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## Nuclear Storytelling: Through Literary Figurations to Nuclear Literacy

Sukhenko, Inna

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Humanities for the Anthropocene (July 2021)  
Abstract Book and Participant Bios



# HUMANITIES FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE

Values, Principles, and Practices

7–10 July 2021

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Alaniz, José. “Comics of the Anthropocene: Graphic Narrative at the ‘End’ of Nature.”

In Marvel Comics’ “Exodus,” published in *Fantastic Four* Vol. 1, No. 240 (Mar. 1982) with story and art by John Byrne, air pollution drives the mutated Inhumans to seek refuge off-Earth. With the assistance of the Fantastic Four, the Inhumans’ city of Attilan levitates free of its secret Himalayan location and out to open space. Safely landed on the environmentally pure “blue area” of the moon, the Inhumans enjoy a new lease on life. With its Biblical references to the flood story and Exodus, as well as the troubling “white savior” implications of Fantastic Four leader Reed Richards’ intervention in the mutants’ destiny, Byrne’s eco-parable reflects Reagan-era concerns over air quality, environmental justice, and the vulnerable position of indigenous populations in a changing planet.

As shown by this example, comic art has a long history of addressing the environmental crisis. Weaving together insights from Critical Animal Studies, Environmental Humanities, Comics Studies and Affect Studies, my monograph-in-progress *Comics of the Anthropocene: Graphic Narrative at the ‘End’ of Nature* investigates such representations of animals, mass extinctions and climate change in (mostly) US comics, primarily since 1970. How have artists dealt with the human-caused destruction of the natural world in graphic narrative, how do these representations manifest in different genres (superheroes, biography, underground comix, journalism), and what resources unique to the comics medium do they bring to their tasks? How do these works resonate with the ethical and environmental issues raised by global conversations about the anthropogenic sixth mass extinction and climate change? Animated by these questions, the study aims to break new ground through an examination of how graphic narrative has uniquely depicted the Anthropocene since the first Earth Day in 1970.

**Bio:** José Alaniz is a professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Department of Comparative Literature (adjunct) at the University of Washington, Seattle, and has published two monographs, *Komiks: Comic Art in Russia* (University Press of Mississippi, 2010) and *Death, Disability and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond* (UPM, 2014); and two co-edited collections, *Comics of the New Europe: Reflections and Intersections* (with Martha Kuhlman, Leuven University Press, 2020) and *Uncanny Bodies: Disability and Superhero Comics* (with Scott T. Smith, Penn State University Press, 2019). In 2020, he published his first comics collection, *The Phantom Zone and Other Stories* (Amatl Comix). His comics have also appeared in *Seattle Weekly*, *Tales From La Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology* and *BorderX: A Crisis in Graphic Detail*.

Albrecht, Monika. “The Anthropocene and Population Growth from the Perspective of Critical Post-Colonial Studies.”

Humans have become a “geological force” [1] not least due to the rapid population growth especially since the 1950s, the detrimental consequences of which, for instance for biodiversity and the environment, are well known. Over the last decades, however, population growth has become a matter of “neglectful concern” [2] and nowadays even

UN reports speak of the “inevitability” [3] of population growth. As a result of narratives that equate population policy with coercive measures, those who raise the matter are often suspect “not only of moral callousness, but also of racism and neo-colonialism.” [4]

There were, of course, good reasons for the critique of population policies and there is certainly no way back beyond the standards of women's rights and reproductive health achieved since about the 1990s. It is also widely agreed on “that entering into a population policy discussion” risks blaming “the poor countries for problems created by the rich countries.” [5] Yet numbers *do* matter and the denial of confrontation of the subject is in danger of “foisting the large costs and impacts” of the population growth “onto future generations.” [6] The proposed paper will thus—from the perspective of *Critical Post-Colonial Studies* [7]—suggest that Humanities *for* the Anthropocene should include taking up the old question of human population growth again. In so doing, however, arguments from earlier controversies need to be readjusted and questions about their current relevance must be posed afresh—“taking into account the unprecedented biophysical circumstances, altered geopolitical relationships and novel discursive resources of the twenty-first century.” [8]

[1] Paul J. Crutzen: Geology of Mankind. In: *Nature* 415 (2002): 23.

[2] Diana Coole: Too many bodies? The return and disavowal of the population question. In: *Environmental Politics* 22:2 (2013): 195–215, 211.

[3] United Nations Environment Programme: *GEO-6: Global Environment Outlook: Healthy Planet, Healthy People*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2019.

[4] Hannes Bergthaller: Malthusian Biopolitics, Ecological Immunity, and the Anthropocene. In: *Econozon@. European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* 9:1 (2018): 37–52, 44.

[5] John Bongaarts and Brian C. O'Neill: Global warming policy: is population left out in the cold? In: *Science* 361:6403 (2018): 650–652, 652.

[6] Timothy Clark: “But the real problem is...”: The Chameleonic Insidiousness of “Overpopulation” in the Environmental Humanities. In: *Oxford Literary Review* 38:1 (2016): 7–26, 12.

[7] Monika Albrecht: Critical Post-Colonial Studies: Opening-up the Post-Colonial to a Broader Geopolitical View. In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford University Press 2021 (in copy-editing process); see also Monika Albrecht: Postcolonialism Cross-Examined: Multidirectional Perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts, and the Neocolonial Present. In *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined: Multidirectional Perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts and the Neocolonial Present*, edited by Monika Albrecht. London, NY: Routledge 2020, 1–47.

[8] Diana Coole: *Should We Control World Population?* Cambridge: Polity 2018, 3.

**Bio:** Since the fall of 2013 at the University of Vechta, Cultural Studies (*Kulturwissenschaften*), previously positions at the University of Nottingham, UK, the University of Limerick, Ireland, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. Research fields include German culture, history, politics, and literature 20th and 21st century, in particular: *Critical Post-Colonial Studies*; memory studies and the politics of memory; multiculturalism and postcolonialism in comparative

perspective; history, memory and minorities in literature; Ingeborg Bachmann (co-editor of the critical edition of the *Todesarten* prose, *Critical Writings*, and *Bachmann-Handbuch*, 2020). Director of DAAD projects “University Collaboration with Greece” (2017–2019) and “Academic Dialog with Southern Europe” (2021).

Altpeter, Katja. “German Studies in Service of Environmental Activism.”

Climate change is arguably one of the greatest challenges currently threatening the global community and global ecosystems. Yet, nobody panics. Or at least: very few people panic. This is perhaps not altogether surprising: after all, our livelihoods, habits, and comforts all contribute in significant ways to climate change. And the global systems of (dubious) stability we count on—the global economy, the coherence of nation states, etc.—are in their current form thinkable and sustainable only in a system that relies (among other things) on the availability of fossil fuels that feed a global machinery of growth.

More surprising to me is the fact that my students are not panicking. At Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, I teach a lively group of engaged young individuals: advocates for social justice, equity and inclusion, students who readily voice their opinions and organize symposia, sit-ins, and protests. The college has a successful Environmental Studies program which hosts an annual symposium, faculty outside of ENVS who teach on environmental topics and activism, a SEED Club, and a school-wide Sustainability Council. In 2015, Lewis and Clark earned the top spot in *The Princeton Review*'s ranking of the 353 most environmentally responsible colleges and universities. And yet, nobody on campus panics. Not our students, and not our faculty and staff either.

My contribution to the Humanities for the Anthropocene workshop will tell the story of how this professor has begun to address the issue of nonchalance in the face of catastrophic climate change through the redesign of her German courses. My redesigned courses are traditional in some respects: they examine German literature and film and German responses to environmental challenges. The dare and experiment come into play in the courses' methodology which seeks to address two significant stumbling blocks that stifle action: skepticism towards activist teaching and learning; and skepticism towards the relevance of teaching and learning based on personal experience and sensual (i.e., senses-related) production of knowledge.

“Think we must. We must think,” writes Donna Haraway in “Staying with the Trouble” (34). [1] My redesigned German courses seek to expand on this exhortation: “Think we must. We must think. Act we must also. We must act.” Through sympoietic classroom practices of joint inquiry, knowledge production, and public action that practice and perform a “feminist collective thinking-with” (61, fn. 3), my courses seek to encourage, in Haraway's words, “attentive practices of thought, love, rage and care” (9). As I continue to tweak my courses, I ponder the benefits, challenges, and shortfalls of engaged knowledge production that focuses on empathy versus a model of detached inquiry. I would like to bring these musings to the workshop.



## Humanities for the Anthropocene (July 2021)

[1] Haraway, Donna J. "Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene." *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Ed. Jason W. Moore. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016. 34–76.

**Bio:** Katja Altpeter is an associate professor of German Studies at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR. Trained as a medievalist, she teaches German language, literature, and culture classes on medieval German literature and culture, fairy tales, migration, questions of gender, and, more recently, the relationship between humans, animals, and nature. Over the last five years, Katja has reoriented herself from being a medievalist to being more fully engaged in the environmental humanities. She teaches many classes related to this new interest. She has also held the position of Coordinator for Sustainability and Curriculum at Lewis & Clark over the last four years. As part of that function, she has spearheaded several curricular initiatives related to sustainability. In 2022 she will lead a sustainability-focused overseas program in Thailand. She is currently finishing a translation of the German novel *Mal Aria* by Carmen Stephan, a book that examines the intertwined existence of a young woman named Carmen and the mosquito whose bite infects Carmen with malaria.

Alvizu, Josh. "Paul Scheerbart and the Coming Recyclo-Poetics."

In 1913, the forgotten writer Paul Scheerbart published *Lesabéndio*, a work of fiction from another galaxy. A quick glance at the plot of this hallucinogenic "asteroid novel"—wherein the eponymous suction-footed hero, an imaginative ecologist with dreams of architectural harmony and grandeur, decides to build an enormous glass tower to connect his planet Pallas' to its double star— one might be surprised to learn of the profound effect it had on the political thinking of Walter Benjamin, who went so far as to suggest that Scheerbart can be read as a predecessor to Bertolt Brecht. Indeed, in Scheerbart's phantasmagorical vision of technological, biological, and cosmological recycling, dying entities are blended into healthy ones, souls become stars, and planets become buildings. The Expressionist correlate to Niels Bohr's claim that "isolated material particles are abstractions," Scheerbart's novel is an early exploration of the quantum theoretical and ecological concept of "interconnectedness" (Tim Morton), the "sly solidarity between things" (Sartre), in which subjectivity is recognized as merely another form of ecological object-hood.

In this sense, recycling can be read not merely voluntary eco-friendly subjective act, but as an inherent operational mode of objects, wherein atoms, elements, and bodies slip into and out of one another in a viscous mesh that the fields of quantum and ecocritical theory attempt in their respective ways to think. The politics of recycling, I hope to then show, is of an ineluctably geological and cosmological mode, recognizant of the fact that humanity has become a legitimate agent of geo-physical change. Aesthetically, earlier interventionist materialist practices such as montage and gleaning offer cursory blueprints for what might one day be better known as a "recyclo-poetics."

**Bio:** Josh Alvizu is Assistant Professor of German and the Environmental Humanities at the University of Maryland, College Park. He has also taught at Washington and Lee

University, Virginia Tech, Roanoke College and Yale University, where he completed his Ph.D. in 2017. His research and teaching engage broadly with German modernism in its comparative, intermedial, and ecological contexts. Currently, he is working on a book manuscript tentatively titled “Montage Practice: Militant Modernism and the German-Soviet Avant-garde.”

Arnott, Jeremy. “Ecology *with* Nature: German Idealism and Climate Crisis.”

This presentation will argue that the philosophies of nature within German Idealism—particularly the *Naturphilosophie* of G. W. F. Hegel and F. W. J. Schelling—provide valuable thought models through which to (re-)conceptualize human relations with the natural world, while responding meaningfully to our current climate crisis. In the Anglo-philosophical sphere, few intellectual movements have been so summarily dismissed as German Idealism, which is generally straw-manned as some mystical relapse to dogmatic metaphysics, containing little of philosophical or political value. Against such assertions, I will argue that inter-disciplinary models through which Schelling and Hegel theorize nature are uniquely efficacious in the age of the Anthropocene. Specifically, their refusal of any sharp distinction between the philosophy (or the humanities) and the physical sciences, along with their invitation for thought to immanently collaborate with natural processes, are extremely relevant for the contemporary humanities.

Beginning with Schelling, I will articulate the main contours of his *Naturphilosophie*, which presents the “ur-productivity,” or “groundless ground” of nature as an “indivisible remainder,” which continually contests the stability of thought. With Hegel, I will take up his (heavily under theorized) *Philosophy of Nature* and examine the fraught dynamism within the text, as “spirit” (or philosophy) attempts to come to terms with the vast array of detail that is the natural world. I will also explore the importance of organic metaphors for the Hegelian project as a whole, examining the extent to which his thinking provides a new “organic” paradigm for thought. In conclusion, I will bring Hegel and Schelling into conversation with contemporary ecology and philosophies of nature, so as to open out to a broader conversation regarding the humanities for the age of the Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Jeremy Arnott (he/him) is a Ph.D. candidate at the Centre for Theory and Criticism at Western University, Canada. His research examines the Frankfurt School (particularly Benjamin and Adorno) in relation to German Idealism. He is also interested in questions of ecology and contemporary philosophies of nature.

Azou, Jente. “The Field Novel as Literature for the Anthropocene.”

The introduction of the concept of the Anthropocene into the humanities raises questions about the implications of this notion for literary studies. The term reminds us of the inextricable links between human and non-human elements, moreover, it blurs the distinction between these two (Vermeulen).

The German author and translator Esther Kinsky engages with this challenge of the Anthropocene in her literary work. She defines her most recent novel, *Hain* (2018), as a *Geländeroman* [1]—which is also the subtitle of the novel. In an interview, the author motivates her decision by claiming a *Gelände* is undetermined, without distinguishable elements (Winkels & Ellmenreich). Neither human nor non-human elements dominate the *Gelände*, the field is rather a fusion of both, in which the separate elements are not detectable as such. Kinsky opposes *Gelände* to the heavily connoted notion of “landscape”—doubtlessly referring to her literary predecessors in German Romanticism.

In my research, I want to refine the definition as well as examine the implications of the *Geländeroman*. Kinsky arguably proposes a new genre or mode that might prove to be an apt form of literature to engage with the Anthropocene. It urges to reconsider notions such as landscape, “nature writing” and the “pastoral” in literature, and questions in which ways the *Geländeroman* deviates from these forms of literature.

[1] The novel has been translated as *Grove: A Field Novel* (2020).

