous people in colonial science, I analyse how the stories Indigenous people told about the Moa and the Huia contributed to the valuation of specimen-commodities, highlighting instances from the archive in which Indigenous agents drew on these bird to generate Indigenous futurities.

Indigenous Ecopoetics and Subaltern Knowledges

Mohammad Jan | Hearing the Ecosubaltern Voices from Bangladesh: An Ecocritical Reading of Garo and Chakma Poetry

According to a recently published article in The Guardian, Indigenous communities are “critical guardians of biodiversity.” Because of the close proximity to and reciprocity with nature that the Indigenous peoples have had for centuries, they possess a strong ecological empathy, which can enlighten all of us in an age of global environmental crises. However, it is also the same group of Indigenous peoples, who are, ironically, on the frontline of the potential threats of climate change because they mostly have their habitation in places that are geographically at high risk, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Indigenous peoples suffer both physically and spiritually when Mother Nature suffers. Their sufferings could also be considered as a physical manifestation of the impacts of what Rob Nixon calls “slow violence.” Bangladesher Adibashi Kabboshongroho (Anthology of the Indigenous Poetry of Bangladesh) is a volume—the first of its kind—that samples more than 250 poems from 23 different ethnic/Indigenous tribes of Bangladesh. For the purpose of my paper, I have chosen poems written by poets from Garo and Chakma communities, two of the largest Indigenous communities of Bangladesh. My paper argues that hearing the unheard voices of the politically marginalized as well as climatically vulnerable Indigenous communities—that I shall be calling ‘ecosubaltern’—through an ecocritical reading of their literatures can firstly, enlighten us about the Indigenous people’s eco-philosophy portrayed through their symbiotic relationship with nature, and secondly, can sensitize us about the nature of their struggle and sufferings caused by ecological destructions. By situating the Bangladeshi ‘ecosubaltern’ voices in the globally resurging Indigenous narratives, my paper will finally try to explain how our understanding of what Joni Adamson and Salma Monani call “Indigenous cosmovisions” can profoundly reshape our environmental thinking in the age of the Anthropocene.
Montserrat Madariaga-Caro | Of Moss and Flowers: Scientific poetics and anticolonial micropolitics in the works of Mapuche poets Leonel Lienlaf and Cristian Antillanca

In its thirst for land, settler colonialism throughout Turtle Island and Abiayala not only consists of a genocidal ongoing process and structure (Wolfe 2006; Speed 2019; Delrio 2018) but also entails environmental detriment including “biocolonialism” (Whitt 2009) and the death of entire ecosystems. The dispossession and intent of elimination of Indigenous people is one and the same with environmental injustices (Gilio-Whitaker 2019), and it is justified by Western science. However, literary criticism of Mapuche People’s creative work has yet to engage with how science plays a role in what Mapuche activist Moira Millan names “terricide,” the genocide of the land including human, non-human, and spiritual lives. It also needs to engage further with the Indigenous science underlying Mapuche poetics. Through the analysis of the works of Mapuche-Williche poets Leonel Lienlaf and Cristian Antillanca, I argue that they create scientific poetics where the Mapuche-Williche knowledge system functions as anticolonial micropolitics. In Kogen, Lienlaf presents what I call a pedagogy of the moss—aligned with Anishinaabeg Leanne B. Simpson’s ideas about land as a teacher—a way of knowing that confronts colonial myth of the inevitable extinction of Indigenous people. In Wanglen y el canto de las flores, Antillaca shows the stellar genealogy of flowers and all lives of the land based on ancient Mapuche stories, that puts forward a Mapuche self-representation against the grain of terricidal science’s appropriations. The poetic language of both authors exposes how Western “reductivist scientism” (Whitt 2009) serves settler colonialism and terricide.

Martin Premoli | Climate Knowledge in the Poemodels of Craig Santos Perez

Recently, artists from the South Pacific have made headlines for calling attention to their precarious position in our increasingly warming world: if the earth warms by two degrees, many islands will disappear beneath the ocean’s rising water levels. In an effort to garner Western support (and to awaken the West to the violence it is enacting), Pacific Islanders have developed numerous forms of aesthetics-based activism. Rather than fulfilling the victimization narrative that the traditional media opts for, these performances highlight the simultaneous risk and empowerment of Pacific Islanders when faced with “sinking islands.” One of the more prominent voices to arise within this nexus of climate advocacy is that of Chamorro poet, scholar, and activist Craig Santos Perez. Perez is a and a poet who has published... My essay will focus on Perez’s most recent work Habitat Threshold—a collection of poems that constellate some of the chief environmental issues facing the South Pacific. More specifically, my essay will explore the numerous ways in which Perez draws upon—and then formally experiments with—scientific graphs on climate change, while also entangling them with poetic counterpoints that explore climate change from a localized, embodied, and Indigenous perspective. I argue that these strategies yield an illuminating hybrid form that we might call the “poemodel.” Rather than simply denounce and deconstruct positivist models of knowledge production (a dangerous maneuver in our current political climate), these poemodels turn scientific graphs into representational devices, illustrating the importance of scientific information, while also spotlighting its limitations. Moreover, they demonstrate how Indigenous knowledge is invaluable for negotiating today’s environmental issues and “are a significant strategy for achieving successful adaptation planning”—as Kyle Powys Whyte puts it. As such, his poemodels illuminate potential points of overlap—and friction—between varying forms of climate knowledge.

Jessica Cory | “Home is What You Make It: Remapping, Spacial Sovereignty, and Sense of Place in Lehua Taitano’s A Bell Made of Stones”

Home is often thought of as a place of security. In A Bell Made of Stones, the first full-length poetry collection by queer CHamoru poet Lehua M. Taitano, however, the author depicts her homeland as a place of uncertainty, violence, and fear, predominantly due to U.S. military occupation of the island. Throughout the collection, Taitano weaves the political history of Guam, known as Guåhan in the native language, with her rootedness in its space, creating a juxtaposition of instability and safety. The author locates the latter largely through
reimagining her ancestral landscape and her relationship with it, remapping her homeland through these poems as a method of decolonization. Taitano engages in self-determination through representing Guåhan as Indigenous space in A Bell Made of Stones, as a means of spatial decolonization that reimagines CHamoru kinship with the Guåhan environment. This analysis of place is important as spatial self-determination creates sites wherein Indigenous queer and two-spirit people can resist the heteronormativity and gender binaries of colonialism, and, on a larger scale, can illustrate the quotidian impacts that political sovereignty has on Guåhan.

**Indigenous Foodways**

**Katelyn Juerjens | Taste the Nation, Consume the Subaltern: Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Menus, Cookbooks, and Colonial Capitalism**

Much of the violences against Indigenous populations in the U.S. have occurred and still occur through the disruption of food systems. From displacing Indigenous peoples from their land and killing off their access to game, to forcibly assimilating Indigenous peoples into eating European foods, colonialism has historically found countless ways of oppressing and controlling Indigenous populations through an erasure of their culinary traditions and a dispossession of their food sovereignty. This dispossession is inextricable from the history of colonization, which includes genocide, forced migration, and the reservation system. In response, the Indigenous food sovereignty movement has formed as a rejection of U.S. colonial and neocolonial practices. It is both a conscious deracination from the global industrial food production, as well as a commitment to restore Indigenous relationships with the land, culture, and traditions. My paper investigates the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been controlled and oppressed through food subservience, and conversely, how Indigenous groups have used food sovereignty as a way of regaining their agency. Through an analysis of menus, cookbooks, and popular culture featuring Indigenous foods alongside the history of U.S. settler colonialism, I place the ways in which Indigenous communities, chefs, and authors use the unlikely medium of food as a voice against colonial structures. Food can be a powerful source of healing and a resource for knowledge, tradition, and culture. Yet, it can also be a site of violence. Indigenous food sovereignty may provide the hope and independence that is crucial for the survival of Indigenous populations, but, as my paper asks, is there any escape from the structures of colonial capitalism, and moreover, is food a powerful enough weapon against those relentless and punishing systems?

**Dan Paracka and Seneca D. Vaught | From God to Man: Social and Ecological Lessons of Palm Wine Practice from Wara Wara Bafodia, Sierra Leone**

This presentation examines an origin story about palm wine that has evolved to promote a deep sense of memory, identity, and cultural values. In this context, it represents an ecological and post-colonial discourse of resistance in rebellion to modern notions of exploitative production and extraction. Palm wine is the most commonly-consumed traditional alcoholic beverage in West Africa and its influence and popularity is recognized throughout the region. Reassessing the cultural values evident in the stories and traditions of indigenous palm wine practices present a path forward that speaks to a process of reparative reconciliation, resiliency in the face of a violent past, and the importance of maintaining a close relationship to and deep knowledge of local environments. A return to the wisdom of traditional palm wine practice presents an alternative worldview for renewing humanity’s relationship with the planet.
Swara Joshi and Meera Vasani | Annihilation of Eco-Terrain Food Culture in Mavchi and Bhil Communities of Western Part of India

The bond between the indigenous people and nature which was once considered as a picture of romance and strength is now merely fighting for its postulation of existence. This reshaped analogy of indigenous life-community-ecology formed over the years needs deeper study not limited up to the writings about social justice movements as done in second and third waves of ecocriticism but also about the unique indigenous culture to see how their lives are always centred around nature and how nature is the hero in their tales. In this paper, I discuss one such regional novel (primary source) named Aador written in the Marathi language by Najubai Gavit. The novel presents the customary world of the Mavchi and Bhil tribes living in the Sakri taluka of the Dhulia district of Maharashtra. The physical world of these tribes in the book concurrently passes with the natural world surrounding them. I examine a tragic incident that upheavals the indigenous food culture as well as other traditional dependencies on a tree called mahua. This exercise of doing a close reading from this book is necessary because to learn about the indigenous life that existed ere the emergence of the crisis in food culture and how the colonial and post-colonial acts damaged and emplaced the beautiful memories of the Mavchi and Bhil lives that thrived on fruits and flowers of the mahua tree but later transposed full of worries in a mere collection of food and survival. This critically selected incident qualifies to be called a response from literary tradition and opens up the scope of finding out more about such cultural and ecological relations in literature.

Migrant Ecocriticism Abstracts

Critical Aesthetic Responses to Environmental Emergencies: Creating New Forms of Collaborative Art and Media Practices

Lisa Bloom | Introduction

We are living through an unprecedented acceleration of crisis-like climate events that has transformed our priorities in our scholarship and teaching. The panel focuses on collaborative perspectives on film, web-based media, and art that engages the reality and the severity of the climate crisis in an array of fast-changing environments. It explores work from experimental feminist, indigenous, and transnational cinema, performance and installation art.

May Joseph | Dalit Trance and Possession Techniques as Sea Methodologies: A Collaborative Approach

This paper explores collaborative ocean experiments with Dalit performers along the Malabar Coast. In 2015 I collaborated with a group of Dalit performers from the Theyyem and Kalaripayyatu performance traditions to delve into the history and ecology of the Fort Cochin shoreline. It was a transformative durational performance staged on the 16th century seawall of Fort Cochin addressing mythologies and stories of the nonhuman and other-than-human ontologies. I will present a powerpoint on the interweaving of divine modalities with ecologies of the nonhuman. I will unpack the precarity of Dalit embodied histories- of those who have been considered less-than-human- alongside the endangered forces of the nonhuman along the Kerala coast.
Sofia Varino | Water Activity: Non/Human Collaborations with the Venetian Lagoon

This paper explores transmarine immersive pedagogies in the Venice Lagoon. Approaching the phenomenon of acqua alta seasonal flooding in Venice in the context of climate change requires collaborative modalities of thought and action. In this presentation, I deploy Harmattan’s Acqua Alta performance in 2014 and our postponed 2020 Venice Project as a case study to consider how the medium of site-specific performance enables both performers and audiences to participate in a multispecies praxis of collaboration in public space, activating bodies in real time in relation to the materiality of climate change events and the volatile agency of water.

E. Glasberg | Roni Horn, Inner Geography, and The Shifting Waters of Iceland

This paper focuses on a long-term multi-media installation set in Iceland created by the artist Roni Horn that entangles and enfolds viewers in an ecological web. Touching on Roni Horn’s work from 1991-2007, I argue that Horn’s work, though usually understood in the frame of abstraction, guides audiences to more genuine attachments to material environments by involuting and entangling the organization of psychic, material, and political realms.

Lisa E. Bloom | At Memory’s Edge: Collaborative Perspectives on the Environment in Arctic Cinema

The paper engages the importance of cross-generational and interracial collaborations in both the creation of films as well as in their dissemination over the internet to indigenous communities. The paper draw on the writings of Indigenous literary theorist Gerald Vizenor who uses the term “aesthetics of survivance” to articulate the central place of creative story-telling in visual form in indigenous knowledge to address climate trauma. I will build on this tenet by investigating collaboratively created film.

Water Moves

Medha Bhattacharyya | Water, Water Everywhere?: A Reading of Rohinton Mistry’s Fiction

Rohinton Mistry is a Parsi Indo-Canadian writer. Though residing in Ontario known as ‘City of Lakes’, Canada, he has been writing primarily about Bombay (now Mumbai), bordered by the Arabian Sea. Water is the life-giving force in our lives. Even though 75% of earth is covered with water only a very small amount of it is deemed usable. Hence, water is an important source for plant, animal and human existence. So, it is not surprising that Rohinton Mistry uses the metaphor of water to communicate to his readers the attitude of his protagonists towards their environment—both physical and mental. In this paper, I propose to analyze as to how Mistry draws his protagonists’ attitude towards the place they (protagonists) reside in depicting the description of water in his writing through a close textual reading using discourse analysis. The texts I will employ for this analysis are Tales from Firozsha Baag (1987) and Family Matters (2002) both published in Canada. One can draw a parallel with the author’s response to his adopted country, Canada and to the country of his birth, India in a similar manner. I mention India as the country of his birth simply because he belongs to the Parsi community which reveals that his country of ‘origin’ is Iran. That means he is a product of multiple migration just as in the case of his protagonists in search of their identities to be analyzed in this paper. In Rohinton Mistry’s texts water features in many dimensions. Just like the physical property of water which assumes the shape of the container in which it is stored, water as featured in Mistry’s writing has similar properties except that in his writings the container becomes the mind’s acceptability of his physical and mental surroundings in its environment.
George Hegarty | "Where the Sewage Meets the Sea" – Mapping Confluence and Collapse in the Tijuana River Valley in Kem Nunn’s *Tijuana Straits*

This essay questions how ecological, border, and literary histories can coalesce to address transnational environmental and humanitarian crises that are being exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change. Looking specifically at the Tijuana, one of the three major rivers that form the U.S./Mexico international border, this paper examines how the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the maquiladora program (1965) have been integral in forming the manufactured landscapes of the borderlands between Baja and Alta California. I argue that Kem Nunn’s novel *Tijuana Straits* (2004) troubles the idea that the Tijuana River Valley is an abandoned space, as the narrative depicts a richly populated environment where various kinds of borders decay. With all aspects of the novel’s portrayal of the valley’s ecosystem impacted by the heavily polluted river, the thematization of decay invites readers to reconsider the distinctions between the two countries and the human and non-human. Through examining moments of confluence in the novel, this paper explores how Nunn’s narrative mapping of the border between the United States and Mexico enables readers to see how the Tijuana River functions as a vehicle to understand the web of influences that constitute ecological and humanitarian threats along the international border.

Apala Bhowmick | "Not Death that came but water" (349): Aquatic Affect and Riverine Agency in Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor’s novel, *Dust* (2014)

My paper considers how Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor’s novel *Dust* (2014) recounts histories of loss—both national and interpersonal—as playing out parallel to the trajectory of environmental despoilation in postcolonial Kenya. I argue that Owuor’s repeated use of the words, “silence” and “wordlessness” as leitmotifs, act as counterpoints, against which other sounds (human, urban, environmental) are integrated to represent a range of human affects which are enmeshed with aqueous imagery in the text. The Kenyan environment is not simply a passive backdrop in Owuor’s worldmaking, but instead provides action, feedback, and inter-subjective identification, propelling the narrative forward along a non-linear temporal trajectory. By discussing the aesthetics of representation of waterbodies, narrative significance of names of rivers, and the affective tensions present in scenes involving descriptions of aqueous imagery, I demonstrate how nonhuman actors in the environment—specifically those related to aquatic bodies—influence moods, decisions, and the politics of physical proximity involving the characters Owuor portrays in *Dust*. My paper examines how water turns into a point of fixation for the grieving characters in the text—which features water songs, references to bodies of water, and the naming of a key character after a river—to unpack an overt environmental statement made by the author where urban events of post-election unrest are connected with questions of gradual, historical degradation of the natural environment of the region. The novel dismantles conventional hierarchies between nonhuman and human elements in the natural landscape, and within the abundance of aqueous imagery present in it, water serves as an ambiguous affective domain embodying, both, loss and perseverance, in the face of loss.

Reimagining Space and Place

*Graduate Student Paper Award Winner* Tori Bush | Eco-Orientalism: Constructing Climate Migration on Isle de Jean Charles

In 2016, $48 million federal tax dollars were allocated to move the entire indigenous community of the Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimatcha-Chocotaw Band. The island community was widely dubbed the first “American climate refugees.” Although many scholars have pointed out that this nomenclature others marginalized
people and places them on the periphery, it still it used widely by journalists when describing this community. For a small island with a current population of less than thirty people, there has been much written about it: The New York Times and The Guardian have all written multiple pieces. Elizabeth Rush’s Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore, a finalist for the Pulitzer centered in part on the island and Behn Zeitlin’s Beasts of the Southern Wild was filmed there. Teen Vogue even wrote an article about the last teenagers on the island. I argue that these texts can create an eco-orientalizing discourse which separates the community from the nation by repeated literary tropes and rhetoric that define this place as peripheral and far from centers of power. I define eco-orientalism as a discourse developed through environmental writing and writers which separates or disconnects people and places vulnerable to global warming and its rising seas. This discourse, like orientalism, has profound material impacts on place, however, it posits the global north’s tradition of environmentalism as the source of power in which “peripheral” places are constructed and made vulnerable.

Elaine Ewart | Breaching the borders: an archipelagic approach to environmental writing

At a time when it is more important than ever for governments to work together to deal with the ecological crisis, Brexit and its consequences have isolated Great Britain and Northern Ireland, both practically and politically, from their European neighbours, and threaten the constitutional break-up of the UK itself. How can place-based creative writing and ecocriticism respond to the cultural and political forces towards national self-isolation, enabling us to think beyond borders? This paper examines the British crisis of national identity through the lens of archipelagic theory, an emergent development in ecocriticism. Archipelagic theory, according to literary critics such as John Kerrigan and Richard Brannigan, is a method of considering the literary production of island regions in terms of its portrayal of relationships between its constituent nations/populations. The description “archipelagic literature” has also been suggested by ecocritic Jos Smith as an alternative term to “the New Nature Writing” to describe place-based writing which is concerned with devolution and connection. My paper applies archipelagic theory to examples of women’s creative and critical nature and travel writing recently published in the UK, including Amy Liptrot, Eluned Gramich and Melissa Harrison. It argues that archipelagic approaches, which invert accepted ideas of cultural centres and peripheries, can facilitate forms of writing which help us imaginatively transcend national boundaries, deconstruct concepts of nationhood, and consider the ways in which we connect, ecologically and culturally, across geographical and political divides.

Tathagata Som | The Place of the Planet: Climate Change and Migration in Amitav Ghosh’s Gun Island

While human migration is often discussed from a nation state-based perspective, environmental ethics is often oriented toward land-based practices and knowledge systems. This makes the agency of climate change migrants difficult to be theorized without either positing migration as an unpleasant experience or categorizing the migrants as helpless victims. This paper uses Gayatri Spivak’s concept of “planetarity” to read Amitav Ghosh’s 2019 novel Gun Island and argues that theorizing environmental ethics in a planetary context, one that refuses to be subsumed into narrow land-based nationalism, can help retrieve the agency of the climate change migrants and see migration as a necessary adaptive strategy for survival.

Narratives of Displacement

Karen Siu | "Out of Sight": Ecological Precarity and Slow Violence in Diasporic Vietnamese Graphic Narratives

This paper examines lingering effects of the Vietnam War that are typically unseen and unaccounted for. Namely, the invisible trauma of migration, displacement, and diaspora for “boat people” (i.e. refugees who fled Vietnam by boat and ship) as well as their descendants have not lessened with time. Although these traumas
are usually mental and thus unseen, I argue that Diasporic Vietnamese graphic narratives work to make this pain visible by depicting the effects of diaspora ecologically. This paper looks at three Diasporic Vietnamese narratives: Matt Huynh’s interactive graphic novel (2015), The Boat, based on the short story by Vietnamese-Australian author Nam Le, and two Vietnamese American graphic memoirs, Thi Bui’s The Best We Could Do (2017) and GB Tran’s Vietnamera (2010). Out in the open ocean, boat people historically faced starvation, drowning, and disease. I contend that these graphic texts imagine the pain of boat people and other Vietnamese Diasporic people after the Vietnam War as lingering ecological violence. All three narratives repeatedly use imagery of boats and water and depict the absence of land in order to imagine how Vietnamese Diasporic people remain situated in the ocean, in-between lands, or landless. Regardless of how long migrants have resided in another country after the Vietnam War, the graphic narratives demonstrate that they are still attached to a particular environment, one in flux and dangerous for human bodies (i.e. the water). I argue then that these texts showcase how the Vietnamese Diaspora can be understood as a permanent state of ecological precarity. Across time and space, Vietnamese Diasporic people in Huynh, Bui, and Tran’s works remain out on the water, absent from land, or in flux in-between lands.

Jasmine Ulmer | Forced Migration in the Anthropocene: Ecocritical Parables

Octavia Butler’s works of speculative fiction cover unusually diverse terrain. What holds across her novels, however, is a sustained focus on displacement and movement, one that continuously affects humans and nonhumans alike. As such, this paper explores displacement and movement across Butler’s three series of novels (Patternist, Parables, and Xenogenesis) as they relate specifically to forced migration. In the Patternist series, Butler addresses centuries of practices involving transatlantic slavery and colonization; in the Parables books, Butler anticipates environmental degradation, ensuing economic collapse, and new migrations; in the Xenogenesis trilogy, Butler imagines a full planetary displacement in which the Earth, its human inhabitants, and its plant life are relocated elsewhere following geopolitical unrest. Repeatedly throughout Butler’s works, humans and environmental life are forced to move against their will. In many regards, but also in respect to forced migration, Butler’s speculative fiction novels serve as timely warning for what has already begun and what, without intervention, will continue to be.

Demi Wilton | “To Lose Country?” Environmental Displacement in Australian First Nations Climate Fiction

Media coverage of climate-related loss and displacement was extensive during the 2019-20 bushfire crisis in Australia. However, though over 5000 sacred First Nations sites were at risk from the blaze, little attention was paid to the damages and dislocation experienced by First Nations communities compared to Australia’s non-Indigenous population. Scholars and activists have since condemned this underrepresentation, emphasizing that climate change is extremely likely to disproportionately affect Indigenous communities because of existing social and economic disadvantages and their dependence on the land for sustenance, culture, and livelihood (Sangha and others, 2020). Responding to ongoing issues of environmental injustice and its insufficient representation in Australia today, this paper will examine two works of contemporary Australian First Nations fiction concerned with themes of climate-related displacement, loss, and damage: namely, Alexis Wright’s The Swan Book (2013) and Ellen Van Neerven’s ‘Water’, from their short story collection Heat and Light (2014). By comparing the climate-stricken futurescapes of each work, this paper will highlight how each author portends that climate change offers the nation state a tool for the assimilation of Indigenous communities into neoliberal society. Alongside these readings, this paper will accordingly draw upon recent developments in Australian politics designed to remove welfare support from First Nations communities even as climate change compounds their hardship. I argue that Wright and Van Neerven offer a critique of the efficacy of climate change-abetted First Nations acculturation through literary registrations of the ancient and adaptive epistemologies underpinning contemporary First Nations existence. Climate injustice and First Nations environmental resilience, they suggest, meet in underrepresented, problematic, but also potentially generative ways.
Multispecies at the Borders

Emily Cheng | Multispecies at the Borders Intro to Panel

My video is the intro to the panel. It includes a bio for each presenter and note about the Migrant Ecocriticism Stream Q&A discussion that the presenters will attend on Friday, July 30 from 3-4pm Eastern.

Karla Armbruster | Dogs, Death, and Human Limits

Dogs are border creatures, conceptually mediating between humans and other animals due to their status as the first domesticated animal and what Donna Haraway terms a “companion species” that has co-evolved with us. Literally, they dwell along the edges of villages and cities around the world. Historically, they have also been associated with the border between life and death, despised for eating corpses but also treasured as guides into the afterlife. Even today, as Colin Dayan asserts in With Dogs on the Edge of Life, dogs are a “bridge that joins persons to things, life to death, both in our nightmares and in our daily lives.” This presentation will explore the death of dogs as represented in literary and cultural narratives, asking how they challenge a humanist sense of control over nature by confronting us with the limits of our power, our bodies, and our lives. In mainstream U.S. culture today, it’s common for humans to manage and control the death of our dogs, whether they are beloved companions whose humans agonize over the right time and way to euthanize them or some of the 1.5 million dogs killed in shelters annually. Many narratives similarly control and even exploit the deaths of dogs, sacrificing them to achieve authenticity or meaning without killing off a human character, but others — often memoirs — present the death of a dog as an opportunity to learn about and reconcile oneself to death. It is these narratives, those that allow dogs to lead us into that borderland between life and death and encourage us to explore the territory, that I find the most promising in their potential to help us to adapt to and even embrace the unknown, the uncomfortable, the unexpected — the very skills we need most in the Anthropocene.

Darya Tsymbalyuk | In the middle: stories about plants in women’s narratives of displacement

In this paper I examine multispecies stories of migration from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in Ukraine, known as Donbas region. Following the outbreak of the military conflict in Donbas and annexation of Crimea in 2014, more than 1,4 people in Ukraine have registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Here, I look at two stories by women, their relationships with houseplants that remained in the occupied territories, and ways in which these relationships have been broken by experiences of displacement. Building on Ukrainian feminist scholarship, I also look at connection of plants to images of domesticity, where narratives about plants are often told in relation to homes to which women do not have access anymore. Examining poor visibility in cultural representations, as well as greater vulnerability of both middle-aged women and plants in society, I therefore build on non-written texts to foreground these underrepresented experiences of war and displacement. Finally, in addition to academic analysis and following decolonial and feminist thinking, I engage with the testimonies through animation as a medium more accessible to the broader public.

