

MESEA

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Europe and the Americas**

14th Biennial Conference

**“Cultural Environments:
Spheres, Ethnicity, Corporeality”**

**Ionian University,
Department of Environment,
Zakynthos Island Campus,
Greece**

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Book of Abstracts

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ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTES:

Juan Ignacio Oliva, Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Canaries, Spain

Border Membranes: An Ecomaterialist Approach to Crossing-Corporeality

The study of Borders has undergone a major paradigm shift in recent years, framed within the perception of a new Era, with many possible names: from the Anthropocene at the beginning of the millennium (Crutzen) or the Wasteocene (Armiero) to the more recent Chthulucene (Haraway) and Symbiocene (Albrecht). Ecological New Materialism contributes a new theoretical-critical framework based on the existence of a liquid (post)modernity that affects all social and institutional spheres. Literary and cultural Ecotones are situated within this context, analyzing the different tensions existing between dividing lines from the polysemous perspective of Biology. Essentially, they can be defined as ‘zones of tension between two habitats’ with different, sometimes radically opposing, characteristics, where significant kinetic activity, mutations, and a critical space of great vitality are generated. Ecotones thus serve as multidisciplinary and hybrid spaces of intersection, where pollinating creativity thrives between classes, races, genders, animal and plant species, biota and abiota, and in relation to the territory (*loci loquentes* and *loci agentes*). In this lecture, the various possibilities this theory offers will be scrutinized from a material perspective and in connection with new concepts of entanglements between bodies: ‘porous viscosity’ (Tuana), ‘transcorporeality’ (Alaimo), and ‘textural membranes’ as surfaces that act sympoietically or symbiotically between humans and more-than-humans, language and matter, or texts and worlds. Finally, for this analysis, contemporary poems by authors who live in cross-border areas between countries and systems in collision—be they economic, political, or natural—will be used, such as Norma E. Cantú in Texas-Tamaulipas (North America) or Birendra Chattopadhyai in Bengala-Bangla Desh (Southeast Asia), among other showcases.

Juan Ignacio Oliva is full professor of Anglophone Postcolonial Literatures (with an interest in Ecocriticism) at U. La Laguna, Tenerife, Canaries, Spain. He studies humans and their environment in ecopoetry, and the interactive observation of landscape and the relationship of sensitive selves with an agent and eloquent nature. In addition to several co-edited monographs in journals such as *ExCentric Narratives* (3), or *RCEI* (64 / 77 / 81 / 82 / 83), he has edited *The Painful Chrysalis. Essays on Contemporary Cultural and Literary Identity* (Peter Lang, 2011), *Realidad y simbología de la montaña [Reality and Symbolology of the Mountain]* (UAH, 2012) and co-edited *Revolving Around India(s): Alternative Images, Emerging Perspectives* (CSP, 2019). He is editor-in-chief of *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* (2014-), and head of the Universidad de La Laguna Centre for Canadian Studies (1997-). Currently, he holds the position of president of the Spanish James Joyce Association (2019-), and vice president of SAAS (Spanish Association for American Studies, 2023-). He was also president of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and the Environment (EASLCE, in the period 2014-2016) and of the Spanish Association for Interdisciplinary India Studies (AEEII, 2014-2019). He is a member of the research groups GIECO-Franklin-UAH (Ecocriticism) and Ratnakara-UdL (Indian Ocean Literatures).

Alexandra Ganser, University of Vienna, Austria

The Astropelago: Navigating North American Imaginaries of Outer Space

“The Moon belongs to everyone / Best things in life they’re free / Stars belong to everyone / They cling there for you and for me,” Sam Cooke crooned in 1964, echoing both the romantic tradition of stargazing and the idea of the sky and its celestial bodies as a commons beyond economic structures of ownership and profit. While the decades of the first Space Age epitomized a mostly symbolic appropriation of outer space in the Cold War context, today’s “Second Space Age” is quite literally changing the materialities of the cosmos and its international laws. My lecture starts by drawing out the similarities (and a few differences) between conceptualizing the world oceans during the first era of globalization in early modernity and outer space today, critiquing technocratic and utilitarian conceptions of both the world oceans and what seems to be imagined not as a “final,” but rather as an infinite frontier from a globally circulating US-American perspective. In the second part of my talk, I will discuss a number of counter-imaginaries to the dominant discourse of frontierism by turning to Afrofuturist examples as well as to Indigenous voices that question settler colonial conceptualizations of an astropelago – a sea of stars – and present critical correctives to hegemonic outer space narratives. From Gil Scott-Heron’s “Whitey on the Moon” (1970) and “Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project” (2024) to Indigenous astronomy and star stories, these perspectives parallel ethnically different oceanic epistemologies such as Paul Gilroy’s 1993 concept of the Black Atlantic. Alongside these voices and with critics like Gayatri Spivak and Bruno Latour, I will argue for a new logic of planetarity that is both *down to earth* and *up in the air*.

Alexandra Ganser holds the chair in North American Studies (literatures and cultures) at the University of Vienna, Austria, where she also headed the interdisciplinary research platform and PhD program “Mobile Cultures and Societies: Interdisciplinary Studies on Transnational Formations” (2015-2024). She co-directs the Centre for Canadian Studies (ZKS) and is co-editor of the book series “Maritime Literature and Culture” with Meg Samuelson and Charne Lavery (Palgrave Macmillan). A Fulbright alumna and board member as well as former Daniel Christoph Ebeling fellow at the American Antiquarian Society, her research interests currently focus on American astroculture and on oceanic refugee mobilities in North American literatures. Her book publications include the monographs *Crisis and Legitimacy in Atlantic American Narratives of Piracy, 1678–1865* (2020) and *Roads of Her Own: Gendered Space and Mobility in American Women’s Road Narratives, 1970–2000* (2009) as well as a number of edited volumes and special issues, among them *Mobile Kulturen und Gesellschaften / Mobile Cultures and Societies*, ed. With Annegret Pelz (2020); *Pirates, Drifters, Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in American Culture and Beyond*, ed. With Katharina Gerund and Heike Paul (2012), as well as a forthcoming special issue of *Amerikastudien / American Studies* on American astroculture (co-edited with Jens Temmen).

Christos Karydis, Ionian University, Greece

Preserving Culture in a Time of Environmental Crisis: The Role of Preventive Conservation

The accelerating environmental crisis—manifested through climate change, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and human-induced degradation—poses unprecedented threats to cultural heritage worldwide. Among the most vulnerable are sacred natural and monastic landscapes UNESCO monuments, such as the Holy Mountain of Athos, Mount of Sinai, the monastery of St. John on Patmos, etc. where cultural, spiritual and ecological values are deeply intertwined. This presentation examines the role of preventive conservation as a strategic framework for safeguarding such sites in an era of environmental uncertainty. Preventive conservation moves beyond interventive conservation by emphasizing risk assessment, environmental monitoring, sustainable site management, disaster planning and community engagement. In the context of remote monastic enclaves and pilgrimage landscapes, it also requires integrating traditional knowledge, spiritual stewardship practices and contemporary scientific methods. Through selected case studies, this presentation explores how preventive conservation can mitigate climate-related risks—including wildfires, floods, corrosion, bio-deterioration, unstable environmental parameters i.e temperatures and humidity, indoor and outdoor pollution, etc. while preserving the intangible heritage, living traditions and ecological balance that define these sacred places. By positioning preventive conservation as a ‘central idea’ and both as technical and ethical responsibility, the presentation argues for a holistic, interdisciplinary approach that bridges heritage science, environmental policy, theology and local governance. Ultimately, safeguarding UNESCO monuments such as Athos, Sinai and Patmos is not only a matter of protecting architectural fabric, but of sustaining cultural identity, spiritual continuity and collective memory in a time of global environmental transformation.

Christos Karydis is the Head of the Department of Environment at the Ionian University; Founder and Director of the MSc “Preservation & Management of Cultural Heritage” at the Ionian University; Director of the ‘PreServe” Lab; and Director of the School of Iconography “Fotis Kontoglou.” He is also teaching several postgraduate courses mainly at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and at the University of the Aegean. He is the academic responsible and co-author for four (4) e-learning programs at the University of Athens. He has been working in Churches and monasteries at Mount Athos, Jerusalem, Constantinople, Colombia, Belgium, Eritrea, Ghana, Malaysia, Spain, Iraq, UK and Greece since 2002. He is an external adviser in monasteries at Mount Athos and head conservator of the textile collection of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul. Prof. Karydis’s area of expertise is preventive conservation of organic materials. Additionally, he has published four (4) monographs and more than 100 papers in scientific journals, international and national conferences. He is the author of the first book on preventive conservation of textiles written in Greek (2006) and he is the co-editor and author of the *Science in Preventive Conservation: Preservation & Management of Collections* (2013). He is also the editor and author of the catalogue *The Late Antiquity Textile Collection of the Holy Basilic, Patriarch and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Patmos: Documentation, Scientific Analysis and Preservation* (2025). He has established and organized more than four (4) full conservation labs in Greece, Istanbul, Jerusalem and Mount Athos.

Saturday, June 13, 2026 (evening)*

*Readings and the keynote address will be held at the Municipal Theatre of Zakynthos in Zakynthos (Zante) Town area.

Title: Poetry Reading and Dramatic Presentation: Carlos Morton & Tino Villanueva

Chair & Moderator: Francisco A. Lomelí (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

Readers: Tino Villanueva (Boston University, USA) & Carlos Morton (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

Actors: Maiza Hixson, Grzegorz Welizarowicz and Mayra Gomez-Labrada

The forty-five minutes allotted to me shall be divided into two parts: thirty-five minutes for the actual reading and ten minutes for a Q & A. The poems will reflect the different themes I have addressed throughout my six books of poetry. I shall begin with four poems from my last book, *So Spoke Penelope* (2013). At this juncture we could enlist a local literature student to read one of these poems in its Greek translation. This will be followed by poems more or less in chronological order from: *Hay Otra Voz Poems* (1972); *Shaking Off the Dark* (1984); *Crónica de mis años peores / Chronicle of My Worst Years* (1987); *Scene from the Movie GLANT* (1993); and *Primera causa / First Cause* (1999). I shall end with a poem in Spanish on the importance of English vocabulary building, “Convocación de palabras” (translation into English provided; from *Crónica de mis años peores*). Access to a blackboard (or a whiteboard) would be helpful so as to convey pertinent names and dates, some literary terminology and figures of speech.

—Tino Villanueva

I propose to read scenes from my play, *La Malinche*, an adaptation of *The Medea*, by Euripides that parallels the relationship between La Malinche and Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes, similar to the union between Jason the Argonaut and Medea. Both women were forced to submerge their lives in deference to the men who used them to gain riches and glory in their native lanes. Both plays begin at an early point of attack when they discover the men are going to wed women of their own race and rank, leaving them abandoned with their children. I will employ actors, Maiza Hixson, Mayra Gomez-Labrada and Grzegorz Welizarowicz, to help me tell the story and I will act as narrator that weaves them in and out of the dramatic action.

—Carlos Morton

PAPERS:

Agriou, Maria (Ionian University, Greece)

Between the Material and the Immaterial: The Role of Preservation and Restoration of Culture in Shaping Cultural Identity across Varied Spatial Contexts

In a world constantly changing due to social, geopolitical, and environmental pressures, the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage emerge as a crucial issue for strengthening cultural identity. The presentation examines the role of these practices in different spatial contexts and analyzes how the tangible (e.g., architectural monuments, objects) and the intangible (e.g., traditions, language, memories) dynamically intertwine in the formation of individual and collective identities. Through theoretical approaches, as well as case studies from Greece and the international arena, it is highlighted how cultural identity is shaped not only through the preservation of the past but also through the active participation of communities in the “present of heritage.” Moreover, critical issues such as the “museification” of culture and the role of digital technology in the representation and dissemination of heritage are addressed. Finally, the presentation seeks to redefine the relationship between culture, space, and identity, emphasizing the need for inclusive, interdisciplinary, and sustainable cultural management policies.

Alexoae-Zagni, Nicoleta (Paris 8 University, France)

Performing Ethnicity, Negotiating Belonging: Race, Corporeality, and Survival in C Pam Zhang’s Climate Fiction

This presentation examines how ethnicity and race are represented within an end-of-the-world culture/environment nexus in C Pam Zhang’s *Land of Milk and Honey* (2023), a speculative novel set against ecological collapse and global scarcity. Through the perspective of a Chinese American chef employed in a European enclave of artificial abundance, Zhang illustrates how racial difference, material resources, and privilege converge to shape survival. My analysis will focus on the ways in which the narrative demonstrates that climate catastrophe does not erase but rather deepens inequalities: access to food and pleasure is mediated by wealth, power, and the commodification of difference. The narrator’s precarity becomes particularly evident when she is compelled to impersonate a Korean woman for elite consumption, a moment that foregrounds her lack of agency and the reduction of identity to stereotype-as-currency. In this context, racialized performance and capital intersect, binding survival to both labor and spectacle. By linking race, diaspora, and ecology to economies of privilege, Zhang challenges dominant notions of solidarity in times of crisis. *Land of Milk and Honey* demonstrates that environmental futures are structured as much by capital and racialization as by ecological scarcity.

Altomonte, Jenna (Mississippi State University, USA)

Crossing [Virtual] Borders

This paper explores video games that critically expose the perils of crossing through/along the US–Mexico frontera and the Palestine–Israeli border zones. I draw on the work of developer-activists who utilize the video game platform as a tool for engaging youth audiences and advancing critical narratives about violent border policies impacting marginalized populations. In the first example, I unpack the after-effects of Rasheed Abueideh’s mobile video game, *Liyala and the Shadows of War* (2015). In the game, users play a father attempting to save his family during a night raid in Gaza. To complement

Abueideh's game, Mexican American illustrator and game developer, Gonzalo Alvarez, released *Borders* in 2017. *Borders*, a top-down style arcade video game, is based on his parent's border crossing into the United States. Users maneuver dangerous terrain and avoid law enforcement. In the third example, Marco Williams's *The Migrant Trail* affirms the perils of crossing the Sonora Desert region of Northern Mexico. Like *Borders*, players must keep their avatar safe from border patrol agents, illness, and dehydration. *Lijla*, *Borders*, and *The Migrant Trail* serve as didactic games, or games that instruct users on cultural, social and/or political issues impacting marginalized populations. Throughout this paper, I address the following questions: can didactic games reach a greater, more diverse audience via the video game platform? How does each game encourage intervention and resistance through active play? I argue that such games can reach wider audiences and reshape understandings of occupied and contested border zones through critical, participatory play.

Andres, Emmanuelle (University of La Rochelle, France)

Killing Trees or Reading the World? Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

Toni Morrison's focus on the state of the land and people's mentalities before any form of environmental and mental pollution could historically apply tends to make of the ever-shifting ecological-pastoral mode the privileged lens from which one might read Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. Tied to ecological imagination, it is often pitted against a more realistic mode that forsakes poetic expression. Incidentally, the vastness and beauty of the land are what trick white European settler Jacob Vaark into thinking he can somehow control it by "going bigger"—by building a huge mansion as a monument to himself, tasked with compensating for his barren marriage and turning him into a man. The smallpox that ultimately takes his life epitomizes the larger infectious disease at work in the new world: Jacob's individualism eventually supersedes the impetus behind the initial, largely collective project of his farm. The symbolic and physical killing of trees can be seen as the initial cause of his demise, as the syncretism at work in *A Mercy* makes the reader privilege an ecological interpretation in such passages where the violation of nature is emphasized. In Morrison's world, the natural environment—its trees, animals, and landscapes—reveals meanings accessible only to those attuned to its language, primarily the nonwhite female characters: Lina, Florens, and Sorrow. According to Terry Gifford, "in the best of pastoral literature, the writer will have taken the reader on a journey to be changed and charged upon for more informed action in the present" (Pastoral 80). I shall argue that the return of the pastoral mode at the end of *A Mercy* coincides with the "wilderness" Florens has become (among her words/"letters of talk"), and the reader's agency, as s/he becomes the privileged recipient of Florens's mother's words/song, where healing can begin.

Arce, María Laura (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain)

Queer Mothering and Nature in Carmen María Machado's Short Story "Mothers"

Cultural practices impact on the ways motherhood is performed, up to the point of turning motherhood into a private public performance. What is acceptable or not for a mother-child link is established by cultural parameters that change enormously between different geographical and temporal contexts. Having this in mind, we aim to explore a different culture: the culture of the animal and the related animal-like motherhood through literature that addresses the question of motherhood as an animalistic or animalized practice, a feral desire that also provokes feral actions. Drawing on the works of Ursula K Le Guin, Barbara Litkowski and Carmen María Machado, as well as the influence of Native American myths and legends, Chicana literary works and Kristeva's notion of abjection, we will explore motherhood from an environmental and more-than-human perspective. This panel is

linked to the research project “Intersectional Maternities: Matrifocal Narratives and New Forms of Family in Anglophone Literature.”

Arfaoui, Sihem (University of Jendouba, Tunisia)

Poetics of Post-human Passages in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* and the Collapse of Anthropocentric Environments

This paper discusses Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* as a post-human narrative of mobility that subverts the traditional narrative of migration across the sea, the air, and territory. It draws on magic realism, subaltern and third space theories to grasp Hamid’s re-imaginings of the refugee crisis of Saeed and Nadia and other nameless characters as a cosmopolitan tragedy that generates a volatile and hybrid cultural environment without totally cutting with processes of preservation and restoration. I focus on the metaphor of magical doors as a metafictional trope that highlights the universal plight of abrupt cultural displacement, challenges the sovereignty of the nation-state and disrupts the us/them dichotomy. On the other hand, the creation of migrant camps at the heart of the Western metropolis in London and San Francisco bring to the fore of the novel the re-emergence of ghettoization even in the post-human sphere as much as they embody third space environments that blur the ethnic and class borders. The parting closure will be examined from the lens of a new interconnected cultural environment relying on transient mobilities and connections that link Saeed, Nadia and other characters, despite their divergences, across the borders of nation-states.