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Hubert Winkels und Maja Ellmenreich: *Literatur ausgezeichnet. Die Preisträger der Leipziger Buchmesse 2018*. Deutschlandfunk.

Kinsky, Esther: *Hain. Geländeroman*. Berlin: Suhrkamp 2018.

Vermeulen, Pieter: *Literature and the Anthropocene*. London: Routledge 2020.

**Bio:** Jente Azou (UGent) studied German and English literature and linguistics at Ghent University and Goethe Universität (Frankfurt). She finished her thesis on memory processes in the work of W. G. Sebald and Esther Kinsky. Her research interests are memory studies and ecocriticism.

[Baer, Hester. “Cinema Studies for the Anthropocene: The Aesthetics and Politics of Transnational Ecocinema”](#)

Recent work in cinema studies has asserted a unique kinship between film and the Anthropocene. Insofar as film history runs parallel to the era of anthropogenic climate change, films operate as seismographs of—even witnesses to—the emergence of a new geologic epoch. Accordingly, “the history of film and the history of climate become explicable in terms of one another,” as the editors of a recent focus section of the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* put it (2019). Environmental approaches offer a new lens for reconceptualizing film theory, technology, and representation; at the same time, cinema studies may be especially well suited to addressing environmental crisis because of its longstanding attention to denaturalizing, human-centered forms of world making. Yet even as cinema studies turns toward the ecological, it has held fast to conventional logics, including the nation-state framework and the arthouse/popular divide, that

continue to shape disciplinary inquiry, institutional formations, and pedagogy. Building on work begun in my book *German Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism* (2021), which develops new theoretical and methodological approaches to film at a contemporary moment in which traditional conceptions of aesthetics and politics no longer obtain, my new project aims to rethink such conceptions in the context of transnational ecocinema, with a special focus on the ways that gender, race, and class figure in the cultural work ecocinematic films perform. Participation in the workshop will enable me to incubate this work in progress in a collaborative context that is crucial for my aim to unsettle received scholarly practices in order to find new ways of thinking cinema studies for the Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Hester Baer is associate professor of German and cinema and media studies at the University of Maryland, where she also serves as a core faculty member in the comparative literature program. Her research and teaching focus on gender and sexuality in film and media, historical and contemporary feminisms, German literature, and culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and environmental humanities. Baer is the author of *German Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism* (2021) and *Dismantling the Dream Factory: Gender, German Cinema, and the Postwar Quest for a New Film Language* (2009). Her current projects include a co-edited volume with Michele M. Mason, *Nuclear Futures in the Post-Fukushima Age* (under contract with West Virginia UP, Energy and Society series) and a monograph on West Germany's first feminist film, Ula Stöckl's *The Cat Has Nine Lives* (1968). Baer currently serves as co-editor of the journal *Feminist German Studies*.

Bannikoff, Sandra. "Teaching Practices to End the Anthropocene, or, Lyric Philosophy in the Classroom."

When was the last time you heard someone say they wanted to be wise? My grand proposal to usher us out of the Anthropocene is to return the search for wisdom to the centre of philosophy. I propose to lead a discussion on teaching strategies that stretch beyond canons and help prepare our students for the work ahead. To frame the discussion, I will review the practice I have developed and explain how it derives from lyric philosophy.

Wisdom about human life is possible to acquire, but not without studying humanity. So, I make room in my classes for intellectual anthropology. In a weekly slide show titled "make this young people voice loud," [1] I present current events. This invites students to see outside of their academic silos, cultivates a sense of the interconnectedness of things, and opens my classroom to other voices, which is a necessary condition for indigenization and anti-racism.

Mainly, I hope the practice fosters trust. The climate crisis is causing not only fear, but also economic and political crises. The reason actors intent upon upholding the status quo (or ushering in authoritarianism) plant conspiracy theories is they know that trust is essential to democracy. It is also constitutive of wisdom. I hope that demonstrating the value of journalism fosters trust in reality, highlighting instances of courage, invention, and

creativity fosters trust in humanity, and that gaining knowledge of the world serves to strengthen students' trust in themselves.

I'm interested in feedback from other workshop participants on the pedagogical practices I've developed and learning about other techniques outside of business-as-usual that people are developing to instill wisdom and trust in ourselves and our students.

[1] CBC Radio, 2011, an "Occupy" protester somewhere in Europe

**Bio:** Education: B.A., with distinction, University of Victoria, 1999 (Honours Philosophy and Anthropology) M.A., Dalhousie University, 2001. Teaching: Camosun College, Philosophy Instructor, 2012 to present.

### Brewer, Michelle. "Ecofeminism: Homo Faber, Homo Pater?"

Ecofeminism's basic tenet is a connection between the subordination and oppression of women and the exploitation and degradation of the natural world. Both have often been connected to the life-sustaining, bountiful mother, either as the maternal body or mother nature. The natural world is interchange with term "the environment." What I argue is that the mother's body is also a resource-rich, complex, overpowering environment. I explore the parallels in the concept of male ownership of property in terms of both these environments, especially vis-a-vis fatherhood. First, I turn to Janell Watson's "Mother Earth, Mother City: Abjection and the Anthropocene" who claims that "Maternity...lies at the heart of the problematic of the Anthropocene" (273). She brings together Kristeva's concept of abject in the form of waste and Serre's womb (first habitat) and pollution to argue that polluting is a form of property appropriation in terms of waste products related to resource extraction from the natural environment and in terms of semen, men's impregnation of women, as a gesture of ownership. The original meaning of pollution was ejaculation. (276) Second, I make an argument that the transition of kinships structures from matrilineage to patrilineage, where children were born of their mother but assigned to a "father" is a primordial resource extraction from the maternal environment that sets a pattern for later resource extraction from the natural environment. The gesture gives social title of children to the father. Here I borrow from Nancy Jay and Mary O'Brien.

#### Works Cited:

Watson, Janell. "Mother Earth, Mother City: Abjection and the Anthropocene." *philoSOPHIA* 5.2, 2015, pp. 269–285.

**Bio:** Michelle Brewer is an interdisciplinary Ph.D. candidate at the University of Victoria, with her home in the Department of Germanic Studies. For her dissertation research, she is undertaking a feminist critique of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through the concept of nature. Michelle has an M.A. in philosophy and women's studies from Trinity College Dublin and a B.A. in philosophy from the University

of Alberta. With a passion for social justice, she is a founder and former executive director of Women's March Canada.

Chiafele, Anna. "A Deadly Pandemic Prior to COVID-19."

Niccolò Ammaniti's *Anna* (2015) takes place in Sicily in 2020. The novel narrates the story of a young girl, Anna, and her brother Astor. This eerie premonitory narration unfolds in the aftermath of a deadly pandemic. Anna and Astor have lost their parents due to a virus that originated in Belgium. This unknown virus kills adults and most human beings above the age of 14. Anna and Astor are trying to survive in a barren Sicilian wasteland; through several adventures, they reach the continent hoping to find a better place. In this essay, I want to offer an ecocritical reading of Ammaniti's novel, where humans appear to be "entangled beings" within a larger and delicate ecosystem. Readers are faced with a peculiar Sicilian wasteland that mingles the traits of ancient times with the signs of a failed capitalist society. In a post petroleum Sicily, readers are forced to "walk slowly" following the footsteps of the main protagonists and their dog. Through a forced slower pace, readers are encouraged to perceive elemental entanglements and to surpass obsolete dichotomies such as culture/nature, human/non-human. Above all, in this slow progression towards the Strait of Messina, readers start to question the achievements of capitalism and therefore of the Western world.

**Bio:** Anna Chiafele is an Associate Professor of Italian Studies at Auburn University, in Alabama. Chiafele has published scholarly articles on Italian writers, such as Luigi Malerba, Massimo Carlotto, Elisabetta Bucciarelli, Ugo Riccarelli, and Antonio Scurati. Her articles have appeared in *Italica*, *Quaderni di Italianistica*, *Rivista di Studi Italiani* and *Ecozon@*. Her monograph *Sfumature di giallo nell'opera di Luigi Malerba* was published by Rubbettino in 2016. Her most recent interests focus on Italian climate fiction in conjunction with material ecocriticism. Together with Canadian writer Lisa Pike, Chiafele has published the translation of three short stories by Luigi Malerba: "La Coda" in *Columbia Journal*, Columbia University, "Anche Dio è mancino" in the *Journal of Italian Translation*, and "Enciclopedia" in *Delos. A Journal of Translation and World Literature*.

Dalsheim, Joyce. "Writing for the Anthropocene."

Good literature can move people to understand what seems distant or abstract. For several years I have been teaching a slow reading course on Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, a novel that illuminates life in the Anthropocene by examining human connectedness to the world of trees. Evoking a visceral sense of environmental dependence and damage, it is less successful in demonstrating the relationship of the climate crisis to other systems such as capitalism, colonialism, and racism. Anna Tsing's ethnography *The Mushroom at the End of the World* is another attempt to describe environmental degradation for a broad audience. Tsing demonstrates the complex necessity of thinking and acting otherwise but is less successful in communicating a visceral sense of urgency. Based on such approaches

to the power of storytelling, I am beginning to craft my own ethnographic writing for the Anthropocene. Vignettes from my fieldwork on nationalism, religion, and conflict in Israel/Palestine reveal broader elements of post-Anthropocene life, as when the borderless migration of birds into conflict-torn regions shifts our perspective away from anthropocentrism. Part of this project involves rethinking the temporality of settler-colonial structures and decolonization. My goal is to find ways to write that help people *sense* our connectedness and think about how to live in what Anna Tsing calls “the ruins” of capitalism, while finding a balance that communicates urgency without fear or panic. I would like to share some of my writing-in-progress at this workshop.

**Bio:** Joyce Dalsheim is a cultural anthropologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Global Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her work focusses on questions of identity and conflict, religion and the secular, nationalism, citizenship, sovereignty, and colonialism. She has carried out extensive fieldwork in Israel/Palestine and has authored three books based on that research: *Israel Has a Jewish Problem: Self-Determination as Self Elimination* (Oxford 2019), *Producing Spoilers: Peacemaking and the Production of Enmity in a Secular Age* (Oxford 2014) and *Unsettling Gaza: Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project* (Oxford 2011). She held a Luce/ACLS Fellowship in Religion, Journalism, and International Affairs in 2019 in residence at Northwestern University. She recently co-edited a brief volume on *The Jewish Question Again* (2020, Prickly Paradigm) and written two co-authored pieces based on fieldwork at the January 6 Capitol insurrection in Washington (forthcoming).

Dare, Alexa & Sarah Weiger. “Entangled Pedagogy: Humanities for the Anthropocene.”

The confluence and climax of climate change, COVID-19, and the fight for racial justice in 2020 is a crisis to which the humanities is uniquely positioned to respond. Ecofeminists and scholars of the “posthumanities,” in particular, are enabling a displacement of the anthropocentrism of the traditional humanities to highlight the existence and experiences of all those formerly considered less-than or other-than human: women, racial minorities, nonhuman animals, complex agential networks, nature-cultures, and even technologies. The goal of our project is to draw from new materialist, posthumanist, and feminist theories to argue for an “entangled” pedagogy that, in decentering the individualist human, offers a vision of disciplinary collaboration in the environmental humanities and in environmental studies programs. Through this project we hope to shape a pedagogy that, in its feminist values, confronts the way in which many mainstream environmental studies programs have failed to prepare students who are not just technically competent, but also ready to act with urgency and humility. We will focus on principles that help students see themselves as entangled with nonhumans, and develop practices that are tuned to the implications of this entanglement and the transformative potential of imaginative, ethical activism.

**Bios:** Alexa Dare is an Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Portland where she also directs the Social Justice minor. She works and teaches at the intersection(s) of Cultural Studies and Environmental Communication and is guided by an overarching interest in materiality and embodiment, especially in the context of protest and activism.

## Humanities for the Anthropocene (July 2021)

Much of her recent research examines questions related to interspecies solidarity and human-nonhuman relations. She is the co-editor (with Vail Fletcher) of the book, *Intimate Relations: Communicating (in) the Anthropocene*.

Sarah Weiger is an Associate Professor of English and Environmental Studies at the University of Portland, where she teaches courses in Environmental Literature and Posthumanism, as well as introductory courses in writing and environmental studies. Her research focuses on 19th century literature, natural history, phenology, and climate change. Most recently, she co-wrote (with Allie Hill) “Remaking Relationships: Renewing the College Family Course through Collaborative, Feminist Pedagogy” for the journal *Pedagogy*.

### Esleben, Joerg. “Brechtian Appropriations in Ecocritical Theatre Productions.”

As my contribution to the workshop, I would like to continue my work on explicit and implicit appropriations of Bertolt Brecht’s works and ideas in contemporary ecocritical theatre productions, and possibly widen it beyond a focus on Canadian theatre. I will continue to analyze the productions *Nuclear Sky* (Montreal 2015) and *The Pipeline Project* (Vancouver 2017) and will identify further ecocritical productions from Canada or elsewhere that use Brechtian texts or ideas. I will analyze this corpus of productions through the lens of the concept of ecodramaturgy, in order to identify the roles Brechtian *appropriations* play in the conceptions and elaborations of these projects and to determine how and with what effects these appropriations interact with specific cultural and political contexts (ranging from local and Canadian or other national contexts to transnational and intercultural ones) in performing ecocriticism.

**Bio:** Associate Professor in Modern Languages and Literatures and in Theatre at the University of Ottawa. His research interests include Intercultural Studies, Cultural relations between Germany and India, Intercultural Theatre, and Travel literature.

### Evjen, John. “Ecological Dasein: Alternative Kinships in Modern German Fiction.”

German ecocriticism has often stressed the importance of environmental consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) to combat climate change. While such environmental has fostered ecologically aware lifestyles, I problematize the notion of environmental consciousness as consciousness is not enough but rather to conceptual living in and with nature through Martin Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*. Heidegger posits that the only way that humans experience existence is through *Dasein* whose primary component is care (*Sorge*). Heidegger defines care as one’s most direct access to the world. Moving to the contemporary movement, Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble* argues that the most ethical way to move towards a human society with positive relationships to the rest of the world is to make non-human kin. Marrying these two concepts, I work beyond a



consciousness of nature and towards what representations Ecological Dasein can teach us how to combat the impending climate crisis.

Reading the novels *Die Sprache der Vögel* (*The Language of Birds*, 2015) and *Winterbienen* (*Winter Bees*, 2019) by Norbert Scheuer, and *Eistau* (*The Lamentations of Zeno*, 2011) by Ilija Trojanow against Heidegger's philosophy, I theorise how an ecological Dasein could look from the novels' representations of non-human kinships. All three novels consisted of diary entries focused on nature and the characters' kinships with various animals and natural phenomena to drive the plot of the novels. The characters non-human kinships become more than just a vessel for human progress and in the case of *Eistau* work radically against human complacency to climate change.