Elizabeth Albert | The Gowanus Muskrat: A Tale of Survival in a Dark BlueGreen World

This visual presentation introduces The Gowanus Muskrat, a lushly illustrated picture book that immerses us in the post-catastrophic environment after a superstorm smashes through a polluted coastal waterway. We experience this dark blue-green world through Finn and Niblet, two small displaced creatures — a teenage
muskrat and a baby mouse — as they search for their lost families and learn to navigate a new and sometimes treacherous world. Their drive to survive is echoed in encounters with other fauna and flora also making their way. Despite the storm’s unleashing of hidden poisons and visible trash, shellfish, raccoons, feral cats, horseshoe crabs, striped mussels, trees, grasses, and flowers, hold their own, as do the brave and resourceful protagonists. The Gowanus Muskrat is a tale of adventure and inter-species bonding within the context of a neglected and storm-beaten urban coast. It is designed to introduce early ecological awareness through a tale of triumph through adversity. The setting is the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, New York, one of the most polluted urban waterways in the country, designated a Federal Superfund in 2010. Originally a tidal creek famed for its oysters “the size of dinner plates”, it was canalized during the mid-19th century, becoming a major industrial waterway lined with lumber mills, oil refineries, chemical plants, tanneries; soap, fertilizer, and paint manufacturers; cement factories; and other heavy industry. The indiscriminate poisoned the water to the extent that by 1910 the canal was almost solid with waste. Its opaque and sickly pallor inspired the its nickname, “Lavender Lake”. The canal has lost most of its heavy industry, but the underlying sediment is still highly toxic, contaminated by polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (P.A.H.’s), quantities of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs; mercury, lead and copper, and other debris, much of which dates as far back as the 1860’s.

Diasporic Environments

Meenu Akbar Ali | “You could go to places” A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Jhumpa Lahiri’s Selected Short Stories

Place holds a key interest in postcolonial and ecocritical studies and writings. Place represents the dwelling and interconnectedness of human and nonhuman entities. Concepts and impacts of rootedness, home, departure and connection to a place etc. are present in both postcolonial and ecocritical theories as mapped by critics like Lawrence Buell, Eric Ball and Homi K. Bhabha. Intersections between postcolonialism and ecocriticism reveal a need for approaches focusing on transnational and eco-cosmopolitan spaces. Jhumpa Lahiri, a renowned Indian-American writer, writes extensively on the Indian-American experience. Her debut short story collection, Interpreter of Maladies (1999) details lives and dilemmas of Indian and Indian immigrants with themes like home sickness, nostalgia, tensions, assimilation and belonging. The objective of this study is to interconnect and analyze how various emigrant characters adjust in foreign places and diasporic spaces in Lahiri’s fiction. How living uncomfortably in these environments, oscillating between the two worlds of past and present, new communities and interactions are formed. And how assimilation/acceptance of foreign others take place as a result of these interactions.

Rebecca Barnes | Nationless States and Stateless Beings: The politics of identity and citizenship in Claudio Mir’s Mondongo Scam and Cheech Marin’s Born in East L.A.

Based off of critics including Jacques Derrida, Hannah Arendt, Homi Bhabha, and Fernando Ortiz, this essay seeks to explore the philosophical underpinnings of citizenship and diasporic membership, and how, especially amongst the Latin American characters in certain works, the politics of exclusion and demonization create a cultural vacuum on the individual level that destabilizes the entire nation-state system and blurs the meaning of belonging. Overall, the argument is structured as a comparison of Claudio Mir’s play Mondongo Scam and Cheech Marin’s film Born in East L.A. The analysis of Mir’s play bases itself off of the exploration of its title, and how, despite wanting to be a taxpaying, hardworking U.S. citizen who would contribute to the wellbeing of his adopted nation, Casiano finds himself in a parasitic relationship with the U.S., ultimately losing himself through a process of severe acculturation. On the other hand, Marin’s film serves both as comic relief and as an inversion of this existential struggle, seeing as Rudy is a U.S. citizen forced to face the importance of the Latin American portion of his identity, which he has tried to escape his entire life. Together, these works demonstrate that belonging should not be dictated by borders or legal documentation, and that the Latin American diaspora requires more political and social recognition in the U.S.
Kuhelika Ghosh | Waste, Material Memory, and Diasporic Possibility in the Slave Fort

Return narratives about the African diaspora tend to struggle with the tension between the desire for a homeland and the material reality of Africa. My presentation addresses the material landscape of return within the Ghanaian slave fort and the ways in which the materiality of waste, dirt, and bodily remains contributes to the affective tensions within the diaspora. I develop this analysis through a reading of Saidiya Hartman’s memoir Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route and Emily Raboteau’s “Ghana” section of her memoir Searching for Zion: The Quest for Home in the African Diaspora, focusing particularly on the slave forts of Ghana. Although these forts are conventionally viewed through the lens of heritage tourism, Hartman and Raboteau encounter the fort landscape both as a site of death and suffering as well as a diasporic space of connection to ancestors through the material remainders of slavery found within the fort. I argue that the material landscape of Ghana provides a space for the diasporic elsewhere to be materialized, despite the overarching problems of heritage tourism. This project highlights the need to reconsider questions of material memory within the environment when tracing the history of the African diaspora.

Climate Emergencies and Disasters

Knar Gavin | Reading Disastrous Borders in Susan Briante and Francis Lo

Documentary poets Francis Lo and Susan Briante each employ unique formal tactics for apprehending and contesting the historical conditions that shape and delimit prospects of movement through precarious environments of the present. In Defacing the Monument (2020), Briante takes up the poetic imperative that Muriel Rukeyser voiced in terms of ‘extending the document’ to illuminate intersecting forces of dislocation and deprivation at the US-Mexico border: “‘We must not replicate the elisions of the state. As poets and documentarians, we can extend the document or deface it to discern its limits and to situate it against those other sources that broaden its narrative, reveal its omissions, lay bare its brutality.” In opposition to state-sanctioned narratives of place and belonging – narratives that would identify some as ‘alien’ or ‘illegal’ – Defacing the Monument collates, marks up and otherwise defaces documents related to forced mobility and borderization. Confronting the anti-communitarian, anti-relational attributes of our necropolitical present (Achille Mbembe’s term), Briante pursues horizons reaching toward care, reparation, and mutual belonging. Reading Briante alongside Lo’s A Series of Un/Natural Disasters (2016), my paper evaluates the carceral logics of US border politics in relation to the internal domestic regulation of mobility in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Through inventorial means, Lo petitions their readers to confront the unequal distribution of precarity in late capitalist naturecultures. In this cataloguing work, Lo contends with the intricate causal networks within which so-called ‘nature’ acts out, revealing cascading displacements and intensively racialized zones of exclusion. Heeding Lo’s call to probe the rubrics through which disasters are themselves apprehended, I assess the political critique of the un/natural disaster of migration leveraged by Briante’s archival assemblages. Read together, these poets illuminate broader patterns of precarization, the originating conditions of which must be centered in political responses to planetary ecological crisis.

A B M Monirul Huq | Climate-Induced Migration and the Decline of Ecological Wisdom in the Sundarbans

Due to the rising sea level, increased salinity, and decreasing scope of traditional professions, many of the residents of the Sundarbans ecoregion are leaving their ancestral home to find better lives within the country and abroad. Battered by cyclones and tidal surges, frequent climatic extremes in recent years, life in the lower Bengal delta is becoming very difficult for the residents. Consequently, people’s faith in the folk deities, largely related to their professions of hunting and gathering, is dwindling as they are migrating to other places, and the
performative practices related to these deities are declining gradually. Coupled with climatic effects, a rise in religious fundamentalism has also been creating doubts and divides among the residents and obstructing the syncretic character of these deities. These declining numbers and cultural practices might prove fatal to the wellbeing of the largest single tract of mangrove forest on earth as the cultural discourse of this area has been dominated by the rituals connected to these deities promoting ecological wisdom and principles of coexistence between humans and nonhuman species. Moreover, a growing number of floating workers unfamiliar with the cultural teachings and devoid of ecological ethics is partially replacing the local forest workers and extracting natural resources heedlessly and thus disturbing the ecological balance of this area. Amitav Ghosh’s novel Gun Island (2019) and Leesa Gazi’s play Daughter of the Forest (2016) address the issue of climate-induced migration from the Sundarbans and extend it in terms of scale and space to shape it as a global issue affecting geopolitics. This paper shows how Ghosh’s and Gazi’s texts critically reinterpret the plight of climate refugees by imaginatively situating it at the intersection of discourses of contemporary globalization and indigenous ecological wisdom.

Ethan King | Good Roads and Great Floods: Emergent States and States of Emergency in William Faulkner’s As I Lay Dying

My paper examines the transformation of the material and social geographies of the U.S. South in the early twentieth century through two specific events—the construction of interstate highways that emerged from the Good Roads Movement and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. As upheavals of the Southern landscape, these events altered notions of national belonging, socioeconomic possibility, and political and human security. For William Faulkner, these events haunt the complex terrain of As I Lay Dying, a novel replete with references to roads and floods. Originally, the objective of southern road development was to assist farmers by improving the material conditions for transporting crops. However, quickly the Good Roads Movement reoriented its project away from improved rural farm-to-market infrastructure and instead toward the construction of tourist highways. Despite Vernon Tull’s repetition of Good Roads Movement rhetoric in the novel—that the “roads is good now”—the roads and bridges the Bundrens traverse have not been maintained at all, causing their wagon to breakdown at various points, signaling the gap between the modern accessibility that the building of roads suggested and the possibility of the rural poor to traverse them successfully without efficient means of transportation. Significantly, Faulkner juxtaposes every reference to the “good roads” with references to local weather patterns and floods, charting a connection between road construction and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. One of the greatest disasters to afflict the United States, the protracted flood in Mississippi was caused by a slew of infrastructural and economic interventions with the environment. By connecting the “good roads” to the flood, Faulkner adds road construction to the litany of causes of environmental and social disruptions. Despite the aspirational qualities of infrastructural projects like the Good Roads Movement, its material transformations carried irrevocable social and environmental consequences that destabilized the South’s rural communities.

Todd Kuchta | The Climate of Partition: Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan

The Indian Partition of 1947 caused the greatest migration in history, displacing some 14 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in a matter of months. Largely forgotten is that this migration took place during a summer of extreme weather in the Punjab, the region most affected by Partition. The monsoon arrived two months late, after a protracted period of drought and severe heat. When the rains finally broke, they brought north India’s worst floods in half a century, compounding the miseries of migration. These conditions allow us to view the Partition as a climate emergency, and its victims as climate migrants. Partition scholarship says very little about the weather, and Partition literature written or translated in/to English even less. But eyewitness accounts, news reports, official correspondence, and meteorological data show how forcefully the weather affected the Partition experience, particularly for migrants. This essay offers a composite sketch of its impact, then shows how it informs Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan (1956). The first and still most famous
Partition novel, Train to Pakistan is perhaps the only work of Partition literature to foreground the climate emergency that accompanied the emergence of modern South Asia. Extreme weather shapes the novel’s imagery, atmosphere, and plot, allowing Singh to explore the horrors of Partition, particularly for migrants. Rather than simply pitting humans against random acts of nature, however, Singh depicts Partition violence as a catastrophic convergence of extreme weather and human agency. In this sense, we might read his novel as a prototype of contemporary climate fiction.

**Borderlands**

**Nick Lawrence | Cruel Fictions: Borders as Sacrifice Zones in US/Mexican Writing and Film**

This paper examines the co-production of weird nature and weird culture in literary engagements with the US/Mexican border, taking in a range of texts that explore the natures of capitalist crisis: from the sinkhole that engulfs a man at the opening of Yuri Herrera’s *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, set in a mining town “riddled with bullet holes and tunnels bored from five centuries of voracious silver lust,” to the Sonoran ‘oasis of horror’ that provides the setting of the fourth section of Roberto Bolaño’s epic novel *2666*, to the cyber-factory Tijuana setting of Alex Rivera’s scifi film *Sleep Dealer*. These and related cultural responses to neoliberal damage along the Rio Grande are at the same time profoundly ecological in their focus, prompting the question of how we might read the border as capitalist ‘nature’ in an Anthropocenic endgame now drawing to its close.

**Meg Perret | “Migration is Natural”: Analogizing Cultural and Biological Diversity in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands**

This talk analyzes scientific and artistic representations of biodiversity in the U.S-Mexico borderlands between 2017 and 2021. I examine an emerging alliance of immigrants, scientists, conservationists, activists, and artists who imagine the futures of human migrant groups as inextricable from the preservation of biodiversity in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. This coalition was sparked by the 2017 environmental controversy over Trump’s proposed expansion of the U.S.-Mexico border wall which would fragment borderlands habitat and doom over 94 endangered species to extinction. A 2018 Bioscience article, “Nature Divided, Scientists United,” with nearly 3,000 scientist signatories from Mexico, the U.S., and elsewhere, opposes Trump’s border wall construction due to its consequences for human rights and the environment. Such scientific rhetoric articulates the importance of borderlands biodiversity conservation using endangered species, such as the jaguar, that migrate across borders as a symbol of the broader cultural significance of borderlands militarization. Through tracing the movement of rhetoric and images among scientific, political, and cultural discourse, this talk illuminates the connections between such scientific publications and artistic representations.

**Beatrice Szymkowiak | Contemporary Poets Resist the (b)order**

In his influential work *Poetics of Relation* Édouard Glissant affirms that “Territory is the basis of conquest” (151). Territory is a land defined by its enclosure, within which a sovereign nation adjudicates and rules, that is, orders. I now propose the term ‘(b)order’ to designate at the same time that, which delimits a land as territory, and that, which orders it and rules what belongs within it or not. (B)order is thus a process of ordering and othering. It is also the narrative central to the ‘conquest’ of America and to the making of the U.S. empire. This narrative has been carried through providential, frontier and wilderness myths, as well as through primers, treaties, maps, slave ship manifests, etc. Settlers used these abstract and concrete, enclosing and thus excluding, texts in order to rearrange the land to their own (b)order. This (b)order perpetuated itself to the present, in the shape of settler colonialism, ecological imperialism, and late capitalism. This presentation will
examine how contemporary Indigenous poets, as well as poets from the Black diaspora and immigrant
grounds, have turned the language imposed by settler colonialism against its (b)order, exposing the initial
and continuous logic of the empire, rearranging the settler colonial map to render visible its margins, or
escaping its (b)order altogether. Specifically, I will analyze the poem “Alphabets of Letters” by James Thomas
Stevens (Mohawk Akwesasne) that emphasizes the continuous logic of the settler colonial (b)order through
time. I will then look at the remapping works of Craig Santos Perez (Chamorro) and Sherwin Bitsui (Diné). I will
conclude with works that attempt to escape the (b)order: the Middle Passage poems by Black poets Melvin B.
Tolson and Douglas Kearney, and the collection “With the River on Our Face” by ChicanX poet Emmy Perez.

The Pluriverse Abstracts

A Religious Emergence/Y

Thomas Bremer | A Huge Burden of Guilt: Rethinking Religion

This paper discusses a historical paradox of nineteenth-century US policies as it considers Lynn White Jr.’s
declaration that “Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt” for ecological ruination. The paper contemplates the
role of religion in connections between US national parks, mineral extraction, and genocidal policies toward
indigenous nations as it joins in responses to White’s conclusion that science and technology cannot solve
“the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.”

Stefano Rozzoni | Anthony of Padua: An(other) Ecocritical Franciscan Trajectory at the Core of Western Thought

In the past few decades, Franciscan philosophy has gained increasing relevance in ecocritical studies
connected to spirituality, especially in relation to the figure of Francis of Assisi: after Lynn White defined him
as the “patron saint of all ecologists” (1995 [1967], p. 14), Francis became a popular environmental icon for
having changed the attitudes of Christians toward the environment (Sorrell 2010). However, while the
prominence of Francis’s persona in ecocritical discourse proves that Franciscanism represents an influential
narrative in contemporary culture, the extent and complexity of this movement remain disregarded by
eccritics. Among its overlooked aspects are the green implications of Saint Anthony of Padua in spite of his
great popularity in Christian communities worldwide. Through my paper I wish to demonstrate how Anthony of
Padua can be re-evaluated as a (latent) ‘ecological force’ (Zapf 2016), by highlighting the potential ecological
pathways connected to his figure, both in relation to his biography and to his extensive literary production.
Specifically, my presentation intends to a) reflect on how several episodes of his life suggest ethical models of
human-nonhuman relationality (including ‘the Sermon of the Fishes’ and his dwelling on the ‘Wulnat’s Tree’); b)
analyze some passages from his Sermons concerning references to how his Nature philosophy offers parallels
with current ecocritical epistemology. Alongside the growing entanglement of spiritual discourse with
eccriticism, my approach thus strengthens the idea that early traces of “a mature environmental aesthetics”
(Buell 1995) can still be found in the archives of Western thought (Zapf 2020). Moreover, I argue that these
trajectories, in the context of Franciscan philosophy, can re-emerge as a ‘spiritual force’ leading practices of
self criticism in one’s ethical relationship with nonhumans, as a possible response to the challenges posed by
the Anthropocene.
Owen Harry | Plant-thinking through Dark Green Religion in Richard Powers’s *The Overstory*

The increasing attention paid to nonhuman agencies by the environmental humanities in recent years has been reinforced by the concurrent emergence into popular culture of insights from plant communication science, such as Peter Wohlleben’s bestselling nonfiction book *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2016) and Richard Powers’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Overstory* (2018). In the field of critical plant studies, Western philosophical and religious traditions have come under criticism for maintaining a rigid and hierarchical separation between human beings and vegetal organisms. This separation underpins the reductive instrumentalisation of plants, and by extension the world of “nature” for which they are so often seen to represent. Such criticisms, of course, risk a too-hasty dismissal of religious traditions, which in fact contain a multiplicity of expressions, including religious narratives far removed from otherworldly devaluations of nonhumans. This paper, however, takes some distance from existing institutional religions, focusing instead on those various animist and pantheist spiritualities gathered by Bron Taylor under the heading “dark green religion”. In interviews, Powers has explicitly described *The Overstory* as “filled with what Bron Taylor would call dark green religion … a kind of biopantheism” (LA Review). Powers draws heavily from plant science in his descriptions of interspecies communication in the novel but often expresses these insights through religious language. This paper will explore the ways in which Powers draws from dark green religion to narrativise the agency of trees, and how doing so complicates humanist forms of subjectivity.

Chris Petter | A “Lyric Relation” to Creation in Richard Wilbur’s Poems

This paper offers Richard Wilbur’s poem “Advice to a Prophet” as a model to learn how we might address ecological crisis through a religious, poetic vision. Wilbur’s poetic vision, in this poem and throughout his corpus, is founded upon a theology of creation that identifies the poetic act of writing as both creative and cooperative. Accordingly, the poet is able to establish a “lyric relation” between himself (as well as readers) and the things of the world. It is through this lyric relation, Wilbur suggests, that one may indirectly address ecological crisis.

Matthew Hartman | The Future of Religious Environmental Ethics in a Time of Climate Denialism and White Christian Nationalism

This presentation will explore the current realities of climate change denialism, why it has been more prominent among certain elements of the Christian right, and what the future of religious responses to the environment might look like in an era of rapidly increasing climate chaos and social unrest. I will begin by looking at some historical examples of climate denialism, including its rhetorical affect and service of identity construction and maintenance. A significant part of this analysis will focus on various factions on the political and cultural right—from the Christian right to the alt-right—to examine historical and ongoing shifts in political alignments around environmental concerns as increasing droughts and other severe weather events cause mass migration and displacement of people. In particular, I am interested in some of the new religious and political relationships forming around climate denialism, conspiracy theories, and ethnonationalist rhetoric, and what such entanglements might mean for the future of environmentalism. These realities are only exacerbated by the global pandemic, stressing already fragile systems impacted by climate crisis and stretching thin government resources. There are uncanny parallels between responses to climate change and COVID-19 on the right: while denial of the severity or even existence of the pandemic has remained steady in parts of the United States, an increasingly vocal ethnonationalist backlash has been on the rise aimed in particular at Latinx and Asian-American communities. I will finally examine the future of religious responses to climate change, and the potential for mitigating turns to nationalism through new spiritual imaginaries that emphasize an ethics of entanglement in the Anthropocene.
Kayla Adgate | Beauty and the Bat: How the Nathan Parable sheds light into intersectional inequities in the COVID-19 era

This is an essay about intersectionality, intersectional oppressions ever-present, yet underscored, illuminated, and intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Commenting on this type of microscopic phenomenon the pandemic presents, disability and animality scholar Sunaura Taylor observes, “the virus lays bare so many of society’s most profound systematic inequities and fragilities” (664). Many of us have turned to scripture in these times of devastation, holding up ancient parables as lenses as we pour over newspaper articles and inconceivable statistics to better comprehend the existential and social precarity around us. Although often explored by feminist scholars as symbolically portraying the subjection of the female under patriarchal forces, the Nathan Parable of 2 Samuel 12 is largely understudied from the perspective of critical animal studies, and even less so from an intersectional perspective regarding the sociopolitical experiences of females and nonhuman animals. In this essay, I will consider how the parable invites the reader to consider these intersectional oppressions and how the pandemic may be a particularly useful time to do so. I argue the Nathan Parable illuminates the mutuality between female and nonhuman oppression, demonstrating how this state of emergency inequitably alienates those already negotiating marginalized spaces into further places of precarity. Yet, far from suggesting that the parable merely elucidates parallel and interdependent interspecies pain and suffering, I also suggest the parable may guide those marginalized into a landscape of solidarity by demonstrating this mutuality and interdependence, deconstructing the divisive human/nonhuman binary and urging us to regain sight of our compassion and morality toward those disproportionately influenced by this instability and duress.

Farming/gardening as Tactic: An Asian American Reading

Shiuhhuah Chou | Beneath the Pacific Redwoods: Gardening and Transfiguring Organic Mindfulness

Although Asian American studies and ecocriticism have both thrived as fields of intellectual inquiry since their appearance in the 1960s, studies of the experiences of Asian Americans remain mostly disconnected from the scholarship in studies of farming/gardening. It is not until the late twentieth century that scholars begin to address this insufficiency and explores how the ongoing exploitation of farming/gardening finds itself interwoven with Asian American experiences of labor, immigration, racism, and capitalism. In this panel, we turn to Asian American experiences of immigration, relocation, detention, and resistance, focusing and considering how farming and gardening have become a tactic for survival and re-worlding: How are transnational experiences of farming/gardening represented in Asian American literature? How may Asian American farming/gardening narratives intersect with discourses of identity, citizenship, and activism? And further, how do these literary works move beyond the concerns of the personal and the communal, anticipating a new vision of Asian American farming/gardening conceived in relation to multispecies co-inhabiting?

Tan-Feng Chang | Decolonizing the Internment: Indigenized “Pioneers” and Agrarian Citizenship in Joy Kogawa’s Obasan and Cynthia Kadohata’s Weedflower

This article examines the cross-racial identifications as Indigenous “pioneers” by Japanese (North) American subjects in their efforts to claim citizenship at the critical juncture of the World War II internment. Thinking of citizenship less as a natural, given right, but more as an identity in transition and in making of history, this article discusses how Japanese Americans invented and mobilized an economized discourse of agrarian citizenship to negotiate their difference and legitimacy with and among white Americans and Native Americans. As scholars Jodie Byrd and Iyko Day have contended, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II was far from a single event; rather, Japanese American internment emerged from the particular lineaments of white settler colonialism in North America that has persistently and profoundly strengthened itself through indigenous dispossession and specters of black and Asian migration. Following this line of inquiry, I argue that the romanticized “pioneer” figure pervasive in earlier or contemporary retelling
of the internment serves to contest the natural belonging of white Americans, while at the same time gesturing to the existence of other racialized groups, whose claims to legitimacy are affirmed through the displacement of others as abject or non-citizens. Keywords: Japanese American internment narrative, pioneer identity, agrarian citizenship, comparative racialization, ecocriticism

Ipeng Liang | Plant Performance: War, Ethnicity, and the Japanese Garden in Patricia Grace’s Chappy

In this paper, I investigate the representation of the Japanese garden as a site of “plant performance” in New Zealand Māori writer Patricia Grace’s novel, Chappy (2015). By drawing on critical plant studies of Patricia Vieira, John Ryan, Alan Read, and others, I examine both the material and metaphor of the Japanese garden as a human-made “ethnic” landscape encoding a specific politicized aesthetics of Japan, as well as an “ecological poiesis”—a performance site “bearing seeds, interrupting flowers, sprouting rhizomes, uncoiling leaves, attracting pollinators, and mobilizing transnational networks” (Vieira et al, xviii). By focusing on the ethnic and botanical performance of the Japanese garden, I explore the relationship between the garden and the humans in the novel that addresses issues of war, ethnicity, and transvegetal interconnectedness. I argue that the Japanese garden creates and calls for a “poetics of inclusion” that centers on peace and interconnectedness rather than on war and exclusion.

Inhabiting: Reflections on the Writer’s Cabin

Jenna Gersie | My Childhood in a Log Cabin

Jenna Gersie grew up in a log house that her father built in the oak forests of northwest New Jersey. In “My Childhood in a Log Cabin,” Gersie draws on the work of W. D. Howells to explore kinship with nonhuman animals formed within and without the permeable space of the cabin.

David Gessner | Building the Shack

I’ve always been a lover of the studies of writers, and if you get me started on the subject of that cabin back in Concord the only way to stop me is to pull a plastic bag over my head. There is also something practically romantic about a good study, or at least something repetitively magical. The place, if it works, evokes a mood, provides a womb for work, a buffer from bills, family, and worries that will come swamping in later in the day. It provides the necessary space and latitude. Talking to oneself, generally frowned upon, is the accepted mode of discourse in a study. “Here our ordinary conversation must be between us and ourselves,” said Montaigne. This means far more than mere privacy. As a former teacher of mine, Lucia Berlin, put it: “When we write we go to a place only we can go to.” She was talking about a psychic space, of course, but a good study, or shack or castle or chateau, is that psychic space manifested, that mental state given body.

J. Drew Lanham | My Outermost House

For many writers, the cabin offers a place for reflection and sustained observance of the natural world. Often considered a retreat, the cabin provides time and space to grapple with the injustices (environmental and otherwise) that our communities face. In “My Outermost House,” J. Drew Lanham invokes Henry Beston, Henry David Thoreau, and James Baldwin as he investigates themes of wild-seeking, security, and America’s legacy of racial injustice from an ink-dark holler. In this dimmed forest, where bats flutter-flap and poets pontificate, Lanham asks, “Am I safe up here? Is this desire to have my own Outermost House too much?”
Elizabeth Bradfield | Berthed: Cabins at Sea

While the idea of “the cabin” holds isolation, a cabin on a ship at sea is anything but. The experience of working on ships is a collaborative one, one in which an individual’s specificity might be held only in “the cabin,” a private space within a wholly interdependent crew. What might it mean to hold creative and not only physical privacy in the space of “the cabin” and yet also be wholly dependent upon one another for survival at sea?

Diane P. Freedman | Creative Cabins: Hiving with a Mind of One’s Own

David Gessner has said a writer in a cabin is retreating inside a retreat, the remote cabin itself. This paper posits that many things can serve the writers’ cabin function, a book one reads or writes, an armchair, hammock, secret spot under a tree, pandemic lockdowns, self quarantine. These all can removes us from some things while taking us closer to others. As Emily Dickinson wrote, “there is no frigate like a book.” Moreover, actual cabin life, Cory Williamson reminded us, has never been one of being alone. Birds and peepers, stars and trees: these animate writers. Cabins are places we pretend to control, but out of attempted stillness emerges fecundity. Like such actual cabin writers as Henry David Thoreau, Henry Beston, Annie Dillard, Louise Erdrich, Anne LaBastille, Louise Erdrich, E. B. White, Alice Koller, May Sarton, Roger Deakin and more, many of us have been emerging from whatever careful curtains we drew with new writing, new appreciations, collaborative musical efforts, new practical life skills (cookery, carpentry, bee-keeping, poultry raising, mask-making) representative of increasing self-reliance, capacity for discipline, and capacity for and recognition of joy.