Arias Rubio, Gala (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain)

The Wolf Woman and the Mother Wolf

While many studies have focused on the influence of Native American cosmovisions and myths on American writer Ursula K Le Guin’s (1929-2018) well-known novella *Buffalo Gals*, there are fewer studies about “The Wife Story” and the influence of Native American relationships with wolves and motifs of human-wolf transformations in their myths, on this tale. The main premise in Native American myths is the fluid boundaries between non-human animals and people. In the specific case of the wolf, there are numerous stories about wolf-human marriages, with the wolf being the one transforming into human and back. Wolves are usually portrayed as positive figures in these myths, teaching humans how to hunt and protecting humankind, even raising orphan children. In the 1979 tale “The Wife Story,” Le Guin uses reverse lycanthropy as a means of blurring the boundaries between human and non-human animals. The tale tells a story full of love and tenderness of a young mother that we suppose is human and that at the end of the story, when love and tenderness are substituted by anger and fear (“the mother anger come into me”, she says) is revealed as non-human. This story is highly influenced by Native American transformation myths such as “White Wolf Woman” or “Wolf Woman Running” (coll. Teresa Pijoan) and shows the weakness of the conceptual walls we build in Western societies between human and non-human animals and how motherhood awakens a force in females that is purely instinctive. This presentation introduces Native American myths about wolves and humans, regarding transformation motifs and wolf maternities, and explores their influence in “The Wife Story,” also analyzing the weight of animal/feral motherhood in this tale.

Autiero, Serena (Thammasat University, Bangkok)

The Mystic Tree at the Bottom of the Ocean: Materiality and Spirituality of the Coco-de-mer

The coco de mer, a double-lobed nut from the Seychelles, is one of botany's most enigmatic fruits. For centuries, its rare and suggestive form captivated imaginations, leading to its prized use in crafting ornate objects by Sufi mystics and Jaina masters. While the material is identical, the cultural and spiritual contexts of these artefacts vehiculate different spiritual meanings, offering a fascinating study in transcultural object biography. The coco de mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*) grows naturally only on Praslin Island, Seychelles. Its journey eastwards via ocean currents to the Maldives shrouded it in myth, as its origin was unknown, creating the myth of the underwater mystical tree. This mystery, combined with its rarity, integrated it into Indian Ocean trade networks, making it an exotic and prestigious raw material. In the Sufi context, the coco de mer was transformed into the kashkul, or alms bowl. Its shape, often interpreted as a human heart or a union of principles, made it an allegory for divine love and unity. Sufi poets used it to symbolise the intoxicated heart yearning for God. These vessels were not mere containers but sacred objects, lavishly decorated with precious metals and inscriptions that reflected the refinement of the soul. Conversely, for Jains, the nut served a practical purpose, rooted in ahimsa (non-violence). Crafted into a water pot (*kamanḍalu*), its impermeable nature was ideal for filtering water to avoid harming microorganisms. Its decoration reinforced the shell's functionality, symbolizing non-attachment. This paper frames the ocean as an "objectscape," arguing that the materiality of the coco de mer object reveals the non human agency of the monsoon winds. These winds not only transported the physical nuts but also facilitated the cultural encounters that allowed a single natural object to be imbued with such diverse, profound spiritual significance across "Monsoon Asia."

Bańka, Ewelina (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)

Margo Tamez's Stories of "Rivered Exist Stance" at the Texas-Mexico Border

My presentation will examine Margo Tamez's poetry as a tool for reclaiming the rivered memories integral to Lipan Apache knowledge systems. Drawing primarily from her collections *Raven Eye* and *Father I Genocide*, Tamez—a Lipan Apache poet, historian, and Indigenous rights advocate—engages in an act of cultural resurgence rooted in Lipan Apache rivered epistemologies. Her work counters the colonial and genocidal forces that have displaced and fragmented the Lipan Apache people inhabiting the Lower Rio Grande and South Texas region, known to them as Big Water Country. Through her poetic intervention, Tamez exposes the Texas-Mexico borderland as a colonial imposition, constructed as an "open-air detention hall" that enforces settler heteropatriarchal paradigms, erasing Indigenous presence and reducing riverine community identities to politically marginalized and demonized "border peoples." Central to Tamez's artistic practice is the revitalization of the Lipan Apache's rivered knowledge—an epistemic framework that encodes ancestral relationships to land, water, and community. This rivered epistemology, embodied in both oral and literary traditions protected by Lipan Apache women, serves as a vital conduit for restoring Indigenous memory and place-based cultural identity. By weaving the language and stories of her people into her poetry, Tamez mends the rupture experienced by Lipan Apache communities partitioned by the international border, fostering reconnection with their ancestral homelands. This process of cultural and historical reclamation not only "herstorizes" the Lipan Apache presence in the region but also asserts Indigenous sovereignty and the ongoing right to self-determination through the preservation of these vital rivered lifeways.

Bercuci-Murariu, Loredana & Andrada Nemeş (West University of Timișoara, Romania)

Interacting with the Specious Other: Climate Trauma in *The Last of Us* Video Games

Climate trauma refers to the symptoms experienced when confronted with ecological degradation, be it in the aftermath or in anticipation of an ecological catastrophe. Scholars have termed this affliction eco-trauma (Narine 2014), ecosickness (Houser 2014), climate trauma (Kaplan 2016; Kaplan 2018; Richardson 2018; Craps 2020; Zimmerman 2020), or ecological grief (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018). E. Ann Kaplan suggests, by juxtaposing pre-traumatic symptoms and film, that climate trauma caused by the anticipation of climate catastrophes is related to the consumption of media representations of climate dystopias (2018, 82-82). I propose a media-conscious approach to climate trauma, arguing that the medium of video games implies a closer enactment of climate disaster through interactivity, but also often embodies the effects of catastrophe through othered human bodies, which must be neutralized by the player as per the formula of the action-adventure and survival-horror genres. An example of this dynamics are the games *The Last of Us: Part 1* (2014) and *The Last of Us: Part 2* (2020), where the main antagonists are human bodies invaded by nature. I explore the idea that “[t]he traumas we perpetuate in an ecosystem through pollution and unsustainable resource management inevitably return to harm us” (Narine 2014, 31), which also echoes Timothy Morton’s (2016) strange loop theory. As such, the player is shown the effect of climate catastrophe on the human body, but, at the same time, is forced to annihilate these bodies in a logic that created them in the first place. Both games feature ethnically and racially diverse characters, portraying a world in which human discrimination has all but disappeared. This paper will discuss the ideological implications of this depiction of climate trauma that pits the human against the non-gendered, non-racialized, (non?)human body.

Bethell, Eira (University of Essex, UK)

Liminal Sovereignty: The Nile Crocodile as Ecological and Mythic Agent in Cultural Environments

The Nile crocodile occupies a rare intersection of ecology, cultural meaning and symbolism. Offering a potent lens through which to explore environmental imaginaries across Earth’s spheres, it reveals how species can operate as both biological agents and symbolic mediators within human–environment relations. This paper examines the Nile crocodile as a liminal figure that bridges ecological reality and cultural imagination across the geosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere of the Nile River basin. Both revered and feared across millennia, this majestic creature occupies a unique position in the cultural environments of Egypt, Sudan, and surrounding regions. Alongside functioning as a keystone species within a diverse ecosystem, the Nile crocodile serves as unique cultural signifier: a mythical guardian and a symbol of sovereignty and transformation. Drawing on multi-ethnic narratives, ecological data, and archival material, this study explores how corporeality and non-human agency converge in representations of the crocodile to explore its role in shaping environmental ethics and symbolic meaning-making. Positioning it as a site of cultural and environmental negotiation, whose physical presence anchors communities to land and water, the analysis foregrounds its role as both ecological agent and symbolic mediator. The crocodile’s mythic elasticity enables it to traverse spiritual, political, and ecological domains whilst adapting to diverse terrains of meaning and power. Situating the Nile crocodile within material and metaphysical environments, this paper contributes to broader discussions of cultural representation, environmental politics, and

collective memory. It argues that this creature is not merely a biological entity but a dynamic cultural agent whose presence continues to shape the identities, imagination, and ecological futures of those who live alongside it. Far from a relic of the deep, it remains a living archive of ecological and cultural entanglement.

Bocchetti, Annalisa (University of Naples “L’Orientale,” Italy)

When the Sea Prays Back: Sufi Coastal Shrines in Urban India

This paper rethinks Mumbai’s coastline by examining the city’s two major coastal shrines, the Haji Ali Dargah and the Mahim Dargah, reading them as examples of non-human agency in Sufi devotional life. Both sites negotiate the sea’s presence and agency, generating coastal forms of devotion and belonging among local coastal communities, including Koli fishermen and migrant labourers. At Haji Ali, located on a small islet off the coast, reachable only via a causeway submerged at high tide, the sea becomes an active participant in ritual practice. The submersion and re-emergence of the pathway determine the rhythms the timing of worship, shaping the experience of crossing a path across the waters, while waves, salt winds, and marine life become part of the shrine’s sensory and spiritual landscape. At Mahim, where the shrine of Makhdoom Ali Mahimi stands on the foreshore, unusual monsoon events, especially the “sweet sea” phenomena of 2006 and 2008, produced miracle narratives that challenged official scientific explanations. Devotees drank from the sea, interpreting changes in the water as signs of saintly presence. Drawing on ethnographic, textual, and media sources and informed by emerging blue humanities theory (Oppermann 2023), this paper argues that these shrines create coastal ecologies of devotion that resist the geontological divide between life and non-life (Povinelli 2016). By tracing how faith, sea, and body shape one another, this study aims to show how coastal Sufism forms cultural environments that are devotional, porous, and co-inhabited.

Brígido-Corachán, Anna M. (University of Valencia, Spain)

“From the Birthing Waters to Air”: Transcorporeality and Environmental Ethics in the Poetry of Linda Hogan and Ofelia Zepeda

In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), Stacy Alaimo coined the concept of transcorporeality: the embodied, porous interconnections that are established between human and nonhuman bodies. These fluid boundaries and biomaterial entanglements are a core component of traditional Indigenous epistemologies and permeate contemporary Native American literature. This article applies the theoretical framework of transcorporeality to the poetry of Linda Hogan and Ofelia Zepeda, aiming to establish a conversation between ecocritical perspectives and Chickasaw and Tohono O’odham environmentalist traditions. Since the 1990s, Hogan’s and Zepeda’s literary contributions have evolved alongside ecofeminist and Indigenous relationality, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of human and other-than-human beings. Grounded in Indigenous relational ontologies that challenge anthropocentrism and dualism, the article specifically focuses on two natural beings that are often represented in their poems: water and air. In their poetry collections *A History of Kindness* (2020) and *Ocean Power. Poems from the Desert* (1995), they render family and bodily rituals that center around maternal practice and aging, and where water and air are necessarily entangled with human and planetary life cycles.

Cavaliere, Stefania (University of Naples “L’Orientale,” Italy)

Exploring Oceanic Liminalities: Shipboard Worlds and the Making of a Laskari Counter-Archive

This paper investigates the lived realities aboard ships in the Indian Ocean system. Life at sea unfolds within a mobile, interdependent ecosystem governed by monsoon-driven atmospheric rhythms, where human–human and human–nature relations are continuously recalibrated to sustain the vessel’s precarious balance. The ship emerges as a distinctly oceanic counter-world: a self-contained yet porous environment that draws on, negotiates with, and responds to the surrounding hydrosphere. This liminal space has long inspired the imagination of writers and essayists, particularly through the mythos of a more-than-human maritime language known as Laskari. Spoken by sailors of diverse geographic, cultural, and social backgrounds, Laskari mediated the constant exchange between ship, sea, and crew. Although traces of these multilingual communities appear in colonial archives, their voices remain largely submerged—registered in reconstructed nautical lexicons and dictionaries yet rarely allowed to articulate their own narratives. By rereading dispersed linguistic and material traces as a “submerged archive,” the paper argues for recovering alternative epistemologies and lens for understanding history and our relational entanglements with the ocean. Doing so contributes to the broader project of oceanic historiography and advances a hydrospheric turn that centers oceanic counter-worlds as vital sites of knowledge, language, and historical imagination in Monsoon Asia.

Cecil, Elizabeth (Florida State University, USA)

Adrift with the Eaglewood Goddess: Seascapes and Religious Ecologies in Early Vietnam

This paper examines how the maritime worlds of the Cham people in central Vietnam generated distinctive cosmologies and ritual practices that reframed the sea not as a boundary but as a source of spiritual potency and historical continuity. Focusing on the cult of Po Nagar, a goddess revered as both an ancestral spirit and a localized form of Śiva’s consort Umā, I explore how Cham narratives, ritual spaces, and environmental relationships positioned the ocean as an active agent in placemaking, sovereignty, and religious authority. At the heart of this inquiry is the legend of Po Nagar’s emergence from eaglewood, a precious tree resin central to Asian maritime trade, and her movement across rivers and seas as a mobile deity shaped by and embedded in monsoonal and oceanic ecologies. Drawing on epigraphic, architectural, and iconographic sources from the 8th to 11th centuries, I consider how the goddess was framed as a culture-bringer and sovereign protector, anchored in a maritime landscape. In one notable stele, Po Nagar transforms back into eaglewood, drifting southward to return to her people in an origin myth that enacts oceanic mobility as sacred return. Her floating body, repeatedly cast into and retrieved from the sea, functions as both a sacred object and a hydrospheric counter-narrative: a way of knowing and shaping the world through movement, material, and myth. By attending to Po Nagar’s seaborne trajectories, this paper argues that Cham ritual culture constituted a hydrospheric epistemology, a form of world-making rooted in the sea as a medium of both spiritual and political imagination. In doing so, it contributes to the broader call for a hydrological turn, unsettling land-based historical framings and illuminating how oceanic and littoral environments developed alternative archives, cosmologies, and forms of knowledge in early Southeast Asia.

Chang, Hsin-chi (Tamkang University, Taiwan)

Learning Without Fathers: Posthuman Pedagogy and Kinship Reimagined in Octavia E. Butler's *Adulthood Rites*

This paper examines how *Adulthood Rites* (1988), the second novel in Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy, reimagines kinship through the theme of fatherlessness. Through the hybrid construct Akin, the novel critiques patriarchal authority and interrogates the colonial legacy of paternal absence that has historically shaped black kinship formations. Akin's development unfolds in a posthuman context, where Oankali parenting replaces traditional human kinship roles. His absent human father, Joseph, survives only through sensory instruction and mediated imagery, which function as forms of memory that register the trauma of disrupted lineage. The novel transforms this absence into a critique of racialized legitimacy and biological determinism, offering a pedagogy grounded in affect, memory, and relational ethics. Akin's *Bildung* reveals the instability of masculinity under biopolitical control, as the Oankali restrict the birth of human males to minimize hegemonic traits. His longing for human connection and his vulnerability to loss expose the limits of engineered coexistence. In reframing absence as a site of ethical reimagining, *Adulthood Rites* envisions kinship as a speculative practice of care, mutual obligation, and interspecies entanglement. The novel proposes alternatives to inherited models of patriarchal authority and affiliation through a posthuman pedagogy rooted in vulnerability and co existence.

Chatterjee, Sharmistha (Aliah University, West Bengal, India)

Towards a Poetics of 'Re-enchantment': Reading 'Storied Matter' in Select Texts of North-East India

Once upon a time, John Keats' the 'storied urn,' could spin tales of love and sacrifice of the pagan Greece. A few hundred years down the line, people no longer have faith in the power of stones. David Ray Griffin defines such 'disenchantment' as the 'denial to nature of all subjectivity, all experience, all feeling,' as a result of which 'nature is disqualified' to add vitality to a place. Often, this is a deliberate act done to suppress and erase vibrant histories and culture. Elements of the ecosystem in such 'shadow places' (to borrow the term from Val Plumwood), are sidestepped and overlooked to create a counter discourse of backwardness and banality, thus stripping the region of its potentials. Often people and matter of such contested domains are politically exploited and oppressed for material benefits of the powerful. Yet a 'reenchantment' (Zimmermann, Cheney and et.al.) of such places is possible with the acceptance of the concept of undivided nature-culture and an insight that matter has agentic capacity and is capable of producing a wide spectrum of material expressions. Borrowing the term 'storied matter' from Iovino and Opperman in their edited collection, *Material Ecocriticism* (2014), the paper seeks to argue how creative texts from North-East of India foreground such matter, for example, 'ferry lights,' 'leaning spear,' 'speaking stone in the forest,' 'cool bamboo,' 'bodies of the dead,' 'boiled weeds' or 'wreath of tuberoses' which become complex palimpsests and sites of narrativity. They contain 'pluriform and 'multivocalic' stories of the region and add to the world's 'reenchanting property.'

Chevereșan, Cristina (West University of Timișoara, Romania)

The Tragicomedy of Corporeality: Crisis and/of Agency in Philip Roth's *The Anatomy Lesson*

That Philip Roth was among the most forward-thinking and oftentimes misunderstood writers of his time is hardly any news. His 1983 *The Anatomy Lesson*, the last novel-length installment in the Zuckerman trilogy, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award, yet less appreciated than its predecessors upon publication. The author's preoccupation with the literary authorship and fame seemed too autobiographical and suffused in artistic malaise to expand beyond his immediate concerns. My presentation aims to highlight the novel's reconsideration throughout the four decades that followed, based on its complexity, initially overshadowed by unidirectional and rather narrow readings. What explicitly lies at the heart of the novel is corporeality and Nathan Zuckerman's attempts to understand and integrate its unexpected ailments in his larger meditations on life, art, and their inherent intersections in the intricate environment that shapes and circumscribes identity. Defined by issues of ethnicity, race, religion as prominent, yet oftentimes reductionist markers, Jewish-Americanness surfaces as the condition Zuckerman must understand and handle with care in the context of "a new social and moral freedom since to be 'raised as a post-immigrant Jew in America was to be given a ticket out of the ghetto into a wholly unconstrained world of thought'" (cf. Nadel 36) Individual and collective memory contribute to the process of self-regulation, analysis, and expression that is inevitably predicated on narratives on geographical, mental, social mobility (see the scene in which Zuckerman's ill mother, asked by the neurologist for her name, writes down "Holocaust"). My proposed investigation of *The Anatomy Lesson* intends to go beyond the tragicomedy of simultaneous success and failure, into Zuckerman's self-conscious engagement with space and affect, body and trauma, belonging and in-/ex clusion, cultural determinism and identity negotiation.