**Bio:** John Evjen convocated from the University of Alberta in 2018 with an honours degree in German language and literatures. His undergraduate thesis dealt with Thomas Bo Nilsson's dramatic installation entitled MEAT and its complexity regarding technology and altering human consciousness. In 2015, he joined the Inaugural Class of the Peter Lougheed Leadership College, where he worked with university sexual assault policy, which he sustains interest in today. Currently, John is a Ph.D. student in the Germanic Languages and Literature department at the University of Toronto. Apart from university, he spends most of his time refereeing water polo, playing music, and cooking.

Finch-Race, Daniel & Emiliano Guaraldo. "Evaluating the Invisible Complexities of Air Pollution in Art as a Principle for Reflective Practice in the Environmental Humanities."

What does it mean to live in an age defined by atmospheric pollution? How has the COVID-19 crisis changed the way that we think of invisible airborne threats? How can the humanities contribute to efforts to grapple with the pervasiveness of something deadly but barely visible like fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)? In "Further Evidence of Important Environmental Information Content in Red-to-Green Ratios as Depicted in Paintings by Great Masters" (*Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, 2014), a team of scientists led by Christos Zerefos looks to quantify how creative works can function as a repository of scientific data. From the perspective of the humanities, art can provide spatial, temporal, elemental, and sensorial context for laboratory-based findings about ecological irregularities linked to carbon dioxide and other problematic compounds in the atmosphere. The psychologist Ellen Winner's *How Art Works* (Oxford University Press, 2018) identifies the strong capacity to stimulate action that inheres in a piece of cultural production displaying a problematic subject like the effects of manmade toxic emissions. The proposed contribution will reflect on the aesthetic dimensions of portrayals of polluted air that help to visualize our co-existence with particulate matter as a mode of being in and for the Anthropocene, such as Berthe Morisot's *Hanging the Laundry out to Dry* (1875), Vincent Van Gogh's *Factories at Clichy* (1887), Jorge Otero-Pailos's *The Ethics of Dust* (2009), Santiago Sierra's *52 Canvases Exposed to Mexico City's Air* (2019), and Nerea Calvillo's *In the Air* (2011–19).

**Bios:** Daniel Finch-Race and Emiliano Guaraldo are postdoctoral fellows in environmental humanities within the Center for the Humanities and Social Change at Ca' Foscari University in Venice.

Fromet de Rosnay, Emile. “Dialogues with Nature: Biophilial Poetic Encounters with Mauritius.”

How can we rethink the relationship between the human and nonhuman, and how can art contribute to such a dialogue? This project (part of a two-year research-creation project) explores the epistemological, ontological, and communicative relationships in the field of posthumanism (where the human is no longer the centre of concern), seeking to better understand the posthuman, how it is contested, and the implications this has for our understanding of the context of the “capitalocene” (the epoch of world history that is entangled with the expansion of global capital). It interrogates the gap between experience and experiment in modern subjectivity, an approach lacking in the field. The eventual project will explore those relations in a multimodal artistic way, what I call a “biophilial poetics” that generates an immanent relation with nature no longer based on the models that govern traditional communication methods (language as information). It will “listen” to seaweed on the island of Mauritius, and convert the digital code from the hydrophonic recordings into digital poetry made up of words and phrases from the living languages of Mauritius (Creole, French, English, Bhojpuri); create soundscapes and sound maps of the island that echoes biology and geography (“island biogeography”, Quammen); finally, account for this process through gestural video art and visual anthropology methods, resulting in a dialogue with the research component in philosophical and poetic ways. My presentation will thus create a double biophilia, by examining the relationships between research and creation, and interrogating the epistemological limits of the human, nonhuman, and posthuman.

**Bio:** Emile Fromet de Rosnay teaches literature, film, and culture in the Department of French at the University of Victoria. He is also the director of the UVic interdisciplinary graduate program in Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT). He has published work on poet Stéphane Mallarmé (Mallarmésis, 2011), postcolonial Mauritian fiction, Critical Digital Humanities, the theory of the useless, on the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, and on the linguist Émile Benveniste. He is currently re-examining the gap between the natural sciences and the human sciences, particularly in light of contemporary posthuman theories, and seeks to examine how these emerge in the history of philosophy, in culture and media. He has a forthcoming experimental book at Punctum Books, Taunting the Useful, that develops a theory of the “virtual useless”.

Fuchs, Susanne. “Presentation of ‘Favourite Concepts’ Project.”

Literary studies’ attentiveness to language and discourse is one of its indispensable contribution to the environmental humanities. Literary studies’ tools help to identify how

certain concepts—such as “progress”, “the good life”, and similar discursive constructs—obscure, by design, the environmental destruction and economic inequalities on which they are built. Rendering the impacts of petrocapiatist ideologies and discursive strategies both intelligible and explicit is, however, only a first (if crucial) step in undermining related dogmata. In addition to this work, scholars in the environmental humanities call for the creation of a different vocabulary, new narratives, and alternative frameworks to gain independence from the neoliberal and extractive paradigms structuring 21<sup>st</sup>-century humans’ perception and thinking. [1] In response to this need for re-naming and re-thinking, I am currently developing a collaborative online humanities project called “Favourite Concepts.” The central element of the project is a website on which humanities scholars, artists, activists, psychologists, and ecologists will present their favorite terms derived from their fields of practice that have the potential to transform (or at least shift) currently predominant conceptions of what contributes to a life well lived. The platform wishes to bridge the gap between academic discourses and a wider public audience by publishing accessible and entertaining texts while maintaining a high intellectual standard. Though the essays published on the website may vary in style (personal, entertaining, contemplative, etc.), they have one thing in common: following environmental humanities scholars’ requests, each of them presents a surprising way to expand what is thinkable and imaginable.

[1] To quote some of the most well-known overarching studies: In the introduction to the *Routledge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, Ursula K. Heise speaks of the present moment as a moment of “reinventing what being human means” (4). In the same volume Stephanie LeMenager writes of new conceptions of genre “as a means of innovating new social-ecological relations.” (“The Humanities After the Anthropocene,” 476). Furthermore, LeMenager, introduces the term “speculative fabulation” to describe a “imagining and narrating collaboratively into the possibility space of the future” (479). In her book *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway famously suggests replacing the word “human” with “humus” and “humanities” with “humusities” to de-center the anthropos (32); another one of Haraway’s ideas is to reimagine the world as a place in which individualism and exceptionalism are “not available to think with” (30). Last but not least, in their conclusion to *The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction*, Robert Emmett and David Nye find that the “environmental humanities can provide new narratives and concepts that make necessary change attractive” (168).

**Bio:** Susanne Fuchs holds a Ph.D. in German Studies from New York University and is a visiting lecturer at Wellesley College. Her current research interests include subjectivity, phenomena of denial, and interdisciplinary work in the environmental humanities. Related to her environmental activism (whenever her time and location allow for it) are her interests in and studies of solidarity economies, co-operative management, and participatory democracy.

García Hernández, Rayner. “Re-locating the Island: The Smartphone’s Revolution.”

Current trends in the national transformation process, taking place in Cuba, indicate that the state is moving away from its planned economy. In fields like economy and politics, culture and society, the nation is experiencing social changes that modify every aspect of its citizens’ lives. In recent decades, processes of political identity formation and cultural

manifestations have come about, describing a new dynamic with genuine characteristics and heterogeneous qualities. The socio- technical transformation, triggered by the expansion of the digital telecommunications infrastructure, finds its mediatic expression not only in the practices exercised by institutions and state-run enterprises, but also through the social praxis of the users that collaborate across borders in a context of transnational relations.

The research project aims at analyzing the media practices of Cuban users in their different socio-spatial fields of action. Assuming a praxeological approach, the investigation intends to explore the way in which Cuban media users build innovative technical infrastructures. The question to be discussed is: In the digital milieu, how can media users change the cultural dimension of technical infrastructures through their actions? The users' media practices in Cuba and in the diaspora reflect civil society's need to establish a social dialogue that advocates freedom of speech, assembly, and movement. The infrastructural characteristics of the socio-technical transformation not only influence individuals' and social groups' behavior, but also reshape social conditions, material experiences in the context of migration and socio-cultural practices. Through the use of the Internet and Smartphones, users develop a communicative and transnational space in which their routines towards a productive use of digital technology are modified.

**Bio:** Ph.D. in Media & Communication Studies (2020) and B.A. in Philosophy with the main focus on Aesthetics (2007). I was professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, History and Sociology (University of Havana) from 2007 to 2015, where I was teaching Philosophy and Aesthetics. Between 2015 and 2020 I was Ph.D. candidate, awarded with a DAAD scholarship, at the Faculty of Art and Design at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar in Germany. The scope of my research in Germany was to get in contact with other theories in the field of European and especially German Media Theory. Prior to that, I dealt primarily with media and communication theories of Anglo-American and Spanish-speaking countries. My main interest in Social Science and in the Humanities focuses on the economic, political, and cultural aspects of social change. Therefore, my research aims at understanding political processes and cultural phenomena in the field of Media Studies not only through a non-media centric approach but focusing on socio-technical and cultural change.

[Gilbert, Bennett. "Does the Anthropocene Require Us to Be Saints?"](#)

The question of the moral demands that humans, posthumans, and nonhumans in the Anthropocene put up on persons now living generally takes the form of supererogatory demands—that is, moral obligations with a perfectionist structure leading to obligations “above and beyond the call of duty” and extreme individual and collective sacrifice. David Roden construes this by deontology; Toby Ord, following Derek Parfit, by consequentialism. Such obligations are akin to the martyrdom of saints: but must our expectations of the Anthropocene necessarily lead to this kind of moral obligation?

Can it be mitigated and how? Meta-ethically, it is a highly externalist form of motivation with no concurrent rewards. In this respect, the inquiry is to be pursued through understanding how to align horizons of experience and of expectation. Normatively, it very much concerns how we define and regard persons—present and future, human and non-human, organic or artificial, conscious or not, intelligent or otherwise—since personhood and moral obligation are deeply connected concepts.

In my conference paper I want to open and provoke discussion of the current and possible views of the supererogatory moral obligations in and toward the Anthropocene. I first discussed this in print via anthropocentrism in chapter 2 of my *A Personalist Philosophy of History*. (Routledge, 2019). I am approaching the question directly and broadly in the book I am now writing (to appear in 2023), and this workshop paper will be part of my exploration and development of the issue.

**Bio:** Bennett Gilbert teaches philosophy and history at Portland State University (Portland, Oregon). He is the author of *A Personalist Philosophy of History* (Routledge, 2019) and of numerous scholarly and general papers. His core interest is grounding moral philosophy in our experience of time in order to understand humankind in the present and future. This is the subject of two books now in preparation. Previously he was a dealer in early printed books for three decades.

Goto-Jones, Chris. “there is no I in Earth: elementary experience in the anthropocene.”

One of the great conceits of the anthropocene is the idea that humans are entities that can be separated from the world around them; the world is just the context within which and on which humans act. This first encouraged and then was fuelled by the European ‘enlightenment,’ which powerfully emphasised the instrumentalization and domination of the natural world by human subjects. This conceit is one of the philosophical foundations of the anthropocene. However, this rigid division between self and other (and especially between the human and the non-human) that grounded European philosophy for centuries is not present in all philosophical or religious systems. That is, it is neither a necessary nor a healthy way to understand the human self.

This paper considers the more fluid and procedural sense of ‘self’ found in various Buddhist writings, where we find the idea of ‘self’ more closely resembles a verb than a noun. Indeed, all material and immaterial forms are seen as fluid and emergent. Hence, on this account, a sense of ‘self’ emerges as continuous with (rather than separate from) the world around us. Far from being merely the context of human agency, the world gives expression to the human self through its movements and actions. So, behaving as though the human self is separate in and from nature is a primary cause of suffering, both for humans and for the world with which we are non-dual. And furthermore, far from being a philosophical abstraction, this sense of self is presented in these texts as experientially verifiable through simple practices, including fundamental forms of mindfulness. The conceit of human separation from the world is thus rendered a form of unhealthy denial or delusion, contributing to both human and environmental suffering.

The hope of this paper is that it can outline how some of these simple mindfulness practices might enable humans to re-envision and re-embody their relationship with the natural world by realizing a more elemental sense of self. Rather than seeing the world as a marketplace of material goods and tools for humans, humans might be reframed as continuous expressions of the world around them. This model of life in the world should promote the health of individual humans as well as the health of the planet.

**Bio:** Chris Goto-Jones (DPhil, Oxford) is professor in Philosophy at UVic and honorary professor in Asian Studies at UBC. He is a certified Nature & Forest Therapy Guide, meditation teacher, and facilitator of mindfulness-based interventions. He teaches the (free) online course “DeMystifying Mindfulness”, recently named ‘One of the Best Online Courses of All Time’ (Class Central, 2020). His next book is *Mindfulness and the Search for Meaning* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

Gries, Ines. “Goethe’s *Doughnut*.”

Goethe may be an old shoe, but despite that—or precisely because of it—his work offers a long-standing humanist perspective on social and environmental dimensions of the Anthropocene, and in particular what economist Kate Raworth has called *Doughnut-Economics*. Raworth’s *Doughnut* as an economic model points to two main problems of the Anthropocene: social disparities and the environmental crisis. As an alternative to both neoliberalist growth and radical degrowth, she offers a post-growth concept which yields diversification and distribution.

Goethe’s idea and theory of *metamorphosis* as the leading principle in his popular (folkloric) writings might be seen as the precursor to this model of post-growth, particularly as diversification and distribution comprise the central components of Goethe’s theory of *metamorphosis*. For Goethe, whose thoughts come from a time prior to the division of specialized disciplines, the popular encompasses both modes of popularization as well as natural generation. Analogous to what Emanuele Coccia postulates in his plant philosophy, to frame “a theory of everything,” Goethe understands natural history as a propaedeutic to human history.

Drawing on the structure of Goethe’s *metamorphosis* as a blueprint for his popular writings (i.e., folkloric, and therefore at the same time political and natural), I propose a concept of culture which might provide a humanist answer to ecological and political crisis, and which I refer to as *Kulturdemokratie*. This is a notion of culture and art in the broadest sense; as a field that is not autonomous and does not aim at originality, but instead uses techniques of popularization such as recycling and bricolage; that doesn’t proclaim growth but focuses on development in the sense of higher differentiation. *Kulturdemokratie* as a cultural and ecopolitical concept generates a humanist forecast of a future of the Anthropocene in which diversity is protected and nurtured.