Autecologies: Emerging Gleanings On Aut(ism) & Emergency

Anand Prahlad | Natures and Nature Writing in The Secret Life of a Black Aspie

Author and scholar Anand Prahlad reflects on his award-winning recent memoir The Secret Life of a Black Aspie as Autistic nature writing. This hybrid critical, creative and activist panel presents a rare and timely gathering of Autist environmental work and diverse Autists in one space. The session seeks to dispel othering stereotypes of ‘environmental savants’, towards new knowledges and liberatory actions, helping to build Autistic community and solidarity around shared lived experiences and shared ecological commitments. Transdisciplinary by design, the panel will help to create links between Autistic ASLE members and current Autism and environment research taking place in the medical humanities, developing our understanding of environmental wellbeing for a group facing health emergencies that are compounded by an absence of representation.

David Mitchell | Precarity and Cross-Species Identification: Autism, the Critique of Normative Cognition, and Nonspeciesism

Mark Haddon’s novel, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time [2004], employs the unruly material agency of disabled bodies as a wellspring for creative interventions within exclusionary social systems. Our reading of the novel focuses on the alternative ethical map of conduct offered by the protagonist, Christopher Joseph Boone, a character on the autistic spectrum, particularly with regard to the representational tactics of cognitive disability evolved within a contemporary subgenre we call “antinormative novels of embodiment.” The presentation explicates the creative agencies of crip/ queer materialities as instances of adaptive knowledge and strategies of the pursuit of being that exceed neoliberal normative scripts of tolerance for those “engaging [the] discrepant materialisms” of peripheral embodiments (Kruks 258).
Dez Mendoza | FRASS: a poetics of entomology

Poet and Insect Librarian Dez Mendoza considers their entomological found-text work ‘Frass’ as a kind of Autistic poetics. This hybrid critical, creative and activist panel presents a rare and timely gathering of Autist environmental work and diverse Autists in one space. The session seeks to dispel othering stereotypes of ‘environmental savants’, towards new knowledges and liberatory actions, helping to build Autistic community and solidarity around shared lived experiences and shared ecological commitments. Transdisciplinary by design, the panel will help to create links between Autistic ASLE members and current Autism and environment research taking place in the medical humanities, developing our understanding of environmental wellbeing for a group facing health emergencies that are compounded by an absence of representation.

Helen Mirra | And per se and

Neurotypical cultures maintain a false division between internal and external, self and other, emphasizing separateness rather than interdependence. In reality, when this is, that is — and recognizing this makes response-ability a necessity, not a choice. Only recently did I realize and accept that dependent origination (inherent causality) is not obvious to everyone, and relatedly, that ethics are not everyone’s axis. Since going to art school and working as a museum preparator in the 1990s, I have been repeatedly surprised by an apparent obliviousness among artists and curators about the impact of ecologically harmful materials and travel that are presumptively part of making exhibitions. In 2019 I wrote a short text in order to articulate some concrete guidelines for ‘art-world’ ecological-responsibility, titled ‘Cathartes 19’, after the genus Cathartes, birds who cleanse. This articulation both strengthened my commitment to non-harming and gave me a clear-conscience agreement for continuing to participate, that could also be adopted/adapted by others. If I were to be comfortable as a member of a club, which I’m not, it might be named Aut&. Like Black, Queer, and Deaf, Aut is monosyllabic, and the ampersand balances, and is a wink to the infinity symbol and the mobius strip, and acknowledges that autistic traits always come along with, intersect with, all other aspects of life. As a sign, the ampersand is neither a word nor punctuation. It appears like a loose tangle – not a knot. Without naming either ‘autism’ or ‘art’, this echoing tracing includes those concepts. It troubles the presumption of a future, and claims now as plenty.

Rhonda Moore | A vision for an Autistic Citizen Science, told with poetry from my garden

Rhonda Moore discusses climate change as a social determinant of health, and shares a vision for Autist citizen science with poetry from the garden. Currently, she is a Program Officer in Global Mental Health at the US NIH’s National Institutes of Health (NIH), where her work focuses on social determinants of health, ethics of new and emerging technologies, climate change and mental health, women’s health, and digital global mental health technology program in low and middle income countries (LMICs).

Natalie Joelle | Autecologies: Emerging Gleanings On Aut(ism) & Emergency

Natalie Joelle and Anna Stenning introduce this hybrid panel Autecologies: Emerging Gleanings On Aut(ism) & Emergency, which presents a timely gathering of majority Autist-activist environmental creative and critical practice. How can divergent ways of being and living lead to ecologically recognizing diverse forms of life? How do these “Autecologies” or Autist-ecologies offer divergent gleanings and emerging acts of recovery in the context of climate and clinical emergencies?
Otherwise Ecocriticisms: Emergent Ecocritical Ethics in Literary Works from the Americas

Jessica Jones | Tomanda conta de Clarice Lispector: Towards a Non-Extractivist Eco-Criticism

This paper considers the eco-critical implications of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector’s idea of writing as taking care of the world through a practice of lovingly tracing it. In particular it explores the tension that emerges for a project of literary criticism faced with writing about Lispector’s work, suggesting that the critical project is underwritten by an extractivist ethos that works in contradistinction to Lispector’s own ethics of writing the world. Trying to learn from Lispector about a different way to write the world, the paper explores Lispector’s idea of taking care of the world for an alternative eco-critical project, what it provisionally calls a non-extractivist eco-criticism, or eco-criticism as a looking after the world.

Laura Harris | On Groundation: Kamau Brathwaite’s CowPastor Poems

A discussion of geographical thinking and ecological ethics in Kamau Brathwaite’s CowPastor poems. These poems recount Brathwaite’s efforts to build a home, library and archive in Barbados on “rab” land he purchased but later lost when it was seized by the Bajan government and developed for tourism. What can we learn from this experience? Are property ownership and territorial sovereignty the indispensable foundations for a sustainable life? If ownership and sovereignty are settler colonial principles, what other forms of habitation might be recovered or created from the Afro-Caribbean experience? How can you live with, care for and be cared for by, land that does not belong to you? What other forms of relation, or something beyond mere relation (insofar as relation implies a strict delineation and separation of figure and ground) might be possible? What other ecological principles can we arrive at by way of Brathwaite’s immersion in the language or “landuage” of the Caribbean landscape, the ground for his metaphors?

Délice Williams | Placing Home in the Wake of Trauma: A Reading of Monique Roffey’s Archipelago

Monique Roffey’s 2013 novel *Archipelago* traces one Caribbean family’s physical and psychological journey of recovery after a devastating loss that dislodges them from home. That journey, part fugue, part sea adventure, part mid-life escapade, involves a series of reckonings: with the traumatic event itself, and with personal and regional history. Central to both the journey and the processes of reckoning is the relationship between human and nonhuman nature, both terrestrial and oceanic. This is a relationship defined and distorted by the event of trauma. This paper examines Roffey’s dramatization of this post-traumatic journey. I argue that in *Archipelago* Roffey reconfigures interactions between human and nonhuman by rendering eco-trauma as a shared experience that unsettles commitments to home as a location or mode of (human) being defined in terms of stasis and ownership. As she traces the movement of human and non-human entities after the event of trauma, however, her dramatization of this physical and emotional journey avoids familiar patterns of pathetic fallacy that posit a fully empathetic connection between the two kinds of beings (that is, the human and the nonhuman) who suffer the traumatic event. Put another way, in *Archipelago* the human and nonhuman nature are not fully separated and opposed in this colonial relation of mastery, but neither are they interchangeable or fused. Rather, Roffey holds the human and non-human in an asymptotic and dynamic relation, maintaining a distance between the two that serves as a counterweight to her notion that they share in the suffering and loss of eco-trauma. I maintain that the result of Roffey’s efforts is a compelling portrait of a transformation in human consciousness and in the human-nonhuman relation.
My presentation analyzes Samanta Schweblin’s Distancia de rescate (2014) or Fever Dream, a novel that is part of the tradition of literary works that depict the proliferation of industrial monocultures and the use of biochemical pollutants such as glyphosate, whose effects include miscarriages, malformations, breathing problems, and cancer. Though never explicitly mentioning them, Fever Dream draws on a number of public health concerns that have made national and international headlines in recent years, such as the trials that Monsanto has faced due to cases of pesticide poisoning throughout the Southern Cone. I analyze the novel through Verónica Gago’s notion of “bodies-territories,” which refers to the way in which the exploitation of communal lands implies the subjugation of the body of each member of the community. Therefore, I read it as an emblematic work that reflects the struggles of ecofeminist collectives that are currently fighting against the double exploitation of lands and bodies across the Americas.

Poetics for the More-than-Human World: Readings and Discussion

Bernard Quetchenbach | Introduction to Poetics for the More-than-Human World

Poetics for the More-than-Human World is an international anthology of poetry and commentary published by Dispatches Edition/Spuyten Duyvil in 2020. This session consists of introductory presentations by two of the book’s editors (Bernard Quetchenbach and Mary Newell, followed by readings by the poets included in the volume. B. Quetchenbach will begin the session by introducing the anthology and reading a poem.

Mary Newell | Some Thoughts on Ecopoetics

The term “Ecopoetics” describes creative writing that engages in the complex interrelationships within the ever-shifting, endangered ecosphere. In this volume, our primary focus has been on writing that abandons a totally egocentric attitude and aspires to ecocentric inclusiveness. Along with disputing the authoritative viewing position of a unified “I,” ecopoetics challenges the classic mind/body split. Further, any belief in an interiority sequestered from the external world confronts the permeability of bodily boundaries to toxins and disease. Yet the sense of more flexible personal boundaries can support encounters of intersubjectivity or co-creation. When we find ourselves implicated and equally at risk, our response may resound with more profound emotional intensity or its irony prick more deeply. Ecopoetics can give voice to inequalities and troubled histories among human populations, alongside the urgent needs of the more-than-human world. It may invoke the restorative power of language to reclaim disrupted connections or forge new ones. It becomes multi-vocal, perhaps multi-lingual, dialogic or intersectional, providing a synchronous breadth. Ecopoetics can foster connections across delimiting boundaries, partly through its grounding in dynamic views of biological and neuro-cognitive systems which, as Forrest Gander notes, “suggest ways of being in the world that might lead to less exploitative and destructive histories.” Beyond whatever paradigms we develop to elucidate ecopoetry, its inspiration flows from those moments or hours of attuning to the vital cadences and vortices that surround us. Ecologically oriented writers enter a shared field of inquiry into what it means to be living in precarious times, in bodies with permeable boundaries, on a globe whose regions and populations are inter-implicated.

Ann Fisher-Wirth | “Pecans”

Poet Ann Fisher-Wirth discusses and reads her poem, “Pecans”. The poem appears in the anthology, Poetics of the More Than Human World. Fisher-Wirth is a Professor of English at the University of Mississippi, and lives and writes from Oxford.
Marybeth Holleman | Poems for the More Than Human World


Patrick Lawler | “Inadvertent Criticality—Before Fukushima”

This is a poetry reading and performance addressing emergence and emergency. The poem considers the nuclear accident at the uranium-processing plant in Tokaimura, Japan. It is presented as a performance piece in a Hazmat suit. We inhabit a world where we are always reassured that “this could not happen here.” But when it comes to environmental issues, every place is here. This is here. This is here. This is here. This is here.

Heller Levinson | “HINGE as Eco -Poetic Address”

Seep Considered Impinged upon by multiple asphyxiations (i.e., digital tyrannies, ecospheric degradation, technological disruption, threats of nuclear Armageddon), “Seep,” here envisioned, is one of the few remaining hygienic pulsations available for evading the ghettoizing binary gridded statistical sterilities intent upon mangling human vitality into frenetic consumption machines. Seep, in marinated-soak, dribbles crawls squirrels through, an unhobbled tumbleweed relieved of formulation, impervious to constriction, Seep is the predator of verities, the osmotic ooze, the creep that credulizes.

Anthony Lioi | “Trilobite” and Other Poems

In this presentation, I perform three poems from the Poetics for the More-Than-Human World anthology.

Evelyn Reilly | Having Broken. Are.

I am reading a poem included in the anthology Poetics for the More-Than-Human World and also an additional poem, Soft of Hearing, written in the same period. Both of these emerge from my long engagement with trying to find a language for the environmental and social circumstances of our time.

Isabel Sobral Campos | How to Make Words of Rubble

This event features several readings from the anthology of ecopoetry and commentary, Poetics for the More-Than-Human World. I will be reading an excerpt from a long poem featured therein and entitled, “How to Make Words of Rubble.” A hybrid between choral ode and musical score, my poem seeks a new horology, a resurrected capacity to inhabit time in the presence of disaster. It is also a dirge, reflecting on maternal grief through the character of Grendel’s mother from Beowulf. This poem ruminates in the dead of ecology.
Janine DeBaise | Seventh Generation

Janine DeBaise will be reading two poems from the anthology Poetics for the More-than-Human World. The poem INSIDE MY HEAD is set in a neighborhood dominated by a pharmaceutical company that emits toxins from their smokestacks. The poem SEVENTH GENERATION is set on the shore of Lake Michigan, near the city of Chicago and the smokestacks of Gary, Indiana.

Sharon Lattig | Dwelling with the Possible

My presentation is a reading of an excerpt of my recent book Cognitive Ecopoetics: A New Theory of Lyric that appears in the anthology Poetics for the More-than-Human World. It is taken from the chapter entitled “Dwelling with the Possible” and focuses on the early semiotic processes involved in the embedded activities of perception and lyric poetry.

Linda Russo | Dear Dirtling

Sometimes addressing “dears,” other times the context and facts of obliterated dearness in the Capitalocene, Dear Dirtling poems feel out intimacies, push at the edges of the individual-as-such, and draw on the critical urgency of resisting destruction, of healing, and of emerging together, biologically and socially. These poems address endangered native prairie; fieldwork images are included in this presentation.

Toward An Ecozoic Commons: Poetics and Practice

Allie Wist | Dwelling in a Climate Crisis: Sensory Poetics in the Anthropocene

Based on Martin Heidegger’s notion of “Poetic Dwelling,” I extrapolate what poetic dwelling looks like in terms of our relationship with food, foraging, and water, as considered within the Anthropocene, the Sixth Mass Extinction, and impending eco-crisis. In an essay and a series of photographs and art installations, I propose ways to more poetically engage with our environment, using multi-sensory and embodied forms of knowing to attempt to grasp my complicity within ecosystems and my role within large environmental systems. This work essentially has to do with de-centering the white, anthropocentric narratives around occupying space, land, and dwellings. The work explores various forms of “noticing” which took place in 2019 at the futuristic bio-dome at Shell House Arts, connecting utopic architecture with tangible environmental engagements. The work includes foraging for oyster mushrooms and re-culturing some of the mushrooms to be returned to the forest (“A recipe for mushrooms for mushrooms”); foraging for plants on the property not seen as edible by property owners, including clover, wood sorrel, and thyme; collecting rainwater from various external surfaces on the dome structure. In all of these applications, nonhuman collaborations are given priority as a way to more poetically combat our anthropocentric view on nature.

Cara Judea Alhadeff | Disentangling Green Colonialism: Social Permaculture in the Ecozoic Era

Disentangling Green Colonialism: Social Permaculture in the Ecozoic Era asks: How can citizen-activists actualize symbiotic solutions as we transition from our petroleum-pharmaceutical-addicted cyber-culture to an economics of solidarity? How can we decolonize our thinking as we joyfully mobilize collective action among peoples of diverse backgrounds? We must practice caution during our transition from our global petroculture, not based on the motivation, but on the underlying false assumptions and strategies that perceived sustainability agendas offer. At this juncture of geopolitical, ecological, social, and corporeal catastrophes, we must critically question clean/green solutions such as the erroneously-named Renewable Energies Revolution.
I suggest we face both the roots and the implications of how perceived solutions to our climate crisis, like allegedly renewable energies, may unintentionally sustain ecological devastation and global wealth inequities, and actually divert us from establishing long-term, regenerative infrastructures. However well-intentioned, these supposed alternatives to fossil fuel-addicted economies, perpetuate hegemonic violence of wasteful behavior and destructive infrastructures through green colonialism. Within this corporate-led consumerism and techno-euphoria, individualism is valorized, while intimacy is vilified. As with climate-crisis injustices, communities that are the least responsible for converging calamities are the hardest hit. Recognizing, designing, and implementing emancipatory interrelationships co-creates humane infrastructures for every social system—including cross-cultural and biomimicry models as well as private-public border crossings in the tiny home movement. Through an urgent commitment to creative-waste collaborations, we can transform corporate-capitalism’s everyday violence—consumption and entitlement—creating a bridge between corporate accountability, infrastructural change, and individual response-ability. Transitioning from our ethnocentric, xenophobic Anthropocene Era (plutocrat-driven corporatocracies embedded in bacteria-phobia, commercialized-childhood, extractive industries, GMOs) into a biophilic social permaculture requires an embodied awareness of interdependency rooted in the Commons. This is a foundation for the Ecozoic Era—Thomas Berry’s concept that humans can share mutually-beneficial relationships with the world around us: intellectually, structurally, and spiritually.

Darms Greg | Meetings in the Chora

Last year I found myself drawn to a nearby meadow and to the surprising number of “strange” insects living there. In approaching these beings, often with binoculars, notebook, and camera, I felt I left other projects behind in “normal” time. I entered, in Michel Jonik’s words, a “slow thinking into place in which place and mind became intimate, and perception became active and embodied.” I have come to view this kind of commitment to place and attention as “reading in the space of genesis through affective engagement” or “choratic reading,” as introduced by Rebekah Sheldon. The chora originally was the place-outside, an extra-urban refuge in ancient Greece. It has been variously characterized by many writers over the millenia, in cosmological, metaphysical, psychological, feminist, and artistic contexts. My own interest in this project is the chora as place of intensity for encountering the other: as an alternative space/time, an opening for thinking about and enacting what Timothy Morton has called a “politicized intimacy with other beings. My presentation is one kind of choratic reading, composed of recordings with ambient sounds and silences and voice-over: a series of visual, auditory, and textual notations, or perhaps a kind of fragmented tractate—an actualization of divergent lines of flight tracing, and leading beyond, my encounters in the field/chora with the others, the temporary dwellers I met there.

Janna Urschel | A New Fiction Manifesto for Terrans: Part 1, Voice and Plot

Fiction in the West has worn minor variations of the same tired form for the last few centuries, at least: Man against Nature, Man against Man, Man against Self. That’s a lot of Man. And a lot of against. These are a lot of illegal dualities. How do we justify continuing to tell stories as and about “I’s” when it is increasingly clear that we are plural, not singular, always already multi, a “we,” entangled with hosts of other “we’s”? What we need are more we-stories, more with-stories, and more not-us stories, not just in subject, but in form. In this time of planetary emergency, it is imperative for us to emerge from our own history of relentless solipsism into ways of telling ourselves that enact the realities of our enmeshment with the rest of what is, animal, vegetal, and mineral. We need to call into question default Western modes of narration which lean heavily on a single, limited-voice narrator and which require conflict with a single, antagonistic entity to drive a single-pronged, closed pyramidal plotline. These craft methods are inappropriate when emergence/y requires re-framing what we are in a networked, rhizomatic way. I propose a new fiction manifesto, which examines emergent questions in the craft of writing fiction for Terrans. Informed by the work of thinkers such as Bruno Latour, Astrida Neimanis, and Corinne Donly, I aim to outline craft methodologies for fiction writers that open new territory for
voice and plot, illustrated by excerpts from my own short fiction and that of other writers.

Ecological Gender and Meaning of Place

Luke Rodewald | All The Queen’s Men: Figures of Ecological Masculinity in Cheryl Strayed’s Wild

There has been a rise in female-authored works challenging traditional notions of wilderness being an exclusively masculine environment. Cheryl Strayed’s best-selling 2012 memoir “Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail,” an account of the author’s 1,100-mile trek from the Mojave Desert to Washington, is an exemplary text still resonating in popular culture. Scholars have previously deemed Strayed’s memoir “subversive” in its ecofeminist foregrounding of a female walker navigating through historically male terrain, thereby "shifting the gaze" of the archetypal nature literature protagonist into one of feminine autonomy (Pryor; Butterfield). However, Strayed’s solo female hiker is not the only revolutionary personality in “Wild.” Her memoir also describes a significant number of male figures who counter traditional portrayals of hegemonic masculinities as they relate to women and the natural environment. Indeed, the majority of men Strayed encounters during her travels exhibit many of the characteristics of what Hultman and Pulé have termed “ecological masculinities.” Imagined as an identity or performance of masculinity that contests patriarchal ideology and its destructive tendrils, ecological masculinities stem from the same philosophical roots as ecofeminism, advocating a more just, harmonious relationship between human and nonhuman beings. In this vein, most of the male hikers Strayed meets along her journey routinely demonstrate both a deep appreciation for the natural environment along with a sincere respect for Strayed’s distinctly feminine presence in the wild. This paper examines the recurring figures of ecological masculinities emergent in Strayed’s “Wild,” which suggest that the depth of an individual’s reverent relationship with the land parallels their capacity to transcend the hierarchal, misogynistic dispositions of traditional patriarchal ideologies. In an era where destructive environmental habits remain largely unchecked—and where gender-based violence continues to plague women across the globe—such figures serve as radical alternatives for current conceptions of masculinity.

Niall Peach | Death, Desire, and the Domestic Limits of the Creole Garden in Jorge Isaac’s María (1867) and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s Sab (1841)

After independence from the Spanish Empire, the nascent Latin American republics’ writers and their colonial counterparts imagined the future of their respective geopolitical spaces through the failed narrative romantic coupling of two lovers. Framing the failure of these couples, who are often cousins, through the death of the racially marginalized protagonist, the novels show their rejection from any imagined political future. But for Sab (1841) by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and María (1867) by Jorge Isaacs, set in Cuba and Colombia respectively, what Doris Sommer terms erotic unproductivity runs parallel to agricultural unproductivity. These agricultural and erotic narrative crises emulate political, cultural, and agro-economic transitions that mark the mid-nineteenth century. Even as the narratives reject these characters through their deaths, the narrative action revolves around the gardens they create and maintain for their respective love interests. These gardens represent the spaces to which the upper-class protagonists long to return and where erotic productivity would be possible. I argue that as symbols of their desire for the upper-class protagonists, with whom their desire is never fulfilled, the gardens represent utopic spaces that redirect racialized desire to the production and maintenance of cultivated garden space, built upon chaste, religious imagery. As Sab and María’s continued labor is necessary for the survival of the garden space, I contend that the narratives necessitate not only the hope of fruitful desire, but also the sacrifice of these marginalized characters whose deaths undermine the politics of desire and domesticity. By critiquing the significance of death in conjunction with desire and labor as productive imperial and national forces, I posit that Sab and María’s deaths put into question the future of their gardens. This highlights the need for their labor in the (neo)imperial civilizing project, which their sacrifice haunts, and questions their place in geopolitical space.
Samantha Nystrom | Building Gendered Violence: The Weaponization of Gardens in Frances Burney’s *Evelina*

Running through Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens’ Dark Walks—the unlit wooded pathways that were one of the most notorious features of this urban garden—Evelina, the heroine of Frances Burney’s 1778 novel of the same name, encounters lecherous men. By manipulating the light exposure, the height of hedges, and the convoluted patterns in the Walks themselves, the men use the garden’s formal elements to catch and sexually assault Evelina. In other words, there is an intentional lack safety that is designed into the Dark Walks that enables male garden patrons to place her in both social and physical precarity. This presentation examines the structural designs of Evelina’s gardens to consider how violence against women was built into the very form of these landscapes. I argue that in this period gardens afforded violence against women and authors like Burney mobilized the novelistic imagination to reveal the sexual trauma female visitors often encountered in these places. Literary criticism under-represents the prevalence of such gendered assault in the garden. While gardens could regularly serve as places of refuge, of education and artistry, and/or of professional labor, literary scholars have yet to explore one affordance of the garden in depth: its generation of violence against women. Additionally, as sexual assault in the garden is often written out of historical records, environmental humanities work must turn to literature like Evelina to reveal this gendered crisis. By narrativizing the trauma these women encountered, literature like Burney’s highlights how the social injustice women endured in the eighteenth century was built into their very environments.

Lauren Frick | The Exclusive Forest: Gatekeeping in the Environmental Movement and Richard Powers’ *The Overstory*

In his novel, *The Overstory*, Richard Powers understands the force of the natural world where each of his characters feel compelled to advocate for the existence of trees as beings with their own agency. Powers acknowledges the inherent need for an intact natural world, one where thousand-year-old trees are not seen simply as capital, yet he also includes a character, Neelay Mehta, who is enraptured not by living trees, but virtual ones. After a fall from a tree, Neelay becomes paralyzed and begins to navigate a built environment catered to able-bodied individuals. The characters in the novel who fight on the ground for the preservation of trees may be perceived as true activists by readers, though the societal response in the novel perceives them as impediments to progress. Contrarily, Neelay’s way of engaging with the forest via a virtual recreation of the natural world is created on a machine seen as a symbol of progress, but is not seen as such an abomination by society. I will offer a reading of the novel through a disability studies lens in order to explore how Neelay complicates the novel’s ecological trajectories and intent and what resounding impacts Neelay’s virtual worlds may have on the future of environmentalism.

Poetics and the Beyond Human

Emma Train | Etel Adnan’s Queer Atmospheres

This presentation examines the Lebanese-born poet and painter Etel Adnan (born 1925) in order to interrogate the affordances and limitations of place-based writing for contemporary queer ecopoetics. Examining Adnan’s recent verse, I attend to Adnan’s queer poetics of atmosphere, a more capacious and diffuse poetics of place that underscores the centrality of the environment to poetic making while also expanding the concept of “environment” beyond coherent landscapes or geographical designations. Adnan’s work accounts for other kinds of environmental forces that might define a place, like the weather (fog), light (sunlight, moonlight, night), or gravitational/temporal forces (tides, seasons). Adnan demonstrates how these latter forces might queer a place, or queer the concept of environment, by expanding the forms of relationality (and agential reciprocity) a human subject can experience within any environment. Adnan’s work demonstrates that what is at stake in the shift from place to atmosphere is a de-centering of the human, and of poetry’s role in offering an aesthetic
imaginary of how beyond-human relationalities and assemblages structure daily life. Moreover, Adnan underscores the queerness of these quotidian environmental assemblages and demonstrates the body’s, especially the gendered body’s, role in channeling this environmental awareness. Adnan’s work figures a queering and gendering of affective atmospheres, and a queer erotics of space and place, amid the specter of environmental threat and destruction.