Chiu, Monica (University of New Hampshire, USA)

Where We Live in Khan's Graphic Memoir *The Roles We Play*: In-Habitation and the Built Environment

The act of inhabiting a nation, city, or dwelling is an active stance. In opposition, a passive stance includes the state of being inhabited by ... a feeling, trauma, illness. In Saba Khan's graphic memoir *The Roles We Play*, Khan, an architectural designer as well as comics artist, draws her comics avatar Sabba as continuously inhabited by—a term I use to denote a forced state of passivity accrued through dislocation, emigration, racism, environmental racism, and feelings of being out of place/space. Early in the graphic narrative, she illustrates injustices against people and the environment following the construction of the Mangla Dam in post-Partition Pakistan. The structure displaces 110,000 people living in the regions of Mirpur and Dadyal, their villages submerged in water. Some of the newly unhoused move to other areas in Pakistan; others take advantage of permits to work in Britain. Her family eventually immigrates to England, where the displaced Sabba experiences racism and her parents long for Pakistan. Khan illustrates government-controlled inhabitation, a form of passivity subjected upon Sabba, through image repetition: scaffolding occupied by human-shaped silhouettes; comics characters whose body parts resemble furniture or tools. These uncanny—or un-home-like drawings—recall a kind of environmental injustice defined by Willie Jamal Wright in his "As Above, So Below: Anti-Black Violence as Environmental Racism" (2021). While he argues that environmental habitats often "commit and conceal acts of anti-Black violence," specifically the erasure of black subjects, Kahn's graphic narrative charts violence against Pakistanis

(or the brown non-British), victims of environmental destruction and structural racism. In this paper, I discuss how Khan addresses the inhabitation of embodiedness—controlled and controlling passivity—as opposed to the expected embodying of space, of inhabitation for living, for being and feeling alive.

Chrzczonowicz, Kamil (University of Warsaw, Poland)

James Baldwin's Televised Debates and the Performance of Black Thought

James Baldwin possessed a relatively rare feat among writers of his stature – an ability to convey the power and finesse of his written word on television. Typically, a televised debate or a late-night interview necessitates transforming one's argument into a series of soundbites—i.e., memorable but inevitably trivialized jingles. With limited airtime at his disposal, Baldwin not only avoided superficiality but, thanks to his expressive body language and evocative articulation, imbued his arguments with extra depth. The paper examines two of Baldwin's most popular television appearances—his debates with William F. Buckley (1965) and Paul Weiss (1969)—to analyze the arguments employed by Baldwin, and look for the echoes of his ideas in television appearances of African American writers of the twenty-first century. All this is to show how Baldwin argued for Black freedom and how contemporary public intellectuals continue to spread his message.

Chu, Patricia P. (朱蓓章) (George Washington University, USA)

Nonhuman Agency and the Miraculous in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

In *Gun Island* (2019), Amitav Ghosh tests the conventions of the novel as a means to imagine and explore the effects of climate change. In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), based on lectures delivered in 2015, Ghosh asserts that the modern novel is not only linked with colonialism, globalization, and the enlightenment, but also resistant to narrating the vast scope of climate change due to its focus on individuals, specific places, empirically verifiable events, and secular discourses discounting the possibility of nonhuman agency. In *Gun Island*, Ghosh retains a realist frame but deploys heteroglossia, narrative elements of myth and fantasy, folklore, and even spiritual language of religious faith to expose and challenge the epistemological assumptions shared by the hero, Dinu, and the novel form itself—assumptions that render the effects of climate change, and the concept of nonhuman agency, inexplicable. Dinu's education in questioning rationalism, and his eventual near conversion to belief in nonhuman consciousness, is mimicked by a mythic hero, the Gun Merchant, whose denial of nonhuman agency is represented by his flight from Manasa Devi, goddess of snakes. As Dinu investigates the origins of the myth, he witnesses the parallel effects of climate change on human and nonhuman climate refugees on a grand and global scale; the steps of the mythic "hero's journey" (Campbell) taken by the Gun Merchant and his modern double, Dinu, challenge readers to question their secular, humanist assumptions as well.

Chung, Eun-Gwi (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea)

Archipelagic Intimacies: Hydrospheric Consciousness and Ecopoetic Interconnection in Juliana Spahr's *Fuck You—Aloha—I Love You*

This presentation proposes a reading of Juliana Spahr's 2001 poetry collection *Fuck You—Aloha—I Love You* through the emerging framework of oceanic and island studies, emphasizing the interconnections of the Earth's hydrosphere, geographic contingency, and an ecocentric poetics of relation. Informed by archipelagic thinking and the poetics of planetary entanglement, this project situates Spahr's work within the larger context of ecopoetics that refuse continental fixity and foreground the relational agency of the ocean

and its currents—both literal and metaphorical. Spahr’s *Fuck You–Aloha–I Love You* stages an idiosyncratic and urgent meditation on collectivity, language, and intimacy in the wake of geopolitical displacement and ecological disorientation. Composed during her time teaching in Hawai‘i, the collection traverses the fissures between settler colonialism, globalization, environmental crisis, and poetic form. In this presentation, I argue that Spahr’s poetics perform a kind of hydrospheric thinking—one that dissolves the boundaries between self and world, land and water, body and environment—through a grammar of permeability and fluid interconnection. In particular, this presentation reveals how her work portrays islands not as isolated fragments but as nodes within transoceanic webs of movement, contamination, and ecology, focusing on her use of anaphora and recursive diction, mimics, and material flaws to reinforce the ecological insight that nothing exists in isolation.

Conners, Thomas (University of Florida, USA)

Objectless “Latinx” Literary Critique

This paper responds to the conference’s insistence on materiality by considering what objectless critique might do to or for “Latinx” literary production. objectless critique refers to an emergent preoccupation in queer theory that reconsiders how that field—itsself long marked by problems and politics “of identity”—turns to the material conditions and relations that structure both queers as subjects, political or not, and the work of queer theory, as focused on identity or not. In bringing queer objectless critique elsewhere, I query how such non-human things as objects, environments, and commodities reshape the critical attachments and affordances of “Latinx” studies. Reading the likes of Betina González (whose novel *América Alucinada* (2013) stretches from the indigenous Caribbean to the middle of nowhere Midwest) and Carlos Fonseca (whose *Coronel Lágrimas* (2015) extends beyond the Américas to Europe, as it were), I query how objectless critique might reassemble our literary canons beyond ethnic and area studies frameworks.

Cutter, Martha (University of Connecticut, USA)

Networked Futures: Posthuman Agency and Ecological Restoration in Nnedi Okorafor’s *Death of the Author*

This paper analyzes Nigerian American writer Nnedi Okorafor’s *Death of the Author* (2025) through the lens of posthuman agency, examining how the text deploys non-anthropocentric ontologies to critique the Anthropocene’s extractive logics while gesturing toward restorative ecological paradigms. Focusing on the embedded narrative Rusted Robots (a posthuman fable set in a post-apocalyptic Nigeria where humanity’s extinction has led to conflict among competing forms of machinic consciousness), I analyze how Okorafor mobilizes speculative fiction’s estrangement effects to defamiliarize dominant epistemologies of environmental and racialized destruction. Within Rusted Robots, the ontological distinctions between Humes (embodied AI with anthropomorphic corporeality) and NoBodies (disembodied networked intelligences) generate a taxonomy of posthuman subjectivities engaged in interspecies warfare against the Trippers, extractive robotic entities threatening planetary biospheric collapse. This tripartite conflict comments both on Nigerian racialized civil conflict and on planetary-scale ecological crisis under late capitalism. The novel ultimately theorizes storytelling as a collaborative praxis capable of generating what Stacy Alaimo terms “transcorporeal” ethics: the recognition that all matter is interconnected across boundaries of human/nonhuman, organic/synthetic, and individual/collective. The embedded author-figure’s revelation that “author, art, and audience create a tissue, a web, a network” (434) enacts what Donna Haraway calls “symptoiesis”: the recognition that survival depends on collective making-with rather than

autonomous mastery. *Death of the Author* therefore performs a critical rewriting of agency, suggesting that ecological futurity requires abandoning anthropocentric sovereignty in favor of networked, relational ontologies that acknowledge interdependence as constitutive rather than supplementary to existence.

Dayal, Samir (Bentley University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA)

Island Consciousness and Chosen Loneliness: Collective Refusal Against Extractive Seasteading in Richard Powers' *Playground*

This paper foregrounds “island consciousness” as collective response to extractive cultural environments spanning multiple spheres—geosphere (colonial phosphate mining), hydrosphere (oceanic ecosystems), and biosphere (multispecies communities). I show how in Richard Powers' *Playground*, Makatea, a small Pacific island, engages the challenge of democratic deliberation over an American AI company's bid for seasteading development. Their admittedly ambivalent yet collective choice to refuse the speciously attractive proposal illuminates tensions between global or even archipelagic relationality, and strategic non-relationality as forms of cultural-environmental resistance. Powers' narrative operates through what Stacy Alaimo calls “transcorporeality”—bodies entangled with material environments across species boundaries. The novel's multiethnic cast articulates diverse ethnic relationships to oceanic space. Ina's activist sculpture using plastic pollution discovered in albatross corpses materializes how Anthropocene contamination penetrates even remote island ecosystems, while Evie's diving encounters with manta rays and cuttlefish trouble anthropocentric environmental narratives. Drawing on Donna Haraway's “staying with the trouble” and Indigenous sovereignty frameworks, I argue Makatea's collective self-alienation from global extractive techno-capitalism represents “critical withdrawal”—not archipelagic connection but principled distance maintaining place-based ecological and cultural accountability. This challenges recent island studies' “relational turn” by theorizing when refusing relationality serves environmental justice. Against techno-utopian promises of floating cities as climate adaptation, island consciousness insists that damaged cultural environments require collective response-ability rather than elite escape, democratic deliberation over technological innovation, and multispecies flourishing over extractive capitalist development.

De Simone, Daniela (Ghent University, Belgium)

Chank and Pearl Diving in Monsoon Seas: Littoral Craft and Submerged Labour Worlds in South Asia

This paper examines the long-term history of chank (*śaṅkha*) and pearl diving in South Asia through the combined analysis of material culture, textual sources, and ethnographic evidence. Focusing on the Coromandel Coast, the Gulf of Mannar, and the western Indian coastline, it investigates how objects derived from marine extraction, such as worked chank shells, shell debris, and pearls, materialise the specialised diving skills and accumulated ecological knowledge that enabled access to shell beds and pearl grounds. These artefacts provide a material entry point for reconstructing ocean-based labour worlds that are often marginal to land-centred historical narratives. Archaeological assemblages from coastal and port contexts are read alongside textual references and ethnographic accounts to examine how submerged labour was organised, sustained, and structured in relation to particular maritime environments. While chank and pearls relied on similar techniques of underwater extraction, their historical trajectories diverged. Pearls (portable and easily recontextualised) entered long-distance networks linking South Asia with the Mediterranean, the Islamic world, and later Europe. Chank shells, by contrast, remained

tightly connected to regional craft traditions, ritual practices, and coastal lifeways, circulating primarily through local and interregional networks anchored in specific maritime ecologies. Adopting a hydrospheric perspective, the paper repositions submerged and littoral zones as historically productive environments in their own right. Shell and pearl artefacts are approached not merely as objects of exchange or meaning, but as material traces of sustained ocean-based labour, accumulated environmental knowledge, and long-term engagement with monsoon sea. Through a comparative lens spanning the Indus world, the Indo-Roman period, later Indian Ocean networks, and early modern transformations, the paper highlights enduring patterns of maritime labour along the southern and western coasts of the Indian subcontinent.

Draga Alexandru, Maria-Sabina (University of Bucharest, Romania)

Deep Ecology and Middle Passage Corporealities in *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

This paper will look at transatlantic reinventions of transgenerational corporealities in Yaa Gyasi's historical revision of the Middle Passage in her 2016 novel *Homegoing*. In the light of Arne Naess concept of “deep ecology” (an extension of “nature-oriented” ecology to interhuman relations), Isabel Hofmeyr's concept of hydrocolonialism and Bruno Latour's idea of transhistorical alternative modernities (“we have never been modern”), I will explore the fluidity of enslaved bodies in the colonial and neocolonial transatlantic journey, taking into account the various levels of temporality that Gyasi proposes in her cross-temporal, cross-generational novel. I will examine changes in perceptions of the body as a site of freedom and empowerment across time, space and the bondage-freedom divide, with a view to arguing that Gyasi's revision and reparation of the predicament of the enslaved body proposes a new understanding of the corporeal self as dynamic, fluid and engaged in perpetual becoming – and, consequently, in pursuit of freedom.

Dreher, Kwakiutl L. (University of Nebraska at Lincoln, USA)

Multicultural Ecologies of the South: Ethnicity, History, and Place-Making in Ryan Coogler's film *Sinners*

Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* foregrounds the presence and agency of Black, Indigenous (Choctaw), Asian (Chinese), and Irish communities who live in, labor within, and draw from the cultural fabric of the American South, specifically the Mississippi Delta. This filmic foregrounding challenges the dominant narrative that southern history is defined solely by a Black–white binary. Coogler instead recovers marginalized, if not overlooked stories, broadening our understanding of who inhabits—and has historically had access to—southern land and culture. Set against a landscape shaped by plantation economies, sharecropping, cotton fields, and segregation, the film underscores that this environment is far from neutral; every acre bears the imprint of enslavement, coerced labor, and generations of racialized exploitation. This paper explores how *Sinners* reframes the Mississippi Delta as a complex cultural environment shaped by disparate ethnicities, ultimately revealing the South not as a binary racial space but as a multicultural, diasporic home.

Duran, Claudia (Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles, USA)

Poetry Reading

I propose a reading of poems that provide an insight and necessity of migration from Southern to Northern hemispheres, and vice versa. I will read from my collection of poems both published *For the Love of Words Small Press, LMNL, On The Edge MSMU*, and unpublished poems that capture decades of relocation. Migration due to natural disaster,

warfare, destitution to reveal a glimmer of hope through reconstruction, music, and food. Beginning with “Volcan de Oido October 21st 1954,” “North to South & East to West 1979-1989,” “Home Depot Man-A Sestina,” “Cocido,” “& Left Behind,” “Deluge,” “Mariachi Reyna.”

Dyckhoff Stelzriede, Danelle (California State University, Los Angeles, USA)

Creating First-Gen Ecologies of Community through Global Education

Despite the extensive body of research documenting the academic and professional benefits of study abroad, first generation university students—defined as students whose parents have not earned a bachelor’s degree—remain critically underrepresented in global education (Dean and Kelly 2020; Ogden et al. 2024). According to the Institute of International Education, only eight percent of U.S. first-gen students study abroad, even though they comprise more than half the total college student population (Mason and Garcia, 2022). This underrepresentation is especially troubling given that first-gen students disproportionately identify as members of historically marginalized ethnic groups (RTI International, 2019). In an effort to address this equity gap and increase access to global education for first-gen students, the English Department at California State University, Los Angeles partnered with Durham University in northeast England to launch a writing intensive, first-gen focused global education exchange program centering on multiethnic first gen authors and culminating in a two-week study abroad. Drawing from research on collaborative first-gen identity formation (Van Galen 2023), inclusive global education and study-abroad equity (Ecker-Lyster and Kardash 2022), and translingual and antiracist writing pedagogy (Horner et al. 2011; Frost et al. 2020), this paper positions the global education experience as a transnational, intercultural biosphere. Through analysis of student-authored narratives published in the CSU Open Journal Text & Type, the paper examines the ways in which multiethnic first-gen bodies navigate global mobility alongside encounters with colonial histories, racial inequities, and class hierarchies. Within this biospheric framework, first-gen focused global education becomes a living and evolving ecosystem where first-gen students from diverse racial, ethnic, migratory, and linguistic backgrounds can connect across material and imaginative terrains.

Emmanouilidou, Sophia (Ionian University, Greece)

Crafting Cultural Environments: Materiality and the Greek Diasporic Imagination

In my recent title *Memories in Lace: Testimonials of Greek Women in Diaspora* (CSP 2025), I experiment with the genre of ethnographic fiction—or fictionalized ethnography—to illuminate the interwoven textures of memory, migration and materiality. The testimonials in the book emerge from a series of interviews I conducted between 2017 and 2020, which I later re-shaped through reflective and/or reminiscence-based narration designed to honor both the tangible and intangible dimensions of women’s lived experiences in diaspora. In this paper, I offer a close reading of select sections from the book, showing how shared testimonies and my reconstructed narrative “threads” reveal complex encounters between physical and non-physical environments across diverse landscapes. Lace, as both crafted object and symbolic weave, becomes a conduit through which the materiality of Earth and the rhythms of everyday labor generate cultural representations inflected by personal, family-related and historical crises. At the same time, the storytellers’ memory archives give rise to new modes of representing nature and of recasting the dreamscapes of homeland. Drawing on these narrative fragments, I demonstrate how self-identity is grounded in ongoing interactions with natural, social and geopolitical environments, and how memory (re)constructs selfhood across shifting spatial and emotional terrains. Ultimately, *Memories in Lace* reveals how the tactile expressions of

culture and affective memory converge, reconfiguring and reimagining understandings of belonging within the diasporic experience.