**Bio:** Ines studied comparative and German literature and aesthetics (interdisciplinary) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, and at the University of Cambridge in

England (Erasmus scholarship). She has taught since 2019 at Goethe University Frankfurt, where she explores the relations of Goethe's *metamorphosis* and his 'popular' (i.e., *volkstümliches*) work for her dissertation [working title: Wissen – Volk – Literatur. Metamorphe Bildung in Goethes volkstümlicher Dichtung (Knowledge – People – Literature: metamorphic shaping in Goethe's popular oeuvre)].

Grifka Wander, Misha. "Reckoning with Difference in the Anthropocene."

Recognition of the Anthropocene seems to go hand-in-hand with calls to unite against the oncoming tide of ecological destruction, to acknowledge the interconnections of humankind with plants, animals, and inorganic systems. This may indeed be necessary, and such calls come from solid ethical positions, but the universalizing gesture that subsumes all peoples into "human" should give us pause. Axelle Karera and others have pointed out that Anthropocene ethics frequently fail to acknowledge the racially differential impact of climate change, the racist underpinnings of the societies which have caused climate change, and the historical exclusion of Black people from the universal category of the human. Can there be an Anthropocene ethics that empowers people to resist ecological destruction without erasing important historical and contemporary difference? This project aims to explore the potential for an intersectional, difference-aware Anthropocene ethics by investigating two questions: one, how does human difference change the way we think about the Anthropocene; and two, are there productive examples in art, literature, and media of species-level human responsibility? Can there be a call for humanity to rally for change that is meaningful without being exclusionary? In addressing the first question, I aim to investigate race, geography, indigeneity, and queerness as loci for disruptions in current Anthropocene ethics as well as opportunities for new ethics. In the second question, I look to speculative fiction and its ability to imagine challenges at the species level, including environmental and existential threats. Between the two, I hope to propose a way to do the invaluable work of addressing the Anthropocene ethically, without erasing humanity's complex past and present, and unequal futures.

**Bio:** Misha Grifka Wander is a Ph.D. student at the Ohio State University. Their research focuses on media, speculative fiction, gender, and ecocriticism. They received their B.A. from the University of Chicago and their M.A. from the Ohio State University. Previous publications have addressed fairy tale and ecogothic themes in webcomics, pronouns in contemporary science fiction, and gender in fantasy and science fiction genre distinctions. They have lived across the Midwest and East Coast of the US and are currently based in Ohio with their partner and two affectionate cats.

Groves, Jason. "Multidirectional Memory for, and against, the Anthropocene."

Following recent accounts of the Anthropocene as "a story of how people treat the environment and how people treat each other" beginning with "widespread colonialism and slavery," as Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin write [1], and following Michael

Rothberg's robust account, in *Multidirectional Memory*, of a "countertradition in which remembrance of the Holocaust intersects with the legacies of colonialism and slavery and ongoing processes of decolonization," [2] my current line of research looks at an emerging conjunction between the two, namely how remembrance of the Holocaust might intersect with legacies of colonialism and slavery and ongoing processes of decolonization in the Anthropocene. My initial case study looks at Paul Celan's geopoetic commemoration of the Shoah, whose spatial and temporal magnitude extends into the planetary and the geological, as it might intersect with the commemoration of the Middle Passage in recent Black hydro-poetics, in which the *longue durée* of transatlantic slavery is mediated through oceanic archives, the element of water, as well as soil and other mineral matter. Drawing on this work, for this workshop I hope to generate new possibilities for thinking of, caring for, and talking to one another in the anti-Black and anti-Jewish climates of the Anthropocene.

[1] Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2018, 13.

[2] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009, xiii.

**Bio:** Jason Groves is assistant professor of German Studies at the University of Washington, where he is also a core faculty member in the Environmental Cultures and Values minor. His research areas include ecocriticism, interdisciplinary nineteenth-century studies, extinction studies, and the environmental humanities. His monograph is *The Geological Unconscious: German Literature and the Mineral Imaginary* (Fordham University Press July 2020). From 2016–2019 he co-organized (with Jesse Oak Taylor) the Cross-disciplinary Research Cluster on the Anthropocene at the Simpson Center for the Humanities of the University of Washington.

#### Hamill, Lalita. "Philosophy, Visual Art, and Human Development for the Anthropocene."

A humanist field that is not often associated with ecocriticism is visual art; however, visual art is arguably as effective a pedagogical tool as literature and language because of its instant, memorable effect, as well as emotional impact, accessibility, interactivity, and universality.

Humanities at present is well positioned to develop from a primarily anthropomorphic, rationalist perspective (i.e., humanism) to a more integrated, comprehensive approach, especially with respect to the Anthropocene. I am curious whether human beings can evolve beyond humanism, not by rejecting it, but by incorporating its redeeming qualities into the next stage of human development. One concern I have is that we will try to solve the environmental crisis by using the same ideologies and intelligences that, in part, caused them.



## Humanities for the Anthropocene (July 2021)

I propose to conduct a workshop to assess the relationships among philosophy, contemporary (visual) art, and human development. To focus this discussion, I will present several works of related art as well as the outlines of my visual art and virtual reality project “Invite your demons to tea.” As a professional visual artist, educator, and juror, a few key questions come to mind: How does art serve to promote individual and collective development? Can collaboration between visual artists, scholars, and critics raise our collective ecocritical consciousness? If so, how might each of us proceed? How likely are such collaborations to lead to tangible shifts in both perspectives and behaviour, especially with respect to our natural world? Can those in the Humanities inspire and inform artists?

**Bio:** Lalita discovered her artistic abilities as a young adult, during the final year of her Philosophy degree at UVic. Subsequent years of drawing led to four years of classes at the Vancouver Academy of Art, where she studied traditional painting methods from classically trained instructors. While Lalita is a professional visual artist, she has been described as a ‘passionate polymath’ who uses her wide range of learning in topics connected with philosophy, psychology, writing, music, and education to explore the human condition through paintings and virtual reality. Her first philosophical painting entitled “Plato’s Cave” was exhibited at the Langley Centennial Museum, which then sold at an exhibition in Guiyang, China. Lalita has won many awards, most recently the “Grand Prize” at the Annual International Representational Show (AIRS). She is a Signature member of the Federation of Canadian Artists and an Associate Member of Oil Painters of America. She is a sought-after instructor, presenter, and juror who has inspired hundreds of artists to create, challenge themselves, and apply what they have learned in the studio to their everyday lives.

Artist Statement: *“I paint and teach to gently awaken in myself and others that which has been lost, hidden, or buried. My drive to create and appreciate art comes from an intense curiosity and desire to understand who we are and what it means to be truly alive.”*

Recent Online Presentations:

“Art Appreciation: A Simple Method to Reach Deeper Understanding,” Surrey Art Gallery Association:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=5777352725623566&ref=search>

Banging Rocks TV Interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHHJxgAB7y4&t=20s>

Heyd, Thomas. “Humanising the Anthropocene.”

Insofar as the Humanities encompass the literary-artistic, historical, and philosophic disciplines, we may describe this field as the self-reflective exploration of human experience. The Anthropocene is the proposed name for a new geologic epoch in which humans participate as a detectable force. While there is continuing debate on the actual extent of our influence on the future depth-historical geologic record, there already are

sufficient reasons to take into account the short- and medium-term global impacts on living systems of human activities. Quite rightly, the physical and biological sciences are the disciplines that provide us with an understanding of the processes underlying the apparent changes in climate and ecological systems. The psychological and social sciences likewise are in line to help us to grasp some of the interactions between environmental conditions, psychological perceptions, and societal responses. It is in this disciplinary matrix that the humanities are uniquely positioned to apply a wide-angled view of what all of this means for human endeavours and experience.

My research to date has focussed on the cultural dimensions of climate change and on the need to adopt a “natural contract” to mitigate this process. My most recent publication concerns the shared pattern of factors leading to both COVID-19 and climate change that make both phenomena paradigmatic of the Anthropocene. Presently, my research is about precursors to the Anthropocene, both regarding earlier, non-human, all-encompassing transformations of Earth systems, and regarding adaptations that pre-condition our species toward the type of actions that bring about the unintended impacts of our times. In this presentation I will lay out some of my research results and the lessons that we draw from these findings.

**Bio:** Thom has been teaching at UVic since 1993. He has held a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Fellowship in the World Heritage Studies Programme at the University of Cottbus, Germany, and an Organization of American States (O.A.S.) Fellowship to study rock art in Patagonia, Argentina.

Hoffmann, Eva. “From Postfeminism to Posthumanism: The Non/Human in Contemporary German-language Literature and Film.”

Traditional works of Anthropocene fiction frequently evoke feelings such as nostalgia, grief, and melancholia as “appropriate” responses to our current sense of ecological crisis. In my current research project (a manuscript in book-length), I am investigating how contemporary writers and filmmakers in the German-speaking world engage not only with the challenges but also with the opportunities brought by our current ecological crises. In particular, I am interested in how they invoke modes of representation often associated with queer theory irony, such as perversity, and playfulness, but also absurdity, camp, indecorum, and ambivalence. Moreover, my work focuses on how the writers and filmmakers in question engage with contemporary points of critique informed by transnational postfeminism to explore the shared precarities and vulnerabilities between human and non-human bodies in the Anthropocene and in neoliberal patriarchy.

As I will illustrate, works such as Olivia Vieweg’s comic *Ever After*, Jovana Reisinger’s *Hold Still* or Katharina Köller’s *What I saw in the Water* present important interventions into the genre of Anthropocene fiction. They facilitate a deeply critical cultural diagnosis of contemporary cultural and ‘natural’ problems, provide the critical tools to probe the instruments and solutions to which we turn to solve our ecological and environmental crises, and imagine alternative futurities beyond heteronormative modes of procreation and

populated and invigorated by inappropriate affiliations, identities, and affects. Moreover, I argue that mobilizing the afore-mentioned affects associated with queer theory can disrupt the impetus of traditional environmental art to re-inscribe the very logic that caused our ecological crises to begin with: postcolonialism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

**Bio:** Eva Hoffmann (Ph.D.; University of Oregon) works on the intersections between critical animal studies, ecocriticism, and queer and intersectional feminist theory. Her work appears, among others, in journals such as *ISLE*, *German Feminist Studies* and *GENDER*. Together with Dr. Kári Driscoll, she edited the volume *What is Zoopoetics: Texts, Bodies, Entanglements* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018). Before returning to Germany this past summer, Eva has taught for many years in the Pacific Northwest. She is currently teaching in the public school system and holds a courtesy postdoctoral affiliation with the University of Oregon.

Höller, Lisa. “Flooding the Anthropocene: Bodies of Water in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century German Prose.”

Water is a precondition for life on this planet. Our surroundings are in every aspect integrated in a larger water cycle, our survival is highly dependent on access to water, our bodies themselves are largely water. Where do more-than-human bodies of water end and human bodies begin? In my dissertation research project, I investigate the watery worlds that emerge in Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Undine geht,” Max Frisch’s “Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän” and Yoko Tawada’s “Das Bad” in order to highlight how these narratives suspend the clear separation of water and human bodies in multiple ways allowing fluid and transcorporeal existences to take shape. What these narratives ultimately demonstrate is how every attempt to solidify human bodies, human identity, and the more-than-human world is porous and will eventually spring a leak.

With my analysis, I hope to offer one perspective in a desirably and necessarily interdisciplinary and multiple endeavor of approaching the Humanities for the Anthropocene. Ultimately, my explorations on water open up to a larger question of the Anthropocene: How can we as Westerners, scholars of the Humanities, humanists interrupt our own anthropocentric mindset in order to conceive, engage, and ultimately actively embrace a more porous, more entangled, more embodied way of being within and for the Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Lisa Höller received a B.A. in German Philology and English and American Studies from the University of Salzburg. In 2012/13, she was a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. While pursuing an M.A. in German, she was a research assistant at the University of Salzburg. After completing her master’s degree in 2016, she taught German as a foreign language in Nepal. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Oregon. Her research interests include *fin-de-siècle* and 20<sup>th</sup>-century German literature, feminist and ecofeminist literary theory, studies in the Environmental Humanities and the Blue Humanities, translation studies, and linguistics.

Hong, Zaixin. "Landscape Painting as Human Intelligence for the Anthropocene."

In the Anthropocene, we humans, as paleontologist and geologist Kirk Johnson observes, are geology. It implies that a reversible observation is not far from reality: landscape is the man in the art of painting as shown in the Chinese visual tradition especially. Like art in general, landscape painting is first and foremost human intelligence. Long before the Anthropocene was coined, Chinese landscape painters and their creative practice made it crystal clear how humanities benefit from and contribute to nature through artistic activities. For exalting their intelligence, they at once revere nature as an object, both material and spiritual, and cultivate it by their moral compass. The personification of *shanshui*, which literally means mountains and rivers in Chinese, in a self-expressive style by the 14th century literati painters, for instance, visualized an early version of how and why we humans are geology. What is more, ancient cosmological views as such incubate modern environmental conscious in balancing both rights and responsibilities of us humans as the keystone species, both constructive and destructive, of the Blue Marble within the cosmos.

In contrast to approach art without artist through a formalistic analysis, or to view art as a social factor in the social history, the anthropogenic perspective of this study will evaluate Chinese landscape painting as human intelligence returning to its source of being an organic component of nature. The humanistic value of Chinese landscape painting for the Anthropocene will therefore be reconsidered with a sense of deep time.

**Bio:** Zaixin Hong has published broadly in his two major areas of research: 10th- to 14th-century and 20th-century Chinese art. He is the author of the award-winning textbook *A History of Chinese Art* (2000, 2012) and the compiler of *Essays on the History of Chinese Painting by Overseas Scholars (1950–1987)*. He was a 2005-2006 fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Hong is working on a new book: *Shaking Hands with the Future: Huang Binhong and the Revelation of Chinese Modernism*. Hong taught earlier at the China National Academy of the Fine Arts and was senior fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religion at Harvard University. He teaches courses on Asian art and on regional and thematic issues, such as Chinese Painting in the West, Tao and East Asian Landscape Art, Art History Methodologies, Chinese and Japanese Art, Buddhist Art, 20th-Century Chinese Art, and East Asian Calligraphy.

Imbrigotta, Kristopher. "Performing the Anthropocene: Building Community and Taking Responsibility in Simone Dede Ayivi's *Solidarity Play/Solidaritätsstück* (2019)."