**Greg Pritchard | Whales, Trees, Octopi and Humans**

There is new research that not only emphasises the intelligence, environmental intra-activeness and consciousness of non-human species, but also offers evidence that humans are not as separate from their environments as is generally assumed. University of Sydney’s Peter Godfrey-Smith’s research into Octopi reveals the impossibility of separating the evolution of human minds from the evolution of animals themselves. The cult classic book and now film, The Hidden Life of Trees by German forester Peter Wohlleben, demonstrates ways in which trees interact with their environments. Inversely, Stanford scholar Robert Sapolsky argues that every act of human behaviour has multiple layers of causation, spiralling back seconds, minutes, days, years, even centuries; that our lives are more determined and we act less through consciousness than is generally believed.

**Elizabeth Curry | Figurative Exchanges: Animal Transpositions in Anita Scott Coleman’s Work**

This talk engages recent theoretical work around race and the animal question to read Anita Scott Coleman’s poetry and prose as modernist works that subvert the hierarchies implied through the animalization of racialized people. Most prominently, this talk will focus on Coleman’s story “Three Dogs and a Rabbit,” which was published in The Crisis in 1926 and serves as a response to American and European histories of bestializing Black men. The narrative discourse inverts bestial logic by using human-animal transposition to ascribe vulnerable (rather than beastly) qualities to the story’s Black protagonist, Timothy Phipps. Animality in Coleman’s story does not function as a means of othering in the service of subjugating; rather its intention is to humanize both animal and Phipps, and to link them through experiences of susceptibility. A look at Coleman’s poetry explores her use of animal affinity (as opposed to abjection) to explore the dissolution of human boundaries and hierarchies as well.

**Sevda Ayva | The 4EA’S OF Cognizing the Posthuman Multi(story)verse in the Rime of the Modern Mariner**

this study attempts to reinvigorate the narratological term “storyworld” through the lens of the posthuman multiverse, which is the ultimate deconstruction and decentralization of any onto-epistemological centre. To this end, the study concentrates on the posthuman multi(story)verse in The Rime of the Modern Mariner to shatter the anthropocentric dualisms in the definition of the human, and on how readers experience narrative empathy through the 4EA cognition (embodied, embedded, enactive, extended and affective) by transporting themselves into the multi(story)verse in the selected graphic narrative. Consequently, this study sheds critical light on how the terminology of ecocriticism, posthumanism and narrative theory can reciprocally widen and reinvigorate the purview of both domains.

**Narrative Meaning and Ecology**

**Debby Rosenthal | Ecocritical Discourse of Conjure in Ernest Gaines’s “My Grandpa and the Haint”**

Charles Chesnutt understood that conjure comprised “black environmental knowledge and power.” His all-powerful conjure women demonstrate black feminist environmental expertise, authority, and influence. My
paper will focus on the way Black writer Ernest Gaines uses the power of the conjure woman to create and transmute masculinity and to restore manhood to its "natural" state of respect and self-authority. Because of the conjure woman’s close association with nature, I want to argue that conjure in Gaines’s hands becomes a black feminist environmental discourse of expertise and sovereignty that enacts the transformation of a man from weakness or ridicule to strength and community respect.

Inna Sukhenko | The Literary Dimensions of Nuclear De-peripheralization (in U.S. Nuclear Fiction on Chernobyl)

If energy periphery is considered to be ‘places that are systematically disadvantaged through the whole energy system due to their inferior position within the asymmetrical spatial distribution of economic, political and symbolic resources and capabilities’ (Golubchikov, O’Sullivan, 2020), nuclear periphery is defined as ‘a remote, geographically separated, economically marginal, politically powerless, culturally defensive and environmentally degraded’ zone (Blowers, Leroy, 1994), characterized by health risks and radiation contamination. Having appeared after the nuclear explosion on the Chernobyl nuclear power (26 April 1986), the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone went through the process of peripheralization, regarded as ‘a spatially organized inequity of power relations and access to material and symbolic goods that constructs and perpetuates the precedents of the centre over the marginalized’ (Fischer-Tahir, Naumann, 2013). The presentation intends to argue that despite the peripheralisation, characterized by ‘political underrepresentation, the absence of economic agglomeration advantages, and dependence on off-grid fuels’ (Golubchikov, O’Sullivan, 2020), the socio-cultural perspective on ‘nuclear periphery’ encourages the process of de-peripheralisation by emphasizing the literary figurations of a nuclear disaster and a nuclear exclusion zone and promoting the ‘nuclear’ image of the region. The focus is made on studying the narrative tools of de-peripheralisation of the post-nuclear trauma location, in the U.S. nuclear fictions, depicting the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath (Pohl 1987, White 2008, Blackman 2020). Contrary to the statement that ‘peripheral countries and communities… lack the political, social, and economic strength’ (Solomon, Shelley etc, 1987), I emphasize the cultural features of ‘nuclear’ periphery, and study how the narrativization/fictionalization of ‘nuclear’ periphery encourages the energy de-peripherization of the region through creating the literary figurations of ‘nuclear exclusion zone’ and nuclear marginalized localities in the global nuclear narrative with a view to reconsidering the apocalyptic nuclear rhetoric of the technology-driven post-traumatic society.

Pritha Banerjee | ‘MAMA MITI’ AND REFORESTATION IN KENYA—REPRESENTING ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM THROUGH CHILDREN’S PICTURE BOOKS

In spite of the reality of climate change and environmental degradation staring us in the face, a tendency towards denial (Norgaard, 2011) is co-existent with a certain paralysis of action or even fear of the insurmountable. Given this challenge, environmentalist narratives form a crucial bridge between human perception and action and children’s literature engaging with environmental themes becomes an even more significant crucible for change as it can inform and persuade young minds regarding the world they inhabit and responsibilities towards their habitat. In this presentation, I will be focusing on reading and analyzing two children’s picture books on Wangari Maathai renowned for her efforts at reforestation in Kenya and the Green Belt Movement, namely ‘Mama Miti’ (2010) by Donna Jo Napoli and illustrated by Kadir Nelson, and ‘Wangari Maathai: The Woman who Planted Millions of Trees’ (2017) by Franck Prévot and illustrated by Aurélia Fronty, as case studies on the way children’s picture books function as environmentalist narratives of persuasion towards change. I shall also be referring to Maathai’s own narratives regarding her life experiences in ‘Unbowed: A Memoir’ (2007) and ‘The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience’ (2003) which emphasize on sharing information and communicating concrete acts of change brought about by actual women planting trees for individual and community empowerment. As Daniel deB Richter(2016) has asserted through his studies, it is important to keep hope alive and create and sustain ‘Georgic narratives’ which see humans as agents of change rather than only that of destruction and extinction and I shall be interrogating the illustration and storytelling techniques (Mehnart, 2016) utilized in these picture books, for their representation
Stephanie Cook | "Scheduled to Die": Human Nature and Ecological Community as a Response to Consumer Death in Don DeLillo’s White Noise

The previous century saw a spate of environmental and social justice awareness highlighting a population experiencing a new type of existential crisis; people who feel compelled to make changes but unsure how to proceed. My project looks at how Don DeLillo’s White Noise creates a space for conversation around environmental destruction, enlisting an “activist writer’s” mentality to push these issues to the forefront of his piece. Analyzing White Noise against the current field of ecocritical literature, I assert the link between much of DeLillo’s story to the burgeoning field of environmental justice at the time of its publication in 1985. While the protagonist, Jack, grapples with his own fear of death after a large-scale environmental disaster, DeLillo establishes commentary on the state of the environment, and Earth’s systems on a larger scale, through an in-depth analysis of modern consumer wastes. By looking at global environmental destruction through the lens of a local disaster event, DeLillo comments on the cause of our widespread global environmental issues, as well as the existential awareness they create. I argue that White Noise creates a template for processing environmental loss, and associated social justice issues, through the formation of post-disaster “ecological communities,” which provide a space for people to process the environmental destruction they perceive around them. “Ecological communities,” in the wake of a disaster, allow different races and socioeconomic classes to persist in the same space, creating an awareness of the other that may not exist without this common ground. Ultimately, DeLillo seeks to create a discussion around these issues through his own “writer activism.” Together, with others, literary works of the 1980s and 1990s awoke an environmental justice consciousness; these preliminary texts helped fuel the “ecological communities” present at environmental and social justice demonstrations we see today.

Class, Labor, and Exploitation

Francesca Nardi | The Potential of Poetry: Slow Violence in Giuliano Mesa’s Tiresias

In this paper, I examine Italian poet Giuliano Mesa’s Tiresia (2001) as the culmination of his socially-engaged and experimental poetry, always led by three fundamental tenets he postulates in “Three Lemmas” (2007): listening, research, and ethical truth. The poem recalls events from the last century told in the form of oracles that the blinded diviner, Tiresias, forces the readers to confront. These events include the collapse of a dump that occurred in Manila in 2000, the 1993 fire in a doll factory in Thailand, the nuclear tests the United States had been conducting for decades, transplants from living children’s bodies in the organ trade in Brazil, and the phenomenon of mass graves as markers of silent and hidden violence all over the 20th century. I argue that the link between voice and sight, which many Italian critics have highlighted, might best be understood through Rob Nixon’s concept of “slow violence” because of its gradual and unseen nature. In my reading of the poem, I highlight the tension between mythology and contemporaneity which allows me to unpack the complex temporality of slow violence. Mesa’s poem relies on this temporal scale to trigger an understanding of the current social and environmental emergencies. According to ancient Greek mythology, Tiresias inhabited the border between the past and the future and blurred the limits between the known and the unknowable. Analyzing Mesa’s text, I argue that poetry’s reliance on figurative language results in the emergence of a possible collective awareness and recognition, activated by the voice of the mythological foreteller—which might be that of the poet. Further, the materiality of poetic language, in which sounds and words continuously reverberate and reshape the poem, verse by verse, mimics the attritional and recursive dynamic of slow violence.
Ryan Hediger | Unfree Labor: Slavery and the Anthropocene

In the epilogue to The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America, Andrés Reséndez discusses the fact that slavery and forced labor have not ended in contemporary times, persisting in a range of activities involving Asian sweatshops, American farming, and much more. Our histories tend to emphasize progress in the movement of time, and the present is typically contrasted with a less enlightened past. But such logics of progress have come under fulsome critique in a range of ways in postcolonialism, feminism, the environmental movement, and most notably recently in the resurgent and expansive Black Lives Matter movement. Another failure of progress lies in our norms and practices of labor. We continue to work on a model of labor that borrows much from slavery, and we live in a world deeply reliant on the logic and outcomes of extraction that animate(d) slavery. To propose alternatives to these regimes, which are profoundly damaging to human and nonhuman life both, we must develop alternatives to this logic of objectification, labor, and slavery. Yet, I will argue, we should be cautious about embracing “freedom” as an alternative value. My talk will focus especially on the development of the notion of “free labor” as distinct from enslaved labor, showing how that still-dominant distinction is insufficient because it accepts regimes and norms of labor, just under different terms; it naturalizes forms of “free” work that are a) not free and b) historical, not universal, and therefore, subject to debate and revision. Instead of—or alongside—“freedom,” I suggest we embrace values of community and care as alternatives to extraction.

Scott McDaniel | Quotidian Insubordination: Rural Space, Environmental Belonging, and Appalachian Plur/rurality

This presentation discusses the phenomenon of the Appalachian wildcat strike as the entwining of labor militancy and rural spatiality. I argue that when placed in the context of rural space, the wildcat strike is both an expression of human and natural insubordination to capitalist exploitation and a manifestation of ontological enfolding.

Public Engagements Abstracts

Land / Bodies / Loss / and What’s Left

Sylvan Goldberg | Leave No Trace

This personal essay thinks through the loss of my mother, who died while visiting me during my first summer living in Colorado, alongside the shift from a leave-no-trace wilderness ethic to the Anthropocene era, in which the trace humans have left on the landscape remains everywhere even when not fully visible.

Jillian Moore | The Disillusionment of Dreams: Drivers, Invaders, and Love-Resources

When we first started trying to get pregnant, my husband and I thought of nothing but immortalizing our love and relationship and feelings for one another through our children. We dreamed of adding small bodies to our late-night kitchen dances and teaching them how to make pasta and rock climb. In the 7 years since we've been trying to conceive, we've been forced to think about much more than the hope of sharing our lives with our children. We think about the validity of the data. We think about my womb and egg production and sonohysterograms; we think about sperm count and motility and about parts per million. These thoughts of more often come in silent moments of grief that make us question everything—every method, every treatment, every attempt, every damn piece of data that does not have a cause but only an effect.
Sarah Nance | Slow Decay

This essay considers the concept of what I call "ghost tourism," of tracing the remnants of a person after they’ve died through places they’ve been. In doing so, I also examine a human-life-bound slow decay, the subtle shifts that occur in a landscape that are noticeable—and often striking—as one revisits a place over time. Moving through some of the places that were important to my father before his death—an abandoned school near his home, Santa Fe, the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon, a beach on the Outer Banks—I question how the small changes I see in these various spaces impact how I understand grief, memory, and large-scale ecological change in timescales that outlive us all.

Emily Rau | The Golden Spike

This creative nonfiction essay is a reflection on writing my dissertation, which emerged from an interest in literature and space, as well as my weird love for the railroad and trains. What began as a labor of love transformed into a meditation on violence and erasure as I worked to understand and expose the insidious underpinnings of the transcontinental railroad project. At the start of the dissertation, I took a cross country train trip with my friend Jenny and enjoyed seeing new parts of the country out the window, while by the end of it I was writing through a global pandemic, through both impeachment trials of Donald Trump, through the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests, and through the devastating rise in anti-Chinese violence. These things happened while I wrote a chapter on the railcar being the first place to be racially segregated by law, another on the railroad facilitating the Indian residential boarding school system that committed cultural genocide against generations of Indian children, and another on recent and ongoing attempts to recover the stories of the more than twenty thousand Railroad Chinese whose names and lives have been virtually erased from history. Through this, I systematically dismantled my own romanticism of the railroad, a romanticism that thrives in the American imagination generally, as I attempted to retell the story of the transcontinental railroad as one that was motivated, sustained, and fueled by white supremacy, violence, and erasure.

Ashley Reis | Fire on the Mountain: Grieving Environmental Loss on Stolen Land

This essay traces my experiences with ecological grief as I reflect upon my lived experience with wildfire in the US West. It serves as a meditation that seeks to make sense of my own scholarly interest in ecological grief and my ethical concerns about who has a right to grieve environmental loss on stolen land.

What Should We Tell the Children?: Narrating Parenting in an Emergency

Introduction

In this panel, five creative nonfiction writers read from and reflect on their personal essays about parenting in a time of planetary emergency. These writers unfold how the experience of parenting encapsulates both possibilities for renewal and palpable crises. Their essays also show how narrating parenting and family experiences creates concrete, intimate scales and settings for considering questions of time, place, and interspecies kinship central to the anthropocene. These kinds of stories are essential for the environmental humanities to change public hearts and minds.
Jennifer Case | University of Central Arkansas

Jennifer Case’s presentation, “Animals on the Eve of Extinction,” comes from an essay published in Dark Mountain. When Case’s daughter goes through a dinosaur phase and nightly asks if humans will ever go extinct, Case finds she cannot answer. How can she tell her daughter that, without sustained action against climate change, the human species may too die out? Her answer captures the emotional complexity of a parent alive to the environmental and reproductive realities of our time.

Paul Bogard | “Where the Wild Things Still Are”

In Paul Bogard’s presentation, “Where the Wild Things Still Are,” based on his New York Times “Modern Love” article of the same title, Bogard tells the story of wondering whether to read to his daughter some of his favorite classic children’s books. These books, he notes, come from a time when the world was a different place. Would reading books like these to his young daughter be, in a way, a lie? Was it fair to share with her a world that may be gone by the time she is grown?

Douglas Haynes | The Secret

Douglas Haynes’s presentation “The Secret” describes how poet John Keat’s concept of negative capability and geologist Marcia Bjornerud’s concept of timefulness can help parents navigate ecological crisis. These modes of thought can be learned from children, he suggests, and open opportunities for renewal in the face of massive biological loss.

Heather Swan | Turning Toward

“Turning Toward” is a part of my own answer to the question “What should we tell the children?” It is an essay about how much courage it takes to love during the Anthropocene, which includes stories about frogs, insects, a team of horses who try to jump over a Chrysler station wagon, and my own children.

The Confluence Lab at the University of Idaho: Stories of Fire, Interdisciplinary Networks, and Community Collaborations

Erin James | From Idea to Reality: The Origins of The Confluence Lab

Our panel begins with an overview of how the Confluence Lab grew from the seed of an idea in fall of 2018 to an established, award-winning research center with ~$750,000 of funding for current projects. Erin James tells the story of how a remote retreat in rural Montana—hosted by the University of Utah—brought together a network of scholars and (together with a stuffed polar bear and some birding excursions) helped inspire the Lab. Erin also discusses a suite of Confluence Lab projects that involve rephotography of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Teresa Cohn | Stories of Fire: Participatory Narratives and Fire Science

Stories of Fire is an interdisciplinary project of the University of Idaho’s Confluence Lab that explores the efficacy of using personal narratives alongside fire science to create dialogues about the changing fire landscape of rural Idaho. We turn to narrative for two reasons. First, a growing body of scholarship suggests
that communication between scientists and public audiences fails not just because of mismatched word choice or content complexity, but because of incongruence in the organization of ideas: communicators of science often use expository communication, which explains or describes, and public audiences prefer narrative communication, which tells a story. Second, we build on a body of work suggesting that STEM communication often reflects the cultural norms of the community that institutionalized them. STEM communicators broaden participation in STEM by expanding these norms through inclusive forms of engagement that encourage expressions of diverse ways of knowing and being. Narrative is particularly adept in this regard, since storytelling offers myriad opportunities for self-expression, and listening to stories fosters empathy and understanding of contexts and processes. The American West is rife with personal narratives of evacuation, smoke, disaster. Yet alongside these dramatic events and the deep, powerful emotions that come with them, fire scientists carry a quieter but no less important message: fire has always been a part of the western landscape, many wildland fires play natural and beneficial roles, and in a warming world we must learn to live with more fire. Bringing together a science communicator, a narratologist, a fire ecologist, and a specialist on emotions and public lands, our interdisciplinary research team focuses on 1) what characteristics of narrative are most effective in fire science communication, and 2) what audience-centered approaches work best when facilitating participant narratives in informal education settings.

Jennifer Ladino | Next Steps: Current Projects, Interdisciplinary Collaborations, and Regional Networks

Confluence Lab projects involve faculty and students with a range of expertise, from music, film, and art, to wildlife biology, geography, and participatory mapping. After describing ongoing projects on climate communication and climate change skepticism, I give a brief overview of our newest project, a multimodal, polyvocal Pacific Northwest Climate Justice Atlas, which will collaborate with regional communities to gather, track, and map stories and images of wildfire in the region. The Atlas is a piece of a much larger three-year project in partnership with the University of Oregon and Whitman College to create a Pacific Northwest Just Futures Institute for Racial and Climate Justice, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s “Just Futures” Initiative. I end with an overview of what we’ve learned so far in our interdisciplinary collaborations on our campus and in the process of gathering stories from Idaho publics.

Microbium: The Neglected Lives of MicroMatter


This roundtable discusses a forthcoming, interdisciplinary book addressing a broad public audience with short entries on micro-matter: bacteria, coral, fungi, lichen, micro-animals, pollen, protozoa, and viruses. This “microbium” does not take the form of an edited volume, but tells a cultural story in the spirit of the specimen collection. In our roundtable, five contributors reflect on connections between their approaches to micro-matter and address some of the significant changes that one type of micro-matter, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has recently prompted. Reflecting on the myriad forms of micro-matter as a collective—an entangled, invisible assemblage, our roundtable features short presentations on bacteria, coral, fungi, pollen, and viruses as the basis for a discussion guided by three questions: (1) In which sense and how does each form of matter live in the micro-scale? (2) How and why has it been neglected or attended to? (3) Why does micro-matter matter and to whom? The responses range from natural science to cultural history to theoretical reflection: We offer some popular-scientific accounts of the life of micro-matter in their respective habitats and in relation to the macro-scale of human life. We also engage the emergence in cultural history of each micro-matter type, with special regard to how it has inflected or been inflected by questions of race, class, gender, and sex(uality). We are particularly interested in examining how literature and the arts might serve as a kind of cultural microscope—an instrument for observing an interspecies social too small to be accessed with the naked eye. Finally, our
conversation will reflect on the significance of the micro-scale as a whole. We will engage the microscopic environment as a diverse network of multi-species relations, which operate on multiple scales, diverging temporalities, and according to patterns that cannot be reduced to either harmony or conflict.

**The Emergency Humanities**

**Bart Welling | The Emergency Humanities: An Invitation**

My presentation discusses how the suffering and sense of isolation so many of us have experienced during the pandemic can push us to work together to figure out what the “emergency humanities” are so we’re better prepared for future emergencies than we were for the events of the last year and a half. I sketch out some thoughts on the emergency humanities using a short essay published in *The New York Times* by Oxford professor Emma Smith as an example. To summarize, the emergency humanities should be carried out in clear language in an effort to reach the widest possible audience; they should not just respond to emergencies but help our societies prepare for them; they should be committed to fighting dehumanization and extractivist (e.g., petrocultural) ways of viewing nonhuman beings; they should be dedicated to saving human and nonhuman lives; they should use literature and other art forms to frame emergencies in humane ways; they can show ordinary people the value of the liberal arts, helping us deal productively with the crisis in the humanities; and they should illuminate what we can learn from past human experiences of emergency in life and art. The most important thing about the emergency humanities is that they should be a group effort, helping us transform individual powerlessness and alienation into collective power. I invite anyone interested in the idea of the emergency humanities to join me in this effort.

**Abby Doan | The Value of the Humanities in the Battle for Survival, Through the Lens of The Last of Us**

My presentation, “The Value of the Humanities in the Battle for Survival, Through the Lens of The Last of Us” uses a popular survival horror video game series to examine what the humanities can contribute to the project of living, as opposed to merely surviving, in the midst of apocalyptic destruction. The Last of Us games have brought a pro-humanities message to tens of millions of players, helping them rethink disaster as not as an excuse for mindless violence but as an opportunity for ecosocial transformation.

**Laura-Marie Herrmann | The Language of Aloha ‘Aina: The Song of the O’opu and Hihiwai**

This paper seeks to extend J. Baird Callicott’s observation that environmentalism must move from a conservation to sustainability mentality in order to recuperate the objective of nurturing healthy ecosystems (“The Wilderness Idea” 37), by analyzing conceptual barriers to that shift as they exist in the context of post-colonial (1492-) American cultural history. Using the written literature and oral records of American culture that demonstrates sensitivity to the shaping power of both settler-colonial and indigenous culture, I trace the evolutions of the keyword “environment” through a culturally comparative framework using the indigenous concept of “‘aloha aina” as a lens. Aloha ‘aina is a natural resource management framework native to Hawaiian culture and indigenous to the Hawaiian islands. Existing as it presently does within a colonized condition subordinate to the settler-colonial model that determines policy making in the state, this framework is both culturally incompatible with the Western model that controls it and, to put it in Western terms, superior to it. My hope is that by decolonizing the term “environment” and situating it in historical and cultural context I may reveal the living concept of aloha ‘aina trapped within it. By doing so, I hope we may begin to collectively release our aloha back to the ‘aina like a long-sought rain after an endless drought, and help restore to life for Americans the old (ancient even) memory of how to care for the earth.
Lucy Miree | I Want More Life: Angels in America, Learning from the AIDS Epidemic, and Finding Meaning in the Age of COVID-19

This discussion outlines how the AIDS crisis is the true precursor to COVID-19 in America, and proposes that there is much to be gathered from looking back to AIDS history, activism, and writing to apply to how we cope with the pandemic today. In particular, the play Angels in America by Tony Kushner feels more relevant than ever. By performing a close reading of the play’s characters, this discussion will illuminate how we can cope with the psychological wounds from living through this national tragedy, and question how we might move forward.

Film as Public Environmental Art

Hal Crimmel | The Rights of Nature: A Global Movement

The Rights of Nature: A Global Movement is a 52-minute documentary film that explores how the legal system in the industrialized world tends to view nature as property, and as a resource from Western views and the legal system tend to view nature as property, and as a resource from which wealth is extracted, a commodity whose only value is to provide for human needs. But for millennia indigenous communities have viewed themselves as part of nature. As pressures on ecosystems mount and as conventional laws seem increasingly inadequate to address environmental degradation, communities, cities, regions and countries around the world are turning to a new legal strategy known as The Rights of Nature. This film explores the more recent origins of this legal concept, and its application and implementation in Ecuador, New Zealand, and the United States. Partnerships between the Maori and the government of New Zealand have led to personhood status for rivers, lakes and forests, and a renewed sense of balance between people and nature. As a work of ‘traditional research’ the film shares a new transnational idea based on traditional forms of research: archival, peer-reviewed articles and books, government documents, and expert interviews with community, tribal and government leaders. As a work of ‘applied research’ its intent is to spread the Rights of Nature message to communities, countries, NGOs and various organizations positioned to drive change via a film in English and Spanish that can communicate a complex idea in a comprehensible way. The film has been screened on 5 continents at NGO meetings in the Netherlands, Ecuador and Brazil, at universities (Duke, U of Munich, NYU Abu Dhabi, Univ. Del Norte in Colombia, U of Auckland) and film festival and university screenings around the globe, and always inspires robust discussion.

Andrew McMurry | That Decade

That Decade is a 33-minute critico-creative lecture-film that juxtaposes moving images of natural, pastoral, and urban environments with an audio track of the author reading a depressing essay entitled “That Decade.” What is “That Decade”? It is a series of linked aperçus inspired by the words of the late Ulrich Beck, who in World at Risk observed “Hopelessness is ennobling, to be sure, and affords the considerable advantage of wallowing in superiority while being relieved of all responsibility for action.” “That Decade” explores the inverse possibility: that with possibilities for effective climate action increasingly foreclosed, wallowing in hopelessness is un-ennobling relief. In other words, an affect of bemused pessimism comes easily to our age. (It may yet prove to have its paradoxical advantages, perhaps in some as-yet undefined action-oriented direction that Beck prefers. As Pablo Cassals said, “The situation is hopeless; we must take the next step.”) The essay consists of a series of syntactically aggressive haibuns that build up a lading list of apathy and gloom (e.g., “The scientists spoke up during that decade. They didn’t get the hearing they deserved. To a lot of people they sounded like the Eeyore brigade. They came out of their labs and blinked in the sun. They had the facts in their pockets. The
facts pointed to reality. But exactly what was reality anyway? The reality announced by the scientists was a
downer. It didn’t match our hopes. It didn’t match God’s plan. It didn’t match the consensus at the barbershop.
Most people said whatever. They said haven’t we heard this kind of gloom and doom before. Hasn’t the sky
always been falling. Don’t we always land on our feet.”) The intersecting, juxtaposing, contrasting, and
complementary visuals were filmed by the author during the pandemic.