Errico, Elena (University of Trieste – IUSLIT, Italy)

Translating *The Savior* (Morton, 1992)

This proposal undertakes a comparative analysis between the Italian version of *The Savior* (Morton, 1992), published as *Romero el Salvador* (Morton, 2019) and an earlier adaptation in Spanish produced collaboratively by Morton and the Honduran theatre company Teatro La Fragua (Romero de las Américas, 2010). Set in El Salvador during the 1970s, the play dramatizes the final years and assassination of Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of the Manipulation School and Lefevere's notion of rewriting (Lefevere, 1982; 1992), this study contends that the divergent translation strategies adopted in the two versions—the first exhibiting a relatively source-oriented approach and the second being comparatively target-oriented—are primarily informed by extra-textual determinants, notably the socio-historical contexts and their intended realization as stage performances.

Evans, Jane E. (University of Texas at El Paso, USA)

Bruno Cabanes' *Les Fantômes de l'Île de Peleliu* (Ghosts of Peleliu): A Clash of Cultures

Soldiers' accounts of the First and Second World Wars rely on the five senses to recreate the "reality" of their experiences. Preparations and fighting associated with war batter the body: the terrain, air, and water surrounding the battle site compounds this vulnerability. In *Les Fantômes de l'Île de Peleliu*, author Bruno Cabanes recounts the confrontation between the American Marines and Japanese soldiers in September, 1944 from the point of view of Eugene Sledge, a young marine. In 1981 & 1994, Sledge published a memoir of his experiences on Peleliu and Okinawa: this motivated Cabanes to follow in his footsteps 80 years later. Both narrators' accounts emphasize differences between their native geospheres (the American South) and that of tropical Peleliu: for example, the coral reef terrain of the island, unlike the fertile ground in Alabama, causes the protagonists disequilibrium and threatens falling. The outside temperature, reaching 114 degrees Fahrenheit (unlike the 90-degree weather at home), makes them breathless. Additionally, the island's elevated humidity and stench of decomposition heighten the sensation of suffocating in the atmosphere. Even the volatile ocean differs from the calmer gulf and river waters of home. During the war, Sledge records the devastation around him, from the injuries and deaths of his fellow marines to the damage to the biosphere and geosphere, much of it permanent. The Palauans, evacuated pre-battle, return to Peleliu to find few traces of their former lives and culture: houses, (commercial) fishing, and sacred landmarks no longer exist. This disorientation takes a psychological toll on their wellbeing, a consequence of war that also troubles Sledge and others. My analysis will draw on sensory studies, the psychological effects of culture clashes, Sledge's memoir, and the interrelation of the Earth's 5 spheres.

Evans, Vanessa (Syracuse University, USA)

"To see and hear the world in a different way": Land and Relationality in the Global Indigenous Novel

This paper takes as its point of departure the understanding that Indigenous Peoples have always been global—networked and interconnected across lands, waters, and hemispheres. These networks are maintained and strengthened through shared understandings of land

as archive, depictions of which appear in Indigenous novels from around the world. Reading trans-Indigenously, my paper places three seemingly disparate Indigenous novels in focused juxtaposition: Kiana Davenport's (Kānaka Maoli) *Shark Dialogues*, Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*, and Waubgeshig Rice's (Anishinaabe) *Moon of the Turning Leaves*. Together, these novels reveal how land operates not simply as setting or resource but as a storied repository of knowledge, memory, futurity, and refusal: an archive that exceeds the limits of imperial documentation and its extractive logics. Drawing on Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) articulations of Indigenous internationalism and grounded relationality, I argue that these novels maintain and strengthen cross-cultural connection through shared understandings of land's archival dimensions. Each text turns to alternative archival practices—ancestral geographies, interspecies relationships, weather and waterscapes—to challenge hegemonic memory practices and the racialized, settler-colonial archives that have long attempted to overwrite Indigenous presence. In juxtaposition, the novels expose a wider story about how Indigenous communities “see and hear the world in a different way” (Borrows 52), forging planetary solidarities that both unsettle dominant histories and imagine more relational futures.

Feng, Pin-chia (National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan)

Crisis of Existence: Disease, Care, and Reproduction in Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu*

This paper aims to examine the representations of disease, care systems and women's bodily experiences—particularly reproduction functions—in relation to hostile ecological environments in Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu* (2018). In the biopunk Tiger Flu, Grist Village, a society of parthenogenetic women created by fugitive slave women, relies on “doubblers” who experience spontaneous pregnancies for reproduction, with “starfish” serving as the source of replacement organs. When the last starfish and final doubler both pass away and almost all the Grist sisters are captured by invaders, the village groom and doctor Kirilow sets out to find a new starfish. Kora, whose grandfather is responsible for the tiger flu pandemic, emerges as a potential candidate. Ultimately, she is transmuted into “the Kora Tree” to supply Grist sisters with replacement organs and limbs. The postapocalyptic space depicted in this dystopian novel reflects the prevalence of ecological disasters and the fragility of existence for members of the imagined world. This paper will analyze how Lai portrays the experiences of the two female protagonists as they navigate their picaresque journeys. It will also explore how Lai envisions transformations in the kinship system resulting from alternative reproductive models, as well as addresses the issues of crises in medical care and ecological systems by challenging rigid gender ideologies and capitalist class systems.

Filonenko, Alexandra (Oleksandra) (Independent Scholar)

(Re)Creating a Nostalgic Border Identity: Artistic-Archaeological “Archives” of Volodymyr and Tatiana Bakhtov

Volodymyr and Tetiana Bakhtov are a family of artists hailing from Southern Ukraine. In their artistic practice, they strive to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, thereby seeking to define the region's identity. Following a maritime journey from Odessa to the Mediterranean Sea in 1989-1992 on a replica of a Greek bireme, during which Volodymyr Bakhtov experienced the cultural and historical connection between the Mediterranean and the Northern Black Sea region, the artists began the artistic construction of an alternative, nostalgic identity of Southern Ukraine, based on its oldest well-documented cultural stratum. Using as their artistic terrain the remnant of the ancient Greek city-state of Pontic

Olbia (Mykolaiv oblast)—the northernmost point of the Oikumene—the Bakhtovs create objects and performances on the border of land-art and archaeological art which revitalise the long-gone past of the dead city, making it relevant to the modern spectators. In their work, they underline the plasticity of the border as an ever changing and ever-reassembling region of human existence, sometimes unseen or unperceived but always present. The presentation will focus on the analysis of a series of objects, installations, actions and performances that took place in Olbia from the mid-1990s to the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War, a period during which the artists were compelled to seek refuge elsewhere. The Bakhtovs' artistic oeuvre is proposed to be regarded as a distinct "archiving" practice of the archaeological material reimagined as a creative medium with active employment of the idiosyncrasies of the archaeological and natural landscapes of the archaeological site and references to Greek mythology and mystery cults, in order to uncover dynamics between the cultural and the natural, memory and oblivion.

Fuchs, Michael (University of Innsbruck, Austria)

Extracting the Feminine: Colonial Geology and Patriarchal Possession in Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) situates its gothic narrative within the toxic materiality of Mexico's colonial silver-mining past, exposing the deep entanglements between extraction, patriarchy, and racial domination. Set in the decaying mansion of a British mining family, the novel transforms the geosphere into a site of both ecological and corporeal violence as the subterranean fungus sustaining the house literalizes the extractivist logic, metabolizing human life in a grotesque fusion of the biological and the mineral. My paper will argue that *Mexican Gothic* reframes the gothic trope of the haunted house through the lens of colonial geology—where the earth bears the memory of imperial violence—and that this reconfiguration links environmental exploitation to the regulation of female and non-white bodies. The patriarch Howard Doyle's desire to control both the mine and women's reproductive capacities reveals a continuity between colonial extraction and anti-feminist biopolitics. By aligning geological depth with the repressed histories of race, gender, and capital, *Mexican Gothic* dramatizes how the colonial Anthropocene fuses the domination of nature with that of women. Reading the novel through feminist ecocriticism and postcolonial theory, I will show how *Mexican Gothic* envisions resistance through contamination, inheritance, and embodied knowledge, challenging both the purity myths of the Anthropocene and the masculinist fantasies of mastery over life and land.

Gall, Cecilia (ELTE University, Budapest, Hungary)

"A Handful of Earth from Home": An Analysis of the Memories of Homeland and Diasporic Identities in Selected Australian Migrants' Short Stories

The 1980s was the decade in Australia when multicultural writers and writings had the best chance of being published. Short story collections, critical writings, anthologies served the public interest in the topic. There is an abundance of resources that came out at the time which reflect the experiences not only of the first generation of migrants but also their children's adjustment to mainstream society. The present paper proposes an ecocritical examination not only of migrants' feelings for the homeland but also the physical attributes of water and earth in selected short stories from the collection *The Strength of Tradition*, edited by R.F. Holt, published in 1983. For example, homeland is evoked by the connection through water in "Kapetan Nikola," Nicholas Athanasou's short story which succinctly captures the complex feelings connected to the loss of physical attachment to Kastellorizo in the Greek homeland. The writer uses a series of aquatic metaphors to guide the reader through the metaphysical landscape that Kapetan Nikola preserved of his

homeland. His diasporic identity is created through the mediation of the Greek and the Australian natural landscape which is interconnected to his displacement as a migrant in a foreign land. The paper will use Myria Georgiou's theoretical formulations of diasporic transnational identities to elucidate the family dramas in situated and temporalised spaces (de Certeau) represented in selected Australian migrant short stories.

Gallego, Mar (University of Huelva, Spain)

Revisiting the Forest: Survival, Healing, and Hope in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *A Mercy*

During slavery, access to free mobility was prohibited or severely punished for enslaved Black people. Consequently, access to the natural world was also restricted by systems of coercion and control. For the enslaved, the forest emerged as a complex and ambivalent symbol—signifying both liberation and danger, but also the mysterious power of the unknown and a potential reconnection to African-based spiritual practices. Resignifying the Puritan legacy that cast the forest as the devil's domain and upheld the binary of sin and salvation, Toni Morrison reclaims this powerful symbol in *Beloved* and *A Mercy* to examine Black people's fraught relationship with nature and their strategies of resistance and survival within the brutal context of the "peculiar institution." In *Beloved*, the forest becomes a space of empowerment for the liberated Black community, with the Clearing serving as a site where Baby Suggs leads essential rituals of individual and collective healing. As a veritable ancestral figure, she preaches a gospel of love and restoration that counters the dehumanizing and violent practices of domination, sexualization, and disembodiment imposed by racist ideology. The roots of her healing practices reach back to African traditions grounded in spiritual and ecological knowledge. Conversely, in *A Mercy*, Morrison portrays the forest as a space of disease, death, and sin, reflecting the colonial attempt to sever emotional and spiritual bonds with the natural world—not only for enslaved Africans but also for Native Americans. By the novel's end, however, the forest is redefined through the protagonist Florens's transformative journey toward self-affirmation and resistance. Her newfound understanding of the natural environment gestures toward renewal and the possibility of a healing, nurturing relationship with nature.

Gardaphé, Fred L. (Queens College/CUNY, USA & the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Italy)

Indigenuity in Italian American Writers

This paper utilizes the concept of indigenuity, as established in the work of author and activist Daniel R. Wildcat, a Yuchi member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma and author of *Red Alert: Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge*. Indigenuity is the application of deep-spatial wisdom held by Indigenous Peoples, e.g., American Indians and Alaska Natives, to solve practical problems we face today. Indigenuity is the result of a People's long intergenerational transmissions of experiential knowledge over millennia resulting from their attentiveness to the inextricable symbiotic nexus of human cultures and the ecosystems/environments that gave tribal Peoples their culture and identity. As such Indigenuity is a co-creation of humans and plants, animals, and other natural features of the world. More often than not, it takes the work of indigenous writers to draw attention to the knowledge that has sustained members of a culture who are not part of the dominant culture(s) of a society. This paper explores the writing of Italian Americans such as Tony Ardizzone, Carol Maso, John Domini, Annie Lanzilotti and others for cultural knowledge that not only works to maintain the indigenous knowledge of Italian culture transmitting that sustainable knowledge to the reader, revealing both what is unique to a culture and what is shared with other indigenous cultures.

Gay, Marie-Agnès (Université Jean Moulin – Lyon, France)

“Terre... Ether... Air...”: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Atmospheric Self

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s committed voice is clearly resonant in her postcolonial, feminist intermedial oeuvre, which combats all scripted assignations, thematically and aesthetically disrupting any fixed notions of identity and belonging. However, Cha transcends ethno-cultural issues by displacing her perspective towards a universal reflection on man/woman’s place on earth, and beyond. Historical time, geopolitical mapping and political memory often fade before considerations of individuals’ immemorial relation to their natural environment. From the first page of her cult autobiographical memoir *Dictée*—a picture of an unlocated mineral landscape in which the only trace of human existence lies in oddly-lined boulders and a cropped ruin on the right hand side—to its inclusion of a photograph of a hand stencil found in a Spanish prehistoric cave, to its final lines evoking the sound of bells breaking cosmic silence, Cha abstracts herself from her here-and-now and from her militant agenda, making her art “simply a vehicle of the Way, [...] the huge memory store-house of the ‘Universal Mind,’” as can be read in her essay entitled “Paths”. In this paper, I propose to explore passages from *Dictée* and art pieces in which Cha widens her focal depth and invites us to join her in her vertiginous immaterial reveries. An untitled piece of conceptual art climactically encapsulates Cha’s signature movement towards metaphysical abstraction: a transparent jar contains five pieces of paper strung together, which read in French: eau (water) / feu (fire) / terre (earth) / ether / air. While Cha’s militent aesth(h)ics rests on a systematic and symbolic practice of Deleuzian deterritorialization, notably through systematic play with language, here, language play literally leads to deterritorialization (terre / ether / air), tracing a growingly spectral path perfectly suitable for Cha’s atmospheric self.

Gedik, Müge & Enver A. Akova (Stanford University, USA)

Mapping the Blue Voyages: Blue Humanities Approaches to the Eastern Aegean Coast

Our project presents a digital mapping of the Blue Voyages, mid-twentieth-century sailing journeys along the eastern coast of the Aegean, which sought to reconnect travelers with the region’s Greco-Roman heritage while instilling a modern ecological sensibility. These itineraries were conceived by a group of Turkish scholars and artists known as the Blue Anatolian Humanists, including Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, and Azra Erhat, who were active through the 1940s and 1970s, during early touristic endeavors in Turkey. They intertwined classical heritage sites with natural landscapes and habitats in their itineraries. Their writings and art not only celebrated ancient ruins, myths, and cultural memory but also documented the coastal environments, small-scale fishing practices, and marine biodiversity with a proto-ecological awareness. We approach this interlayered material through Environmental Humanities frameworks and Digital Humanities tools such as GIS mapping and digital text analysis to create two interlinked maps: one tracing cultural heritage sites referenced in Blue Voyage itineraries and cultural production, and another mapping marine species from the twentieth century to the present. The second stage of the project involves a third map documenting the effects of the 1923 Population Exchange, the forceful displacement of Greek communities, and their maritime environmental and cultural knowledge of the eastern coast of the Aegean, which has been incorporated into Turkish maritime knowledge or migrated to Kavala and Skiathos among other coastal areas in Greece. By situating the Blue Voyages within a broader maritime network of the late Ottoman Empire, Turkey, and Greece and contemporary sustainability efforts, our project makes visible intersections between travel, migration, maritime history,

literature, and environment. Our approach demonstrates how humanistic and literary narratives document environmental transformation of the seas.

Georgi, Sonja (Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany)

Un/Haunting the Plantation: Land-Based Counter-Archives and Memory in African-Native American Novels

Recent scholarship in the fields of Native American Studies and African American Studies emphasizes the various intersections of African-Native American encounters in US-American history: from shared experiences of enslavement in the colonial era to moments of Indigenous enslavement of African Americans and forced removal of Native American communities with the employment of Black US soldiers during the Reservation Era. These histories are now often analyzed within the context of the settler colonial enterprise in North America rather than alongside the trope of the US as a country of immigrants (Miles, Dunbar-Ortiz). Contemporary discourse and art in African American and Native American cultures tend to counter traditional and mainstream historiography. Scholars and artists of what Saidiya Hartmann terms “critical fabulation” apply their own archival and academic research to create counterstories. One example of critical fabulation that retells the story of African-Native American family history is historian Tiya Miles’s novel *The Cherokee Rose: A Novel of Gardens and Ghosts* (2015/2023). The ghosts are the untold stories of enslaved and confined women on a speculative version of the James Vann plantation in Georgia. In search of her “mothers’ gardens” (Alice Walker), the young Black-Indigenous protagonist, who purchases the abandoned plantation, discovers the undocumented and thus formerly unacknowledged story of the intricate power relations in the pre-removal era and their legacies for contemporary African-Native American communities and families. Focusing on transethnicity in relation to the environment, this paper will discuss literary examples that foreground their characters’ spatial relation to a particular place – to the homeland, the plantation, the garden – in their exploration of the complex family chronicles amidst histories around the institution of African slavery, Native American removal, and European settler colonialism.

Greenham, David (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)

Anaxagoras and the Golden Spike: Towards a Conceptual Genealogy of the Anthropocene

This paper explores ‘How narratives of culture and the physical cosmos are historically formed and articulated in the Anthropocene.’ To do so, I propose a return to the origins of Western thought—specifically the Pre-Socratic philosophers—to trace conceptual shifts that anticipate the Anthropocene. I focus on the transition from the material monism of the Ionian thinkers to the emerging dualism of the Eleatics, identifying a pivotal conceptual moment—a ‘Golden Spike’—not between geological epochs, but between intellectual paradigms, in the metaphors of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), I examine how the Pre-Socratics employed embodied metaphors to articulate their cosmological principles, or *arke*. For early thinkers like Thales, Anaximenes, and Heraclitus, *arke* were material and self-sufficient—water, air, fire—each eternal and self-moving, grounded in physical experience rather than myth. These metaphors reflect a disenchanted, monistic, materialist worldview in which nature is self-caused and ontologically complete. However, with the Eleatics and especially Anaxagoras, a conceptual shift occurs. Anaxagoras introduces *nous*—mind—as a first cause, incorporeal, external to nature and divine in character. This marks a decisive break: *nous* is located in humanity but not in nature, and Anaxagoras’ metaphors establish a dualism between the self-moving ‘mind’ and inert ‘matter,’ the corporeal and the

incorporeal, that has paradigm shifting consequences for philosophical conceptions of the human and the natural. I argue that this metaphysical separation inaugurates a hierarchy that aligns humanity with the divine and relegates nature to the material—a foundational conceptual move toward the Anthropocene. Anaxagoras' metaphors thus represent a historical inflection point: a 'Golden Spike' that distinguishes human and natural spheres. This paper contends that this dualistic turn is a critical moment in the genealogy of the Anthropocene.