Theatre has long served as an art form through which humans have questioned and examined their own relationships with nature and the natural world. Indeed, the environment, the land, our resources, our relationship to one another have always been present on the stage and in dramatic texts. My work is grounded mostly in the theatre

context from Germany, and therefore I am interested in how these notions mentioned above manifest themselves on the German stage and how theatre, as Theresa May (*Earth Matters on Stage*, 2020) suggests, can have a “material-ecological impact.” Informed by May’s concept of “eco-dramaturgy,” I will share preliminary thoughts on Ayivi’s 2019 *Solidarity Play* as a performance that intervenes in this discourse as a way to break down systems of inequality, extraction, destruction, and oppression among others. Ayivi’s play acknowledges this history and seeks to empower the spectator to take responsibility and to forward the theatre’s participatory power in the decolonization of people, culture, and the land.

**Bio:** Kristopher Imbrigotta is Assistant Professor of German Studies at the University of Puget Sound. His research and teaching cover literature and cultural studies from the late nineteenth century to today, focusing primarily on: theater history and drama pedagogy; visual culture and film; memory discourses and literary historiography; and environmental humanities. He is co-editor of the performance journal *Communications of the International Brecht Society* (IBS) and an elected member of the steering committee for the IBS. Starting in 2021, he will be series co-editor with Jost Hermand for *German Life and Civilization* (Peter Lang). He has recently completed a new critical student edition of Brecht’s *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Methuen, 2021). He was also a member of the international translation team for the latest edition of *Brecht on Theater* (Methuen, 2014). Since 2019, he has served as coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Teaching Network of the German Studies Association and is a founding member of the German Studies Collaboratory, a digital humanities online teaching/research hub. His work has appeared in various book volumes as well as in *Radical History Review*, *Brecht Yearbook*, *Expressionismus*, *Monatshefte*, and *Translation and Literature*.

Iribarne, J. “Place, Purpose and Poetic Philosophy: An Urgent New Discourse.”

Our earliest and still most important *techne*, language, offers doorways into new ideas for the Anthropocene. The right metaphor can call us through from one era into another. We need language to help reconceptualize relationships—to space (borderless, held in common); to one another (Indigenous persons, settlers, refugees, migrants, trans-nationals); to other species (other life with its own intrinsic value); to the environment itself.

Poets practicing a non-dogmatic lyric philosophy have this to offer: the re-forging of a word hoard, not de-historicized yet forward looking. In this workshop we look closely at a poetic practice that aligns itself with Jan Zwicky’s “lyric philosophy,” a non-analytic approach that seeks wisdom through metaphor. In Zwicky’s terms, metaphor becomes “the linguistic expression of focussed analogical thinking” (2003, 5) and forms the basis of all understanding—a spatial “seeing-as.” Though environmental crisis foregrounds urgent scientific questions, language can shape our understanding and thus, our action.

As an example of this practice, I propose a workshop to cultivate deeper understanding of place names and their influence on our attitude to ecosystems. Can we reconcile an animist

view of reference—that names call entities like mountains into existence—with a scientific desire for precision in denotation? We turn to Saul Kripke’s thought experiment in *Naming and Necessity* about Dartmouth, which originates from its position at the mouth of the Dart river, and lay this example alongside North American Indigenous philosophies of place names (considering the SENĆOŦEN and Apachean languages). We reflect on these combined with the mis-speakings of recent immigrants and the language of advertising. Ultimately the goal must be a shared understanding of place, an emotional recognition of gestalt, the basis for any human action.

**Bio:** An active playwright and poet, J. Iribarne has been teaching at Camosun College since 2001. Teaching is her passion—she values working with students of all ages and backgrounds to improve their creative and academic writing. Areas of research include the intersection of music and poetry, American literature of the twentieth century, and documentary film.

Jasikowska, Katarzyna. “Climate Activism in Academia as a Response to the Anthropocene: A Sociological Perspective.”

I will argue that climate and ecological activism is one of thoughtful response to the question about role of Academia for the Anthropocene. Universities have necessary infrastructure, expertise as well as social status to act as a local driving force towards climate neutrality and climate justice. Here lies one of the newest and potentially transformative role of humanities—informed collaborative practise derived from clearly defined values and principles. Such practices have a potential to transform Humanities themselves.

In order to illustrate transformative potential of Humanities I will present Polish bottom-up student- doctoral students–academics initiative called *klimatUJ* [1]. KlimatUJ is formed of people determined “to Move that University!” [2] focusing on step-by-step systemic actions aimed at extending knowledge, rising awareness, and, last but not least, institutional change towards climate neutrality and climate justice at local level. Illustrations will be taken from the interdisciplinary and open for the public academic course entitled: “Challenges to the democracy in time of climate change: interdisciplinary perspective” as well as participatory works on petition to the Rector of the Jagiellonian University, signed by over a thousand people [3] and aimed at introducing climate strategy [4] at the Jagiellonian University.

[1] In Polish “klimat” means “climate” and the acronym “UJ” reads for Jagiellonian University.

[2] A quotation from survey made among students who participated in one of the events organized by klimatUJ.

[3] Jagiellonian University in Kraków is one of the oldest universities in Europe (since 1364).

[4] Petition in English:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gOhVI4n8GqTRRVIXGdGMPHc08zoc2fU7/view> (20.03.2021)

**Bio:** Associate Professor, Jagiellonian University, Institute of Sociology in Krakow, Poland. Researcher and climate activist, co-organizer of the klimat bottom-up initiative at the Jagiellonian University ([www.facebook.com/klimatUJ/](http://www.facebook.com/klimatUJ/)) and member of the executive team of the Priority Research Area Anthropocene (POB Anthropocene) at Jagiellonian University. Coordinator of the Talent Management program within POB Anthropocene, addressed to students and Ph.D. students interested in carrying out research and outreach projects within Anthropocene topics and related challenges. Author of the book *Zmieniając świat! Edukacja globalna między zyskiem a zbawieniem* [*Changing the World! Global Education Between Profit and Salvation*] (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, 2018).

Kanz, Christine. “Is there an Anthropocene Literature? Olga Tokarczuk's ‘Der Gesang der Fledermäuse’.”

The novel “Gesang der Fledermäuse” [*The Song of the Bats*] by the Polish Nobel Prize laureate Olga Tokarczuk is based on the central insight of its bizarre, elderly female protagonist, “that the world was not made for humans”. The personal suffering of the first-person narrator, who is interested in sociobiological astrology, psychology and feminism and has remained young at heart—a kind of “world shattering or shock” (*Welterschütterung*) after the killing of her two female dogs by hunters, the anger at the destruction of nature by humans, and the increasing alienation from her own body due to various frailties—are connected with descriptions of the terrain, the seasons and the inherent laws of nature. Different relationships between humans and non-humans are explored. But above all, a hierarchical power imbalance between humans and animals becomes visible in the poaching and hunting practices that are the focus of the text. At the same time, however, animals have 'agency:' Time and again, there is talk of the “vengeance of animals” on people, and animals even have jurisdiction over humans. The gruesome murders of several men in the village clearly refer to the wild animals of the forest, as traces of them can be found near the bodies. Although the text might be analyzed from the perspective of “New Feminist Materialism” or “Animal Studies,” I will read Tokarczuk’s text in light of the central question of whether it can stand for a new poetics in or for the Anthropocene, and whether, in fact, it can be called an 'Anthropocene' novel in the first place. After a brief examination of previous efforts at developing a poetics of or for the Anthropocene, I will highlight central themes of Anthropocene and Anthropocene narratives, questioning whether the underlying aesthetics of Tokarczuk’s novel is indeed anthropocene-specific—and questioning this question itself.

**Bio:** Christine Kanz teaches as a university professor for modern German literary studies in the university network 'Cluster Mitte' in Linz and Salzburg and is visiting professor at the University of Ghent. Her research interests include emotional science, diversity theory and ecocritical approaches. Most recently, articles on the “Reinvention of 'Nature’” in Thomas Hettche's novel *Pfaueninsel* (2018), on eco-critical tendencies between nature writing and terrain text (2020), on the literary plant discourse in the age of the

Anthropocene (2020) and the anthology she co-edited *Deutschsprachiges Nature Writing from Goethe to the Present* (Metzler 2020).

Kigar, Samuel. “Gods in the Anthropocene: Teaching Beyond the Secular.”

Responding to the universalism of the term “Anthropocene,” scholars have offered counter terms and chronologies to specify which human activities bear responsibility for our present crises, e.g., European colonialism, plantation capitalism, and industrialization. Yet, questions remain: How do we incorporate these critiques into pedagogical practice? How might we avoid reinscribing Eurocentrism in these practices of critique? Do Anthropocene curricula privilege the study of operations of (neo)colonialism at the expense of exposing students to other sources of ecological knowledge? This paper takes these questions to the classroom, arguing that, rather than diversifying “Western” humanities, students should begin with a multi-centric understanding of humanism. It draws on a course taught at the University of Puget Sound, “God in the Anthropocene,” which began with a range of premodern scriptural texts that introduced students to alternative ontologies, epistemologies, and temporalities for thinking about the present ecological crises. These texts allowed students to see how communities in the past grappled with questions about the relationship between human and non-human nature. The Anthropocene proposes that we are living in a unique era because the human/non-human divide has been eroded as a result of human domination of Earth. By beginning with premodern texts, students were able to provincialize this configuration. They noted, for example, the way that the human is elevated to god-like status in some descriptions of the Anthropocene. Yet, this paper also struggles with the limits of this approach in the first iteration of this course: in a context where texts such as the Qur’an and Bhagavad Gita are normally taught as objects of study, rather than sources of knowledge, some students struggled to see their relevancy. This paper proposes that a humanities for the Anthropocene must begin from a position of plurality. It takes these structural limitations as an opportunity for continued thought about how to achieve this aim.

**Bio:** Samuel Kigar is assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Puget Sound. His work considers notions of territoriality and spatial belonging in Islamic thought. He is at work on a monograph, tentatively titled *Islamic Terroir: Religion, Space, and Belonging in Twentieth Century Morocco*.

Kroll, Gary. “Snarge Ecology: A New Natural History and the Environmental Humanities.”

The role that science and technology will play in digging our way through the anthropocene is still unclear, but anthropogenic toilers (what else do you call such a motley crew, myself included), seem to be calling for an alternative to the techno-scientific paradigm that is—at least partially, if not largely—at the root of the anthropocene. Many of them are drawing on “natural history” for epistemological guidance. This essay considers a handful of



toilers—Lydia Millet, Liz Breazeale, Daisy Hildyard, Anna Tsing, Donna Haraway, Kathryn Yusoff, Bruno Latour, and whoever I can get to—to assess how the discourse of natural history moves through their arguments. I'd like to suggest that they are not calling for a return to the nineteenth century vestige of the naturalist, but are rather highlighting the need for a new natural history that can take stock of a fragmented landscape. I'd like to conclude by demonstrating how their new natural history bears striking similarities to trends taking place in what might be called the anthropocenic sciences, and here I'll focus on what I'm calling "snarge ecology." Snarge ecology refers to the landscapes, technologies and people that create roadkill, bird-strikes, train-strikes, whale-strikes and manatee-strikes. But it also refers to the scientists and engineers who are working to mitigate the problem of vehicle-induced death (i.e., snarge). These snarge ecologists may be practicing the new natural history that anthropocenic toilers seem to be calling for. If I'm right, the most helpful epistemology of the anthropocene will be a humanities-infused science.

**Bio:** Gary Kroll teaches an array of courses in environmental history, but his primary interest is the history of exploration. He is the co-creator and instructor in the foundation course, "The History and Culture of Expeditions," for our expeditionary studies program. As an environmental historian and a historian of science, Dr. Kroll brings an important perspective to the expeditionary studies curriculum. In a past life, and one he still dreams of, Dr. Kroll spent hours blowing glass.

Lewis, Kristen. "Bodies *with* Organs: Engaging the Biological Body as Site of Critical Pedagogy through Dance Improvisation."

This paper suggests that so-called non-dancers (for instance, people doing social theory in academic contexts) could benefit from the physical practice of dance improvisation. I position dance improvisation as both a methodology for theorizing and a tool for critical pedagogies, useful for the way it foregrounds the biological body's agency in thinking and learning processes. As an embodied methodology, dance improvisation might be an effective form of what Pierre Bourdieu has called counter-training—physical practices that work to unseat deeply engrained habits of thinking and being. I see the persistent habit of thinking ourselves as separate from nature, the devastation of which ought to be undeniable, as something that we can unlearn.

Dance improvisation is one strategy, among many, that can help with this necessary unlearning. This paper/presentation/performance/dance class introduces an accessible-to-all-bodies dance improvisation practice as a way of unlearning and remaking the ways people acculturated in mainstream Western environments (often unconsciously) approach the question of the 'nature/culture' divide (a dichotomy that new materialism, for instance, indicates may no longer be tenable) [1]. I suggest that dance improvisation can help to uproot the habits of thinking that make it difficult, even for otherwise sophisticated thinkers, to embody the insight (e.g., coming out of new materialism as well as other places) that nature and culture are not separate but deeply entangled. In a good session of

improvisational dance, the body's materiality often merges with thinking and perceptual processes (and vice versa), transforming both the bodies and the thinking of improvising dancers. As a methodology for 'doing theory,' improvised dance might be a particularly effective way of bringing to consciousness the body-mind's experience of itself as a "socionatural" phenomenon [2]; neither nature nor culture but both, unfolding and emerging together. I advance a simple approach to dance improvisation informed by i) the work of dance pioneer and movement researcher Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen on embodied anatomy; and ii) the work of feminist new materialist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, who advocates for a practice of thinking with biology as a way to imagine new possibilities for freedom-expanding social change. In elaborating this approach, I draw on insights from my own extensive practice as a dance educator, choreographer, and improvising dancer. I root the concept of 'improvisation' in the scholarship emerging from the growing field of Critical Studies in Improvisation.

[1] Donna Haraway puts this untenability well, when she writes: "What happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social? (...) What happens when the best biologies of the twenty-first century cannot do their job with bounded individual plus contexts, when organisms plus environments, or genes plus whatever they need, no longer sustain the overflowing richness of biological knowledges, if they ever did?" (Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking" in *Staying with the Trouble* (London: Duke University Press: 2016), at p. 30. Karen Barad approaches the problem from a slightly different angle, coming as she does from a physics background, but frames the problematic nature/culture split in complementary terms: "Nature is neither a passive surface awaiting the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances." Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (2003) 28 *Gender and Science: New Issues* 3 at p. 827.

[2] Stephen Garlick, "The Return of Nature: Feminism, Hegemonic Masculinities, and New Materialisms" (2019) 22 *Men and Masculinities* 2, at p. 384.