Kimberly Richards | Sustainable Tools and Performance Activism for a Just Transition

Performance offers a unique set of creative tools to help us imagine alternative energy futures, and guide
communities out of apathy or fear of our rapidly declining, and extremely limited carbon budget. Playwrights
and performance artists are developing new scripts and performances to shape social imaginaries about
energy; art activists are using theatrical tactics to spur climate action and dismantle the apparatus that fuels
our current “petrocultures.” How can artists be effectively deployed to mobilize public support for a just energy
transition? This paper introduces an open-source video archive I am building of performance-strategies that
have emerged over the last decade to inspire energy transition and imagine alternative energy futures. I will
discuss the framework of “sustainable tools”—art activist tools and tactics that can be circulated, adapted and
repeated in different regions of the world (Alvarez, Lauzon, Zaiontz). One vivid example of a “sustainable tool”
for a just transition is the “how to” guides for approaching costume, tableaux and procession that Bristol
theatre maker Doug Francisco developed for the Red Rebel Brigade—a segment of the global environmental
movement, Extinction Rebellion, which adorns actors in scarlet robes and performs “slow motion mime shows”
to encapsulate the grief, pain, loss and rage of climate inaction and ecological destruction. The fact that Red
Rebel Brigade troops have assembled in places as varied as Kelowna, Lisbon and Tel Aviv, and adopted a
unified visual aesthetic, illustrates the usefulness of “sustainable tools” like Francisco’s costumes and
choreographies in mass global appeals for climate action. In this paper I address how the framework of
“sustainable tools” inspired me to shift from deconstruction and critique as my predominant contribution as a
scholar of the (energy and environmental) humanities, and how I see the turn towards the public energy
humanities contributing to collective liberation.

Shaping Values and Changing Behavior

Todd Williams | The Pro-social and Pro-environmental Effectiveness of Horizon Zero Dawn

Horizon Zero Dawn has been widely praised as an ecofeminist game largely because of its powerful and
altruistic female protagonist, Aloy, who lives in a post-apocalyptic world-in-recovery 300 years after an almost
absolute environmental disaster. As a triple-A game with environmentalist themes and a social justice
message, Horizon can serve as a model for video games to promote a more just, equitable, and ecologically
sustainable world. In Playing Nature, Alenda Chang argues that games provide an accessible and “less off-
putting” way to engage the public in “environmental problems and their solutions.” The field of Conservation
Psychology has considered several strategic models for cultivating pro-environmental and pro-social attitudes
and actions, which help explain the potential effectiveness of a game like Horizon. Perhaps most useful of
these psychological models is the Value-Belief-Norm (or VBN) model developed and empirically tested by Paul
Stern. VBN brings together several psychological paradigms to provide evidence for the same intersectionality
that is predominant in ecofeminist theory. The VBN model argues that people with more altruistic and less
egoistic values tend to hold more pro-environmental beliefs and with them norms of pro-environmental
action. Horizon combines and reinforces several intervention strategies identified by Stern that can shape
values and change behavior in people: it makes moral appeals for altruistic actions and for environmental
preservation; it provides information about the future consequences of climate change and expanding
militarization; it incentivizes the player’s altruism through in-game rewards; finally, Aloy’s actions and the
gratitude she receives from NPCs helps to establish altruistic social expectations. Horizon champions values
Nels Christensen | A Real and Righteous Insurrection: The Black Panther Party, The January 6 Mob, and Revolutionary Green “Fuckitness”

For the past four years, I’ve taught a class to incoming first-year college students called “All Power to the People: Why the Black Panthers Still Matter.” The experience of listening to my students of color talk about the Black Panther Party and their own lives has locked in my conviction that the Black Panthers remain strikingly relevant today. But it wasn’t until the January 6 mob assault on the U.S. Capitol that I began to see the relationship between the Black Panther Party’s revolutionary politics and what’s missing in our current environmental movement. What’s missing is what my students have dubbed “fuckitness,” an all-in attitude about the risks necessary to achieve what the Panthers would call “real” and “righteous” political change. In this talk, I pursue the theme of revolutionary Green “fuckitness”

Julie Seton | Analyzing Efforts to Achieve Praxis

This presentation introduces a praxis process that requires two entities: an “originating agent” who sees a need within their community and identifies a “good end” to satisfy that need; and audience agents who recognize the good end. The originating agent self-reflexively deliberates possible symbolic actions (or means) to reach the “good end” and takes action. The action is seen by others in the community who may agree that the “good end” and the symbolic action taken are beneficial for their community, and act in a similar way. For example, an originating agent recognizes that reducing the risk of contracting COVID-19 is good for the community. She identifies some options to reduce the risk that include wearing a face mask, staying away from all public contact, or interacting with others via non-face-to-face means. She decides that wearing a mask is the most viable means for her, and she dons a mask. This act by itself is not praxis unless her action is recognized by others as a viable means toward the end of reducing the risk of contracting COVID-19, and they also voluntarily don masks. The Praxis Process Model, a six-stage analytical tool, examines the originating agent, their conscious intent to help the community, the means s/he considers to reach a defined “good end, and the symbolic action taken. The audience agents who are exposed to the originating agent’s symbolic action are analyzed for their recognition, deliberation, evaluation, and response to the originating agent’s symbolic act. If the answers to the questions in all six stages is “yes”, then praxis is achieved, or is possible. The example symbolic action used to run through the Model comes directly from the Conference’s Public Engagements stream initial Call-for-Papers.

Brigitte Tsobgny | Deforestation and the Ebola epidemic in Véronique Tadjo’s novel, In the Company of Humans – Why Should the Whole Planet Feel Concerned by Ebola Epidemic in Africa?

Why should we care about the deforestation taking place in West Africa? Why should we need to be interested in the Ebola epidemic that took place there and whose outbreak continues to be felt today? These are the questions I aim to answer in this presentation based on Véronique Tadjo’s novel En Compagnie des Hommes (In the Company of Humans). After showing how Tadjo’s characters emphasize the importance of the forest in the environment before reaching back to the origins of the epidemic, I explain how the novel raises the specter of the pandemic. Afterwards I indicate how the epidemic is contained and then, by drawing lessons from this crisis and emitting the arguments of certain voices of Tadjo’s polyphonic novel, I show the importance of the solidarity between inhabitants of the planet Earth by insisting on the difference between “generosity” and “solidarity”. “The first is disinterested; the second, by definition, never is: it is a convergence of interests so that each one defends his own while defending that of the others.” (André Comte-Sponville) I conclude that, as the inhabitants of Earth, it is in the interests of all of us to care about an epidemic that is raging on the far side of the world and the origins of this epidemic.
Laura Barbas-Rhoden & Natalia Valenzuela Swanson | Thinking with: A Dialogue about Amplifying Voices through Bilingual Public Humanities Research

Laura (a faculty member) and Natalia (a program director for a foundation) think and share about co-laboring with others and together to foster more equitable and flourishing socio-environmental contexts in community. The purpose of the talk is to articulate the contexts from which their shared work is emergent; to discuss how shared hope and co-laboring happens for them across languages and cultures & how such co-laboring furthers efforts for equity and flourishing; and to uplift the labors and joys of critical reflection about work together and with others.

Arlene Plevin | Which Portal Will We Go Through?: Environmental Humanities and Activism in a Time of Distant Bodies

In "The Political Life of Children," Pulitzer Prize winning author Robert Coles writes of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “telling my wife and me in Atlanta 1963...that he had noticed the various ‘luxuries’ of white people, one of them being ‘their capacity to turn their backs on politics, while at the same time holding on to their power’” (quoted, 10). For Coles, this was one of his first examinations of whether his lack of “seeming indifference to matters political...wasn’t itself an expression of a kind of politics itself.” While this realization and his subsequent exploration of children and politics is the core of Cole’s work, it also suggests the dichotomy that many educators struggle with: what politics might their students have, how to have all kinds of students consider politics and, importantly, for this paper, how activism is a kind of politics and social/environmental justice that is not only essential but arguably made more possible through the environmental humanities. Using Coles and discussions of students' political lives by Rebecca Solnit and Arundhti Roy, this presentation argues that environmental humanities as it does and could exist can enable all types of students to become activists. This is a version of a public intellectual, the role many educators have already taken. Due to its broadening of alliances between previously more isolated fields of study, the environmental humanities offer increased opportunities for activism, which many students not only seek but which educators seek to have students pursue. Consequently, in addition to arguing that the environmental humanities are intrinsically suited to activism, this paper will offer two examples of an activism evolving from environmental humanities. It is, as Arundhati Roy writes, in “The Pandemic is a Portal,” a time when we can be “ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”

Bryan Rasmussen & Colin Virgines | Storytelling for Environmental Justice: Voices of the Simi Hills

Our research tells stories of entangled vulnerabilities in the Simi Hills, a wildland-urban interface in Southern California where Indigenous cultural heritage, wildlife conservation, and environmental cleanup controversy collide to reveal a matrix of harms that pit vulnerable communities against one another. To the Chumash of Southern California, the Simi Hills are Sky Valley, sacred astronomical observatory where sovereignty claims over cultural resources continue to go unrecognized. To residents of nearby Simi Valley, they are a source of cancer clusters, the result of decades of rocket and energy contamination by NASA, DOE, and Boeing. To imperiled mountain lions, they are the last remaining habitat linkage between two critical ecosystems and last chance to avoid regional extinction. We synthesize long-form interviews with tribal leaders, anthropologists, poets, wildlife conservationists, Simi Valley parents, and others, to reveal that the harms embedded on, and emanating from, this site are not specific events, but ongoing structures that cross scales of time and space and human/nonhuman boundaries. While these communities’ vulnerabilities emanate from a shared history of land use and abuse, their specific harms pose challenges to intersectional solidarity we can describe as
“incommensurable” (Tuck and Yang 2012): harm reduction for each community threatens harm reduction for the others. Incommensurability defies simple solutions to injustices and poses challenges to environmental storytelling. Therefore, we approach the Simi Hills as an opportunity both to disentangle its harms as well as to explore what this and similar places can teach us about environmental storytelling. By linking present injustices to past harms, giving voice to marginalized and nonhuman populations, and disentangling entangled histories, we hope to break down barriers to empathy and understanding and reveal that while reconciliation may be neither possible nor desirable, contingent collaborations for a more just future may yet be possible.

William Stroup | Ecocriticism and the Role of a Library Trustee

Since the recent ASLE workshop on public advocacy with George Handley I have been reflecting on my role not only as an ecocritic and literature professor but as a trustee of my local public library. The advice to engage patiently and with key goals in mind redoubles my commitment to this ongoing work. The Keene (NH) Public Library has an unusual charter in providing for long-term appointments of “Thayer Trustees,” who may continue to serve until resigning or moving out of the city. I have been used to thinking of teaching, scholarship, and college committees as my “work” and my accepting of the Thayer nomination as an extra commitment, at times one too many. But protecting shared commons against those whose definition of “individualism” excludes those whose standing may not be valued is a dynamic central to ecocritical awareness, and I am developing more of a deliberate connection between these aspects of my attention and care. The International Federation of Library Associations has launched new initiatives on foregrounding the responsibilities of institutions to respond to climate change, and these inform this presentation and my actions. Former ALA chair Jim Rettig’s model of a “library ecosystem” functions as a useful figure as well as literally as we look at impacts of the Library’s infrastructure, and my talk will show how these can be expanded into our communities. What worries me is a change in attitude about shared commons, familiar from environmental study, in new threats to the library’s efforts to serve an increasingly diverse community. Rather than agree on the inclusive benefits of this work, but remaining worried about expense, trustees are seeing more open hostility to sharing as an idea, to building for a future beyond immediate benefits, to enact the opposite of resource-hoarding.

From Ecopoetics to EcoEthics: Reading Nature for Change

Sir Jonathan Bate | We Must Cultivate Our Garden

During lockdown, the only green spaces available were public and private gardens. Reduction in air and ground traffic has also led people to rejoice in the sound of garden birdsong, bringing comfort in a time of extraordinary stress. Research has demonstrated the mental health benefits of green spaces: for example, a group of patients convalescing from major surgery in a hospital ward with a garden outlook recovered far more quickly than those in a ward with no outlook. Gardens and parks are ecological zones of prime importance for human wellbeing as well as the biodiversity of urban spaces. This paper is a preliminary sketch towards a book I am writing called “The Garden: A Global History”. It will offer a brief introduction to two of my themes. First, that the absence of gardens in ancient Athens meant that “nature” and “paradise” were regarded as distant spaces, in opposition to civilization and culture, and that this opposition between culture and nature has persisted through western history, licensing the extractive economy. However, a counter-vision emerged in the “garden philosophy” of Epicurus. The second argument is that “garden thinking” has proved of particular value in times of cultural trauma. The paper will offer the example of England in the late seventeenth century, when there was a re-emergence of Epicureanism and a renewed valuation of gardens at a time of civil war, urban pollution, pandemic, fire and climate change. Like all my work (“Romantic Ecology”, 1991, and “The Song of the Earth”, 2000), the paper will be written in an accessible style aimed at a broad audience, in accordance with my “public humanities” mission of making the work of ecocriticism available to a wide audience, including
policymakers who need to think about forms of resilience to prepare us for the next global emergency.

Claire Davidson | Can Climate Fiction Novels Inspire Social Change? A Literary and Empirical Ecocritical Analysis

Collective action to combat climate change first requires individuals to recognize their responsibility in the fight for a better future. With the urgent need for more to develop a climate awareness, novels may be a powerful tool to motivate that cultural mindset shift. My thesis raises the central research question: can novels depicting the disproportionate societal impacts of climate change generate sympathy for environmental situations beyond the reader’s immediate community? If so, how? I draw from Ulrich Beck’s encouragement of social scientific research that is cosmopolitan and multi-perspectival to propose the form of storytelling that may drive one to act against climate change. Then, I conduct a literary analysis of Flight Behavior by Barbara Kingsolver and Oil on Water by Helon Habila—where negative environmental conditions underscore the societal dangers of climate change in the present day. I further propose a mixed-methods sociological study to empirically determine whether climate fiction novels can galvanize readers to rethink their personal contributions to climate change. The longitudinal study asks affluent white Americans to participate in discussion groups and formal interviews to examine whether reading climate fiction influences personal action against climate change. Inspired by the emerging research field of empirical ecocriticism, my research thesis highlights how future interdisciplinary approaches are necessary towards understanding the potential of novels to provoke systemic environmental changes that support vulnerable communities and planetary wellbeing.

Jessica Gigot | Embodied Ecopoetics: Writing Towards Real Change

Many know intellectually that our relationship with the ecosystems that hold us, how we use and conserve natural resources, needs to shift. The pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home order caused us to pay more attention to the natural world and writer Helen MacDonald asks the question, “What is it that we are desperate to see in the natural world right now, and why?” Embodied ecopoetics, an integration of creative writing, science, and somatic psychology, may aid us in this shift by creating new opportunities to feel, in every inch of our bodies, why the earth matters and why, as humans, we must change our destructive patterns with great urgency. Walt Whitman wrote, “I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person.” By cultivating a deep empathy for nature using the poem body as a vessel, we can better explore how emotions, scientific ideas, and spirituality overlap and more important how this alchemy can move individuals from a place of inaction to action.

Heather Lamb | The Liminality of Plants via Cold War Narratives in McCloskey’s Blueberries for Sale

In his children’s book Blueberries for Sale, Robert McCloskey utilizes the liminality of plants to mediate anxiety surrounding the Cold War. Upon first read, this Army war veteran’s book seems remarkably unextraordinary. However, the stagnation of the plot presents an eco-narrative that resists masculine narrative structures to mimic a prolonged state of fear presented by Cold War rhetoric and counterintelligence tactics. The connection between movement, which creates confusion in the narrative, and Cold War fear is not surprising when considering that McCloskey drew maps demonstrating movement of Army troops. The movement through plants, which present a liminal space, reveals how eco-narrative structures can be used to mimic perpetual states of fear. Such revelations are significant in that they both present challenges to anthropocentric narrative structures, and they reveal that plants offer a form of mediation in terms crises, such as a global pandemic or a period geopolitical tension. While this argument does not necessarily place value on the physicality of plants in the real world, it brings to light the value of plants as narrative devices that help readers understand global crises.
The Art(s) of Environmental Change

Sarah Crooks | Home is Here: A Return to Source

The multidisciplinary art project Home Is Here: A Return to Source reimagines the landscape of Northeast Florida through the lens of deep ecology and illustrates archetypes of the divine feminine by creating contemplative public spaces for healing and connection. Based on ecofeminist artist Sarah Crooks’ four monumental RED Pearl River textile drawings and related objects, pop up installations traveled from the mouth of the St. Johns River 310 miles south, collecting water from the community to gift back to the Source in 2020. RED, an acronym for Redirecting my Energy Daily is a catalyst the artist has cultivated in community for remembering our belonging, decolonizing our minds and opening hearts. Each 16’ tapestry drawing illustrates the medicine of a cardinal direction, aligns with a river ecosystem and illustrates a stage of human development. Visually complex the layered images, are resist dyed and handsewn, and create the backdrop for public practices of reciprocity and creative engagement. Funded in part by a grant from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, RED Pearl River began a decade ago, when the artist drew a piece of charcoal across a 16 ft piece of vintage Chinnoiserie fabric representing the arrival of the first Europeans to her native landscape of North East Florida. Exhibited in venues such as Silver Springs State Park, Yellow House Gallery of Art, The Museum of Science and History, The Lee Adams Gallery of Florida Artists, The Cummer Museum of Art, The Bioneers Conference this project continues to evolve. The 100 page illustrated catalog, published in 2020 includes poetry, process images, photography and details of the Home is Here project and provides the basis for my multidisciplinary presentation along with soundscapes and videos highlighting water ceremonies along the St. Johns River.

Michael Hewson | A Picture Paints a Policy Change

Following on from the definition of ‘concrete poetry’ as ‘brief, pared-down pieces of text that are intended to be seen rather than read aloud’ (Bray 2012, p. 298), the proposed creative artefact is a ‘concrete prose’ – a staccato of short sentence lines arranged to let the visualisation of the literature do some of the interpretative heavy-lifting. The creative nonfiction fragment discusses the impact of Peter Dombrovskis’ iconic Rock Island Bend photograph (1979) on the 1980s Hawke Labour Australian Government environmental policy. The narrative is about art informing action and the piece wanders through one signature ecological history. The piece might at first glance, look like an ekphrasis, a poem describing visual art (Greene et al. 2012) – but it is an abstraction of a more usual, flowing sentence structure. The purpose of abstraction is to convey the spirit of a scene rather than a realistic depiction. Literary impressionism is an imaginative writing expression of the ‘show do not tell’ imperative. This strategic story reflects on one public policy change success that changed hearts, then changed minds – then, changed government policy (necessarily, it seems, in that order).

References


Leslie Carol Roberts & Christopher Falliers | How We Hear Now: Towards Global Ecological Solidarity

The Ecopoesis Project, a multidisciplinary initiative, uses varied forms of community building and curation to bring together diverse groups, building solidarity around the experience and emotions of climate chaos globally. This paper discusses our 2020-21 collective audio work How We Hear Now. As the pandemic hushed the human world, the more-than-human world was heard in fresh ways. The Ecopoesis Project is grounded in the long tradition of ecological storytelling, from Paleolithic cave paintings to utopian imaginaries and dystopian nightmares, all illustrating human fascination with the more-than-human and the struggle to depict and enact human relational identity to varied, shifting ecologies. From seminars, gatherings, and made work The Ecopoesis Project argues for encouraging individuals to see the climate crisis as something we can all collaborate on — and away from sage on the stage “expertise.” Ecologies are spiritual — not religious. Spirit, of course, comes from the Greek, for breath. And eerily COVID-19 turns out to be all about the breath. How the virus learned it could be airborne, could be breathed in. For How We Hear Now, we invited participants to send in audio files of both environmental sounds and thoughts on how the world sounded now. We discuss how the world was designed and constructed, as well as how it reflects the philosophies of the Ecopoesis Project as a whole. We show how How We Hear Now offers an open-ended field of text, recording, and visual patterns to create an ecological immersion space of reading and listening. With no beginning, end, or prescribed sequence, each iteration of How We Hear Now is unique How We Hear Now. The idea of a sound collage to perform the integration of human and more-than-human ecologies is designed to be a provocation, towards embracing ideas of a flat ontological approach towards Earth’s complex ecologies.

Beth Shepherd | Problematized Shorelines: Is Everything Still OK Here?

Beth Shepherd explores the constructs of “landscape” and “nature,” reflecting on how art can both hide and reveal environmental truths. The title – “Problematised Shoreline: Is Everything Still OK Here?” – is an ecocritical commentary on the landscape and nature genres of art, which have been used to mask the damaging environmental impacts of extractive colonialism in the past and continue today with urban development, expansion, overconsumption and waste, and our continued dependence on fossil fuels. Through her work she strives to spark the viewers’ imagination, urging them to pay attention to their environment and to consider more completely their impacts on local and global ecosystems. Shepherd presents four of her recent art projects: Soap-Poop Meets the Ottawa Water System, a series of scenic photographs and an essay in the form of a coffee table book; Untitled (Plastic Film Ball), an installation; Plastic Shores, a collagraph print series depicting dead shore birds; and Shoreline Lost and Found, a time-lapse video integrating the artist’s personal anxieties, the visible variation in the daily weather, and the imperceptible changes in the climate, in a repetitive landscape composition. Through her art she perturbs myths of pristine nature and boundless resources while provoking new ways of seeing and experiencing the urban ecology. By unmasking the tendencies toward realist aesthetic filtration (Braddock, 2015) and landscape amnesia (Diamond, 2005), she describes how her art, aims to raise local awareness of environmental and climate emergencies. Beth Shepherd is an Ottawa-based interdisciplinary artist working in various media, including photography, video, sculpture, printmaking and painting. Holding an MA in Art History, a BA (Hons) in Psychology and a BSc in Biology, she works at the intersection of ecology, animal advocacy, and ecocritical art history, addressing themes of the problematized landscape, consumption and waste, industrialized animal agriculture, and ecological loss.
John Yunker | Writing for Animals: How Writers Can Use Their Talents to Better Advocate for Animals

Words have the power to open eyes and hearts, and this session will help writers leverage their talents to become advocates for animals. Using examples from fiction and nonfiction works, we will discuss how to give voices to animals while honoring their true voices, why anthropomorphism should not be feared, and how to engage even the most reluctant readers.

Speculative Ecomedia Abstracts

Weather Report

Stephanie Bernhard | The Point of Tips in Jenny Offill’s Weather

Jenny Offill presents many forms of advice in her novel Weather, via pamphlet, website, question-and-answer session, email, and parking lot proselytizer, among other outlets. But most of the “tips” the novel dispenses are insufficient, misdirected, or unsuited to the challenge of living with the major injustices of the twenty-first century. The mismatch between tip and problem is especially apparent when the novel’s narrator, Lizzie, starts googling “prepper things” late at night to help her family survive a seemingly inevitable near-future catastrophe caused by climate change. She learns how to fish with spit and make a candle out of a tuna can, but these quirky skills don’t quell her anxiety or stop the global temperature from rising. Lizzie’s wan results demand the question: what use are tips? And given the stereotype of environmentalists as prescriptive, finger-wagging bores, what can survival tips do in climate novels when presented in jest? In this talk, I explore Offill’s use of the useless “tip” to illuminate structural inequities in American life and point toward better versions of help that transcend individual survival. I contrast the “tips” presented in the novel itself with the instructional tips listed on the website obligatorynoteofhope.com, which Offill constructed to complement the novel. Where the novel tips are unhelpful, specific, and presented ironically, the online tips are philosophical, general, and presented sincerely. Read together, each corrects and qualifies the other: the novel forces readers to stay critical of the advice given by supposed authorities, while the website reminds viewers that cynicism and doubt alone won’t lead to large-scale change.

Sarah Dimick | Climate Careerists

Sarah Dimick takes up the figure of the climate intellectual in “Climate Careerists.” Focusing on the character of Sylvia, an academic hosting a podcast called Hell and High Water, Dimick argues that Weather parodies an emerging cohort of professional climate thinkers. How are careers forged in the midst of the climate crisis? How do personal branding and promotion—within and beyond academia—shape discussions of climate change? In its searing caricature of a climate careerist, Offill’s novel invites academic self-reflection.

Nicole Seymour | The Whiteness of Weather: Affect, Indigeneity and Comedy in Jenny Offill’s Novel

This presentation thinks through the vagueness of Jenny Offill’s 2020 novel Weather—its inability to name specific objects of anxiety, for one thing—and establishes the particularly white affect of that vagueness. I then read the novel vis-à-vis contemporary Indigenous theorizing and, very briefly, Black feminist comedy, to further understand this whiteness. I conclude that Weather helps us understand how white identity is shaped through fears of the future.
Speculative Agriculture: Closing the Loop

Nora Castle | “Everything here survives at the mercy of his balance”: Agriculture and Ideology in Closed-Loop Future Imaginaries

This presentation will focus on the agricultural systems of two contemporary sf narrative worlds. In particular, it will look at systems that attempt, usually by necessity, to create communities that are self-sustaining and self-contained. These include the train-as-world of the *Snowpiercer* (2013; 2020-present) the apocalypse bunkers of *Wool* (2013; 2014). These narratives trace differing relationships between the human and more-than-human in their future imaginaries, and moments of encounter between humans and their agricultural systems (and thereby the plants and non-human animals implicated therein) are crucial in understanding these relationships. *Snowpiercer* uses the policing of calories needed to sustain such a system as a method to police other boundaries and ‘privileges’, such as class and reproductive rights. *Wool*, instead — at least, at the level of the individual silo — emphasizes humans’ entangled place within an ecosystem; in the bunker community’s funeral rites, for example, which involve the ritual consumption of fruits, “the lowering of the body and the plucking of ripe fruit just above the grave was meant to hammer this home” (164). Drawing on theoretical work on world-ecology and on the Anthropocene/Plantationocene, this presentation will engage in close readings of scenes in these transmedia narratives. It will argue that these ‘lifeboat’ type narratives can serve as microcosms through which the web of life can be examined; that the agricultural infrastructures developed in these works reveal the underlying sociopolitical ideologies of their respective worlds; and that the way humans are integrated into these systems can serve as warnings or as beacons of hope for a differing relationship with our own world.