Ghosh, Sutanuka (Jadavpur University, India)

Homing, Un-homing, Precarity: Narratives of a Transboundary River

The tempestuous Teesta, arising from the Himalayan glaciers, flows across the hills and foothills of North Bengal (India) before entering Bangladesh. This presentation will read a Bengali novel on the Teesta, *Teesta Parer Brittanto* (*Chronicles of the Banks of the Teesta*) by Debesh Roy, and riverine folk music from north Bengal to examine the representation of the river Teesta as a complex geomorphological entity—shifting masses of water, earth, rocks and vegetation—that is changeable yet constant as a home to humans and nonhumans alike. These homes, along the banks of the river and on the alluvial planes formed within the river, are rendered precarious by human interventions, like hydrothermal projects, which threaten and diminish the river, and unhomes a large number of its human and nonhuman inhabitants. While any river narrative is a cultural construct, those who live by a river first experience it as an extra-discursive reality. This reality of the river and the riverine ecosystem can never be adequately represented in any cultural text, yet that is the only way most of us can “know” a river. Roy's novel resists erasure of the river in its attempt to narrate the river as an extra-discursive reality. The narrative uncovers the political and scientific ignorance and blindness evident in the state's definition of the river, as also in the conception of the Teesta Barrage project. The novel writes a tragedy on an epic scale in its portrayal of the impact of the project, unhoming people, animals and forests that have found a home in the river. The folk music on the other hand speaks of a mercurial river that is awe inspiring yet intimate to the lives of the people. Even as the river resists domestication, it is woven into the living history of the people.

Gupta, Sunil (Ghent University, Belgium & Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi)

Guardian Spirits and Divinities of the Seas: Ritual Worlds of Ancient Seafaring in the Western Indian Ocean (1st–8th centuries CE)

The dangers posed by storms, tides, and shifting currents were a powerful and persistent reality for ancient mariners navigating the western Indian Ocean. Knowledge of winds, shoals, and navigation techniques alone was often insufficient to ensure safe passage across open sea waters. Seafarers therefore sought protection and reassurance through divine powers and guardian spirits associated with the maritime world. This paper examines the religious and ritual dimensions of ancient seafaring in the western Indian Ocean between the first century BCE and the eighth century CE. During the BC–AD transition, the western Indian Ocean supported maritime mobility, with merchant vessels sailing between Roman Egypt and the Indian subcontinent. Indian mariners also travelled to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The *Yavanajātaka*, a Sanskrit treatise on astrology composed in the third century CE by Sphujidhvaja, an 'Indianised' Greek author, presents the zodiacal sign of Virgo as Isis Pelagia, the Roman Egyptian goddess associated with the lighthouse of Alexandria. On the western coast of India, the Buddhist goddess Tara appears in the rock-cut caves of Kanheri holding a flaming torch, interpreted as guiding deep-sea vessels toward safe harbour. Temples dedicated to Sokotara Mata, a guardian deity whose name

derives from the island of Socotra, survive along the western Indian coast, signalling maritime connections across the Arabian Sea. Drawing on literary, archaeological, art-historical, and ethnographic sources, this paper argues that sea deities, guardian spirits, and sacred coastal sites were integral to lived oceanic worlds. These figures acted as mediators in a more-than-human maritime environment, where winds, tides, storms, and currents structured movement and risk. In this sense, sacred imaginaries of the sea functioned as hydrospheric counter-archives through which maritime communities made sense of the living, volatile environments of the western Indian Ocean.

Haas, Astrid (University of Bergen, Norway)

Drawing Resistance in the Borderlands: Fighting Trumpism in/with the *El Peso Hero* Comic Series

The paper analyzes how the Mexican American superhero comic series *El Peso Hero* utilizes the textual-visual genre of the superhero comic to offer cultural resistance to the situation in the US-Mexican border region and the border politics of the two Trump presidencies targeting Latin American immigrants. Although comics largely serve as vehicles of entertainment, their strong appeal among broad audiences endows them with the potential for cultural interventions in public discourses. In recent years, a growing body of US Latine authored comics engages with the situation in the US-Mexican borderlands and the increasingly hostile US border policy aimed at deporting Latin American immigrants in compliance with nativist sentiments in the country. Situated in the Texas-Mexico border region, Hector Rodriguez's *El Peso Hero* comic series is an ideal case study. Based on a close reading of the volumes *Border War* and *Sicario War* (both 2025), the paper analyzes how Mexican American superhero comics can offer a political critique of and cultural resistance to the border ideology and politics of Trumpism. Comparing these issues with earlier volumes of *El Peso Hero* the talk further explores some of the continuities and ruptures between the border politics of the two Trump presidencies.

Hardack, Richard (Independent Scholar-Southwest Research Institute)

Zones of Difference: Race and the Cultural Geography of the Environment in the US

In "Zoning, Equity and Public Health," Juliana Maantay asks whether land use planning is and can be equitable. If low income people of color are more likely to live near industrial areas than upper income whites, how has zoning been implicitly and explicitly used to allocate health risks? Maantay contends that most noxious uses can be eliminated in society. But as environmental disasters in Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and West Virginia demonstrate, our systems of industrial production and waste disposal are designed disproportionately to affect the poor and people of color. How should local planners then consider issues of class and race? I then discuss the ways several recent African American writers, particularly Toni Morrison and John Edgar Wideman, narrativize this concept of racial zoning. In *Sula*, for example, Morrison depicts the razed African American neighborhood of The Bottom as incessantly suffering the effects of white zoning, and an area of incessant inversion. In *Philadelphia Fire*, which focuses on Philadelphia's fire-bombing of the African American MOVE enclave, Wideman treats zoning as a system of racial classification. In mapping inner city Philadelphia, and what seems like an ironic commentary on enterprise zones, Wideman envisions a wheel like pattern giving form to the city, a design whose original purpose has long been lost. Wideman's zones are areas of absolute difference that only seem to offer democratic universality: "These white kids had been granted a zone. Everybody had zones. Addicts, prostitutes, porn merchants, derelicts. Even people who were black and poor had a zone. As long as they didn't contaminate

good citizens who disapproved. As long as everybody knew they had to give up their zone when the cops blow the whistle.” Even in such divisive circumstances, racial difference offers one corrective to the universal whiteness of many depictions of American cultural geography.

Hartwig, Marcel (University of Siegen, Germany)

Tulsa’s Best Kept Secret as a Mobile Archive: Environmental Erasure and Transethnic Memory

In May and June 1921, tensions between Tulsa’s Black and white neighborhoods exploded into what is called today the Tulsa race massacre. Sparked by a false accusation, white Tulsans, together with police forces, set the largely Black, well-to-do Greenwood district on fire, killed several Black residents, and detained others. Until 2018, the event was not taught in Tulsa’s schools and most of Tulsa’s population was unaware of the dimensions of this event, or that it even happened, as was the wider American population. It can be rendered as one of Tulsa’s best kept secrets until popular cultural representations of the event raised global awareness about the massacre. This paper intends to revisit it to gain a better insight into the work of commissions to do justice to the victims of this event and the role of the archive in the memory work more than a hundred years later. With the DOJ’s latest evaluation of January 10, 2025, reparation demands are still unmet, and the full dimensions of the white terror are not yet graspable, although the official authors of this report were in consultation with Tulsa’s Historical Society and perused the archives at TU and the Helmerich Center for American Research. This paper asks what the years of histories forgotten and recovered, ignored and reread, discarded and reappropriated have done to the current memory work of the Tulsa race massacre. It will read the commission report against “the status” (Mbembe) of the archive and thus follows Ann Laura Stoler’s criticism of the established extractive use of the archive (2002). Stoler observes a turning away from an undiscerning understanding of the archive as fact towards seeing archives as cultural “taxonomies in the making” (85). She recommends an “an ethnographic sensibility” (100) that would enhance a critical decolonial perspective. How can her frame help to elucidate the pitfalls in the commemoration of the ethnic clash and in what ways does the archive need to be reapproached?

Helman, Ivy (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)

An Ecofeminist Analysis of Nature and Environmental Care in Star Trek’s Discovery

This paper explores the world of Star Trek’s Discovery, the newest of the Star Trek franchise, which begins ten years before the original series and then subsequently becomes set the furthest in the future (the 32nd century). Running five seasons, there are many aspects of this series that speak to the environment including travel on the mycelial network, the dependence on dilithium as a fuel source, endangered species protection, examples of environmental destruction and environmental refugees, programmable matter, the ‘objective’ knowledge of science, the continuation of life, and so on. These topics beg the following question given the futuristic, multi-planetary setting of the series, where there is often talk of cultural relativity and yet the promotion of a set of universal values. Are there ecofeminist solutions presented within the show or does the show continue patriarchal ideals of objective knowledge, rely on science to provide answers, and spearhead colonial, patriarchal understandings of environmental conservation and protection? Star Trek as a franchise has always been considered to be ahead of its time, and this series is not an exception to this: featuring the first non-binary character, a gay relationship, a trans character, and various examples of empowered female leadership. Yet,

is it ahead of its time when it comes to the portrayal of environmental concerns? This paper argues, through the use of examples covering all five seasons, that while some aspects of the environment within *Star Trek: Discovery* could be understood as ecofeminist, most are clearly not.

Hixson, Maiza (The University of Texas at Dallas, USA)

Greetings from Gdańsk: *Trapped in Amber* as Collaborative Urban Placemaking

Intersecting with the 2026 MESEA conference through the lens of performance studies, Dr. Hixson will analyze Chicana playwright Carlos Morton's research residency at the International Border Studies Center (University of Gdańsk) and his resulting text *Trapped in Amber* as a theatrical performance of collaborative urban placemaking. Hixson articulates placemaking as the choreographed rehearsal and enactment of aesthetic public space by key political actors, ranging from historic figures to contemporary theater makers. She argues that Morton's portrayal of the city of Gdańsk positions it as an active performer—a civic body whose layered history, traumas, memories, and solidarities are enacted and reenacted through the play's narrative structure and the return of historic figures and events from the recent past.

Hofmann, Bettina (University of Wuppertal, Germany)

American Jewish Youth Books on Jewish Exile in Siberia during WW II

In recent years, there has been an astonishing number of children's and youth books published in the US that are set in Russia. While many of them discuss either Jewish life during the Second World War or afterwards in the USSR during the cold war, there is a segment which discusses the deportation of the Jewish intelligentsia with their families to Siberia under Stalin. In my talk, I shall discuss youth books by North American Jewish authors that depict the experience of exile in Siberia the 1940s. I shall discuss how these texts negotiate adapting to the unfamiliar environment of the Siberian steppe and how individual and collective memories are formed in these ethnic narratives.

Holešová, Andrea (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

Porous Bodies, Toxic Waters: Corporeality and Environmental Injury in *cullud wattah*

This paper examines the embodied politics of water contamination in Erika Dickerson-Despenza's play *cullud wattah* through concepts drawn from material feminism, feminist environmental humanities, and Black feminist thought. The play is read as staging a form of corporeality shaped by porosity, where bodies and toxic environments become inseparable. Contaminated water functions not as a metaphor but as an active substance that moves through and alters the bodily, emotional, and spiritual lives of the protagonists. To contextualize these dynamics, the analysis engages theories of environmental injustice, slow and accumulative harm, and the pervasive, ongoing structures of anti-Black violence—frameworks that highlight how bodily symptoms become living records of social abandonment. Illness, reproductive distress, and intergenerational vulnerability emerge as forms of testimony that make visible the otherwise obscured operations of state disregard. In doing so, *cullud wattah* develops an environmental dramaturgy in which Black women's embodied experiences expose the convergence of contamination, dispossession, and resilience, offering a powerful account of how ecological crisis is lived and resisted at the scale of the flesh.

Huang, Hsinya (National Sun Yat-Sen University NSYSU, Taiwan)

From River to Reef: Indigenous Pacific Water Cosmologies and the Ethics of Care

Rooted in Austronesian and Pacific Islander cosmologies, water is not merely a resource but a living archive and a conduit of memory that binds oceanic communities across generations and geographies. Drawing on literary texts, oral histories, and community-based environmental initiatives in Taiwan, Aotearoa New Zealand, Fiji, and Marshall Islands, this presentation examines how Indigenous Pacific concepts of relationality and reciprocity can re-frame contemporary debates on watershed governance, coastal restoration, and climate adaptation. By juxtaposing Chinese classical notions of “watercourse management” (理水) with Pacific epistemologies of ocean stewardship, I argue for a trans cultural/trans-ethnic “ethics of care” that bridges technocratic water management with place-based knowledge systems, highlighting practical pathways toward more equitable, multispecies water futures.

Hudson, Dale (NYU Abu Dhabi)

Decoding Cultural Extractions within Financial Speculation: Liu Chuang’s Three-Channel Video Installation on Nomadic Mining for Cryptocurrency in Relation to Multiethnic Communities on the Southeast Asian Massif

In Liu Chuang’s video installation *Bitcoin Mining and Field Recordings of Ethnic Minorities* (China, 2018), a female voice traces connections between bitcoin mining and field recordings of ethnic minorities through a speculative analysis of sound and water over 40 minutes. Across images on the installation’s three channels, she explains how hydroelectric energy gets diverted into bitcoin mining and ethnomusicologist research is sold to Hollywood. She speaks in Muya, a Sino-Tibetan language, of how nomadic people have navigated centuries of containment by Han states. By deepening time, ecological and economic, material and immaterial, microsystems and macrosystems overlap within the meshing of reality and speculation. By focusing on bitcoin mining, the work link cryptocurrencies with a material planet. The mines are nomadic, moving across the massif for very different reasons than indigenous people. They also require massive amounts of energy, which largely comes from hydroelectric generators within dams. In other words, they are powered by water at a cost to ecosystems and nomadic peoples, who are displaced. “As the material memory of the earth, the energy residing at the geological surface is abstracted into a virtual currency that escapes the nation,” explains the narrator; “Both participate in the construction of the larger other external to the earth.” The sound of mining is so loud that miners need to protect their ear. Outside, the noise is muffled by water. The human ear not only hears sounds but also balances and orients for the human body. Multisensory perception also orients nonhumans within the natural world of air, land, and water. Bitcoin mining disrupts ecosystems as matter is extracted to generate energy, which is used to produce an artificial world governed only by financial speculation. Understanding connections requires toggling multiple perspectives and temporalities across three screens with layered sounds and images and above all speculation.

Iliopoulos, Grigorios (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

Re-Purposing, Malleable Culture, and Space in William Gibson’s *Virtual Light*

The paper examines the concept of re-using and re-purposing of materials and technology within the unregulated, marginal spaces created by the underclass in William Gibson’s novel *Virtual Light* (1993). The focus is on how the preservation and ‘irreverent’ modification of tangible culture can, not only shape the people’s environment, but also

their very identities and sense of belonging. Additionally, attention is to be paid to the cyberpunk setting which through its barrage of pictures and emphasis on material culture delineates the crucial relationship between the malleability of materials and space. Gibson's writing style, rife with visual intensity and always open to political reflections, is fertile ground for the examination of material culture and the manner in which it shapes ourselves and our urban surroundings both in contemporary times and in our future.

Jackson, Cathy M. (Norfolk State University, USA)

Homeplace No More: When African American Communities Are Destroyed, Culture and Memory Remain

Utilizing qualitative research methods, this study denotes the pain Norfolk's African American community endured because of the city's urban renewal policies since the 1960s. Through the words of eight former residents of the Church Street community, the true nature and consequences of the loss of homeplaces are clear. Those displaced (former) residents are often invisible, and the uncertainty caused by displacement is unvoiced. These interviews recover the memories and the longing for community of African American residents whose neighborhoods are gone. This methodology mirrors the work of researchers engaged in "black geographical" mapping. McKittrick notes that "black geography, forged in a cauldron of colonialism, slavery, racism, and the struggle against white supremacy, illuminates how African American struggles helped delineate a unique sense of place in the United States." It became a necessary place where they could seek a safe harbor against all the troubles outside their doors. And wherever they settled, they began the process of building homeplaces. Kent C. Ryden persuasively uses geographical, sociological, folkloric, cultural, and historical arguments to contend that a "sense of place" is defined by inner thoughts, memories, and deeply held feelings about the places called home. These become the unofficial history of a region, where "landmarks are remembered and found significant because of something striking that once happened there" (1993, 63-65). A sense of place creates stories and memories that form the bedrock of communal identity. Their memories become part of an "invisible mapping" that breathes life and history into geographical entities once denoted by mere maps.