**Bio:** Kristen Lewis, JD, is a dance educator, dance artist, and graduate student in law, with deep and abiding interests in the intersection between movement, embodiment, and theoretical concerns that trouble habitual modes of seeing nature and culture as separate. Her current performance research and choreographic work looks at the ways engagement with embodied anatomy (how we can relate to our anatomies with awareness, intelligence, and feeling) and with natural landscapes can awaken new lines of relational thinking between the human and the "not-human"—working to blur the boundaries between the two even as we come into fuller awareness of the vastness of "being human" (a vastness often denied when we leave out bodies out of discursive habits). Her graduate work, at the Osgoode Hall law school, looks at the intersection between law and Indigenous religion, from the standpoint of how a focus on stories, land, bodies, love, and the visceral register can fruitfully complicate how we think about the Western Law versus Indigenous Wisdom divide—a division whose boundaries, like so many boundaries, may be far more porous than current public discourse suggests.

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Ludewig, Julia. “Ecocriticism Meets Comics.”

The humanities play a role in addressing climate change by analyzing its socio-cultural underpinnings, its reflections in the artifacts we study, and its ethical imperatives. Ecocriticism is a powerful tool to do so, and I am currently exploring it in my field, comics studies. I argue, however, that an often untapped potential lies in what we *do* with that knowledge, how we give it life beyond our respective academic disciplines. Hence, I see my ecocritical approach to comics as only half of the work, work I want to couple with community engagement.

Comics certainly belong to the fields we might not immediately associate with ecocriticism, and they are more than yet another type of “text” we subject to this methodology. Through their multimodal nature, comics force us to rethink ecocriticism for the world of still images *and* words. Comics’ reception is peculiar, too, as “eco-comics” can benefit from the medium’s appeal to mass audiences (think superheroes) as much as niche readers (underground comix). I plan to survey ecocritical comics research with the goal of presenting both an inventory of insights and avenues for future research. As the equally important applied component, I envision a project in which students or local community organizations engage in a reading circle of “eco-comics” followed by a workshop in which members create and exhibit their own multimodal works.

Just as comics yoke two elements, images, and words, so too, should our practice as humanities scholars bridge academia and the public to contribute to the “is” and the “ought” of the Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Julia Ludewig is Assistant Professor of German at the World Languages and Cultures Department at Allegheny College where she teaches all levels of language, literature, and culture classes. Her research focuses on comics and graphic novels, language pedagogy, and environmental studies. Recent publications have appeared in *Inks*, the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, and *Diegesis*. She is currently teaching a class on plants in which students engage in community service with an environmental emphasis. In the summer of 2022, she is planning to take students to Germany for an experiential learning trip on the theme of sustainability.

MagShamhráin, Rachel. “‘Don’t go!’ Some Agoraphobic Postulates for a Post-Travel World.”

This paper takes inspiration—and consolation—from Lévi-Strauss’s *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) in which he begins his famous work on his travels in Brazil with the declaration that “je hais les voyages et les explorateurs,” but also from Flann O’Brien’s de Selby, who claimed in *The Third Policeman* that all journey is a hallucination, which he proved by travelling from Bath to Folkestone (and, such was his success, back again) without ever leaving his room.

The conjunction of *errare* (movement) and error at their etymological roots is well documented. But, simultaneously, one of the core metaphors of Enlightened modernity is mobility. To be mobile is to be free, to progress, to advance. To be confined is to be mad, criminal, ill and unproductive. As Elizabeth A. Pritchard puts it in the context of feminist theory, the “correlation of liberation and mobility appears to be a matter of common sense; after all, could a narrative of women’s advancement tell a spatial story of women’s containment?” But she then importantly wonders “why would feminists enjoin mobility, per se, as the measure of progress?” [1] Counterintuitively but brilliantly, she asks, why, if the history of women’s oppression has been containment, should we imagine dislocation as the story of women’s development. The radical reimagining of liberation as static, indoors and in opposition to a rhetoric of movement-as-progress will perhaps jar in a pandemic lockdown, although for many of us, having a quiet confinement, has led to otherwise unthinkable productivity in situ.

Using the example of Ingeborg Bachmann’s short story collection *Simultan* (1972), five stories, three of relative stasis, flanked by two of travel and movement, taking these examples as a pretext, this paper asks if we can deploy a rhetoric of motionlessness to rethink progress (and productivity, if we wish to retain the term at all) in terms that are more ecological and feminist, imaginatively replacing the error of movement metaphors with such quiet, near motionless acts as sitting, sleeping, staring, lounging (and even reading and writing). I look particularly at examples of agoraphobia in these texts not as instances of failure or regression or illness, but rather as moments of genuine liberation in what we might call inertia.

[1] Elizabeth A. Pritchard, “The Way out West: Development and the Rhetoric of Mobility in Postmodern Feminist Theory”, *Hypatia* 15.3 (2000): 45-72, here 45.

Matthews-Roper, Misty. “Embracing Empirical Ecocriticism: Measuring the Impacts of Climate Fiction.”

In the last decade, climate fiction (cli-fi) novels, characterized by their attention to anthropogenic climate change, have stirred interest in their capacity to impact readers’ minds and behaviours. Ecocritics often argue that cli-fi novels help us imagine different states of climate change and create space to reflect on how this crisis makes us think and feel. But beyond academic review and critique, what do we know about the influence of cli-fi? In response to this question a new sub-field of ecocriticism has emerged: empirical ecocriticism. It seeks to combine social science methodologies with textual analysis and other ecocritical concerns (such as questions of narrative voice). The first empirical survey of cli-fi readers was conducted by environmental humanities scholar Matthew Schneider-Mayerson (2018). The results of this and his two subsequent studies illustrated that reading any one cli-fi novel will not lead to the desired behavioural change. But gauging cli-fi’s effectiveness by measuring individual reader responses misses the social aspect of reading. I argue that we should observe groups of cli-fi readers to obtain a clearer picture of the social impact of these novels. Despite warnings that reading is becoming a lost art in our digital age, a recent study of Canadian readers suggests book club participation is

increasing. As well, in the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people found solace in online reading groups. If we continue to rely on scholarly critique and individual reports of cli-fi's impact, we could be missing valuable input about its influence.

**Bio:** Misty completed a joint M.A. in Intercultural German Studies (University of Waterloo/Universität Mannheim) in 2016 with a thesis on Albert Camus's concept of the Absurd in German climate fiction. After a short break from graduate school, she is now pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Waterloo's School of Environment, Resources, and Sustainability. Her research focuses on the role that climate fiction novels can play in our cultural understanding of climate change.

Mayo, Russell. "(Eco)Composition for the Anthropocene: Writing Pedagogies for a Post-Sustainability Planet."

As a result of the pressing problems caused by life in the Anthropocene, ecological matters must occupy a prevalent position in writing and humanities education. The "slow violence" Rob Nixon (2011) describes, brought on by extractivism's environmental destruction, has and will continue to reshape the contexts for writing, teaching, and living, with specific implications for educators and higher education writ large. Eco-Composition *for* the Anthropocene means engaging with new perspectives and pedagogies that focus on the challenging constraints and exigencies of teaching and writing in an age of potential collapse.

Twenty years after essential works by Christian Weisser and Sid Dobrin (2001, 2002) established the subfield of "eco-composition," writing scholars continue to neglect the complex relationships between discourse and environment, particularly as they relate to public or civic life in this frightening ecological context. My own classroom-based scholarship builds on this previous scholarship while updating it for the exigence created by the ongoing climate and ecological crises we face today. Additionally, I present an argument about the importance of reimagining sustainable forms of writing education in the Anthropocene, of which the pandemic is but one manifestation. Building on Jem Bendell's (2018) work on "Deep Adaption," my work offers an ethical guide for eco-composition pedagogies for a post-sustainability world, a world in which there is no "going back to normal."

**Bio:** Russell Mayo is an Assistant Professor of English and Writing Center Director at Purdue University Northwest in Northwest Indiana. His teaching and research connect writing, pedagogy, and environmental humanities. Russ is currently co-editing a collection of essays, *Exigence in the Anthropocene*, that engages with questions of teaching and writing in the age of global climate change. He is also conducting research on climate change education with diverse, pre-service English teachers in the Chicagoland area. Both of these projects explore the conjunctures of ecological crisis and English education in order to engage in ongoing debates about the problems and possibilities of literacy education for a post-sustainability world.

Mödersheim, Sabine. “Fissure and Fusion: (Non-Western) Storytelling for the Anthropocene.”

Starting with Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga’s 2018 exhibition *To Dig a Hole That Collapses Again* and Teju Cole’s essay *Eight Turns* written for the exhibition catalogue, I’m beginning to explore what these stories can teach us about the consequences of fossil fuel or mineral extraction, the devastation of bodies and the earth in colonial and postcolonial exploitation, and the need for remediation.

As Teju Cole writes, “Human intervention breaks the earth apart, through warfare, erosion, construction, and, of course, mining. Out of the provisional whole, perpetual fragments emerge.” The extractions create waste, often carried in bodies, lungs, and blood, through mining dust and water pollution, and destroy bodies through mechanized and dangerous labor. The destructive and deconstructive processes that Nkanga and Cole trace in their work are closely related to “facture” as in collecting, producing, and using the excavated materials for consumption while leaving wounded and scarred landscape behind and abandoned.

In her sculpture/performance *Solid Maneuvers*, Nkanga works through the embedded memories of the destruction and excavation, invisible in the manufactured product, dragging out a multitude of emotions, while the work *Carved to Flow* ask the question: “How does one put something back in a place where things have been taken out?” This project tells the story of not only the ingredients but also the economic transactions through which these materials are placed in circulation with a focus on the social aspect of possible regenerative practices and healing.

**Bio:** Sabine Mödersheim is Associate Professor of German Literature and Culture in the German Department. She currently serves as the Director of the Center for Early Modern Studies. Education: Dr. phil. (German and Philosophy, Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg); teaching positions at the Universität Freiburg/Germany and McGill University, Montreal. Her research interests are in the areas of literature and culture from the Renaissance to the present, in particular the German and European emblem tradition and visual culture, the use of images in architectural decorations, popular culture and propaganda. She serves on the advisory board of *Emblematica* and on the editorial board of *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur*. As Director of the UW Center for Early Modern Studies she organized the conference ‘Spiritual Optiks’: Jesuits and Visual Culture and edited a volume on *The Art of Persuasion: Emblems and Propaganda*.

Muir, Cameron. “Histories of Recovery and Adaptation in the Australian Anthropocene.”

The scale and intensity of the 2019–20 bushfires shocked Australians. With little warning, communities were cut off, people huddled on beaches, skies turned red, smoke hung in the air for weeks, and over a billion animals died, leading many to ask how we could better

prepare for such events in the future. Before this summer of fires, those of us living in air-conditioned urban comfort could discuss environmental extremes and disruption in a hypothetical or future tense—but some Australian communities have been encountering and responding to anthropogenic environmental hazards and disorder for decades. In these shadow places lie not only cautionary tales, but lessons about power and justice, about how individuals, communities and experts found ways to adapt and to build resilience.

I'm about to start a project with my colleague Prof Andrea Gaynor (University of Western Australia) exploring how communities have lived with abrupt environmental change and disorder. I'll be going to some of the most ecologically degraded places in Australia to talk to locals and with ecologists and others who are responding to those changes and asking about their values, their grief, how they are implicated in the changes, how they've survived, and the ways they've contributed to regeneration. The plan includes holding participatory workshops in which people could, for example, walk country or bring objects important to them, and record their stories with oral history, video, images, drawings, or material culture.

**Bio:** Cameron Muir is an environmental historian and writer. He is the co-editor of *Living with the Anthropocene: Love, loss and hope in the face of environmental crisis* (NewSouth, 2020). His essays and features have been shortlisted for the Eureka Prize for Science Journalism and the Bragg Prize for Science Writing. Later this year he starts a project at the University of Western Australia on histories of recovery and adaptation in the Anthropocene.

Ní Dhúill, Caitríona. “Engaged Humanities for the Anthropocene: Report from a New Network in Ireland.”

The rapidly destabilising ecological context demands new ways of conceiving humanities research. The paradigm of the hypermobile global researcher might be usefully queried and supplemented by an intensified focus on local, regional and national networks and initiatives. To this end, a network of researchers is currently forming across the arts and humanities disciplines at all higher education institutions on the island of Ireland (North and South) whose research is concerned with the human and cultural dimensions of climate change, environmental destruction, biodiversity loss, and the wider issues associated with the Anthropocene. The relatively compact scale of this network—encompassing some 40 researchers across 7 institutions and c. 10 disciplines—may provide a useful case-study for similar initiatives elsewhere, as we all confront the urgency of: rapid mobilisation of new critical perspectives and methodologies; incubation of new research partnerships; development of effective outreach, engagement and activism strategies; and initiation of discussions on implications for pedagogy. The Irish Humanities for the Anthropocene initiative sees itself as part of the wider global effort to 1) bring the critical and creative energies of humanities research to bear on the pressing contemporary concerns of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological degradation; 2) explore the extent to which environmental / climate crisis is also a crisis of values, ideologies, and symbolic systems; and 3) foster new and daring rethinks of the ‘local/global’ nexus.

**Bio:** Caitríona Ní Dhúill is Professor in German at University College Cork. She is the author of *Metabiography: Reflecting on Biography* (Palgrave 2020) and *Sex in Imagined Spaces: Gender and Utopia from More to Bloch* (Legenda 2010), and has published widely on life writing, utopian philosophy, gender theory and modern German literature. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin (Ph.D. 2005), she taught at the universities of Durham, Vienna and St Andrews before coming to UCC. She founded the Durham Centre for Culture and Ecology in 2017 and is a member of the Environmental Humanities working group of the Irish Humanities Alliance.

O'Brien, Annie Rose. "Soil, Memory, and the Equal Justice Initiative."

I am developing a paper on the work of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to address local and national legacies of white violence through ritual acts of public recognition and commemoration. I focus on their ritual collection of soil from lynching sites in order to consider ongoing connections between racial and environmental violence and degradation. Soil taken from an identified lynching site is placed in a jar or jars bearing the name of the person murdered there; it is made publicly available to visit in the community, then taken on a pilgrimage to and enshrined at EJI's National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. More than just jars of dirt, these are seen as relics of the lives, bodies, and experiences of victims of lynchings, both witness to and victim of white violence and claims to supremacy. They are archives of earth, experience, violence, and blood. Through research conducted at a number of these sites during Summer 2020, I hope to offer broader reflections on human porosity and vulnerability, the absent-presence of white and settler-colonial violence in dominant conceptions of American spaces and places, and the ever-present Anthro/Plantationo/Capitalocene. I would like to explore our inescapable connections to and reliance on soil, and what this means in a world where corpo-humans continuously erode, poison, and contaminate the soil beyond repair, as well as consider the ways in which discourses of whiteness, Christianity, and settler colonialism have fueled inherently violent and extractive systems of environmental and social devaluation.