Fiona Farnsworth | ‘In this place, we do not fear pestilence’: Africanfuturist Fecundity Outside the World Food System in Tade Thompson’s *Rosewater*

Tade Thompson’s Africanfuturist *Rosewater*, (the first in his *Wormwood* trilogy) is preoccupied with the material conditions of a future-Nigeria which still wrestles with its colonial trauma, but in a world in which global hegemonic structures have begun to decay (‘America has gone dark’). At the core of the novel (and at the literal core of *Rosewater*, the doughnut-shaped titular township) lies an alien biodome. *Rosewater* is one of future-Nigeria’s most prosperous municipalities — a rapid and continuous evolution from its origins as a shanty town which attracted the ‘sick, desperate, or criminal’ – and this affluence is due in no small part to to the fecundity of the biodome’s surrounding soil, and its capacity to host and nourish any crop or other vegetation. However, *Rosewater* itself is demonstrably complicit in a world food system that appears, at least superficially, to resemble our own: one in which food is rarely sourced locally, coming instead from national (and international) urban centres, and its distribution is determined by (and upholds) the unevenness of class relations. In contrast, the Lijad (a travelling ‘village’ that exists ‘in the different spaces between various heres’) and the inhabitants of the biodome endeavour to develop and sustain a more egalitarian paradigm. In this paper, I compare the ‘closed’ self-sufficiency of the Lijad and the (apparently utopic) community within the biodome with the insinuation of *Rosewater* in globalized commodity chains. I interrogate the ways in which these communities register and respond to the violence of the food system, by extracting themselves entirely or by implicating themselves further; and the extent to which for these communities, ‘closing the loop’ – isolating themselves from the machinations of the world-system and, thus, from the world food system – is an exercise in survival.
Eliza Rose | Recursive Utopias: Closed Biospheres in the Cold-War Imaginary

In 1986, American researchers visited Moscow to meet Soviet scientists studying closed ecosystems. John Allen, who would later found the closed habitat Biosphere 2, met Russian biophysicist Josef Gitelson, who worked on a sealed environment called BIOS-3 in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. Allen and Gitelson soon joined forces in collaborative research on closed-loop ecosystems. Allen saw Gitelson as “a master in the field, a friend, a colleague, and a maker of history.” While the closed biosphere became an object of scientific inquiry, it also grabbed hold of the science-fictional imagination. This paper explores parallels between Soviet-American collaboration on closed biospheres in reality and in Kim Stanley Robinson’s novel Icehenge (1984). Robinson’s novel opens with a starship’s departure on an interstellar voyage. The Soviet-American crew’s survival depends on their ability to enhance the ship’s environment as a bioregenerative ecosystem. This paper argues that the closed biosphere – as research objective and sf trope – captures the fatigue felt, respectively, toward socialism and capitalism as malfunctioning yet seemingly eternal systems in the Cold War’s final decade.

Rebecca Baker | Mars Rising: Speculative Ecopoetics and Terraforming Futures on the Red Planet

Much enthusiasm surrounding the prospect of human futures on Mars—in both science fiction and speculative science—arises from a seemingly teleological faith in technological “progress”, combined with an ecological despair over the im/possibility of salvaging the Earth from the ravages of climate change. The future of Martian colonization, for some, represents a “do-over,” problematically imagined to eschew the violence of Terran colonial history. And yet, for others, settling on Mars represents a critical, ecological poesis, frank engagement with colonial history, and a chance at crafting alternate, sustainable futures for humankind. I begin with a close-reading of the Perseverance Martian rover and the strategically-crafted public relations campaign surrounding its public image as “Percy,” the lone, plucky explorer. However, the rover’s existence as a series of semiautonomous, multi-functional systems working in tandem, as well as its astrobiological mission, both work to destabilize this conceptualization, effectively rendering Perseverance as an entity that is BOTH the product of a settler-colonial explorer mentality AND a potential disruptor of this master narrative. Perseverance functions as a sort of analytic crossroads from which to examine Martian terraforming via two lenses: the techno-determinist, capitalist trends of current plans for a human-habitable Mars, as well as the socialist-utopian vision(s) offered by KSR’s Mars Trilogy. While the former relies largely on expansionist, “Earth 2.0” mentality and an all-encompassing vision of “escape”, the latter offers a complex theorization of terraformation as a negotiation between worldviews, a dynamic, recombinant, and ecological set of processes that are as cultural as they are scientific, sociopolitical, and technical. KSR’s vision is one of myriad lifeworlds working in tandem, inviting us to understand the speculative infrastructure of terraforming as an emergent, conceptual scaffolding for sustainable, ecopoetic futures on Mars and Earth alike.

Speculative Extinctions: Imagining Environmental Existential Risks

Maddison McGann | Viral Reception and the Crisis of Time in Mary Shelley’s The Last Man

In February of 1826, Mary Shelley’s The Last Man (1826) was condemned by the Literary Gazette as a “sickening repetition of horrors,” an iterative if not exhausting account of the devastation and death wrought by plague. This critique—echoed by the Monthly Review, who cited the novel’s “rhythmical conciseness,” as well as the Panoramic Miscellany, who complained of Shelley’s “dilation of sentences into pages”—suggested that there was something nauseating about reading The Last Man; that its long-drawn narrative and cyclical structure was nearly as ‘sickening’ as the virus itself. Even the phrase “repetition of horrors” smacks of a viral experience—scenes of suffering replicated and diffused across the novel as a way to emulate the lifecycle of plague. Treating the novel’s reception as an index of environmental disruption, I suggest that the enforced suspensions of pandemic time—imposed by Shelley through narrative propagation and outbreak—generated
an eschatological anxiety in nineteenth-century readers that manifested in the novel's reviews. *The Last Man*'s vexing temporalities (its Sibylline framing device, which resists the teleology that the title implies; its interruptive flashbacks, which reveal a history that has yet to occur; its prophetic outbursts, which become more frequent as the plot unfurls) arrest readers then and now in an unsettling pandemic time that deviates from the relentless advance of industrial or 'modern' time. By reexamining the hegemonic notion of progressive time within the context of ecological disaster, I hope to show how the modern time interrogated by the Romantics (and other writers) continued to be co-produced with the natural world; that what British modernization had wrought was not a new form of human time, but new forms of ecological time, with which prose and the novel would grapple.

**Doron Darnov | What is Planet Earth?**

This talk responds to recent work in the environmental humanities on the theoretical prospect of a “world without us”—that is, imagined conceptions of what Earth might look like following a hypothetical human extinction event. I explore how such imaginings might inform, challenge, or transform conventional approaches to understand both the biological category of the human and the geological designation of “planet Earth.”

**Aaron Toscano | No Profligates in the Wasteland: Nihilism and Neoliberalism in Post-Apocalyptic *Fallout—New Vegas***

Few settings spur conversations on nihilism and ecocatastrophe better than post-apocalyptic texts. Whether those texts be Hollywood blockbusters or straight-to-streaming distractions, speculative literature or videogames, the settings project contemporary anxieties onto a wasteland, a desert of the real. In *Fallout—New Vegas*, the protagonist, The Courier, wanders an alternate historical version of the Mojave Desert in search of revenge, one of the few “real” goals one can have in the virtual environment. Surviving on scraps of past knowledge, the Courier makes deliveries, usually in the form of information, as a remnant of a forgotten commerce system. The one place where life may continue is in the oasis that New Vegas promises to be. This presentation—adapting perspectives from Brett Steven (nihilism), Mark Fisher (capitalist realism), and Fredric Jameson (consumerism)—argues the Courier’s logic of survival parallels contemporary neoliberalism and the trajectory to (even greater) ecocatastrophe.

**Jeremy Chow | Extinction’s Such a Drag**

This talk explores the affinities RuPaul’s *Drag Race*, a queer media phenomenon, shares with environmental thinking and awareness. The series repeatedly returns to issues of environment and climate change, such as in campy challenges that highlight colony collapse, sea level rise, and global warming, and as I show, reveals drag as a means by which to combat imminent planetary disaster. Despite its complicities with greenwashing, *Drag Race* engenders a theoretical apparatus by which to assess the queer ecological implications of drag. Through queer of color critique, I argue that *Drag Race* frames narratives of apocalypse and extinction as obstacles for humanity to which drag—in its representation of plural genders, races, and identities in the series—is both a remediation and solution. The drag apocalyptic aesthetic hawked by *Drag Race* tarryrs with the proximity and exigence of an apocalyptic present and future, all the while demonstrating that drag, in its gender-bending performativity, is what perseveres.
The Ecology of Irrealism: Genre, Place, and Decoloniality in World-Literature

Esthie Hugo | A Violence Just Below the Skin: Racial Ecologies and Atmospheric Toxicity from West Africa

Focusing on the uneven experience of global environmental crisis, this paper is interested in mapping new directions in the Gothic through analysis of West African forms of cultural production in which the site of Gothic terror becomes reconfigured and located in atmospheric racism. I chart the evolving politics and aesthetics of racial toxicity by focusing on the mobilisation of atmospheric terror in the writings of Nigerian author Ben Okri, as well as in the artistic portraits of Beninese photographer Fabrice Monteiro. Comparing these works allows for the interrogation of how different African artistic mediums draw on Gothic aesthetics to give shape to the racist history of toxic exposure, and, in the process, enable us to model a new analytic framework for understanding global environmental crisis as a political and ecological project that distributes life and death unevenly.

Amul Gyawali | Utopian Desire and ‘Shangri-La’: From James Hilton to Kim Stanley Robinson

‘Shangri-La’ has been ubiquitous in Western representations of the Himalayas since it was first popularised in the early-20th century. Imagined as a pristine utopia safely untouched by modernisation, the Orientalist drives of this eco-cultural trope are both extensive and well-documented (Bishop 1989, Hutt 1996). In this paper, I expand this discussion to the emergent field of decolonial utopian studies, to explore how genre mediates the political and aesthetic production of Shangri-La. I start my paper with a reading of James Hilton’s Lost Horizon (1933), the utopian novel where Shangri-La first appeared in Western eco-cultural imaginary. Drawing on Hilton’s text, I chart how the novel’s utopia—which reflects the first of Raymond Williams’ four utopian modes: “the paradise, a happier life described as simply existing elsewhere” (Williams 1978)—represents Shangri-La as unaffected by ‘history’: synonymous with capitalist modernisation in the text. Isolated from the outside world, I suggest the utopia’s isolation in the novel encodes a dialectical relationship between anxiety and serenity by drawing on the aesthetics of the sublime and the picturesque/bucolic in its depiction of Shangri-La. I then turn to Kim Stanley Robinson’s Escape from Kathmandu (1989) to read Shangri-La’s representation in late-20th Century speculative fiction. Unlike Lost Horizon, Robinson’s text complicates the paradisical nature of Shangri-La by introducing the historical realities of the time: postcolonial development, bureaucratic corruption, and Himalayan geopolitics. While Hilton’s Shangri-La manages ‘the art of not being governed’ (Scott 2009), Robinson’s Shangri-La requires the text’s protagonists to save it from the territorialising drive of capital, and meta-textually, secure its place in the Western imagination. Despite the differences in utopian modes between Hilton and Robinson, I conclude my paper by tracing how the irrealism of utopia in both texts represents a shared desire for a Williamsian paradise ‘existing elsewhere’ from the capitalist world-system.

Giulia Champion | A New Shore Ontology: Ghosts of Colonialism and Extinction in the Postcolonial Oceanic Weird

In a recent article, Kerstin Oloff and Sharae Deckard theorised Rita Indiana’s La Mucama de Omicunlé (2015) – translated into English, in 2018, as Tentacle – as a piece of New Oceanic Weird Literature: “Indiana’s turn to the Oceanic Weird is mediated predominantly via the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, which teems with fears of deep geological time, natural immanence, and the alterity of both nonhuman life and non-European civilization” (2, 2020). By engaging with Lovecraft’s racist and ecophobic legacy, Indiana’s speculative work connects the colonial past of the Caribbean with one of ecopocalypse. In her novel, the crystalline waters and white sandy beaches of the region have been transformed into decaying landscapes, challenging the Edenic and picturesque images used to sell these sites to tourists – images which never show the environmental impact of this industry. Similarly, in this paper I propose a comparative study Rita Indiana’s novel with the Victor Halperin’s horror movie White Zombie (1932). By considering the intertextuality of Euro-American folklore and
cultural productions in both works, I first identify how the figure of the zombie and that of environmental catastrophe become ghostly figures of colonialism haunting Caribbean shores, both metaphorically and literally. I then illuminate the use and misuse of Afro-Caribbean deities and myths in Indiana's novel and in Halperin's film, respectively. This is done by identifying the embodiment of American racial and gender anxieties in Halperin's depiction of the zombie figure contrasted to Indiana's representation of the water deity, Yemayá. Finally, I explore how the author's engagement with the Yemayá's character can be understood as depicting a new shore ontology. This approach envisions coastal and littoral environments as more than spaces of mere leisure and vacationing, emphasising the critical role they play in anthropogenic climate change regulation.

Seeping, Contaminating, E(merg)ing Bodies in Speculative Genres

Elif Sendur | Concorporation and the Emergence of Sympoiesis in Monstress and Claymore

This paper will examine the notion of the body as a symbiotic multiplicity by comparing the monstrous figures in Marjorie Liu's and Sana Takeda's continuing comic series Monstress with Norihiro Yagi's manga Claymore. The former's protagonist Maika Halfwolf is a human-shaped figure sharing her body with an ancient, tentacular monster that inhabits her cut arm. Yagi's Claymores are silver-eyed witches who are in a symbiotic relationship with their yoma, a species of powerful monsters placed in the wombs of these warriors, providing them with extraordinary powers. In both works, controlling the monstrous within the body may be seen as a valid concern where many instances of concorporation threaten the idea of a singular body. As Margrit Shildrick underlines, such singularity relies on an image of "an ideal bodily closure that relies on the singular, the unified and the replicable" (162). This singularity is threatened by the random, uncontrollable, and unruly emergence of monstrous beings within and through the body, seeping into the idea of normality, which in turn disrupt any order of the proper and the normal limits of these bodies. I will argue that by displacing the border between human and non-human, by rejecting abjection and instead embracing a marvelous becoming-with, these half monsters/half-humans pinpoint the crisis of the human subject as the singular, controlling agent of its own body. Hence, they invite us to rethink our assumptions of how we cohabit our bodies: these monsters show ways to embodying the other by celebrating the monstrous in its co-production with the human figure they cohabit. To borrow Donna Haraway's concept, this sympoësis asks us to imagine the ontological possibilities for humans to become something in excess, that is always more than itself through its immediate companionship with other species.

Burcu Kayişçı Akkoyun | Eco-ethics and Aesthetics of Non-Human Storytelling

This paper explores the possibilities non-human storytelling could provide at the intersection of eco-ethics and aesthetics. I will examine Karen Tei Yamashita's Through the Arc of the Rain Forest (1990), Indra Sinha's Animal's People (2007), and Jeff VanderMeer's The Strange Bird: A Borne Story (2017) in order to delineate the authors' critical intervention into anthropocentric discourses and narrative conventions. The novels portray horrors of toxic pollution, bacteria outbreak, and unbridled genetic engineering through grotesque characters that expose the ethical bankruptcy of profit-oriented corporate capitalism both on their "unnatural" and contaminated bodies, and in their formally hybrid stories. Drawing upon David Herman's understanding of "narratology beyond the human" and Erin James's formulation of "econarratology," I will argue for the necessity of a more comprehensive hermeneutical model that does not disregard the inseparability of the textual and the material, and the entanglement of the "man-made" with "the natural" as demonstrated by Yamashita, Sinha, and VanderMeer.
Allison Mackey | Making Kin with Monsters: The Emergence of the Non-human in Hemispheric EcoGothic

In this paper, I focus my reading of hemispheric EcoGothic on the unsettling short story “Bajo el agua negra” (2016) by Argentine writer Mariana Enríquez, who invites us to consider what happens when the uncanny, “thing-like” voice of that which is not fully human becomes insistent, threatening, unforgiving, and vengeful—and yet, I argue, can at the same time emerge as a source of hope. Enríquez engages with monstrosity in order to simultaneously attend to ongoing and recent historical injustices as well as resonate with Anthropocene anxieties. What Iovino and Oppermann call the “storied matter” (2012) emerges particularly forcefully in this story, as a vengeful—and uncannily bovine—spectre emerges from under the toxic waters of the polluted 64-km Matanzas-Riachuelo River of Buenos Aires. However, while in a sense representing “monstrous nature,” this disturbing irruption manages to avoid being “ecophobic” in Simon Estok’s sense (2009). What gradually emerges is the realization that what is really “monstrous” is not non-human nature, but rather human complicity within toxic systems of social and material production and reproduction that have led to total failures of care.

Cagatay Emre Dogan | Seeping Sounds, Magical Rivers: Nonhuman Worlds of Apichatpong Weerasethakul

The auteur director of Thai cinema, Apichatpong Weerasethakul is often referred to as one of the most successful names of international slow cinema. This paper investigates a unique aspect of his films: how the non-human components outside the main narrative seep into the frame without necessarily serving a purpose in terms of the human agency. The paper will focus on the 2012 film Mekong Hotel, where the soundscapes and landscapes displace the relationship between the environment and the humans. Whether he shows a landscape or an interior with ambient noises, Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s cinema seems to question the limits of human-centered cinematic narrative. It pushes the classical protagonists to the margins, sometimes by inserting surreal monsters, other times by playing with the disorientation of the spectator to achieve a space where anthropocentric narratives no longer work.

Ecomedia and Empire

Monique Allewaert | Metamorphosing Ecomedia: or, Bugs on the Leaves, Power in the Flowers

This talk treats Maria Sibylla Merian’s Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium (1705) as a medium that that transmits the convergence of European ideas with Amerindian and Afro-diasporic ideas about insects, nature, and metamorphosis.

Carlos Alonso Nugent | Mescalero Apache Pictographs Beyond U.S. and Mexican Settler Colonialisms

Between 1849 and 1857, the U.S.–Mexico Boundary Commission created a comprehensive archive of the human communities and nonhuman environments that lay between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Like other European and Euro American institutions, the Boundary Commission was contemptuous of Indigenous ecomedia. However, even as it entrenched racist parochialisms, the Boundary Commission could not help but translate Indigenous ecomedia—and, as a result, could not help but acknowledge alternatives to U.S. and Mexican settler colonialisms. Taking up new work in Native studies, media studies, and the environmental humanities, this presentation focuses on Mescalero Apache pictographs that moved through the Boundary Commission’s archives. Rather than dwelling on differences between signifying strategies (settler texts vs. Native pictographs) and material ecologies (ink and paper vs. gypsum on granite), this presentation works through a single field of ecomedia—a single field in which the Mescalero Apache pictographs have wielded the most power. Since the late eighteenth century, these pictographs have elicited
embodied experiences from men resting after buffalo hunts, women roasting mescal crowds, and other
audiences. Since the mid nineteenth century, they have inspired visual interpretations, such as A.T. Jackson’s
photographs and Forrest Kirkland’s watercolors. Finally, since the early twentieth century, they have animated
anthropological arguments. Because they have travelled through these communicative contexts, the
Mescalero Apache pictographs have been able to sustain imagined environments—my term for the
frameworks through which human groups represent, relate to, and reside in their more-than-human worlds.
Depicting the borderlands in their full diversity, interrupting borders with multimedia flexibility, these Apache
imagined environments have moved beyond their U.S. and Mexican counterparts. On an increasingly
precarious planet, these Apache imagined environments can teach us to stop defining ourselves around fixed
places and to remain resilient while migrating through shifting spaces.

Hester Blum | Arctic Ice and Figures of “Vanishing”

The ecomedia of polar climate change, which include the now-cliched photos of polar bears on diminishing ice,
enact the imperial trope of the “vanishing” Indigene, consigned to obsolescence in the settler colonial
imaginary. Climate activists have pushed back against such forms of extinction rhetoric on the logic that it
discourages change: if annihilation is assured, there is neither time nor reason to act. Yet in either case, the
discursive urgency is focused on the compressed timeline of the present crisis, rather than on earlier, more
protracted, or nonlinear timelines of polar climate knowledge and climate change. This presentation considers
the temporal acceleration and dilation in an Arctic transformed by imperial processes.

Rahul Mukherjee | Documenting Radiation and Songs of Displacement: Intermedial Relations across Time

Media theorists from Harold Innis to Lisa Parks and John Durham Peters have (re)connected media to its
environments and infrastructures. Blending ecocriticism and media archaeology, some scholars suggest that
studies of “ecomedia” should move beyond analyzing representations of environmental destruction to grasp
the mutual imbrications of media and environment across historical, sensory, and material registers (Parikka
2015; Blum 2019). The paper discusses two ways of conceptualizing the intersecting trajectories of ecomedia
and empire in India across time. In my first example, I trace a set of radioactive films across empires from
Vladimir Shevchenko’s Chronicle of Difficult Weeks (about the Chernobyl nuclear fallout) to RP
Amudhan’s Radiation Stories: Manivalakurichi. In each of these cases, radiation makes/leaves its mark in the
form of myriad tiny pops and scratches on the surface of the film or radiation is suspected (speculated) to be
present not only in the background (environment) but also on the film equipment. Along with studying how
radiation accompanies its own archiving, I relate monazite mining in contemporary Manivalakurichi (for
possible use of thorium in nuclear reactors) to British mining companies in the princely state of Travancore in
the early-twentieth century. These companies would ship monazite to Europe, which would then be
transformed into thorium nitrate to produce incandescent gas mantles (Abraham 2011). Over time, as empires
shift, archiving technologies and documentary testimonies are reconfigured. In the second case-study, I
examine how indigenous filmmakers (in particular, Biju Toppo in Kora Rajee) incorporate songs and oral
histories into their documentary practices in order to critique exogenous development projects of both the
(colonial) British Empire and the (postcolonial) Indian state that displace populations. Here, “ecomedia”
connects mediations of environmental devastation across varied temporalities. In its affinities with “media
ecology,” ecomedia stresses intermedial relations across time.
Jeffrey Barber | The Production and Consumption of These Violent Delights: Westworld and the Challenge of Imagining Sustainable Futures

In HBO’s Westworld series, characters cite a line from Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, “these violent delights have violent ends.” This phrase becomes a mimetic trigger for memory and growing self-awareness among the android “hosts” serving within an elaborate future theme park catering to the violent desires of their human “guests.” This commodification of carnage as entertainment calls to mind the violent viewing delights of audiences catered to by HBO and other media producers. Some months after the season three finale, with its scenes of widespread rioting, mobs of Trump-supporters and white supremacists staged their own spectacle of violent delights in the January 6th Capitol insurrection. Following the highest U.S. death toll from gun violence in 20 years, 2021 continues with new shootings and racial hate crimes, adding to the global crises of Covid-19, climate change and species extinction. For many, the notion of stories imagining transitions to sustainable futures might look like escapist fantasy. For others, envisioning a sustainable future is the most critical task facing humanity today. The proposed presentation explores the aesthetics of violence in popular media narratives of the future, such as Westworld, and the challenges posed to the production and consumption of sustainable future narratives, such as Kim Stanley Robinson’s Pacific Edge and Ministry for the Future, and efforts to raise public awareness and support for climate and sustainability policies and institutional change. The presentation also explores parallels between the theme of surveillance, use and abuse of guest/audience behavior and desire in Westworld and current media and political practices of observing, predicting, and shaping public behavior and belief.

David Shackleton | Africanfuturism: Wanuri Kahiu’s and Nnedi Okorafor’s Counter-Visions of Development

This presentation argues that Africanfuturism provides counter-visions of the future that are urgently needed to combat climate capitalism. It reads Wanuri Kahiu’s film Pumzi (2009) and Nnedi Okorafor’s novel The Book of Phoenix (2015) against the hostile projections that have been used by what Kodwo Eshun calls the “futures industry” to render Africa the site of “absolute dystopia.” Specifically, it situates Asha’s rebellious quest in Pumzi to plant the Mother Tree after a water war in future East African Territory in the context of the 2009-11 drought in Kenya, and the structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the IMF since the 1980s. Asha’s efforts resemble those of environmentalist Wangari Maathai, about whom Kahiu directed a documentary film in 2009. While, as Maathai pointed out, indigenous Kikuyu culture was often derided as “primitive,” she used some of its principles to build the Green Belt Movement. Correlatively, by showing Asha planting a sacred Mũgumo tree, Kahiu transposes aspects of Kikuyu culture to a science fictional future and creates a counter-image of futurity. Similarly, The Book of Phoenix provides a counter-vision to the future scenarios devised by multinational corporations such as Royal Dutch Shell. By portraying a future in which Shell and other oil companies build androids to indiscriminately kill anyone who tries to siphon oil from their pipelines in the Niger delta, The Book of Phoenix puts into question Shell’s projections of the future and their claim that corporate responsibility is sufficient to ensure the harmonious extraction of resources in an unregulated economy. Both Kahiu and Okorafor turn to science fiction as a means of constructing counter-visions of development, and thereby make what Eshun describes as chronopolitical interventions into the production and distribution of African futures.

William Thompson | Hansel and Greta: An Apocalyptic Fairy Tale

I would like to offer a presentation in which I explain the nature and scope of my project, Grimms Tales for a Post-Apocalyptic Future. In addition to situating the project in terms of scholarship and popular culture, I will offer a reading of “Hansel and Gretta.” “Hansel and Greta,” published originally in the online, UK journal, Feast,
in 2018 (see the link below), is an adult rendering of the Grimms’ “Hansel and Gretel” set in an uncertain future. My attempt with these renderings is to remain as true as possible to the original stories by the Brothers Grimm, setting them in a future in which civilization has collapsed, where people’s lives have been reduced to subsistence levels, and the natural world has become as threatening and wild as in the original stories by the Brothers Grimm.

Nicholas Silcox | Reading Through Seawater: Toward a Watery Method

In I write to propose a paper entitled “Reading Through Seawater: Electronic Literature & the Underwater.” In recent years, there has been substantial energy in reconsidering literary methods in light of the various epistemic conditions of our time, including social, political, and technological factors. One such factor that has largely gone unaddressed in the debates around method is climate crisis and the Anthropocene. It is crucial for literary scholars to develop reading practices that are considerate of environmental conditions. One such environment that will become increasingly relevant is that of the underwater. In this paper, I will argue that the two electronic literature texts, Sea and Spar Between by Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland and Loss, Undersea by D. Fox Harrell, demonstrate a submerged reading practice. Following Melody Jue’s recent call for a “milieu-specific analysis,” I outline the ways in which the formal and thematic elements of these texts inform the cultural and literary imaginary of the underwater and demonstrate the ways in which an underwater environment distorts, diffracts, and reconfigures the practice of reading. Both texts demonstrate several key features of the underwater, including differentiated temporal conditions, the size and scale of the ocean, shifted sensorial and affective experiences, and what I call the “phenomenology of the dissolving.” These conditions preclude a terrestrial reading method, and open up the possibility for new ways of thinking about reading more generally, across a multitude of environments. Though their capacity to be read environmentally or in terms of the milieus they evoke, speculative texts, speculative digital texts in particular, allow media and literary scholars to move beyond the paradigm of reading and method as looking either “at” or “through” and instead allow us to look around.