Jackson, Christina (Rutgers University–Camden, USA)

Embodied Archives of Abandonment: Race, Spatial Neglect, and Environmental Inequality in Trenton and San Francisco

This paper brings together ethnographic findings from Trenton, New Jersey, and earlier research from my Embodied Difference chapter on San Francisco, California, to analyze how racialized environmental neglect becomes imprinted on the body and the urban landscape. Across both sites, Black residents describe housing decay, infrastructural abandonment, and health-system failures as not only external stressors but embodied experiences rooted in long histories of spatialized racism. In San Francisco, older Black residents narrate the bodily consequences of environmental toxicity, hospital closures, and displacement. In Trenton, younger Black and Brown caregivers similarly detail mold induced respiratory illness, months without heat or hot water, gun-violence-related hospital lockdowns, and daily negotiations of unsafe streets and deteriorating rental housing. Participants link these crises to a racialized geography of disinvestment: redlining, predatory landlord practices, shrinking social services, and the siting of incinerators, landfills, and boarded-up properties in Black neighborhoods. Their narratives function as embodied archives, where the body becomes a record of urban abandonment and where racialized memory and place are co-constitutive. Yet residents also articulate ecological and community-based visions for spatial justice—youth mentorship, intergenerational

community centers, green spaces, neighborhood leadership, and more accountable health and housing systems. By placing Trenton's contemporary "environmental precarity" in dialogue with San Francisco's longer arc of racialized urban transformation, this paper contributes to MESEA's focus on cultural environments and earth's spheres, showing how racialization shapes the built environment and how marginalized communities generate place-based strategies for repair and resilience.

Jiroutova Kynclova, Tereza (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)

Cutting the Roots of/and Flow: Conflicted Masculinities and Extractivism in Paolo Bacigalupi's "The Tamarisk Hunter"

First published in environment-oriented *High Country News*, Paolo Bacigalupi's "The Tamarisk Hunter," set in 2030, came to prominence for its portrayal of a drought-ridden hell-scape of the American West. Most analyses so far have focused on its relevance for the cli-fi genre and/or reconsideration of water-rights and environmental stewardship. However, in capitalist and/or settler colonial societies the institutionalized upkeep of life-sustaining resources has always been linked to the existing gender order. Dagget has persuasively analyzed the rise of authoritarianism in what they call petromasculinities, i.e. identities linked to the control of coal, gas and, oil extraction. In contrast, the contested strategic resource in Bacigalupi's short story is water, yet (petro)masculine governance persists. In "The Tamarisk Hunter," authoritarian masculinities wield power over masculinities in water-conservation servitude on the one hand, and over rivers and water dams on the other, thereby controlling both the feminine and the masculine in the short story's symbolic and gender orders. Employing Klaus Theweleit's discussion of the rigid masculinity exemplified by Freikorps in his *Male Fantasies*, this paper will discuss the representations of masculinities and landscape/resource management in the said short story. Theweleit's metaphor of an impermeable dam serves to convey the ideology of masculine authority and control against all (that) flows in the body, nature and society, an image almost seamlessly applicable within a gender-sensitive reading of "The Tamarisk Hunter" that I aim to provide.

Kanikli, Antri (UCLan Cyprus University) & Alan Rice (University of Lancashire, UK)

Endangered Languages and Family Language Policy Interventions: Evidence from a QR PSF Project

This paper presents the insight gained from the implementation of a QR PSF (Quality Research Policy Support Fund) project that examined why Cypriot Arabic (CA) is severely endangered (Karyolemou 2019) and demonstrates how this informed the design of an intervention that supports the transmission of the language. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in the framework of the project; four interviews with families in which both parents are speakers of CA, and four interviews with families in which only one of the parents is a CA speaker. The collected data were transcribed and analysed via NVIVO15. The qualitative analysis of the data revealed that the fact that CA speakers were forced to migrate from Kormakitis, the village where the language was spoken, to the south part of the island after 1974, had a significant impact on CA Family Language Policy (FLP). CA speakers' attitudes towards their native language changed, and they stopped transmitting the language to the young generation. Studies on home language transmission have shown that speakers who are proud members of an ethnolinguistic community want to transmit their language to their children (Schwartz 2010). This study showed that this is not the case with CA speakers. Their attitude towards the "usefulness" of their language, as a consequence of the forced migration, is the FLP factor that prevails over the other

factors reported in the study. The knowledge acquired from the development of the project informed a policy proposal that was submitted to local stakeholders and policy makers in Cyprus. An FLP intervention has been designed to support language transmission of CA. The intervention builds on the research outputs of the award-winning “Planting Languages” Erasmus+ project, further developing the project tools to educate CA families on how to design their own family specific language planning strategy.

Karamanidou, Niki-Grigoria (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

On Identity Negotiation and Belonging: Exploring the Nature/Culture Nexus and the Cultural Representation of the Non-Human in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Gardens in the Dunes*

The present paper explores the interconnectedness between nature and culture in relation to notions of belonging and identity formation in North American Indigenous communities as this becomes exemplified in Leslie Marmon Silko’s work *Gardens in the Dunes*. More specifically, the paper traces the representation of the cultural practices embedded in the physical cosmos, which are presented as being an integral marker of identity in the fictional tribe of the Sand Lizard People in Silko’s novel. Moreover, the paper argues that these Indigenous cultural worldviews underlining the agency and importance of non-human components of nature are pointedly contrasted to the Western white American cultural framework which views nature as a commodity, as the novel illustrates. Furthermore, the paper explores the main character’s, Indigo, coming of age process as a constant struggle against assimilation to the white culture imposed to her, whereby her resistance is fueled by the cultural values of her tribe and her close relation to nature. Finally, the paper comments on the novel’s ecocritical concerns as voiced by Indigo’s sister, Sister Salt, who describes the appropriation and violation of Indigenous land by Western capitalist schemes. Donna Haraway’s concept of the ‘natureculture’ which stresses that “conceiving of “nature” and “culture” as either polar opposites or universal categories is foolish” (8), becomes invaluable in this investigation. It is particularly utilized in this research project, in order to investigate Grandma Fleet’s and Indigo’s performance of cultural practices such as seed gathering and cultivation of their ancestral land as embodied practices which are inseparably connected to the storytelling narrations and cultural heritage of their tribe. Great emphasis is given on the climactic planting in the novel’s symbolic end, of Indigo’s seed collection in her ancestral land in the dunes, where she is reunited with her sister, in this meaningful locale.

Keleta-Mae, Naila (University of Waterloo, Canada)

Black Expressive Culture in the Atmosphere

This paper seeks to identify how Blackness and freedom are interconnected with the geosphere and atmosphere through the examination of three sites of Black expressive culture: The Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Canada; the Accompong Town ritual of liberation in Jamaica, and the film *Mother Nature > Earthlings* (2023) by Aljumaine Gayle. Together, these sites provide historical and contemporary examples of the pursuit of freedom for Black people from the 18th to 21st century. In particular, the analysis of these sites will take up two of the conference’s proposed questions: “How are ethnicity and ‘race’ represented in the culture/environment nexus?” and “How do geopolitical changes, crises, and conflicts affect cultural environments?” The Black Loyalist Heritage Centre commemorates the arrival from New York in 1783 of about 3000 free and formerly enslaved Black people to Canada. During the American Revolutionary War some enslaved Black people fought for Britain and were given certificates of freedom and promises of land and money that never materialized. Accompong Town is a village in Jamaica where

descendants of the Maroons have lived autonomously since the 18th century. The Maroons were Africans who escaped enslavement by the Spanish and waged wars against the colonial authorities. I visited in 2024 for the town's annual celebration of the signing of a treaty in 1739 with the British. Gayle's film is a reflective story of the negligent relationship between human beings and the earth. The allegorical film fashions this dynamic as being akin to that of a child and their mother. The film also speaks to the relationship between Black communities and nature, thereby subverting stereotypes that create distance between the two. Lastly, this paper will be theoretically and methodologically underpinned by feminist, critical race, performance studies, and autoethnography in ways that elucidate perspectives on ethnicity, culture, and corporeality.

Kiełkowicz, Justyna (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland)

“Wouldn't life be so much simpler...?” Medievalist Responses to Contemporary Geopolitical and Environmental Challenges in Nicola Barker's *Darkmans*

This paper integrates medievalism studies, the studies of literary representations of mobilities, and ecocriticism in a reading Nicola Barker's medievalist novel *Darkmans* (2007). Images and ideas associated with the Middle Ages offer scope for creative revisions of the past in contemporary fiction, through the lens of the texts' present. One of the central aspects of medievalist nostalgia is the yearning for a simple mode of existence and human connection with nature. As a response to industrialisation and the accelerating climate crisis, the medievalist “utopian thinking” re-imagines the Middle Ages as an alternative to modern environmental concerns. Medievalist fiction tends to establish pre-modern settings through which environmental and posthumanist notions are made manifest. Set in present-day Ashford, *Darkmans* establishes a different mode of medievalist solastalgia as it draws parallels between preservation of natural and cultural/historical heritage and situates medieval legacy within the postmedieval framework of mobility, cultural memory, and environmental activism. Medievalist ideas of nature become an implicit context for the novel's discussion of technology, progress, and social and environmental justice. The analysis demonstrates how Earth's materiality affects cultural environments across time while, simultaneously, being shaped by them. Blending together contemporary stories of characters of diverse background with that of John Scogin, a medieval court jester, the novel signals the complexity of modern identities and the inextricable connection between history and contemporaneity. Through its discussion of migration, multiculturalism, and the colonial history with its social and environmental implications, the novel foregrounds how ethnicity and “race” can be represented in the culture/environment nexus. The paper indicates how medievalist fiction can challenge predominant notions of collective/cultural identity, difference, and belonging.

Kilpeläinen, Pekka (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland)

Anthropocentric and Ecocentric Intersections: Animism and Spectrality in Bernice L. McFadden's *Gathering of Waters*

Bernice L. McFadden's *Gathering of Waters* (2012) narrates traumatizing incidents in African American history from an animistic point of view foregrounded by a nonhuman narrator, the town of Money, Mississippi. By extending its focus beyond the category of the human, the novel constructs a counternarrative against Western modernity. The narrative highlights the intersections of anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives, as the novel depicts the traumatizing journey of an evil spirit that possesses both humans and nonhuman phenomena. This is exemplified by depictions of the Great Mississippi Flood, the racist murder of Emmett Till, and Hurricane Katrina, highlighting the questions of human and nonhuman agency. In addition, the narrative foregrounds spectrality, as ghosts

become an inherent part of the reality constructed in the novel, instead of being explained away as hallucinations. These posthumanist tendencies challenge and resist the tenets of demystification and rationality on which the exclusionary grand narrative of Western modernity is based.

Kot, Svitlana (Saarland University/Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University)

Narratives of Displacement: Cultural Responses to Violent Border Rifts in Ukraine

The paper will explore how narratives of displacement emerging from the ongoing war in Ukraine articulate the affective and cultural dimensions of violent border rifts. It will investigate the ways in which individuals and communities navigate and narrate the fracturing of territorial and symbolic borders. Drawing on cultural border studies, affect theory, and the concept of bordertextures, it examines how literature, film, and digital narratives bear witness to the ongoing reconfiguration of borders and to the lived experience of loss, exile, and belonging that accompanies acute geopolitical rupture. By exploring a range of contemporary border narratives, the paper situates Ukraine as a key site for understanding how trauma is negotiated, mediated, and transformed through cultural form, and how artistic practices make visible the profound fluidity of geopolitical space in moments of violent transition.

Kurjatto-Renard, Patrycja (Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, France)

Mermaids, Sentient Roads, Enlightened Bats, Starfish and Stone Eaters Unite: Seeking Ecological Justice in *Lagoon*, *The Broken Earth Trilogy* and *The Tiger Flu*

Nnedi Okorafor, N.K. Jemisin and Larissa Lai are three ethnic speculative fiction women writers whose novels explore the theme of ecological justice. The paper will focus on a comparative reading of Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014), Jemisin's *The Broken Earth Trilogy* (2015—2017) and Lai's *The Tiger Flu* (2019). While the three narratives, published over the period of five years, are set in very different worlds (Nigeria in the near future, an imaginary planet and western Canada in 2145), they all feature non-human characters seeking survival and ecological justice. Or rather, in the way the quest for such justice is presented, they question what humanity is and to what extent it matters. Also, all those narratives feature abrupt bodymind modifications. Jemisin's trilogy addresses the interconnections of Earth's five spheres in the most graphic way, but Okorafor and Lai also grapple with the borders between human and non-human actors and their environment, and interrogate the role of interspecies agency in preserving the environment. The three novels address what Anna Wienhues named "a corrupted relationship between humans and the other living beings on Earth" in different ways, offering complementary points of view. Last but not least, the three narratives offer a glimpse of different regenerative models which are supposed to protect the wellbeing of humans, other species, and Earth. The article will compare their different takes on ecological justice and offer a rationale for those differences.

Kušnír, Jaroslav (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Place, Nature and Cultural Identity in Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman*

In her highly acclaimed novel *The Night Watchman*, Louise Erdrich portrays the lives of Thomas Wazhashk, a night watchman and Chippewa Council member working near the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota, and Patrice Paranteau, along with other Chippewa characters residing on the reservation. Through her depiction of this Indigenous community, Erdrich explores their dual struggle: the challenge of survival within the

pressures of the modern world, and the ongoing effort to preserve their cultural identity—an identity deeply rooted in a specific geographical region and a traditional understanding of nature and cosmos. This paper examines Erdrich’s representation of place as both a formative element of Chippewa cultural identity—intimately tied to the landscape of North Dakota and Indigenous ecological knowledge—and as a site subjected to the encroachment of modernity and technological forces that threaten the continuity and distinctiveness of Native American cultural existence.

Lambert, Raphaël (Kansai University in Osaka, Japan)

From Douglass to Du Bois: The Early Negro as a Repository of Freedom and Democracy

The ideas surrounding the Negro, freedom, and democracy converge in the writings of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois. In Douglass’s *Narrative* (1845), a group of slaves singing while en route to their master’s home fosters a spirit of self-confidence and freedom that counters their condition as human chattel. Contrary to Saidiya Hartman’s assertion, in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), that these songs exemplify “the social death of slavery,” this reflection posits that they carry the seeds of a new Negro aesthetic, which Du Bois, half a century later, will elaborate on in his seminal *Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Indeed, Du Bois’s theory of a messianic new Negro reifies what was incipient in the singing performance of the slaves, namely the capacity to generate a world in which nothing is predetermined or foreordained—a fertile breeding ground for experiments in democracy.

Lauret, Maria (University of Sussex, UK)

Against Storytelling: Attica Locke’s Recalcitrant Fiction

Known chiefly as highly successful African American crime fiction that has won prizes and drawn favourable reviews, Attica Locke’s oeuvre to date is also characterised by a resistance to storytelling as we usually understand it: a matter of cause and effect, of tension and release, of mystery and solution. Her narratives are not so much counter-narratives as anti-narratives: they take issue with the logic of storytelling itself. A quote from Rebecca Solnit that serves as epigraph to *The Cutting Season* (2012) exemplifies this: “We navigate by stories, but sometimes we only escape by abandoning them” articulates Locke’s quiet revolt against—not just the conventions of genre fiction, but more fundamentally against the ubiquitous demand for narrativization (your story, a new story, an alternative story) that is endemic to 21st century culture, from advertising to politics and from historiography to psychotherapy. But what happens if this impulse is refused? In this analysis of *The Cutting Season*, a novel which begins as a murder mystery only to gradually turn into a critical contemplation of Louisiana slavery, the importance of Black Geographies (McKittrick) is stressed to understand connections between historic place and present precarity. A second theoretical frame, that of Pierre Nora’s lieux de mémoire, further elucidates those connections in relation to the plantation and memory. But the main interest lies in Locke’s resistance to storytelling that derails the narrative imperative to impart a deeper, unassimilable truth—a trauma beyond Morrison’s “This is not a story to pass on” at the end of *Beloved*, that won’t let itself be told at all.

Laws, Page (Norfolk State University, USA)

Woke is Broke: Indigenous-, Other-, and Self-Mocking in Larissa FastHorse’s Indigenous Teaching Plays

The Horatian dictum, *docere et dulcere*, saying that art should both “teach and please,” can apply to all genres, but it has always seemed to be particularly targeted toward theater and

especially theater for the young. Although it's difficult with politically driven writers such as Bertolt Brecht (proselytizing for Marxism), and our contemporary Larissa FastHorse (demanding rights for indigenous peoples) definitively to separate "teaching" plays from their other works, it can be a useful exercise to try. Brecht famously designated several of his works from the 1920's and 30's as "Lehrstücke" (Der Jasager, Der Neinsager, Die Massnahme), and FastHorse has likewise designated some of her 'devised' plays as being for juvenile audiences. This paper considers all available FastHorse plays (three will be published Nov. 18, 2025, in good time for our conference but not this abstract), focusing on her masterwork "The Thanksgiving Play"—which satirically interrogates the traditional archive and (trans)ethnic identities—but also prioritizes the more obviously didactic among her others, especially those targeting young people. There is also an urgent need to reevaluate FastHorse in the second, more virulent Age of Trumpism when 'wokeism' is being eviscerated by the Right throughout America's universities and wherever else it's perceived to exist. Well intentioned (if foolish) 'woke folks' are surely to be preferred to those who openly despise non-white peoples. That's a painful lesson we are all being forced to learn.

Lee, A. Robert (Nihon University Tokyo, Japan)

Land and Water: The Native American Poetries of Luci Tapahonso, Diane Glancy, Joy Harjo, and Linda Hogan

Before we had "ecology" and "environmental humanities" we had land and water. Or, rather, and more than most others, Native and First Nation peoples did. But, over time, we in the so-called First world have come back to indigeneity, not only through the ambiguous filter of anthropology but the voices of literary authorship. Oral tradition is a given. In the case of Native North America, so, increasingly, is poetry—and not least by the symptomatic quartet of Native authorship by the women writers named in my title. This presentation will alight on a selected roster of specific poems in which land and water give positioning, latitudes and longitudes in seizing upon the earth's memorial lineage: materiality and spirit, reality and language.