**Bio:** I am a Religion in the Americas Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My work considers race, religion, and violence as interconnected elements of settler colonialism and nation-building, with a focus on lynching and public memorials in the Southern US. Currently my work focuses on soil as medium for anti-racist work, disrupting white claims to supremacy, and unearthing buried histories, memories, and futures.

Pelekanidis, Theodor. "The Anthropocene as a Challenge to Historical Knowledge: What Kind of Event Are We Living in?"

Climate change personifies this lost subject for historical science, as it brings historians and social scientists before their social responsibilities. The question of whether the era of



the Anthropocene should be regarded as a breaking point in history, as the slow movement of human development in relation to nature reaches a tipping point and possibly leads to radical changes in humans' way of life, is deeply historical. Global warming is gradually evolving into what has been called "ecocide" that shows humanity the limits of the predominant growth model followed in the last century. It has crushed the illusion that humankind can transform nature according to its will indefinitely; it has shown that human's ecological footprint on the planet puts an end to the differentiation between human and natural history; and it has made it of crucial importance to develop a new knowledge regime that not just promotes the collaboration of natural and human sciences but draws in a direction of their synthesis, a productive unification of human knowledge that can provide answers on a global scale and save the whole species from incoming destruction.

**Bio:** Ph.D. student at Humboldt University in Berlin, writing my thesis titled "The Postmodern Critique of Classical Historiography and the Example of the Holocaust: Philosophy of History as a Means of Political Emancipation."

[Peraica, Ana. "Photographocene: Mediation of Anthropocene Images."](#)

The consciousness and knowledge of the Anthropocene revise most of human knowledge and media. So it does with visual representations. Invented immediately after Anthropocene, photography becomes a silent witness of human destruction of the environment. Thus, it is necessary to reapproach photography history to define our relationship to all changes in the environment.

This presentation is analyzing various aspects of photographic image relates to the Anthropocene; intentionality to unintentionality, formal genres (before and after; time-lapse, camera monitoring), as well as history of particular genres that indicate changes (landscape photography, animal/wildlife/safari photography, archaeological photography...), but also recent phenomena as 'recording climate snuff'. It implements the theory of the Anthropocene so as to not only analyze the problem of its historical mediation but also the apparent lack of consequent action following the publishing of the image. Finding such an image critical, this presentation also defines the era of Photographocene (Peraica 2021). Such an era was initiated with the invention of photography, which happened only 55 years after the steam engine's invention, which defined the beginning of the Anthropocene according to Paul Crutzen (2006). Photographocene is the time of Anthropocene as recorded by the medium of photography, at the beginning accidentally, yet nowadays fully consciously and strategically. It is the era visible only in comparison among images in a long span. And that era will end after human extinction, recording complete devastation of life by nonhuman operators in space (Zylinska 2017).

**Bio:** Ana Peraica is the author of *The Age of Total Images* (Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam 2019), *Fotografija kao Dokaz* (Multimedijalni institute, Zagreb, 2018), *Culture of the Selfie* (Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2017). She also published in readers/anthologies by MIT Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, SAGE... She is a

Visiting Professor at Danube University (AT) and was recently a Visiting Fellow at Central European University (HU).

Planche, Jill. “‘A Very Long, Deep History’: Thinking Reconciliation, Decolonization and Environmentalism through Gilles Deleuze’s ‘Minor’ Theatre Ontology.”

To seize the moment of emergence from the pandemic condition in a posttraumatic space, Achille Mbembe declares, we must “reclaim the lungs of our world with a view to forging new ground,” and imagine differently about ourselves and spaces than allowed previously. He repudiates the hegemony of linear models and dualistic partition of mind/body, nature/culture, and speaks instead of “*interlocking* of pasts, presents, and futures” in recognition that humans are part of a long history of “*time as lived*” not simply theirs. I argue Gilles Deleuze’s minoritarian ontology offers such an insurgent way of *thinking*, breaking from dominant encoded geographical and psychological space toward the immanent process of self-organizing bodies. His notion engages the geological (the earth) and the philosophical (society) to experiment with “flows of energy and matter, ideas and action,” and offers a generative way of thinking how bodies are embedded in space, moving beyond an identitarian grounding of assumed identities as processes of becoming.

Deleuze’s approach of *thinking immanence* extends to conceptualization of ‘minor’ theatre. Can a minor theatre praxis, then, proffer an alternative space of thinking to break the impasse in current discourse by destabilizing and reshaping bounded physical, social and psychological spaces whose histories, landscapes, languages, cultures and imaginative worlds were interrupted and radically reformulated by Western imperialism and globalization? Can it contribute a philosophy of thought to create a “space as stage” for political and cultural conversation about how space—in its broadest sense—can be structured otherwise?

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**Bio:** independent scholar and sessional instructor (Ryerson U and Brock U). Interests include postcolonial and decolonial literature; ‘minor’ theatre’s role in contemporary discourse in South Africa and Canada; decolonizing knowledges; posthumanism; social/cultural policy (particularly social justice).

Pnevmonidou, Elena. “Songs from Beyond the Anthropocene: Paul Celan’s Glacier Poetry.”

This paper builds on my research relating to the poetics of grief, memory, and remembrance in the poetry of Paul Celan. Celan is generally regarded as one of the most important Holocaust

poets in the German language. Written self-consciously in the aftermath of the Holocaust and with continued reference to, Celan's entire poetic oeuvre is dedicated to the search for a new poetics adequate to the task of writing the catastrophe and to the yearning to move beyond. This yearning gestures temporally in both directions, to the past that is lost and to a future for which there is as yet no language. Writing from the catastrophe, Celan meditates on the dead, memory and commemoration, and the predicament of the poet who remembers.

Remarkably, in Celan these lyrical meditations take the shape of a temporal layering, not unlike a geological formation or a glacier that gains its shape and internal dynamics through the compacting of ice layers on top of and into each other. Celan offers his poetic record of the times as a sediment deposit on the various layers and landscapes of the planet. Celan's poetry is replete with geologic and glacial metaphors, and indeed, these are not only markers of memory and grief, but also the foundation for the new poetics for writing in and of the catastrophe.

Through a reading of one of the most important glacier poems by Celan, "Weggebeizt / Etched Away," from the collection *Atemwende / Breathturn*, this paper explores the extent to which Celan's writings offer the foundation for a poetics of the Anthropocene. There is a twofold concern implied here. On the one hand, there is the question of what constitutes "Anthropocene poetry" and to what extent Celan's Holocaust poetry is also Anthropocene poetry. On the other hand, and more importantly, what does it mean to read Celan's glacier poetry *for* the Anthropocene, in light of the precarious predicament of glaciers today?

**Bio:** Elena Pnevmonidou is Associate Professor in the Department of German and Slavic Studies and Director of the European Studies program at the University of Victoria. Her main areas of research revolve around aesthetic theory and discourses of gender and otherness in the Age of Goethe; modern poetics; critical theory; and Bertolt Brecht. Her publications have appeared in *German Quarterly*, *Brecht Yearbook*, *Seminar*, etc. She is presently working on the motifs of ice and snow in the poetry of Bertolt Becht and Paul Celan.

Powers, Michael. "W. G. Sebald and the Eco-Medial Imaginary."

My contribution to the research workshop presents work in progress on the depiction, understanding, and overall mediation of nature in W. G. Sebald's writings. Sebald's prose is known not only for blurring the boundaries between literary genres, but also for incorporating a variety of visual media, including graphic images, photography, and film. My talk explores two interlinked themes that recur throughout many of Sebald's highly intermedial texts: the essential role of writerly and visual media in shaping how we perceive nature, and the related, if often overlooked mediality of natural environments themselves. Focusing on the exemplary interrelation of nature and media in Sebald's writings, my paper examines the ethical and epistemological stakes of reconsidering humanity not as distinct from nature, but rather as embedded and entangled with it, including the very media through which and *in* which our historical and cultural perceptions of our natural surroundings are formed.

**Bio:** Michael Powers is Visiting Assistant Professor of German Studies at Macalester College. His research interests include literary theory, visual culture and media studies, and the environmental humanities. He has published on Jean Paul, Goethe, Freud, Bloch, zur Mühlen, and Merleau-Ponty in journals including *MLN*, *The German Quarterly*, and *Pacific Coast Philology*. He is currently completing a book project on Walter Benjamin's image and media theory.

Ranis, Marek. "Decolonizing Climate Change: Artists of the Peripheries."

It is about time to decolonize the narrative of the Arctic by giving a voice to native artists there. In my paper I focus on four contemporary artists: Sonya Kelliher-Combs (Iñupiaq Athabascan), based in Alaska; Maureen Gruben (Inuvialuit), based in the Northwest Territories of Canada; and Aslaug Juliussen, Hans Ragnar Mathisen (Sámi) of northern Norway.

Those four artists, whose creative work has been inspired by their native heritage and the current environmental and social conditions in the Circumpolar North, strive to create art which is deeply invested in recognizing and preserving traditional knowledge, culture, and respect for the environment. They all tackle the most important contemporary issues, from climate to social justice and decolonization. All three are feeling firsthand the urgency of oncoming environmental catastrophe; in that context, they want to shape and decolonize the narrative of their land and their people.

All four represent thousands of years of presence and cultural tradition in their respective lands, which are wrongly considered extreme and empty peripheries of the world. All four, literally and symbolically, are stitching the narrative of their land while increasingly understanding the global resonance of events in the High North.

Global events inspire many artists to travel to the remote corners of the world. However, this project recognizes those creatives who are already there, for whom not only their art but also their daily experiences are determined by their geography and heritage, for whom global events are their identity.

**Bio:** Marek Ranis is a multi-media environmental artist and Associate Professor of Art at the College of Arts and Architecture, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Since 2003, Ranis has conducted creative research on *Albedo*, encompassing a series of projects ranging from installation, sculpture, and painting, to video and photography. *Albedo's* focus has been global climate change and the era of Anthropocene. His project, *Arrival Greenland*, explores climate change in the context of post-colonialism. His films *Hold On*, *Like Shishmaref*, and *Tourist* investigate the relationship between the perceived remoteness of climate change-related events and their global reach. His recent multi-disciplinary project, *Arctic Utopia*, is focused on dramatic social, economic, and demographic changes in the High North while addressing language diversity in Alaska. Research projects on climate have taken Ranis to Iceland, Norway, Australia, Alaska, Greenland, Mauritius, and South Africa. In 2017, in recognition of his work and research

in the High North, Ranis was appointed a Curator-at-Large at the Anchorage Museum in Anchorage, Alaska. He is the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships, and residencies, including the UNESCO Aschberg Fellowship, American-Scandinavian Foundation Grant, Rasmuson Fellowship, N. C. Arts Council Fellowship Award, multiple Arts and Science Council Grants, and several UNCC Faculty Research Grants.

Redlich, Jeremy. “Representing Value and Interconnectivity in Yoko Tawada’s Eco-Texts.”

Focusing on four of her post-3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake texts, this presentation will explore the multiple ecologically based topics and debates represented in Yoko Tawada’s fiction and non-fiction. Taking the essay “Choosing Between Life and Human” as the point of departure, I will trace Tawada’s representation of ‘value’ back to Foucault’s biopolitics and Agamben’s bare life, and then situate her ideas within recent discussions of value by Latour and Joshua Clover during the time of COVID. I read this focus on value, and its application to both human and non-human life, as an entry point into Tawada’s recent texts, in particular the novel *The Last Children of Tokyo*. The post-3.11 texts continue to explore issues related to borders, boundaries, nationalism, and identity that have appeared throughout Tawada’s oeuvre, but these issues have been braided into explicit and expansive discussions of anthropogenic environmental degradation. My aim is to explore these key ecological issues, in particular the impact of nuclear power, effects of climate change, and globalization as complicit in environmental destruction, and how these issues can be understood when framed within Japan’s recent socio-political context, and when read in dialogue with scholarship in ecocriticism by Alaimo (transcorporeality), Heise (global and local), Morton (hyperobjects), and Nixon (slow violence). Tawada thematizes the problematic interconnectivity of humans and environment through representations of contaminated bodies, soil, water, food, and language, all of which take on a different sense of ‘value’. I will expound on this use of value and interconnectivity to construct a coherent picture of Tawada’s ecological thinking.

**Bio:** After completing my Ph.D. in Germanic Studies from the University of British Columbia in 2012, I moved to Japan to work as a lecturer at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. After 2.5 years there I then taught at the University of Tokyo for three years, and since 2018 I have been an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Culture at Fuji Women’s University in Sapporo, Japan. In addition to introductory literature and literary theory courses, I teach a seminar course on ecocriticism. While I have been publishing on Yoko Tawada’s fiction and non-fiction for over a decade (most recently an article titled “Illegible Bodies and Cultural Illiteracy in Yoko Tawada’s *Verwandlungen* and ‘Das Fremde aus der Dose,’” 2021), it was only with the publication of her 2018 novel *The Last Children of Tokyo* that I really immersed myself in the field of ecocriticism. I hope to use the opportunity of presenting and discussing my work at this conference in order to advance this work-in-progress towards a publishable paper, and I would relish the chance to hear what others are doing in this essential field within the Humanities.

Simson, Henrietta. “The Shape of Landscape: Reimagining Space for the Anthropocene.”

As an artist my research is focussed on landscape’s characterisation as ‘image’ and I consider the problematic implications of this at this juncture in history. I am especially interested in critiquing the assumptions of realism generated by visual technologies that have grown out of a Western perspectival history, whose hegemonic forms have established a regime of unproductive distance, characterising landscape as three-dimensional ‘space,’ the generalised background in front of which human action is played out.

For this workshop, I will discuss an ongoing exploration of landscape that draws from bodily and material sensibilities, which I find in the landscape backgrounds of late medieval paintings. These works present the landscape as something other than Cartesian extension and as such can help to alter its increasingly unproductive positioning within Western subject/object ontologies. Rather than being the straightforward settings in which human narratives are enacted, I will argue that their unique forms in fact work in a way that triggers a physical empathy and can therefore become a ‘tool’ for mitigating the feelings of loss created by ecological collapse.