Modeling Environmental Narrative

Bridgitte Barclay | “Webs of speculative fabulation”: Creating Speculative Ecomedia in the Classroom

Teaching science fiction and environmental literature and writing, I reel in environmental apocalypse all of the time and see speculation itself as an act of hope. In arguing for “webs of speculative fabulation,” Donna Haraway writes that “it’s important which stories tell stories.” Why would Bacigalupi imagine the near future devastation in The Water Knife other than to change our actions and trajectory? The beauty for the everyday in Erdrich’s Future Home of the Living God offers hope in ongoingness and connection. As much as I revel in those fictional worlds, though, the current one can make everything feel speculative, teaching included. As always, I’ve asked myself how do we teach environmental justice with hope, but this year, that question has felt especially daunting. Students’ creative ecomedia work has given me hope, though. Using ecomedia assignments in science fiction and environmental courses has worked well this year to help students speculate about a positive future in the midst of the dire circumstances of the global pandemic. I taught a Speculative Film and Literature course and an Environmental Literature course in fall 2019 in person before COVID-19 changed the world, and I taught Environmental Research Writing: Popular Science and Advocacy remotely during the spring 2021 semester and used speculative ecomedia assignments in both. Students made podcasts, horror films, museum exhibits, children’s books, virtual tours and other types of ecomedia to engage with the texts and to engage with the public. In this presentation, I will analyze the nature of speculation in our current teaching modes, explore the value of creative speculative ecomedia assignments, consider the lessons I learned in using speculative ecomedia assignments, and highlight student learning speculative ecomedia work.
Lydia Borowicz | Syncopated Time: Exhibiting Climate Futures

As a global phenomenon occurring over more-than-human timescales, climate change is outside human perception, a hyperobject difficult to conceive of, let alone experience. The environmental humanities are filled with calls to reimagine the future, yet scholars such as Amitav Ghosh, Timothy Morton, Una Chaudhuri, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and others have all pointed to human inabilities to fully comprehend or experience the climate crisis, describing failures of the imagination when faced with climate change’s scales. My paper explores how museums can offer the public material engagement with anthropogenic climate change; as object-based spaces, they provide an embodied and participatory experience of multiple temporalities within an accessible human scale. I consider two museum exhibits that deliberately place the visitor in juxtaposed temporalities: Carbon Ruins, a mobile exhibit of a carbon-neutral future set in 2053, and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History’s new exhibit, Deep Time, which speculates on a climate-changed future based on past extinction events. Drawing on Rebecca Schneider’s concept of “syncopated time,” I show how temporal layering offers visitors embodied insight into climate change and climate-changed futures. I argue that in exhibits of climate change and its predicted effects, the museum visitor is not just a passive observer, but becomes an active participant, even an integral component in the exhibit. By considering climate change interpretation in museums not only within the exhibit design, but as an essential component of the visitor’s presence, museums can create climate change exhibits that realize climate change’s scalar challenges.

Nick Earhart | Four Places: Ambient Comics and Criticism

Over the past two years, I have developed a comics practice that hovers at the periphery of my academic work. I am writing my dissertation on art and activism along the Los Angeles River, and it’s been an occasion to think deeply about place and the possibility of art as a form of radical mapmaking. I find a different register of thinking happens, however, when I draw, which often feels automatic and revealing of preoccupations that reflect and inform my ecocritical interests. I’ve drawn countless four-panel comics—the series is titled “Four Places”—and I’m consistently surprised and delighted at the simplicity of the four-part structure: a literal beginning, middle, and end, with an extra section for suspense or a punchline. Often the “story” is a brief study in narrative time: A car appears, moves across the frame, then vanishes; a person parachutes from the sky; a genderless pair notices something about the weather; a star emerges, hovers, then explodes. Another subseries focuses on “ambience”—usually the same pair facing each other as the watercolor backdrop changes behind them. For this talk, I’d like to share my comics and consider connections between serialized artistic practice and scholarly work. In particular, I will address “ambience” as a creative and critical category (from Brian Eno’s music to Timothy Morton’s concept of “ambient poetics”), as well as my own reflections on the topic. Comics, in a way, operate for me as an “ambient medium”—adjacent to my “real work,” but always shaping my sensibility. I think of ecocriticism as a fundamentally interdisciplinary concern; I’d like to discuss its multimodal dimensions, as well.

Parenting & Community

Lauren Woolbright | Umbilical Haunting: Death Stranding and the Dark Ecology of the Sixth Great Extinction

In her book Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative, Alexa Weik von Mossner discusses “the emotional power of dystopia” (139) in communicating the urgency of action in the face of climate change. Citing numerous studies of people’s attitudes toward the this threat, she observes, “How we feel about a certain risk, then, will in part determine how we act when it comes to the issue of climate change” (140); convincing people to take action to prevent something that is not yet affecting them takes imagination,
she argues. Hideo Kojima’s 2019 genre-defying arthouse game *Death Stranding* drops players into a terrifying, devastated landscape they must navigate mostly on foot, delivering much-needed supplies across the US. Known for his rich symbolism, metagame critique, and innovative multiplayer mechanics that create a supportive player ecosystem, Kojima invites players to consider the value of fearing death and face the inevitability of the Sixth Great Extinction. For all its unsettling imagery, *Death Stranding* is more than ecocritique; the environment and gameplay align through themes and imagery of birth, unborn children, parenthood, and umbilical connection to communicate the trauma of loss and highlight just how connected human beings are to the non-human natural world, like a baby on an umbilical cord.

**Madison Myers | Speculative Eco-Mothering: Mothering as a Response to the Anthropocene in Speculative and Ecofiction**

Environmental and social conditions within the Anthropocene create hierarchies that leave non-human species, the landscape, and vulnerable populations exponentially removed from power. Additionally, all species face risk of environmental degradation within the Anthropocene that threatens human and species survival. Knowing the current trajectory must change through radical means, I propose that one approach several authors offer for radical change and imagining speculative departures from the Anthropocene (not necessarily the least damage done or the best outcome for humanity) is through their depictions of mothering and care-taking across species, races, cultures, generations, locations, etc. As part of an extended project, I am exploring the practice of mothering as depicted in speculative, post-modern/contemporary North-American ecofiction as a site of inquiry for the ways mothering responds to the Anthropocene, what I am terming eco-mothering. By looking at examples in fiction, I consider the ways overlapping and often contradictory definitions of human and multispecies mothering—biological, psychological, and sociological—contribute to multispecies community building—intra-species community grounded in variability, interconnectedness, diversity, and complicated notions of species—to understand possibilities for envisioning mothering as a practice of care-taking within ecofiction and as a speculative departure from the Anthropocene. Speculative departures from the Anthropocene are productive, imaginative, and unprecedented ways of reconsidering human positionality and relationality within the Anthropocene—to each other, to the earth itself, and to other species—that consciously respond through action that hinges on community, care, and justice. I consider different aspects of mothering, multispecies and cross species relationships, and speculative futurity (whether through futuristic, scientific intervention; post-apocalyptic envisioning; reimagined possibilities that have retroactive and proactive implications for space and relationships; or fantastical and techno-futuristic embodiments). Ultimately, eco-mothering literature invites readers to reconsider their positionality within the Anthropocene and their normative assumptions about species hierarchy, community, and possibilities for care-taking across species.

**Alexandra Reznik | Composing an Evolving Relationship with the Environment in Octavia Butler’s Novel and Toshi Reagon’s Folk Opera *Parable of the Sower***

This paper explores how music in the speculative ecomedia Octavia E. Butler’s novel (1993) and Toshi Reagon’s folk opera (2015) *Parable of the Sower* shape our relationship with the environment. Both Butler and Reagon exemplify music’s power to both enact and resist change, moving communities of readers and listeners to navigate a more intentional relationship with the environments we inhabit.
**Queer Futurity**

**Kristin Ferebee | The Child You Save May Be Your Own: Nonhuman Futurity on The Mandalorian’s Space Frontier**

When Disney’s *The Mandalorian* premiered in November 2019, it earned immediate attention not for its titular antihero, the masked gunslinger played by Pedro Pascal, but for “Baby Yoda”: the magical infant whom the Mandalorian takes it upon himself to save. In the show’s focus on a vulnerable-yet-sacred child who must be protected by a morally complicated fighter, *The Mandalorian* openly displays its Western genre roots, which it also nods to in cinematography and scoring. Yet in the Western, the child who must be saved is a White child, usually after being endangered by indigenous people—a trope that references anxieties surrounding White futurity, as others (Sheldon; Cronon; Edelman) have pointed to, as well as implicit tensions between the nonhuman or “wild” and “civilized” world (Sheldon). What are we to make of a nonhuman child appropriating the role of imperiled human futurity? Here, I interpret *The Mandalorian* as part of a trend that reimagines kinship in order to confront anxieties about the posthuman future, pointing out that the work of creating the “human” has always been the defining element of the “frontier.”

**Elizabeth Boothby | “The Next People”: The Material Ecocritical Turn in Apocalyptic Fiction**

Based in material ecocritical theory, primarily in the work of Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, and Serpil Opperman, this paper seeks to illuminate a ‘material ecocritical turn’ in apocalyptic speculative fiction. This paper explores post-apocalyptic scenarios that challenge the human/nonhuman boundary, with particular emphasis on the ‘monster’ and the inherent queerness of such thinking. In material ecocriticism, the ‘monster’ is no longer feared, but rather constitutes a queer, combinational, hybrid creature of symbiotic wisdom. Fiction within the material ecocritical turn, therefore, embraces ideas of monstrosity, queering the nonhuman, and radical alterations to the definition of ‘people.’ Apocalyptic speculative fiction offers an ideal arena in which to test material ecocritical modes of being, with the contemporary world either crumbling, or long past. What separates the apocalypses of the material ecocritical turn from more familiar, purely catastrophic ones is that, in these newer narratives, we see some sense of continuance—not quite optimism, but something akin. This continuance, of sentience or some form of human-approximation, is what will be referred to as ‘the next people,’ a phrase borrowed from M. R. Carey’s *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2014). ‘The next people’ are whomever or whatever lives on after the human. In this paper, three versions of ‘next people’ are briefly outlined across a variety of texts and media: an entirely separate species, a new consciousness or body-form created through human mutation, and the mutation specifically of monstrous children. Exploring the material ecocritical turn in apocalyptic fiction allows for the envisioning of a paradoxical ‘hopeful’ apocalypse. These stories foster the types of imagination that are necessary in the present, in order to cultivate queer thinking, empathy, and collaboration with present nonhuman and more-than-human peoples.

**Environmental Monstrosities**

**Zak Bronson | “It Was Changing Everything”: Posthumanism and Body Horror in Alex Garland’s *Annihilation***

While science fiction and horror cinema has always demonstrated a persistent preoccupation with the possibilities of a posthuman existence, recent years have witnessed the release of a number of films that have explored the links between posthumanism and ecological degradation. From climate disaster films such as *Elysium* and *Snowpiercer*, to the continued persistence of apocalyptic and zombie narratives such as *Blood Quantum*, contemporary science fiction has articulated a collective anxiety around the figure of the human in a world of ecological collapse and extinction threat. These mutations of the genre can be indexed to the
proliferating crises and catastrophes associated with the Anthropocene, a moment said to trouble the lines between nature/culture, self/other and body/nature. If earlier science fiction cinema routinely probed the boundaries between technology and the body, modern science fiction film has constructed an alternative series of images and narratives to deal with the uneasy anxieties of a posthuman Anthropocene. In this paper, I explore these issues by examining Alex Garland’s *Annihilation*, a science fiction-horror hybrid that firmly articulates the fears and anxieties associated with posthuman existence. Based on Jeff VanderMeer’s novel of the same name, the film depicts five female scientists as they investigate Area X, a mysteriously contaminated zone that is rapidly altering the human and nonhuman beings within its vicinity. Building on the work of Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Stacy Alaimo, this paper argues that *Annihilation* transposes the fears of the Anthropocene onto the body by presenting nature as both weirdly familiar and eerily uncanny. In doing so, the film reflects the numerous cultural tensions associated with the construction of a posthuman existence that troubles the boundaries between body and nature. Through this portrait, *Annihilation* offers a reformulation of the posthuman condition that simultaneously highlights the anxious anticipation of its arrival.

**Matthew Lambert | Mice and Monsters: The Atomic Grotesque in Judith Merril’s ‘That Only a Mother’ and *Shadow on the Hearth***

Radioactive mythical creatures from the Pacific. Giant ants from the American southwest. Sci-films of the 1950s are full of similar “monsters” that symbolize human anxiety over the development and use of atomic and hydrogen bombs. But for author Judith Merril, the monster was not an abstract representation of the catastrophic force and radioactivity of these weapons; instead, the monster was humanity itself, particularly the western patriarchy that developed, used, and benefitted from these weapons. In her story “That Only a Mother” (1948) and first novel *Shadow on the Hearth* (1950), Judith Merril subverts mid-century norms around gender and science by resituating “hysteria” as a masculine response based on insecurity, fear, and loss of control that has devastating consequences on the human body and natural world. Appropriating what Istvan Csicsery-Ronay calls the “sf grotesque” in her depictions of mutated bodies and landscapes, Merril questions the norms and practices projected onto women and the environment by men. These grotesques are not depicted as the monstrous others as they so often are in science fiction and horror, the destruction of which ultimately reinforces the patriarchal status quo. Together with the lack of narrative closure (particularly in “That Only a Mother”), the grotesque bodies and landscapes force readers to face the disastrous consequences of attempting to dominate and control nature, women, and others who threaten to subvert white, male supremacy. In doing so, Merril models narrative devices and strategies to depict and confront the climate change and pandemic “monsters” of our own time.

**Lindsay Jolivette | Disastrous Projections: Nuclear Futurity in South Korea’s *Pandora***

On March 11, 2011 the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima, Japan suffered a series of disastrous events. Beginning with an earthquake that caused a tidal wave which led to multiple meltdowns within the powerplant when the coolants were affected, the triple catastrophe that took place ten years ago has come to be known simply as “3/11.” While the repercussions of 3/11 in Japan alone are innumerable, the reverberations of the event also rippled out beyond Japan’s borders and increased the overall sense of the disastrous future that faces nuclear nations in the rest of East Asia. In this presentation I argue that *Pandora* is a nuclear disaster film of projected futurity that brings to the surface of Korean media consciousness the uncanny similarities between Korea’s potential nuclear ecology and Japan’s nuclear power plant disaster of 3/11. This mirrored situation of nuclear ecology in the two nations of Japan and Korea is highlighted by “projection” —cinematically, factually, and psychoanalytically—and these projections allow the monstrosity of nuclear disaster to become thinkable and confrontable. Instead of retelling a domestic incident as a historical remembrance, *Pandora* “reproduces” the disaster of 3/11 in a domestic setting thereby creating a projected version of a potential-future that explores the collective fears surrounding the safety of nuclear energy in Korea. Through its use of futurity, *Pandora* functions as an actionable warning for the Korean nation in a way
that nuclear disaster films focused on remembrance do not because it makes visible a realistic projection of what the disaster will look like when it occurs based on ecological and political realities in Korea and Japan.

**Carter Soles | Not the Apocalypse You Were Looking For: Contagion, The Crazies, COVID-19**

In March 2020, Wired's Laurie Penny characterized the Trump pandemic response thus: “Faced with a crisis they can’t solve with violence, they dithered and whined and wasted time that can and will be counted in corpses.” The pandemic film Contagion (2011) is known for being factually accurate in its depiction of a global SARS-type outbreak and does feature scenes of large numbers of corpses. Yet it assumes an Obama-era CDC. Obama’s investment in pandemic preparedness, including a “pandemic playbook” that the Trump team roundly ignored in 2020, looks infinitely preferable to what really unfolded. The real-life Trump response to SARS-CoV-2 is much more like the chaotic shitshow displayed in The Crazies (1973). No one competent leads from the top, so one lone immunologist is left to struggle in the field amidst a rapidly deteriorating situation. Beyond that scientist, The Crazies features mainly military protagonists, much different from Contagion, in which the various employees of the CDC are the main characters. Contagion captures what might have been if a global pandemic had erupted during the Obama years. Yet The Crazies evokes (metaphorically in some cases) what actually happened under Trump: absent and/or incompetent guidance at the national level, leading to outbreaks of shocking public violence in addition to the virus running amok. One can easily imagine an event like the January 6th, 2021 Capitol Insurrection taking place in the world of The Crazies. The closest Contagion comes to depicting violent social unrest are some (offscreen, discussed but not shown) food riots. Both films have things to tell us about U.S. culture’s response to COVID-19 and about the significance of the present pandemic moment in the unfolding Anthropocene.

**Race & Environment**

**Sarah Parijs | Darkening Gaia in The Broken Earth: Magical Others and Ruptures in Allegory**

Gaia and the Anthropocene are new scientific ways of thinking about transformed planetary life. Gaia theory engages in ecocritical efforts to decenter the human and take seriously the nonhuman environment in more horizontal politics, but universalizing humanity erases racial difference. The Anthropocene, and Gaia, challenge our ability to see and think history and raced inequality on the planetary level. N. K. Jemisin’s Hugo award winning SF fantasy trilogy, The Broken Earth, offers a way of understanding Gaia and the Anthropocene through allegorical magic as a heuristic for U.S. histories of anti-black racism. The Broken Earth is set in a planet where climate change events are known as the Fifth Season. As allegorical parables of our possible future, Jemisin’s planet is apocalyptically alive, known as Father Earth, and wants to eradicate humanity as a fantastical version of Gaia. Jemisin imbues Father Earth with magical agency and memory beyond the human. Father Earth’s humanoid inhabitants are equally weirded through magic as allegorical tropes for raced Others: orogenes or roggas quell geological catastrophes as chattel slaves; the Niess are the extinct progenitors of magic as a black diaspora; and stone eaters are immortal stone creatures as foils of indigeneity. I argue that Jemisin uses magic as an allegory for planetary connection and American anti-black racism but displaces allegory by darkening Gaia, in what I define as a speculative history of magic and apocalypse that exposes raced violence in Gaia’s planetary holism. Roggas function allegorically as part of chattel slavery by maintaining planetary balance as daemonic weapons, but exceed allegorical tropes through magic, which suggests that planetary and racial exploitation are too all-consuming to be allegorized. History isn’t something that can be gotten over nor can the planet be saved in The Broken Earth: both the body and Earth remember.
“The Deep” (2017) by Clipping, an experimental hip hop group, tells the story of Black merpeople born from pregnant slaves thrown overboard during the Atlantic slave trade. They live in the depths of the ocean, far away from “two-legs,” until humans invade their home in search of oil. This combination of the slave trade and contemporary extractive practices connects past and present, racism and capitalism. Further, the song’s future setting and perspective (“y’all remember”) allows us to imagine the radical possibility of destroying humanity to save the deep and the merpeople. The song is both apocalyptic and utopian. Gesturing toward the ongoing environmental racism of destroying Black homes and lives to extract resources, “The Deep” reverses the terms of destruction, ending the song with a massive tidal wave (created by the merpeople) that “stretched up like a mountain high / And the no-gills gasped and they closed eyes.” This uses the revenge-of-nature trope to place the song within both ecohorror and Afrofuturism. “The Deep” also reflects the possibility of living beyond apocalypse, acknowledging the creation of this undersea community from the loss of individual lives as well as home and culture and allowing the merpeople to be the source rather than victims of apocalypse (“them no-gills had to feel it ’cause they couldn’t be told”). Their apocalyptic action is not simply revenge, however, but protects the utopian society they have created far away from anti-Black racism, slavery, and other “two-legs” problems. Ultimately, the song’s form – a post-tidal wave oral history – indicates that this undersea community survives and thrives. “The Deep” provides a satisfying response to environmental degradation and racism – as long you don’t identify too strongly with the two-legs.

Matthew I. Thompson | Soylent Green and the Fear of Being Consumed

Eating is an ecological process and problem: it is our most direct link to the environment, and yet it involves committing violence against that environment three times a day. In the 1960s and 70s there was a resurgence of the Malthusian fear that the global population would outstrip the planet’s food supply, or carrying capacity. In this paper I will demonstrate that the fear of running out of food is directly linked to a fear of becoming food oneself. Inspired by the cannibalistic solution to the overpopulation problem in the film Soylent Green, I look to the history of demographic dystopian thinking for instances of anthropophagic anxiety. As it turns out, both Thomas Malthus and Paul Ehrlich (whose 1968 The Population Bomb was a direct influence on the production of Soylent Green) mention cannibalism as a potential result of overpopulation, but only fleetingly. I read these marginal mentions of anthropophagy in the demographic discourse as revealing a central anxiety rooted in the colonial fear of being overwhelmed and consumed by a racialized Other. Soylent Green engages in this racist anxiety, and yet it also provides the opportunity for a radical reassessment of cannibalism. What if submitting oneself to be eaten solved not only the problems of overpopulation and ecological devastation, but also the larger ethical issues of eating and human exceptionalism?

Stacey Baran | Preserving Nature and Preservation of Whiteness in Ari Aster’s Midsommar

The celebration of the summer solstice in Sweden – or midsummer – caught the attention of the American public upon the release of Ari Aster’s Midsommar (2019). The film recounts the narrative of a tightly-knit commune that maintains an active disconnect from “modern” society; instead, it encourages human connection with nature and engages in ancient, ritualistic practices. Swedish folkloresque imagery is featured heavily throughout the film, and the visitors’ extended stay with the Hårgas evokes connotations of ecotourism and, subsequently, environmental preservation. To this end, Robert Spadoni notes the presence of a book titled The Secret Nazi Language of the Uthark in the mise-en-scène of the film. He further remarks that “in 2019, Sweden [experienced] an increase in right-wing, populist, anti-immigrant feeling” at the same time that Swedish artistry moved to celebrate “images of nature, tradition, and mythology” (711). In his essay, Spadoni outlines the connections between white supremacy and the construction of the Hårgas’ social order. In my presentation, then, I read Midsommar through its undercurrent of Swedish nationalist political ideology with which Spadoni engages. Secondly, and more principally, I explore the resurgent roles of environmental
conscientiousness, white supremacy, and xenophobia in the twenty-first century, arguing that *Midsommar* emphasizes the traditional correlation between preservation of nature and preservation of whiteness. Further, the film’s depiction of people of color and inbreeding reaffirms the anxieties surrounding preservation of national identity in historically white-majority countries. The revelation of the Hårga’s hidden practices – namely inbreeding, animal sacrifice, and selective ritual mating – showcases the fear of ethnodiversity and the perceived superiority of white bodies and white appearances. *Midsommar* thus serves as an imaginative yet chilling display of what ethnic homogeneity seeks to accomplish, and how “oneness” with tradition and nature can often equate to white supremacy and anti-multicultural sentiment.

**Strange Foods**

Sriyanka Basak | The Quest for Sustainable Diet: Exploring the Horror in the Food Production Systems in Non-Fiction Films

Do we not feel horror when we see videos of diseased salmons, dead whales, helpless calves, or tethered chickens? Documentaries like *Seaspiracy* and *Cowspiracy* captures such gruesome realities in food production systems – animal husbandry and fishing industries making us question our food choices. In this paper, using the above-mentioned documentaries as texts, I would like to analyze how horror is presented in non-fiction shows to raise awareness about our present unsustainable food production systems. Further, I would like to examine the very notion of sustainability as food companies ‘go green’. The documentaries also suggest a shift towards a plant-based diet as a move towards alternative food choices. In doing so, the prioritization of certain local “vegan” food over others in global food systems leads us to rethink the idea of accessibility and availability in terms of power structures, hegemony, and social injustices. Additionally, it needs to be examined whether the plant-based food production companies are reestablishing the existing capitalist structures while promoting sustainable food structures. Thus, locating horror as the focal point in food production, the paper will explore the questions of food choices and alternative solutions, sustainability and green-washing concepts to understand the intersection of environment and gastronomy in non-fiction films.

Samantha Hind | "IT’S ALIVE!:" Cultured Flesh in Mat Blackwell’s *Beef*

There is an ethical and environmental emergency in our food systems. The rate of animal agriculture is increasing yearly, resulting in more and more animal lives being taken and the climate crisis worsening at alarming rates. Imagine, then, a future where cultured flesh has replaced animal agriculture, animal flesh is known as corpse-meat, and cultured flesh waste powers the planet. This is the world of Mat Blackwell’s speculative novel, *Beef*. In *Beef*, cultured flesh seems to create an indistinct future; one where animals are no longer farmed for their flesh and the ideology of distinction between humans and animals has been dismantled. Complicating and lingering among this indistinct future, however, is the traumatic legacy of flesh. The traumatic legacy of flesh resurfaces at strange conditioning moments of flesh consumption, presenting characters with uncomfortable realisations about their past, present, and future. *Beef* teases out the problematics of cultured flesh as an easy solution to complex problems, negotiating the potentiality of cultured flesh consciousness, alongside the ongoing traumatic legacy of flesh. The traumatic legacy of flesh resurfaces at strange conditioning moments of flesh consumption, presenting characters with uncomfortable realisations about their past, present, and future. *Beef* teases out the problematics of cultured flesh as an easy solution to complex problems, negotiating the potentiality of cultured flesh consciousness, alongside the ongoing traumatic legacy of flesh. In *Beef*’s indistinct future, the realisation of conscious cultured flesh’s consumption encapsulates a unique horror and discomfit born of indistinction, one that add to the transmission of the traumatic legacy of flesh. In this presentation I will consider how *Beef*, as a speculative fiction text, explores the complex construction of cultured flesh as both a facilitator for indistinction and a continuation of the traumatic legacy of flesh. Cultured flesh is bound to the indistinct possibilities that *Beef* encapsulates, with its consciousness forcing Beef’s indistinction even further, to include all fleshy beings in what Matthew Calarco calls “universal indistinction.” Ultimately, I will show how *Beef* attempts to complicate the simplicity of a cultured flesh future, while still striving for and imagining the counter-ideological, indistinct possibilities that could arise from it.
**Sabiha Khan | Modeling the Future of Food through the Digital Uncanny**

In this paper, I consider the ways in which the sense of the uncanny in the discourse of food frontiers intersects with other more speculative ecomedia concerned with the visual modelling of food, including: monster films featuring sentient food, such as Ishirō Honda’s *Attack of the Mushroom People/Matango*, experiments in 1980s computer animation using food, and more recent animated films building on those animation techniques, such as PIXAR’s *Ratatouille*. Freed from the necessity to fulfill projected food needs for humans, these iterations of the uncanny provide an opportunity to explore alternate, repressed, more-than-human models of relating to the environment through food.

**Imagining Animals**

**Brittany Roberts | The Soviet Anthropocene: Desiccation, Desertification, and the Horror of Animality in Dmitri Svetozarov’s Hounds**

Dmitri Svetozarov’s film *Hounds* (1989) begins with a provocative sequence: a young boy, wandering a dimly lit cavern, is torn apart by now-feral dogs. Set in a central Asian village on the edge of the shrinking Aral Sea, the film’s unnamed city, like the dogs, has been abandoned: the formerly lush landscape is now empty, barren desert. Left behind as their human owners fled desertification, air contamination, and thirst, the dogs prowl the ghost town in marauding packs, their savage expressions levying accusations against their human prey. Like the Aral Sea, desiccated by destructive Soviet environmental policies, the dogs no longer bow to human sway: as a squad of Soviet specialists attempt to exterminate the now-monstrous dogs, the canine beasts drive them mad, one by one, beneath the punishing desert sun. Released during Glasnost in 1989, Svetozarov’s brutal film examines through an ecohorrific lens the devastating environmental consequences of Soviet irrigation and water diversion programs enacted in central Asia in the 1960s. The film’s sustained environmental critique raises several linked questions useful to studies of both horror and Soviet contributions to the Anthropocene: What are the limits of human influence over “nature”? What claims of authority can we make over nonhuman animals? And, most critically, can we ever exercise mastery over the planet on which we live and the animals with whom we share it? Considering several key scenes from *Hounds* through the lenses of Soviet environmental studies, animal studies, and post-humanism, this talk examines how Svetozarov’s film challenges Soviet myths of mastery over nonhuman nature and animals. Locating the film within the broader sub-genre of ecohorror and histories of the Aral Sea disaster, I argue that Svetozarov’s bold film presents an indictment of the human exceptionalist beliefs and philosophies that undergirded Soviet environmental policy in the former Soviet bloc.