Liu, Chang (Heidelberg University, Germany)

Race, Energy, and Environmental Contamination in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

In popular culture studies, the energy themes of the 1987 U.S. animated television series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (TMNT) have increasingly attracted critical attention. This paper revisits these themes through the figure of Splinter, the turtles' mentor and a Japanese American character whose mutation results from exposure to radioactive waste. By focusing on Splinter, the paper highlights the underexplored issue of environmental racism as conditioned by nuclear power, toxic waste, and environmental contamination. Departing from Robert Bullard's sociological definition, this study understands environmental racism as a matter of representation: how racialized characters are depicted in relation to their environment, and how stereotypes are mobilized to rationalize these relationships. Splinter's backstory as an immigrant forced to live in the sewers reflects social exclusion and precarity, while his transformation into a rat dramatizes both environmental harm and racial marginalization. Importantly, the narrative does not center on seeking a cure or social justice. Instead, through familiar racial tropes—such as the portrayal of Asian Americans as inscrutable and resistant to assimilation—the series naturalizes Splinter's continued existence as a victim of radioactive contamination and as an outsider relegated to polluted urban spaces. This reading situates TMNT within Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's framework of environmental racism and Judith Butler's

concept of precarity, demonstrating how certain forms of suffering remain invisible or unacknowledged. Ultimately, the paper argues that TMNT not only engages with energy themes but also reflects cultural logics that link race, environment, and social exclusion.

Łuczak, Ewa Barbara (University of Warsaw, Poland)

From the Tragic to the Comedic Mode and Back: The Ethics of Humor in Carlos Morton's *Trapped in Amber*

Trapped in Amber is conceived as a work of historical satire that employs wit, irony, and humor to engage with the major traumas in the history of the Kashubia region, while simultaneously drawing attention to the cyclical nature of domination and oppression. Yet, humor—dependent as it is on cognitive dissonance and ambiguity—runs the risk of misfiring: rather than exposing or subverting systems of oppression, it may instead provide a momentary, voyeuristic release for the audience. This paper examines the ethical dimensions of humor in Carlos Morton's play. It argues that despite its seemingly simple acto form, surrealist atmosphere, and carnivalesque, baroque structure, Morton's Menippean satire operates as a profoundly ethical text. It interrogates the moral questions surrounding history and social justice, functioning simultaneously on both local and global levels. Through its representation of successive regimes of domination—whether Teutonic vassalage, the Catholic Inquisition, or Soviet-linked communist rule—the play aligns its laughter with the victims of colonial and authoritarian violence. In doing so, it exposes not only the region-specific manifestations of oppression but also the mechanisms universal to all systems of authoritarian power. The play's laughter is directed at both the historical agents who abuse power and at the ironies of history itself, thereby challenging the illusion of history as a linear, evolutionary, or Hegelian dialectical process. For Morton, history is neither a zeitgeist unfolding through violent clashes nor an evolutionary march toward progress, but rather a spiral that traps humanity within the illusion of advancement. Ultimately, however, laughter in *Trapped in Amber* emerges as an act of ethical resistance and empowerment: it momentarily restores a sense of justice to a land historically dispossessed of its original inhabitants.

Ludwig, Sämi (Université de Haute Alsace in Mulhouse, France)

The Sphere of Experience vs. the Sphere of Training: Evaluating the MFA-trained Authors of the 21st Century

What has been written by sophisticated Modernist critics about the prose of Theodore Dreiser and Frank Norris is downright humiliating. Many claimed that they simply “can't write.” Still, these authors remain classics because they have something to say that speaks to us and represents an important experience of their time. These old texts last. I recently had to think of this several times when I read recent by contemporary minority authors. The new millennium write like silk. Many of them have learned how to plot and how to write well-balanced sentences at sophisticated writing schools that teach Master of Fine Arts degrees. Their books have a great “hook,” sometimes they even know how to carry a tune and tell a story. But much too often, they have little to say. I own a number of recent novels that I started reading but didn't finish. Many of these texts are extremely well attuned to contemporary reality—they always have the right opinion and are well-packaged and marketed. In my contribution, I would like to discuss these issues: Why is Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953) so memorable, even though it is a simple memoir that describes the facts of her life? And why did I not finish *When the Emperor Was Divine*? Why not the African American text *Negroland a Memoir* that was praised by the German reviewer? And why did I have to laugh out loud when teaching *Southland* and then used it to explain American political correctness to my students? To be sure, there are some brilliant young

authors with an MFA, such as Tommy Orange or Ocean Vuong, but somehow their academic training may not be the reason for this...

Maber, Peter (Northeastern University London, UK)

“The Universe is my voice”: Sun Ra’s Astro-Black Cosmology and Diasporic Reimagining of the Earth’s Spheres

This individual paper will examine Sun Ra’s “astro-Black” philosophy and practice as a radical reimagining of African diasporic relationships with the Earth’s spheres—primarily the atmosphere and the hydrosphere—through cosmic displacement and extraterrestrial possibility. Sun Ra’s Afrofuturist practice, across music, poetry, film and performance, sought to transcend terrestrial oppression by proposing alternative spatial and material configurations of belonging. His work reimagines the atmosphere as medium of liberation rather than of constraint, transforming air, soundwaves, and cosmic radiation into pathways for Black transcendence beyond earthly constraint. This paper will examine Sun Ra’s practice, from the 1950s to the 1990s, and then turn to the work of contemporary Afrofuturist practitioners the Otolith Group (Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar), whose films and installations explore oceanic and atmospheric spaces as sites of both historical trauma and of speculative possibility. Works including *Hydra Decapita* (2010) and *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (2013) extend Sun Ra’s approaches, mapping connections between the Middle Passage’s hydrospheric violence, atmospheric colonisation, and the climate crisis today. My paper argues that Sun Ra’s astro-Black philosophy offers crucial interventions for the environmental humanities by centring Black radical thought’s engagement with the planetary spheres, challenging dominant narratives that position the environmental crisis as a new concern. Instead, his work reveals how racialised populations have long experienced Earth as an uninhabitable space requiring imaginative escape or transformation. By examining how contemporary artists inherit and extend these frameworks, I will demonstrate how astro-Black thought generates alternative environmental imaginaries, grounded in diaspora and displacement, using the material agency of sound, water, and atmosphere, and constructing new cultural ecologies of liberation.

Mădroane, Irina Diana (West University of Timișoara, Romania)

Rhetorical Citizenship and Performativity in the “Floodlines” Podcast: Centering Black New Orleanians’ Voices During and After Katrina

The Atlantic magazine “Floodlines” podcast (2020), suggestively subtitled “The Story of an Unnatural Disaster,” recounts in eight parts, plus a twenty-year anniversary special (2025), New Orleans’ response to and memory of Hurricane Katrina. Hosted by Vann R. Newkirk II, who was concerned with “what memory and what disaster reveal about a place,” it amplifies the narratives of the city’s African American inhabitants, highlighting their struggles for survival amid environmental catastrophe, systemic failure and racism, their resilience and subsequent endeavors. A character present throughout the story, the hurricane brings to surface “just how much people loved each other ... their communities and their city” and “how little the country and that city loved them” (Part IX). By dealing with Katrina’s lingering effects, regular survivors like Le-Ann Williams, one of the main protagonists, embark upon a civic journey of community reconstruction. This study examines Black New Orleanians’ (inter)actions with each other, the hurricane and American institutions, as they are evoked and performed in the podcast’s long-form narrative, through the lens of “discursive/rhetorical citizenship” (Asen, 2004; Kock & Villadsen, 2012, 2014, 2017). From this perspective, the “Floodlines” symbolic constructions, mobilizing particular semiotic and technological affordances, constitute

“modes of public engagement” (Asen, 2004): they have the potential to expand the public agenda, reverse hierarchies (Asen, 2004) and foster rhetorical and civic agency (Mădroane & Cărlan, 2024). Drawing upon rhetorical and multimodal discourse analysis, the presentation will demonstrate how “Floodlines” discursively recasts the Black New Orleanians’ confrontation with Hurricane Katrina into “the sound of specific experiential encounters in civic life” (Watts, 2001, p. 185), whereupon their marginalized voices come into their own, and mainstream American publics are invited to (self-)reflection and conversation.

Majithia, Sheetal (The Juilliard School, USA)

Riverine and Entomological Webs from Ithaca to Ayemenem in the work of Arundhati Roy

The Anthropocene challenges conceived understandings of comparison. How do scholars reimagine equivalence and representation given the demand to think planetarily, that is across the geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and cryosphere while also considering humans as species, differentiated by virtue of ethnicity, culture, and corporeality? This essay suggests an alternative model of relating incommensurable “things” such as species, force, and difference by way of a feminist textilic reading of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) wherein riverine and entomological webs overlap to undo the dominance of anthropocentric agency. Arguing that the novel’s title refers to Velutha, the Dalit protagonist, but also to a spider, also known as Chappa Tamburan or The Lord of Rubbish, I contend that the novel is woven like a cobweb, intertextually relating modern protagonists’ to Karna from The Mahabharata, Athena and Arachne from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, and Penelope from Homer’s *Odyssey*, thereby rendering temporality and scale commensurable. Staging these dramas in overlapping real and mythical riverine settings such as the Ashva River of The Mahabharata and Kerala’s Meenachil River while evoking the Lydian Pactolus River in the myth of Arachne, the novel weaves the mythical with the mundane. Linguistically, *The God of Small Things* weaves a tangled web of sticky connections, assigning language, affect, and influence to human and more-than-human entities thereby rendering them equivalent. Attending to the swapping of syllables in the irregular uses of syntax, spelling, typography, coining words, exchanging syllables, collage, palindromes, tongue-twisters, backward reading and writing, and onomatopoeia as well as the equation of the main human protagonists of Velutha and Ammu with the seemingly less heroic non-human spiders of *Metamorphoses* and *The Mahabharata*, the novel relates weaving and writing as commensurable models of exchange. The focus on a shared human and more-than-human artistry reveals the contingent human and nonhuman webs separated by scientific taxonomies assumed by the Anthropocene.

Martanovschi, Ludmila (Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania)

Performing Ecogrief and Ecojustice in Chantal Bilodeau’s *No More Harveys*

This study demonstrates that *No More Harveys*, the third play in Chantal Bilodeau’s *Arctic Cycle* (<https://www.cbilodeau.com/arctic-cycle>), places a woman’s outcry center stage in order to raise awareness about ecogrief, ecojustice and the urgent need for radical action. Unapologetically, the monologist’s narrative leads to demanding justice for women, for ethnic minorities, for non-human beings and for the environment. Steeped in personal experience, her anger and protest challenge multiple aggressors, whose names happen to be always and exhaustingly Harvey (the husband, the movie producer, the hurricane). By migrating to Alaska to escape a traumatic marriage, the protagonist articulates the possibility of re-centering herself, voicing her (eco)grief and accessing agency. An effective coping mechanism that she testifies about is learning from indigenous friends, sisters-in-

arms, in the process of receiving and giving support. Another such mechanism that the audience/reader witnesses is the protagonist's establishing a dialogue with Alexa, an Amazon Echo. An illustration of ecodramaturgy at its best, the play lends itself to an ecofeminist interpretation and offers this critic the chance to continue to celebrate Bilodeau's oeuvre, after having published "Ecodramaturgy Meets the Arctic: Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila and Forward*" in *Eco-Consciousness in American Culture: Imperatives in the Age of the Anthropocene* (Peter Lang, 2023).

Martin, Lowry (University of Texas at El Paso, USA)

Exploiting Until Exhaustion: Extractive Economies and Queer Futurity in *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*

Diego Céspedes's *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*—winner of the 2025 Un Certain Regard prize—offers a compelling intervention in cinematic representations of AIDS, gender variance, and extractive economies in Latin America. Set in a mining enclave in northern Chile in 1982, the film stages its young protagonist's coming-into-subjecthood within a kinship network of transgender women—her mother, "Flamingo," and a circle of "aunts"—whose caregiving practices unsettle heteronormative and biopolitical norms. Against the backdrop of the desert's extractive infrastructures, Céspedes articulates a queer ecology in which bodies, landscapes, and species are mutually imbricated. The result is a film that, despite its historical setting, resonates uncannily with contemporary attempts to legislate trans life out of public existence. Rather than visualizing AIDS through sensationalist imagery, Céspedes's film treats it as an "affective atmosphere": an invisible but omnipresent threat that produces anxiety, intimacy, and solidarity. The looming possibility of infection consolidates the chosen-family dynamics of Flamingo, her "aunts," and the young protagonist while this unnamed disease stirs up fear, brutality, and self-loathing among the miners. As in many Latin American AIDS narratives, illness operates less as biomedical event and more as a condition that reorganizes affective life—how characters love, protect, desire, and fear for one another. The film thereby brings together what Catriona Sandilands and others have called *queer ecologies*—the study of sexuality in relation to environmental and multispecies entanglements—with a critique of the necropolitical conditions under which trans bodies become disposable. The miners' clandestine sexual encounters with trans women and men from the city reproduce the epidemiological vulnerabilities of the early AIDS crisis, yet Céspedes resists pathologizing these women. Instead, he frames their lives through an affective register that oscillates between desire, fear, shame, and care, reminding viewers that queer and trans survival is always negotiated within uneven terrains of recognition. Ultimately, Céspedes suggests that redemption, if it is possible at all, emerges not through erasing difference but through sustaining the difficult gaze of the Other.

Meade, Christopher (Appalachian State University in North Carolina, USA)

No Ecojustice Without Decolonization: Natalie Díaz's "Colorado River"

In this paper, I read recent work by Mojave poet Natalie Díaz as a political text giving voice to an Indigenous community that has suffered decades of water theft leaving their river, the Colorado, the most endangered in the United States. I explicate the poem's references to ghosts, spectrality and haunting as signals of minoritarian subjectivity under the cultural, ecological, and poetic imperialism of settler colonialism and extractive capitalism. Díaz dwells on the meaning of the Mojave demonym 'Aha Makav, "I carry a river," which signifies that the people and the river are one. She posits that the term is untranslatable and so is the Mohave relation to the river and the land. Instead, the Settler state alienates everything as private property and by law places limits on the amount of

water Native nations can use from their own rivers. As Díaz puts it, white Americans relegate anything that threatens the functioning of their settler-state and extractive industries to the status of myth, banishing those bodies, that thinking, and the land itself from its structure. She expresses this through the chiasmus “I have never been true in America. America is my myth.” The appeal of the poem, ultimately, is for the reader not just to recognize the interconnectedness of ecology, human being, and thought, but also to recognize that this ecological stewardship has been actively suppressed and represented as a myth by the Settler state. Díaz posits that this first step toward ecojustice can only take place if it is preceded by decolonization. Only when the chiasmus that alienates Native and Settler is addressed will the United States be able to help bring about ecological justice.

Melpignano, Melissa (The University of Texas at El Paso, USA)

Corporeality and Speculative Imaginaries: “Fleshing” Out Time

This paper examines how the materialization of bodies in their intersectional situatedness provokes temporal turmoil—or, more quietly, temporal questioning—that disrupts the conventional association of speculative horizons with future-oriented imaginaries. To support this argument, I analyze the work of two dance and performance artists operating on politically and epistemically contested sites: the Mexico-U.S. border and Palestine-Israel. LROD is an intermedia Latinx dance artist. In *Borderland Vol. 2: Bilateral*, LROD and La Fractura immerse themselves in the borderland landscape of El Paso, Texas. Choreographing their relationship with the border through posthuman Chicanafuturist tropes, LROD interweaves a series of material connections that produce simultaneous centrifugal and centripetal spatialities and temporalities. These reveal the El Paso-Juárez border as an inherent continuum, interrupted only by state borders. The kaleidoscopic corporeality manifesting in this work challenges normalized tripartite conceptualizations of time. Farah Saleh is a UK-based Palestinian choreographer. Her reiterative project *Balfour Reparations* (2024-2044; 2025-2045) is a participatory performance based on a fictitious apology letter issued by the British government to organize reparations for Palestinians after endorsing the Zionist settler colonial project in 1917. By mobilizing historical archives while projecting the performance into a paratopic future, the work renders the present itself speculative. This ongoing reconfiguration of time enables the programmatic interruption of the Ongoing Nakba. In both artists’ work, speculative corporealities foreground the presentification of political processes and the materialization of their enactments. They suggest the present as a site of suspension (Alon 2025) where, on the one hand, violence phagocytizes lives and time, but, on the other hand, the unsettling of such violence programmatically materializes.

Min, Susette (University of California, Davis, USA)

Gleaning Photography’s Failures

Susette Min’s presentation will explore the migration and movement of materials—gold, vanilla, flora and implicitly people—in select works by contemporary artists Stacy Lynn Waddell and Lucy Kim. Waddell and Kim engage the history of photography and its impact on the world, specifically the way it makes visible and invisible dark histories of commerce and colonialism. In light of photography’s representational failures and how it can obscure, distract, and abstract, Kim and Waddell’s artworks on paper offer glimmers and glitches of possibility that disclose alternative associations and connective entryways to subjugated histories. Using photography as her source material, Waddell’s 22-karat gold and silver-leaf landscapes of burnt paper and gilded drawings index gold and silver’s associations with global economies and racial histories. Once part of a flourishing colonial spice trade industry, vanilla is now the second most expensive spice in the world. By

mimicking the photographic process, but using melanin instead of light sensitive materials, Kim's rendering of vanilla pods and plants unsettles our understanding of photography and the pollination and production of vanilla. Drawing heavily on art history and recent scholarship on new materialism and indigenous and Pacific Islander studies to read and unpack each layer in Kim's and Waddell's art and practice, Min's presentation leads less to a revisionist history than a relational one as well as a contractual co-stewardship that attends to the land and sea. Throughout the paper, Min will offer critical meditations about the urgency to engage indigenous epistemologies and theories in highlighting the delimitations of dominant paradigms in Asian American Studies on the nation-state and the diaspora.