By moving beyond landscape as the ‘de facto’ representational image to a sense of landscape as embodied form—understanding landscape as ‘body’ and defining it as non-human subjectivity—requires a reappraisal of ontological definitions, and especially of space and our relation to it. This pre-historical framework to the imbrication of image and space is re-visited and is found to offer up creative possibilities for re-thinking landscape under the conditions of the Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Henrietta Simson is an artist who researches representations of landscape through its historical and technological development, seeking images of this overtly visualized form appropriate to a digital context framed by ecological crisis. She completed an M.A. in painting at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2007, and then a practice-related Ph.D. in 2017, with the thesis title, *Landscape After Landscape, Pre-Genre Backgrounds in a Post-Genre Digital Age*. In 2011 she won the Threadneedle Prize for Painting and Sculpture, and her work and writing have been exhibited and published widely. Her recent work has researched landscape through the mine and the cave as both material and spiritual wilderness. She understands these ideas as urgent not only in terms of the pandemic, but within a wider early 21st century context. She currently teaches at Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts, London

Sukhenko, Inna. “Nuclear Storytelling: Through Literary Figurations to Nuclear Literacy.”

Within the contemporary agendas of energy humanities and environmental humanities the research on the narrative tools of emoting nuclear energy in nuclear storytelling reveals how the literary dimensions of multi-levelled reconsideration of ‘the nuclear’ can contribute to ‘literary energy narrative’ studies (Goodbody, 2019). Such perspective allows to distinguish the socio-cultural parameters of nuclear energy as a response of the society

to the current debates on energy transitions and sustainable energy's challenges (Bellamy, 2016) in the perspective of critical thinking of energy history and future energy scenarios.

In the context of literary-critical analysis of nuclear fictional writing, nuclear storytelling is studied within the debates about the correlation of 'fabulously textual' and 'factual' in nuclear fiction. In this aspect studying the literary implications of nuclear energy and nuclear energy related events (nuclear technology, nuclear policy, nuclear wastes, uranium mines, nuclear disasters, and their aftermath) can shift the boundaries of 'nuclear narrative' with its 'fabulously textual' 'imagined event' (Derrida, 1984) within the nuclear traumatic experience of the Nuclear Anthropocene with further contributing to shaping nuclear literacy.

My research project provides the comparative narrative analysis of fictional storytelling about nuclear energy-related issues in North American and East European literary practices of the post-Chernobyl Age within the Nuclear Anthropocene's rhetoric, which allows highlighting the literary parameters of the emotional component of narrating 'nuclear energy' towards shaping nuclear literacy/awareness within the values' paradigm in the technology-driven society. Such approach not only yields ground-breaking results in the literary energy narrative studies but also creates an exchange of knowledge to join the efforts for sustainable energy discourse and develop the narrative toolkit for communicating the values and priorities of our energy-dependent society.

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**Bio:** Inna Sukhenko is a visiting researcher of Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub, the University of Helsinki. Her current project is focused on researching nuclear narrative within ecocritical studies. After defending Ph.D. in literary studies (Dnipro, Ukraine), she was a fellow of the University of Turku (Erasmus, 2012), the University of Cambridge (Cambridge Colleges Hospitality Scheme, 2013), the University of Ohio (SUSI-the US Department of States, 2015), the University of Warsaw (Artes Liberales Foundation, 2016). Her research interests lie within literary energy narrative studies, environmental humanities, energy humanities, ecocriticism, nuclear criticism, comparative literature, eco-narratology. She contributed to the international projects on ecocriticism, environmental literature studies, energy humanities. She is among the contributors of *The Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*, Ed. S. Slovic, et al. (Routledge, 2019) and *Energy Humanities and Energy Transition. Current State and Future Directions*. Ed. M. Mišík, et al. (Springer Nature, 2020). She is a member of the

Association for Literary Urban Studies (Finland), Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS).

Torres Mallma, Anna. “Precarious Bodies Walking Dystopic Cities: Pedestrians, Broken Bodies and Cities on the Verge of Collapse in Contemporary Latin American Narrative.”

My dissertation revolves around the movement of precarious bodies in dystopic or post-apocalyptic urban spaces in contemporary novels by Chilean, Argentine, Peruvian and Mexican writers. Defining the walker as an ordinary individual who moves in and out of (mostly urban) collective spaces, my dissertation examines the effect of spatial dislocations on individuals and communities struggling to survive in cities on the verge of collapse in the wake of poorly implemented neo-liberal agendas. Among those effects are physical ailments, mental disorientation, and various forms of speech pathologies (or excesses) as reflected in the writing. These spatial dislocations are in part the result of political, economic and ecological crises brought on by both neoliberal and pseudo-Marxist governments, crises that continue to render major Latin American cities unsafe and unsustainable. These works explore the disappearance of collective spaces and, at the same time, the potential and pitfalls of public protests as ways of reappropriating lost space and mobility. Finally, I propose to examine how the tension between dispossessed pedestrians and the broken city is reflected in these works’ writing (both in terms of structure and style).

**Bio:** I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Illinois in Chicago. My research interests are dystopian spaces (spaces of crises) and dystopian bodies (dysfunctional bodies) as new ways of materiality of this era. I turn to some theories that support the “spatial turn” in social sciences, such as the studies of Henri LeFebvre, David Harvey, Edward Soja, Michel De Certeau, Robert Tally, Doreen Massey and Tim Cresswell. Their works emphasizes the role of the physical space as a tangible component of social interactions. Furthermore, the spatial phenomenological studies carried out on human geography, such as the body perception theory of the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, states the importance of the body as the first medium to explore the world (e.g., home, workplace, street, city, ecosystems). At this moment, I have been working as a teaching assistant in the Spanish Department at UIC and I am working on my dissertation project.

Wolny, Katarzyna M. & Dorota M. Ciszek. “Restorative Imaginings: Representations of Nature in Polish Contemporary Narrative.”

Inspired by the recent instances of granting lakes, rivers, and dolphins a status of “legal/environmental personhood,” our project examines representations of natural objects in literary fiction from the past decade. At this turning point of the climate crisis, what do such representations tell us about our sense of belonging in the natural world? We are interested in comparing the way fantasy and magical realist narratives respond to climate change and the resulting climate anxiety. In these early stages of research, we plan to focus



on the most recent, critically acclaimed works from Polish literature paying close attention to elements such as anthropomorphism and personification, and trends such as earth-based spirituality and revival of the ancient Slavic mythologies. However, the scope of materials we consult may grow as the project progresses. We will use Raymond Williams's definition of the emergent structures of feeling as our theoretical basis to examine to what extent climate anxiety influences representations of nature in the literature of our time. Through close readings of ecocriticism and cross-disciplinary studies of sentience and communication, we want to trace how literature joins other disciplines in imagining our future differently than the post-apocalyptic wasteland. Through this project, we hope to respond to the philosopher Ewa Bińczyk's suggestion that some of the problems of the Anthropocene are caused by the "crisis of imagination." What kind of world do our stories imagine now? Are they the kind of stories that can inspire us to give up the comforts of unsustainability and reforge the connection with mother earth?

**Bios:** Katarzyna Majchrowicz-Wolny is a first year M.A. student of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests lie in intersections of Central European and Anglophone literatures and cultures, primarily in regard to immigrant experiences, solidarity, and the emergent structures of feeling from the last two decades of the twentieth century to the present. She holds a bachelor's degree in English literature.

Dorota Majchrowicz-Ciszek is a Polish educator, currently living and working in a primary school in England. In her work, she stresses the importance of living in harmony with nature. She believes in the advantages of holistic education—integration of discovery and experience of nature into daily school activities to foster the growth of care for the natural world. She holds a bachelor's degree in English philology.

[Woodson-Boulton, Amy. "The Anthropocene or Racial Capitalism? Some Shared Paradoxes and Erasures in the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Age of Plastic."](#)

I've often wondered what John Ruskin or William Morris, those tireless critics of the cheapness and ugliness of industrial products and processes, would think about plastic. Ruskin's design ethos of "truth to materials" shows us the economic logic that was already at play in the nineteenth century—he railed against the substitution of wood for marble or plaster for stone. That same logic would drive chemists to develop synthetic polymers applicable to numerous uses and available through the apparently endless supply of fossil fuels. Plastic is now evidence in the rock strata for the Anthropocene as a geological epoch and embodies multiple aspects of our current crises: our disposable economy, reliance on fossil fuels, rapidly changing climate, and the unevenly distributed toxic effects at all stages of plastic's production, use, and disposal. These negative externalities fall along historically constructed lines of racial inequality, and such disparities continue to make plastic seem deceptively cheap. Thinking through the related histories of the international Arts and Crafts movement and of plastic can help us think about a Humanities for the Anthropocene through the intertwined problems of systemic racism, mass production, hidden costs, art and design, and extractive economies. Even when critical of industrial capitalism, logics of extraction, and aesthetics of substitution, many (white) artists and

writers have erased the racialized aspects of fossil-fuel-driven mass production, or the earlier histories of race-based slavery that pushed industrialization forward. A Humanities for the Anthropocene will need to grapple with and acknowledge such paradoxes and erasures.

**Bio:** Amy Woodson-Boulton is associate professor of British and Irish history and past chair of the Department of History at Loyola Marymount University. She holds a B.A. from UC Berkeley and an M.A. and Ph.D. from UCLA. Her work concentrates on cultural reactions to industrialization, particularly the history of museums, the social role of art, and the changing status and meaning of art and nature in modern society. Published work includes articles and book chapters as well as her monograph *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford, 2012) and a volume that she co-edited with Minsoo Kang, *Visions of the Industrial Age, 1830–1914: Modernity and the Anxiety of Representation* (Routledge, 2008). She is currently working on a book-length study of ideas about interactions between anthropology, art criticism, and the concept of “primitive art,” tentatively titled *Explaining Art: Nature, Authentic Culture, and the Search for Origins in the Age of Aesthetes and Anthropologists*. She teaches courses on British, Irish, modern European, imperial, and global history, with a focus on museum studies and cultural, public, and environmental methodologies.

[Wurr, Julia. “Anti-Natalism, the Dystopian Double Standard and the Anthropocene.”](#)

This project analyses the intricate relationship between literature, (anti-)natalism and the Anthropocene. Whereas natalism evaluates birth positively, anti-natalism posits that human beings should abstain from procreation. Broadly speaking, anti-natalist reasonings range from the ethical argument that reproduction is intrinsically irresponsible and cruel to environmental concerns about the problems which the steadily growing human population causes for the planet. Especially in this latter strand of ecological anti-natalism, anti-natalist concerns are thus tightly interwoven with concerns about the Anthropocene.

Despite the implications of human procreation for the Anthropocene, however, debates about anti-natalism are still often considered a taboo—especially if they concern the procreation of those who are privileged. In fact, anti-natalist positions as furthered by proponents such as David Benatar and Théophile de Giraud are often met with alienation and even evoke the deprecating suggestion that its adherents kill themselves. In contrast, anti-natalist demands are issued more openly with regard to those less privileged. At worst, they are instrumentalized in treatises such as Thilo Sarrazin’s books, where they are conflated in racist biopolitical considerations of who should—or should not—still give birth.

Oscillating between taboo and discriminatory demand, this double standard in negotiations of anti-natalism is also visible in the cultural marketplace. While anti-natalist ideas are mostly absent in negotiations of the role of procreation for those who are privileged, dystopian films and fiction often feature anti-natalist and Malthusian ideas as a means of ensuring the survival of the fittest at the expense of those most vulnerable. So, if the play

*Lungs* (2011) or the 2013/14 UK TV series *Utopia* (and, to a certain degree, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*) are exceptions in that they critically and ambiguously approach the role of human procreation in the Global North, scenarios in which humanity has trouble giving birth are often generically linked to dystopian film and fiction. In these dystopian scenarios, both the survival and procreation of the privileged and the perpetuation of a system of exploitative and unequal growth are frequently achieved at the expense of those less privileged.

By exploring different forms of natalism and anti-natalism in the contemporary cultural marketplace, this project does not only combine the concept of anti-natalism with postcolonial approaches, but it also explores what role literary studies can play in the study of ecofeminism, biocolonialism—and the Anthropocene at large.

**Bio:** Dr. Julia Wurr is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of English Studies at the University of Trier, Germany. She studied English and French philology as well as International Relations at the Universities of Trier, Liège and Oxford. In 2019, she completed a Ph.D. thesis exploring the Neo-Orientalist commercialisation of the Arab uprisings in English, French, and German language fiction. Her postdoc project explores the aesthetic and ideological dimensions of natalism and anti-natalism in postcolonial fiction.

Yang, Peter. “Incorporate the Anthropocene Turn into German and Chinese Language Courses.”

My research focus in this workshop is the importance of incorporating the Anthropocene turn into German and Chinese language courses, and the pedagogy of such an incorporation. I will draw on my experience with teaching the Anthropocene turn (i.e., human induced climate change and environmental degradation) in my German and Chinese language courses. My planned case study will also explore how to make the lessons on the Anthropocene turn and the green movement that aim to move our world from this vicious circle through decarbonization, renewable energy turn, and sustainable development in a more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable future. It will examine the meaning of teaching foreign language students the green movement in Germany and China as a response of foreign language profession to the Anthropocene and the meaning of learning the green transformation for them as the Anthropocene turn global citizens. It will also explore the pedagogical aspect of my foreign language courses covering the green movement in Germany and China. This exploration will focus on how to make this topic of green movement more interesting for foreign language students, the other way around, how to enhance the motivation of foreign language students for the green topical courses. To this effect, the pedagogical investigation of teaching and learning green topical language courses will focus on how to make these foreign language courses more relevant to our Anthropocene turn and post-Anthropocene world.

**Bio:** Associate Professor of German, Chinese and Comparative Literature at Case Western Reserve University, where he teaches and researches on renewable energy, sustainable

development, and German and Chinese Studies, as well as technology-based language learning pedagogy in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. His current research focuses on challenges and solutions in renewable energy, energy storage, and energy efficiency. He has been holding his tenure at CWRU following years as German translator and senior researcher in China and Austria, and years as Language Center Directors at CWRU and elsewhere. His publications include books and translated volumes, numerous refereed journal papers, book chapters, and book and film reviews. The books he published since his arrival at CWRU include (a) theater research monographs *Theater ist Theater* on theatricality in the chalk-circle plays by Bertolt Brecht and Li Xingdao (Peter Lang, 1998) and *Play is Play* on the Swiss playwright Max Frisch's *The Great Wall* (University Press of America, 2000); (b) German textbooks *Modern German Plays* (Peter Lang, 2015) and *German through Modern Plays* (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2018); and (c) renewable energy and sustainability studies *Rolling Back the Tide of Climate Change* (The Green Economics Institute, 2014), *Renewables are Getting Cheaper* (The Green Economics Institute, 2015), and *Cases on Green Energy and Sustainable Development* (Engineering Science Reference, 2019).