**Elena Anatolievna Ivanova | “Animal unknown to science” Cheburashka as an Icon of Russian Culture: Stereotypes and Archetypes**

In 1969 a hand-made Soviet animation called “Gena the Crocodile” was released. It was based on the text (1965) of the children’s writer, Eduard Uspensky (1937 – 2018), who created an “animal unknown to science” (the quotation) Cheburashka. Today, Cheburashka is an iconic character of Russian-speaking culture. Cheburashka became a popular character in Russian jokes (along with his friend, Gena the Crocodile). Cheburashka is a popular toy, the so called “Russian Pokémon” (resembling “Pocket Monsters” in Japan). Cheburashka was a mascot for the Russian Olympic Team in the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 games. There are images of Cheburashka on T-shirts, as well as other outfits and accessories. Cheburashka and Gena the Crocodile were depicted on a Soviet postage stamp (1988). There are even collectors of Cheburashkas. For example, the United States National Champion figure skater, Johnny Weir, who knows the Russian language
(he was trained by the Russian figure-skating coaches), is known to be an avid collector of Russian Cheburashka items. In my presentation I’m going to describe Cheburashka and his/its phantasmagoric, anthropomorphic world: a crocodile Gena (a Russian male name) who smoked a pipe, played chess, spoke and wrote Russian and “worked” in the zoo as a crocodile; an “old lady” Shapoklyak who was a hooligan and owned a domesticated rat, Lariska (a derivative diminishing form of the female name Larisa), which lived in the “old lady’s” handbag. In addition to entertaining with new cultural information, I’m going to present my ideas about why these animated series and their central figure, Cheburashka, became a Russian symbol as much as, for example, the American Mickey Mouse.

Brett Mills | Jaws, from the Shark's Point of View

“This is the story of my death.” Representation functions as the most powerful tool by which anthropocentric and anthroparchal societies enable humans to encounter non-humans. As animals have disappeared from real-life, everyday encounters they have been replaced by depictions, and thus these depictions inform how human cultures understand species, environments, and individual non-human beings. This paper explores one of the purposes to which animal representations have often been put; the normalisation of human cultures through the depictions as animals as threatening and problematic. Popular depictions of animals in media such as mainstream, popular Hollywood cinema have repeatedly drawn on animals as threats, their animality equated with their violence. To outline this process this paper takes Jaws (Spielberg 1975) as a case study. It shows how the problem posed by the film’s narrative is one dependent upon assumptions of human dominance, and the film functions as an argument for the reassertion of that dominance. To correct this error this paper asks; what happens if we retell Jaws from the shark’s point of view? How would this reshape the narrative, and what implications would this have for the meanings the film offers? To what extent would this trouble the analytical frameworks Film Studies typically employs, and therefore to what extent is that academic field unthinkingly anthropocentric? By offering a rereading of the film from the shark’s point of view, this paper decentres the human as the primary meaning-making locus, and rewrite the film’s species hierarchies.


Compelling scientific evidence demonstrates that many forms of marine life, including mammals, crustaceans, and cephalopods, are sentient and capable of experiencing both positive and negative emotions. Nevertheless, a significant cognitive disconnection exists among consumers in capitalist societies between the acknowledgement of sentience in marine life and their use and commodification. In the Amazon Prime TV show The Boys, the superhero The Deep reflects this ambivalent attitude toward sentient marine life. The Deep possesses the ability to communicate with sea life, and the show portrays him in conversation with a variety of marine animals, including lobsters, whales, and dolphins. He has a profound awareness of their emotional capacity and their suffering at the hands of humans, yet his attempts to help them fail in horrible ways. In the morally ambiguous universe of The Boys, The Deep is a highly problematic character. He advertises for an exploitative marine park that holds dolphins captive in order to keep his job, and his care for marine animals often results in their greater suffering and death. The Deep’s actions reveal the severe limitations imposed by capitalist and settler colonist frameworks that fail to allow for the recognition and creation of space for other than human sentience and self-determination. In this presentation, I analyze how the The Deep’s character interrogates prevailing attitudes toward marine life sentience and exposes the limitations of capitalist structures to permit self-determination and freedom from suffering for marine animals. I then examine whether current approaches, such as efforts directed at consumers of marine mammal “entertainment” parks, the Whale Sanctuary Project, and other initiatives can effectively dismantle capitalist paradigms involving the use and abuse of these sentient animals.
**Ecohorror, True Crime, & Crime Fiction**

Sara Crosby | “Stay out of the forest!”: True Crime’s Ecohorror/Ecogothic Problem

The chapter titles of Georgia Hardstark and Karen Kilgariff’s bestselling memoir, *Stay Sexy and Don’t Get Murdered* (2019), repeat catchphrases from their hit true crime podcast, My Favorite Murder. These slogans tend to the imperative, offering women strong suggestions about how to avoid being murdered, such as “Fuck politeness” or “You’re in a cult, call your dad.” Generally good advice. However, one title stands out as more problematic: “Stay out of the forest” capitulates to ecophobia by once again singling out wild landscapes as spaces of deadly ecohorror/ecogothic that must be shunned—particularly by women. This reactionary move is disappointing and a bit surprising. Hardstark and Kilgariff are credited with helping transform true crime into a progressive, feminist genre, aimed at critiquing the toxic masculinity and structural sociopathy that enables violent oppression of women and other minorities. Ecofeminist scholars have long pointed out that this is the same entitled consuming of the “other” that is currently destroying our planetary ecosystems. Nonetheless, while the newest wave of true crime texts, inspired in part by My Favorite Murder, critiques social oppression, it struggles with its own unexamined ecophobia. And I do mean “struggles.” In subsequent podcast episodes, Hardstark and Kilgariff express discomfort with “stay out of the forest” and worry that it might be blaming natural spaces. Recent true crime texts have followed suit and begun to approach representation of the environment with more sensitivity or at least more ambivalence than the typical demonizing productions of yore. My presentation investigates true crime’s problematic ecophobic representations and the possibility that it is hosting an emergent ecofeminism that could push it beyond this outdated approach to ecohorror/ecogothic. Right now, true crime is a powerful tool of social change, and I ask: Can it use this power to combat our environmental emergency?

Anna Kirsch | The Emergence of Environmentalist and Ecological Crime Fiction: The Anthropocene as Popular Consciousness

This paper argues that there has been an emergence of environmentally concerned rhetoric in popular culture, specifically crime fiction. Further, it advances the claim that the environment and environmental conservation has attained cultural currency as a desirable identity in popular culture and has been inducted into the crime genre to lend critical respectability. Further, this paper argues for the emergence of two new sub-genres of crime fiction in popular culture: environmentalist and ecological. All crime fiction, indeed all fiction, is ecological in the most basic sense of the term. However, some crime novels are actively environmentalist focusing on crimes directly perpetrated upon the environment while others are infused with an ambivalent ecological sensibility where environmental activism is not integral to the plot’s resolution. While environmentalist novels are explicitly concerned with the environment and are easier to link to environmental activism and awareness, most crime novels unwittingly participate in ecological debate by depicting daily cultural, economic, and ecological engagements. In doing so, the conventions and expectations of genre fiction open up a liminal space for challenging discussions about social order and environmental justice, allowing readers to, potentially, conceptualize the global emergency represented by the Anthropocene’s slow violence. The paper does not rely on specific texts and authors to exemplify ecological cultural value. Instead, it appeals to the ubiquitous ecological nature of the crime genre. Using examples from environmentalist writers such as Carl Hiaasen, Dona Leon, and Tana French, to name but a few illustrative authors, the paper analyses texts for a collective representation of a popular ecological consciousness.

Nicholas Sabo | Travel and the Environment in Modernist and Contemporary Audio Horror

As humanity merges our technology into the environment, we merge and subject ourselves to the same technology. The ecological crises of the industrial revolution have accompanied a corresponding rise in
communication technology, with both changing what it means to be distanced from one another. From the early days of radio to the podcasts of today, audio technology has transformed the experience of travelling through landscapes. Radio and podcasts are both an important part of their respective moments, but both are deeply understudied as reactions to modernity, particularly in relation to environmental studies. This paper examines the shifting anxieties around travel in Orson Welles’ radio drama adaptation of Dracula and Joseph Fink’s podcast Alice Isn’t Dead, specifically the depiction of the landscape in audio horror. Gothic horror often literalizes its deeply resonant metaphors, mixing its people, places, and objects. Welles’ adaptation of Dracula in particular considers how all of these things can be transformed into reducible data, a problem which has only become more relevant since 1938. Alice Isn’t Dead translates the American road novel to serial audio horror, examining how travel and landscapes in America are policed, controlled, and neglected, despite an underlying promise of freedom. Both use simultaneously human and inhuman monsters which threaten to destroy, consume, and replace humanity by transforming environments and ecology on an informational level, especially through gendered violence. As new informational schemas arise and subsume both people and the environment, more research is needed into the patterns created by forms of media—both in how we consume them and how we are consumed by them.

Making Ecomedia

Isaac Rooks | Shifting Sands: Disney’s Mulan (2020), Xinjiang, and the Unanticipated Power of Location

Working at the intersection of industrial and cultural studies, this presentation analyzes the outcry in response to Disney’s Mulan shooting in Xinjiang. This case study raises questions about the indexical quality of environments on film, and the ways in which these environments can become central to ideological contests. Mulan was already set for controversy, based on Han supremacist messages within the narrative and provocative political statements by the film’s stars. However, following the film’s release, the strongest condemnations revolved around elements that are usually overlooked by audiences: establishing shots, title cards, and the end credits crawl. Like many Hollywood films, Mulan plays with location, filming primarily in New Zealand and in locations all across China. The intention was that these varied Chinese locations would provide a sense of authenticity, and would combine to evoke a timeless, generic, and mythic China that would fit the studio’s trademark fairytale and fantasy sensibility. However, the film’s Xinjiang location shots had an unexpected indexical quality and, for some viewers, they evoked a contemporary and unseen element: the Chinese government’s Uighur “re-education camps.” It was the latest development in the ongoing saga of the Xinjiang camps, a story in which technologies of seeing have been essential. The Chinese government denied the existence of these camps, and satellite footage helped expose what was meant to stay hidden. The Mulan case offers an example of how reality and fantasy clash in the modern media industry. Central to this story of activism and the political nature of popular art are visualized environments, and questions about how locations are framed and how people interpret the meaning of those framed environments. This presentation will give extended analysis to a recent, high-profile case of a desert that moved out of the background and became the unintended star of a blockbuster.

Stephen Rust | What Price Beauty? An Ecocritical Analysis of Merchant Ivory Productions

Director James Ivory, writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, and producer Ismail Merchant enjoyed the longest creative partnership in the history of motion pictures. Ivory, who is still making movies, became the oldest person to win an Academy Award for the adapted screenplay for Call Me By Your Name (2017). Using the James Ivory and Ruth Jhabvala Papers archived at the University of Oregon, I propose an ecocritical analysis of the company’s cine-ecological history—examining the ecological footprint of its production practices along with the textual landscapes and cultural impact of their films. Despite their esteemed place in film history and commitment to social justice, the company has also left a substantial ecological footprint. Production Studies
scholars have brought ecocritical attention to major film industries like Hollywood for their issues with pollution and waste but independent producers like MIP have yet to garner similar attention. MIP does not position itself as an environmentally-minded company and their films elude narrow definitions of green filmmaking or ecocinema. Yet the company’s ethos and the efficiency of their production practices may provide useful models for sustainably-minded filmmakers. Building on the work of production studies scholars like Nadia Bozak, Hunter Vaughan, Pietari Kääpä, Debashree Mukherjee, and Brian R. Jacobson, I position the materialist flow of Merchant Ivory Productions in relation to the infrastructures of Hollywood and read the content of their films against their ecological costs to help the next generation of filmmakers consider the cost they are willing to pay to create cinematic worlds of immense beauty.

Ryan Yang | Camera/Canvas/Chance: 24 Frames (2017) and the Essayistic Form of Natural Observation

Abbas Kiarostami decides to retain silent throughout his last feature film 24 Frames, thereby teaching the audience a lesson on the techné of observation, or more specifically, the art of looking at nature by way of the medium of film in its pure and essayistic form, as a medium of leisure and chance. As its title already discloses, the film is composed of twenty-four nonnarrative and CGI-animated paintings and photographs from Iran and other countries across the world, such that, together, they bring momentary vitality to the originally still imagery. In each of the roughly four-and-a-half-minute-long segments, Kiarostami makes it look as if the camera is fixed absolutely still and simply lets the represented animals and nonhuman objects freely move in and out of the frame for the purpose of— as is shown at the very beginning of the film— depicting the reality of the scene, while filling in imagined sequences of what might have happened before and after the shots. This essay, therefore, seeks to reflect upon Kiarostami’s cinematic experimentation; an experimentation that concerns the art forms of painting and film and renders the aesthetic quality of the canvas and the frame. I argue that 24 Frames can be understood as a dual project by Kiarostami that explores both the essayistic form of cinema and the optimal way to observe nature. Further, in light of Deleuze’s explications of Francis Bacon’s paintings, I go on to argue that 24 Frames serves as a lesson on spectatorship, such that the observation of nature has the most intensive quality when one waits till chance is in view.

Uncanny and Performance

Fereshteh Toosi | Oil Ancestors: Relating to Petroleum as Kin

This presentation is a brief introduction to my creative work Oil Ancestors, which is a series of interactive art and performance experiences about our entanglements with petroleum. The talk concludes with a reading of two poems from the Oil Ancestors project. Oil Ancestors is inspired by my experience as a first-generation immigrant of Iranian and Azeri heritage. Petroleum imperialism defines the relationship between my ancestral homeland and the US. The legacy of armed conflict and resource extraction also affects many countries that are represented among the immigrant diaspora in Miami, where the project is based. Furthermore, oil money funded the vacation fantasies that brought railroads to South Florida. Swampland and limestone were transformed under the cruel labor systems of convict leasing and debt bondage.

Kelly Richmond | Ghosts in the Gallery: Performing the Ecological Uncanny in The Anthropocene Project

The uncanny is “a crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was ‘part of nature’: one’s own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world” writes literary critic Nicholas Royle. Simultaneously referring to a striking embodied sensation, a mode of un/familiar critical analysis, and an excessively spectral and queer something-else-ness, uncanny phenomena beg for a consideration of their performative dimensions, especially in the face of such un/natural crises as COVID19, climate change, and the
Anthropocene. How does understanding the ecological uncanny as a performance phenomenon reveal the boundaries of the un/natural and in/human? Is the ecological uncanny a practice that can be intentionally used by artists to explore and expand these liminal thresholds in times of crisis? In this paper, I will turn my uncanny gaze toward Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier’s *The Anthropocene Project*, a multimedia multi-locational visual installation that debuted simultaneously at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa in September 2018, as an example encounter with ecological uncanny performance. I will unpack how a mix of affective cuing, phenomenological haunting, and environmental anchoring generate an uncanny and ritualistic experience for the spectator as they move through the installation gallery. By reading the installation as an ecological uncanny performance, I argue such performances conjure forth the un/natural and in/human ghosts with whom we must speculatively, spectrally, and spectacularly learn to intra-act.

**Eco-Play: Gaming & Environment**

**Nusrat Zahan Chowdhury | Digital Games as a Way of Reconsidering Care, Exploitation and Governance: An Ecocritical Analysis of *Plants Vs. Zombies* (2009)**

This paper examines the digital game *Plants Vs. Zombies* (2009) from an eco-critical perspective. In this paper, I explore how this game presents and represents nature through a critical, ecological, and biopolitical inquiry based on the game’s in-game environment, game mechanism, and the relationship between human and non-human agents. Drawing on the material feminist scholarship of Donna Haraway and Puig de la Bellacasa, this paper tries to look through the ethico-political notion of care and labor within the gameplay, and the instrumental relationship between the human player and the non-human natural world within the game environment. Following the eco-ethical analysis framework developed by Backe (2017), this paper argues that the game *Plants Vs. Zombies* (2009) complicates the politics of care between the human player and the in-game nonhuman agents by mobilizing care as a mask to veil the inherent anthropocentrism in the game. This paper also claims that by naturalizing the labor of care of the plants and other environmental elements, and by foregrounding a complex negotiation of care and exploitation, *Plants Vs. Zombies* (2009) warrants us to reconsider broader issues of neoliberal capitalism, biopolitical value and labor, and environmental ethics. Keeping in mind that the success of this strategy video game depends on the players’ strategic ability to manage natural and biological resources in the gameplay by commodifying ‘care’ itself, this paper also strives to foreground the notions of Foucauldian biopolitics and Achille Mbembe’ necropolitics through conceptualizing the game itself as a simulation of biopolitical governance and administration.

**Morgan Pinder | Embedded Eco-Narratives and the Last of Humanity in Post-Apocalyptic Video Games**

Since their inception, video games have imagined future spaces. Video games make it possible for the player, to not just envisage but explore, post-apocalyptic spaces through environmental storytelling and embedded narratives. These post-apocalyptic spaces are manifestations of contemporary anxieties, allowing the player to interpret the causal relationship between current practices and the collapse of social order and ecologies. Video games that explicitly engage with contemporary eco-anxieties utilise mechanics of exploration and discovery to craft narratives that both depict the destruction wrought by the Anthropocene, and help the player navigate the associated guilt and culpability. *The Aquatic Adventures of the Last Human* (YCJY) and *Some Distant Memory* (Galvanic Games) are independent games that deploy embedded narratives and storytelling artefacts to show the cause and effect of human violence and exploitation. The player is invited to explore spaces and find these narrative capsules that show the effect of our current practices on, not just the non-human ecology, but on the gradual extinction of humankind. One of the key differences between these shorter games and the big-budget title *Horizon Zero Dawn* (Guerrilla Games) is the foregrounding of embedded and environmental eco-narratives. *Horizon Zero Dawn’s* rich eco-narrative is often completely obscured by the
combat mechanics and storytelling, making the destruction of all life on Earth due to human hubris a secondary concern. *Some Distant Memory* and *Horizon Zero Dawn* offer humanity a second chance, a chance at redemption, through improbable and distinctly science-fiction mechanics. *The Aquatic Adventure of the Last Human* offers the player no such relief, providing an unflinching critique of the Anthropocentric exploitation of the environment, forcing the player to confront their violent behaviour in-game. These games provide a unique window into the power of embedded narratives to engage the video game consumer in critical ecological thinking.

**Victoria Googasian | Games, Play, and Planetary Fictions**

Thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Timothy Morton, and Dominic Boyer have recently called for political responses to environmental emergency that displace the high seriousness of revolutionary politics with playful affects and ludic forms. But these calls also distinguish the playfulness they advocate from the contemporary fad for gamification, which risks, as Boyer puts it, “giving oneself over to the capitalist economy of pleasure....all the better to consign potentially threatening ideas to the domain of leisure time.” This distinction between ludic insurgency and the quietist modalities of gamification begs further consideration: which features of play experiences position them as either structures for facilitating ludic experimentation, or, conversely, as forms of social control that neutralize the radical possibilities of crisis? My talk will address this question by considering two literary texts that depict games as potential solutions to environmental emergencies. Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Green Mars* (1993) and Richard Powers’s *The Overstory* (2018) were published a quarter of a century apart and have correspondingly divergent visions of play as crisis response. In both novels, eccentric West Coast tech entrepreneurs use games to generate political responses to planetary emergencies. But while the more recent text imagines gaming as a route to planetary consciousness, the earlier novel depicts games as dangerous abstractions from concrete reality. Taken together, the two texts underline a shared anxiety that unites planetary games with planetary fictions. When they address environmental crisis, both games and novels worry about their respective modes of realism and abstraction. I argue that in these novels, planetary games serve as offsites for a set of metafictional fears and desires linked to the analytic of play. Planetary games figure the utopian ludic freedoms that these novels fail to achieve, as well as the bad abstraction from the realities of our environmental present that they seek to avoid.

**Comics & Graphic Narrative**

**Victor Taku | Process Drama and Protection of Wildlife: Adapting “The Death of Mr Leopard” from Tale into Comic Strips**

Adapting and transforming the oral tale renders it more useful and valuable to new and modern outlets of information and entertainment. This paper reveals the pedagogic, moral and environmental relevance of Process Drama in environmental protection and forest degradation. Focus will be on the process of adapting The Death of Mr Leopard from Tale into comic strips in a formal learning setting with the contribution of the teacher, playing the role of adapting artist and learners playing the role the audience. With the aid of creativity guided by the tenets of adaptation, we will discover how the birth of a new tale contributes positively towards the eradication of poaching which in the fight against forest and environmental protection. With the aid of creativity guided by the tenets of adaptation the teacher and learners are able to transform the original tale that witnessed the Death of Mr Leopard to a new tale wherein his life is protected. In this vein we will see how aspects such as title, setting, plot, characterisation, dialogue and structure are blended with the aid of drawings, panels, and scene descriptions in the process of transformation. The paper reveals the pedagogic and moral relevance of adaptation in addressing issues of local and more global appeal.
Marvel’s highly anticipated 2019 relaunch of the *X-Men* line under the creative direction of Jonathan Hickman opened up opportunities for greater presence of relational ecology in popular imagination. The main premise of the books, established in 2019’s *House of X* and *Powers of X*, establishes the sentient mutant island of Krakoa as home to all mutants, sidelining the usual dynamic of *X-Men* comics in which the survival of the mutant race in the world of hateful humans was the main concern and in which sense of kinship with the humans or lack thereof were the primary constitutive factor for mutant identity. The new status quo, while not abandoning these thematic concerns altogether, imagines a mutant society that forgoes villainizing other mutants and foregrounds the importance of mutants’ relationship to the land of Krakoa as the primary guarantor of their security and, consequently, their survival. This seemingly ecologically conscious premise, reinforced by the notable presence of relational and indigenous philosophies in the worldviews of certain non-White and/or Indigenous characters (such as Storm and Manifold) in some of the X-titles, is, however, complicated by the creators’ insistence to complicate the utopian character of the mutants’ new reality by, for instance, having the security of Krakoa rely on black ops (as is the premise of the X-Force series) or constantly teasing that the formerly villainous characters will eventually turn against their fellow Krakoans, because their propensity for evil is stronger than their care for the survival of mutantdom. In this presentation I aim to analyze these tensions in Marvel’s Hickman-led mutant ecotopia and try to speculate whether the publisher’s corporate environment is able to produce a series of books that would effectively respond to the current need to reconceptualize our relationship to the world and to each other.


With the river Yamuna drying up due to scanty rainfall, and the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) issuing repeated alarms on Water Shortage due to the closure of Nangal Hydel Channel, the National Capital of India, stands staring at summer, escorted by unprecedented water scarcity. As Ecological consciousness, prevailing in the literary and visual aesthetics, has been summombonum for many writers and artisans since ages, this “Delhi dearth”, finds a pictorial representation in Sarnath Banerjee’s speculative graphic novel, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2015), which depicts a water-less Delhi, where taps have run dry and scarcity compels one of the characters-Girish, the Psychic Plumber-to dig deep into the Earth in search of the “Mythical Saraswati- The Lost River of the Indian Desert”, which the residents believe, can put an end to the water scarcity. This article is a humble attempt to emphasize that *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2015), through its remarkable graphic visuals, coupled with a fictional narrative, harnesses the transformative potential of ecologically charged Popular Culture mediums, particularly Speculative Ecomedia, to highlight as well as cater to this ever-so-real issue of Ground Water depletion and Contamination, leading to severe water scarcity in India. Further, the article highlights that *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* is an evident manifesto of the dangers of the Anthropocene, where Water crisis, if not paid immediate attention, can transform into “water wars”- represented in the novel through a dismaying depiction of the areas of Delhi in conflict with one another. Not only does the narrative represent an Eco-dystopian future, it also highlights the nuances that mushroom this crisis- Climate Change arising from the anthropogenic greed, blind industrialisation and Capitalism in the name of “Vikas” (development), disregard for the Earth and its resources, socio-political slow-violence rendered to the Environment, Short-termism and the lack of media engagement with the Environmental issues.
Animated Potentialities

Sayantani Sengupta | Anime and Ecocriticism: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Shinkai’s The Garden of Words and Weathering With You

Nature has been the pivotal theme in most of the anime films by Makoto Shinkai, the acclaimed Japanese animator. On the one hand, he has successfully portrayed nature as a healer of an aching soul, in The Garden of Words. However, on the other hand, he has also emphasized on nature as a dangerous beauty, focusing on issues of climate change and its consequences in his most recent cinematic text, Weathering with You. This article proposes to explore the power and importance of nature in these two urbanized cinematic texts. Nature has been the crux in the Studio Ghibli productions of Hayao Miyazaki as well. However, it is mostly the arcadic countryside which has been highlighted in those productions. In Shinkai’s The Garden of Words, rain unites two lonely individuals in the city, and motivates them to find happiness. In the latter, continuous downpour creates a disaster and poses a challenge of obliteration to the city of Tokyo. Furthermore, the article also plans to critically read the lead female characters as possible manifestations of ecofeminist embodiments. Yukari from The Garden of Words possibly suffers from social anxiety, and finds comfort in the chrysalis of rain that creates a safe space. But Hina from Weathering with You is called the “sunshine girl”, who uses her unique gift of controlling weather to bring joy to her fellow members of humanity. Whether a behavioural disposition of a phobia or a philia, both Yukari and Hina are inextricably tied to nature. Through a contrast between the two anime films in regards to the impact of nature on people, the article plans to analyze the ecocritical concerns which might be embodied in these texts.

Guillermo Guadarrama Mendoza | An Ecological Messiah?: Reading Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind Through the Theory of the Marvelous and Timothy Morton’s Concept of Agrilogistics

This conference explores Hayao Miyazaki’s film Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind from the perspective of Timothy Morton’s dark ecology, specifically through the concept of agrilogistics, as well as from Omar Nieto and Juan Pablo Morales Trigueros’ theories of the fantastic and the marvelous literatures. While a synthesis of these two theories enables a deep comprehension of how the human and non-human worlds are codified in the film’s narrative, Morton’s dark ecology allows us to read such worlds from an ecocritical perspective. Miyazaki’s world-famous anime film has been often read as a pro-environmentalist narrative as the main character Nausicaä achieves the reconciliation between the human world represented by the Valley of the Wind, and the non-human world represented by the toxic fukai. However, this conference explores whether the film actually presents an ecological alternative of coexistence between humans and non-humans, or if it rather represents a reestablishment of the human normal world, maintaining thus the boundaries between them. First a theory of the marvelous as a textual system is developed departing from Nieto’s general theory of the fantastic and Morales Trigueros’ category of the marvelous. Then, this theory is deployed to analyze the way in which the ordinary and the extraordinary are codified in the film. Afterwards, Morton’s dark ecology concepts associated to agrilogistics are applied to develop an ecocritical analysis. In the last section, conclusions are presented.