Mok, Nelly (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

Cambodian American Poetic Sites of Mourning and Memory: Remapping Resting Places for the Missing Ones

Focusing on various contemporary life-writing poems written by 1.5 and second-generation authors from the Cambodian diaspora in the United States (Monica Sok, Sokunthary Svay, and Bunkong Tuon among others), this paper will examine the commemorative process of writing about sites of mourning by authors who inherited the first generation's traumatic experience of the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime from 1975 to 1979. The poems carve out memorial and/or imaginary spaces within which the faces and bodies of the dead can be re-membered and ultimately reclaimed from mass killing through mnemonic artefacts like photographs, objects or names, and mourning rites, thereby recovering their corporeality in a transcultural environment that is re-defined or re-mediated across the past and the present, across Cambodia and America. More specifically, I will consider how Cambodia's memorial sites related to the Khmer Rouge genocide are reimagined as alternative "sites of memory" (Nora) where the ghosts of the missing ones can be remembered individually and reclaimed by their families. As reparative and subversive memorial spaces, they shed light on the contradictions of the Cambodian state's politics of memory as well as on the ethical limits of the U.S. narrative of refugee resettlement which strategically obscures the history of U.S. accountability in the Khmer Rouge takeover. By investigating the aesthetic, political, cultural and ethical implications of these life-writing poetic works' reimaginings of Cambodian American physical spaces of memory, this paper aims to shed light on the "geomnemonics" or "the site-specific evocation[s] of memory and imagination regarding site-based collectives" (Ben-Shaul) that underlie Cambodian American postmemory work on the Khmer Rouge genocide.

Morton, Carlos (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

Conversation with the Playwright

In this segment of the panel the playwright will discuss his work process and the play itself. The playwright will also moderate the panel and will have an opportunity to respond to questions raised by other panelists.

Mózes, Dorottya (University of Debrecen, Hungary)

Traveling Otherwise: Caryl Phillips as the Black Diasporic Flâneur in *The Atlantic Sound*

This presentation, part of a broader project on Black travel writing, argues that Black writers engage in a form of global flânerie shaped by diasporic dislocation, historical consciousness, and affective intensity. Black diasporic flâneurs walk through spaces marked by ancestral violence and contemporary racialization, producing a mode of spatial

encounter shaped by longing, anxiety, and melancholic return. This presentation reframes the critical reception of Phillips's perceived detachment and privilege in *The Atlantic Sound* (2000) as a feature of Black diasporic flânerie. By situating Phillips alongside Coates and Saidiya Hartman, it expands the lineage of the flâneur to account for diasporic memory, history, grief, and mobility. In doing so, it offers a framework for understanding Black flânerie as a spatial practice that illuminates Black geographies within contemporary zones of uneven freedom.

Muhury, Priyanka (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

Mapping Affective Borderscapes in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

This paper examines the role of geographical, cultural, and affective borders and borderscapes in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* through Ashima Ganguli's experiences, foregrounding the novel as a powerful exploration of how borders, mobility, and cultural exchanges shape notions of belonging and becoming. Drawing on border theory and affect theory, the study interprets Ashima's life between Calcutta and the United States as an affective borderscape, a living site of encounters where spatial movement and emotional intensities converge. Lahiri's narrative can be read as depicting migration as an ongoing practice of border-making, generating new emotional geographies and evolving modes of belonging. Through Ashima's liminal journey, *The Namesake* illuminates how diasporic women inhabit and reimagine cultural environments shaped by mobility, memory, and the everyday negotiation of difference. Her story foregrounds the materiality of border-crossing as a site of negotiation and becoming. In doing so, the novel offers a nuanced portrayal of transnational life, showing how mobility, affect, and cultural environment collectively redefine home, identity, and relational space.

Mukherjee, Rai Kamalini (Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India)

The Mountaineer as Celebrity: Interrogating the Role of a Himalayan Cryospheric Imagination in Post-Colonial Nation-Building in India

Since the advent of colonial mountaineering in the eastern Himalayas born of the lure of imperial 'conquest' of Mount Everest as the symbolic crest of power, the Sherpas are a people changed forever. As they joined and climbed for colonial Everest expeditions as porters, cooks and in other secondary roles, it compromised the traditional Sherpa ethos of the mountains as the abode of the gods that forbade them from climbing. This paper will look at the autobiographical account of Tenzing Norgay's *Tiger of the Snows* (1953), written in collaboration with James Ramsay Ullman during a watershed moment in the (post)colonial history of Everest as it is summited for the first time in 1953 by the climbing pair of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary. Norgay's autobiographical record is at once a vindication of the rights of the Sherpas as well as an attempt to foreground a Sherpa ethos of imaginative vision of the top of the mountain as a pilgrimage through an eco-poetical construction of the self in the text in conjunction and contradistinction to white, masculine representations of the climb in colonial mountaineering autobiographies. Furthermore, the heroization of Norgay as a part mythical, part human figure owing to the achievement of an unprecedented feat, leads to the 'celebrification' of his character in the national discourse as a living embodiment of the country's dream of coming out of the long shadow of colonialism and fostering a global standing. As science, modernity and indigeneity come together in the construction of his personhood, it leads to the technologization of the mountains so to speak in the pursuit of national destiny that resists the colonial imagination of itself through the realization of a South Asian modernity.

Mukherjee, Sipra (West Bengal State University, India)

Of the Need to Protect Mayal-Lyang: Legends, Literatures and Resistance

The Lepchas, an ethnic group indigenous to the land in and around the southern Himalayas in north-eastern India, have been described by both Lepcha and Western writers as a “vanishing tribe” (Gorer [1938]2014, Foning 1987, Bentley 2007: 59). This ‘vanishing’ is not so much because of dwindling numbers, and has more to do with the danger posed to the traditional Lepcha way of life given modernity and its associated technology that is inching steadily closer. The otherwise quiet community has been in the news since 2006 after announcements by the Government to set up hydroelectric power projects within the Dzongu Valley where the Lepchas live. This Valley is part of an imaginary among the Lepchas, inherited from their ancestral faith of Bonism, regarding their relationship with the natural environment. The Dzongu Valley is considered a sacred space which the Lepchas believe is the bridge to Mayal Lyang, their mythical paradise. Having converted to Buddhism and Christianity centuries ago, many of the younger Lepchas had somewhat moved away from Bonism, their traditional religion that believes in spiritual connections between the humans and the spheres of Nature they inhabit. However, the possibility of a complete erasure of their way of life through these hydro-power projects have led to strong protests from the community and also to a return of the youth to Bonism. The projects have since been stalled. Using their legends and mythology, the community has begun making its presence felt in the literary world since 2010 through writing out and publishing their oral literatures. This in turn has led to greater awareness of the Lepcha religion and their way of life, to research and critical publications. This paper will explore this conscious political return to Bonism by the youth of the Lepcha community through their published literature.

Munteán, László (Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands)

Navigating New Wreckscapes of the Titanic

There is hardly a shipwreck as famous as the Titanic. The ship’s sinking on April 15, 1912, quickly became a subject of fascination and speculation, which gained new momentum when oceanographer Robert Ballard discovered the wreck in 1985. The hull, broken in half and resting at a depth of nearly 4000 meters in the North Atlantic, has been photographed during several undersea expeditions, turning the wreck into a pilgrimage site for scientists and wealthy enthusiasts. These expeditions also revealed that the hull has been attacked by a species of microbes, *Halomonas titanicae*, which will inevitably cause the wreck to collapse within a few decades. To preserve it for posterity in its current state, Magellan Deep Water specialists captured over 700,000 images of the vessel’s remains in 2022. Using the technique of photogrammetry, these images yielded a life-size 3D model of the Titanic, bringing the ship back into the spotlight. The model was featured in a National Geographic documentary, *Titanic: The Digital Resurrection*, released in June 2025. In 2024, Magellan made the model accessible to the general public at 1/10 resolution through a computer game called *vROVpilot: Titanic*, with new updates expected in the coming years. While Magellan’s goal is to make the wreck site researchable remotely, this presentation argues that there is much more at stake in such a photographic act of preservation. Using the documentary and the computer game as primary case studies, I will explore the range of imaginaries, affects, and desires that these platforms evoke as cultural practices. Specifically, I will examine the types of dispositions that these new ‘underwater wreckscapes’ produce in relation to preservation, representation, heritage, materiality, and the oceanic environment in an era of mass migration and climate crisis.

Nardi, Paola A. (University of Genova, Italy)

Surviving Through Nature: Women in Motion in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and *Paradise*

Mainstream narratives are deeply indebted to the Puritan heritage and the Jeffersonian pastoral myth, both of which construct the American wilderness as a space to conquer, subdue, and transform. These narratives have not historically taken into account the importance of the traumatizing experiences of slavery, segregation and unequal access to resources in shaping African Americans' relationship with the natural world. These concerns have been brought to the forefront by scholars working at the intersection of environmental justice and environmental racism, including Carolyn Finney's *Black Faces, White Spaces*, Drew Lanham's *The Home Place*, and Kimberly Ruffin's *Black on Earth*. From a diachronic perspective, and with the aim of showing how historical conditions inform present dynamics, African American environmental historians have extensively explored Black responses to nature in contexts marked by oppression, discrimination, and violence. They have also emphasized that enslaved and later segregated African Americans cannot be reduced solely to the status of victims. African Americans demonstrated agency, particularly visible in their engagement with the natural world. Through gardening, hunting, plant knowledge, and orienteering, African Americans resisted dehumanization and revealed their profound capacity for survival, resilience, and adaptation. As part of a broader project that has previously applied the lens of African American environmental history to the analysis of African American relationships with nature in *The Bluest Eye* and *Home*, this paper focuses on the connection between the natural world and African American women in *A Mercy* and *Paradise*. It highlights how the natural world provides survival, healing, and regeneration for African American women in motion.

Nasser, Hend (University of Lancashire, UK)

Performing Environmental Justice in the Diaspora

This paper examines the intersection of environmental justice, displacement, and identity in the performance poetry of Emtithal Mahmoud and Amal Kassir—two prominent Arab diasporic poets whose works challenge dominant environmental and geopolitical narratives. Drawing on the lens of ecocriticism and performance studies, the paper explores how their poetry articulates both global and local environmental crises, from the ecological devastation of war-torn regions to the systemic neglect of marginalised communities in the diaspora. Their work offers a critical perspective often absent from dominant environmental discourse by centring refugee experiences, Indigenous ecologies, and racialised geographies. Mahmoud's performances, such as *Di Baladna* and *2 a.m.*, draws on her humanitarian work and UNHCR ambassadorship to foreground the relationship between forced displacement and environmental degradation, often linking refugee experiences with the consequences of climate change, drought, and land loss. Her performances incorporate imagery, video footage, and real refugee testimonies to connect ecological degradation to broader humanitarian crises. Kassir's work, including *This Land Is Your Land* and *My Grandmother's Farm*, critiques corporate war profiteering, the militarisation of land, the environmental costs of global capitalism and the civil war. Through her work, she reimagines environmental activism as a deeply personal and collective act, rooted in storytelling, cultural memory, and calls for justice. Both poets use multimedia performance—integrating visuals, costumes, video footage, and sound—to expand the affective and rhetorical impact of their eco-critical narratives. This paper argues that Mahmoud and Kassir's poetic activism contributes to an emerging discourse of ecological justice—one that foregrounds race, displacement, and environmental

vulnerability. Their performances not only document ecological harm but call for transnational solidarity, imagining new cultural and environmental futures rooted in collective survival.

Ntola, Georgia (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

Aquatic Crossings: Neo-Victorian Seascapes of Feminist Solidarity in Kate Grenville's *Sarah Thornhill* and Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden*

This paper will examine aquatic crossings as critically conducive to the establishment of feminist solidarity in two neo-Victorian narratives. The texts in question, Kate Grenville's 2011 novel *Sarah Thornhill* and Park Chan-wook's 2016 film *The Handmaiden*, both feature heroines who learn how to relate to other women across ethnic differences, and ultimately show their solidarity through acts that involve traversing marine spaces. Specifically, the eponymous protagonist of Grenville's novel, the white daughter of a former English convict transported to Australia in the early nineteenth century, is invited by a group of Māori women to travel to New Zealand to honour the memory of her biracial, Māori niece, whose unhappy life anachronistically echoes the plight of the Stolen Generations of Australia. Comparably, in Park's film, set during the period of Japan's occupation of Korea, the Korean thief Sook-hee and the Japanese lady Hideko, after being pitted against each other in a defrauding scheme, cheat their male oppressors and escape together on board a ship. Informed by scholarship on global neo-Victorianism, feminist theories of transnational solidarity, and the blue humanities' conceptualisation of the sea as simultaneous barrier and connector, this paper will read the sea crossings portrayed in both narratives as exemplifying how feminist alliances become possible through literal and metaphorical acts of voyaging beyond imperial, racialised, and patriarchal scripts. In this respect, the sea is read as a fluid space in which identities, power dynamics, and relational possibilities become unsettled, and open to reconfiguration. María Lugones's concept of feminist 'world'-travelling will prove critical in this process, as it illustrates how movement across material and epistemic borders fosters a loving and self-reflexive engagement with the Other, thereby enabling the female protagonists to inhabit previously inaccessible 'worlds' and forge solidarities capable of challenging imperial and patriarchal domination. This paper will ultimately argue that neo-Victorianism can productively frame (transnational) feminist encounters and intervene in ongoing tensions between women across ethnic divisions and geographical locations.

Önder, Ayda (Istanbul Arel University, Turkey)

Waves of Relation: Oceanic Epistemology and the Fluid Formation of Multiethnicity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001)

This study argues that Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) develops an oceanic epistemology of relation, a mode of knowing shaped by the sea's cyclical temporality, shifting borders, and embodied sensations. Drawing on Elizabeth DeLoughrey's tidalectics, Meg Samuelson's littoral theory, and Steve Mentz's oceanic affect, it contends that Gurnah fuses historical, spatial, and affective registers of the ocean into a single relational practice that redefines how displacement, memory, and belonging can be apprehended. The novel's recursive structure mirrors the tidal rhythm of the Indian Ocean. Latif Mahmud's immigration and Saleh Omar's refugee passage from Zanzibar to Britain unfold through recurrent returns to the past, exposing how colonial and diasporic histories continue to move within one another. Its littoral imagination locates identity in transitional coastal spaces where cultural and ecological boundaries remain permeable. Blue affect serves as the experiential bridge that allows Gurnah to turn these tidal and littoral processes into lived, relational knowledge. Through the novel's tidal rhythms, sounds, and tactile

imagery, the sea's material vitality becomes a way of perceiving continuity across rupture. The ocean's atmosphere makes relation felt. Its motion teaches that belonging is not fixed but continuously remade through contact and circulation. In uniting rhythm, threshold, and sensation, *By the Sea* transforms the ocean from backdrop to generative principle. Gurnah reimagines the Indian Ocean as a field of fluid genealogies, where multiethnic history and ecological process become mutually intelligible. The novel thus proposes an embodied, postcolonial understanding of belonging grounded in the sea's connective intelligence, showing that cultural identities and ethnic relations are produced through oceanic movement, negotiation, and exchange rather than anchored in stable origins.

Özer, Sevgin (Sabancı University, Turkey)

From Under a Roof to Beneath the Sky: Longing and Belonging in Nermin Yıldırım's *Ev*

This paper examines the dichotomy between being inside and outside urban spaces, the impacts of nature walking, the physical and emotional effects of space on individuals, and the implications of the notion of home in the contemporary Turkish author Nermin Yıldırım's *Ev* [Home] (2020). *Ev* is a novel that narrates the story of a young woman protagonist, Seher, who is longing for the joy of life, self-love, a sense of belonging, and compassionate encounters that will help her define her identity. She flies from Istanbul to Porto with her travel companion, Ogo, to walk the Camino de Santiago. As a child abandoned by her parents and having to move house after house, and as an adult who lost her beloved roommate to a hate crime, she has no desire to continue living. However, as she walks in nature and simultaneously wanders through the corridors of her memory, her encounters transform her. She distances herself from the so-called civilization that harbors the perpetrators of violence and destruction and steps outside the preconceptions. Only after experiencing the physical pain of walking long distances and the emotional relief of moving forward does she feel brave enough to appreciate Ogo's help, become friends with a stray dog, Şerbet, and a woman, Vesna, who is traumatized by war. This paper argues that the novel questions the cultural, familial, and commodified dimensions of "home," ultimately suggesting that the Earth itself is the only home for all beings. In addition, it analyzes *Ev* in comparison with Kirsty Bell's narrative, *The Undercurrents: A Story of Berlin* (2022), to reveal how the meaning of home, the responsibility of living in a particular environment, and the impact of space's memory on individuals can be similar across different cultures. In this narrative, the person does not go outside, but the nature and memory of the environment find their way to enter her home.

Pegler-Gordon, Anna (Michigan State University, USA)

Settled or Unsettled? Images of Wong Kim Ark and US Birthright Citizenship

US birthright citizenship, which has been settled law since the Wong Kim Ark decision in 1898, will be reconsidered by the US Supreme Court in 2026. The original decision affirmed that children of Chinese immigrants born in the United States were birthright US citizens. As a result, ethnic Chinese, other Asians, and almost all individuals born on US soil secured the right to jus soli birthright citizenship. They could not, however, secure recognition of their citizenship without documentation, the key that linked birth to birthright. This paper will explore images of Wong Kim Ark and his children from the 1890s to the present, considering the ways that these images fix him in Chinese and western registers of representation. At the same time, it will consider the ways that identity documentation, transpacific migration, and unreliable testimony unsettle the image of Wong Kim Ark and destabilize birthright citizenship. Using a close reading of Wong Kim Ark's photographic identity documents from the 1890s through the 1930s, this paper will

consider the unsettling of birthright citizenship both during his life and in the current moment.

Pereira, Malin (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA)

Representing Jacob Lawrence: A Tale of Two Museums and Ten Ekphrastic Poems

In 2015, The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and The Phillips Collection collaborated to exhibit all of Jacob Lawrence's panels from his Migration Series. This unprecedented event—the panels were divided between the two in 1942—presented an opportunity to frame for the public a key ethnic narrative, the Great Migration of rural Southern Blacks to the urban North. Beginning in 1915, it totaled six million people, constituting one of the greatest demographic shifts in US history. Coordinating with the organizers, poet Elizabeth Alexander commissioned ten African American poets to write poems on Lawrence's work, including some of the most significant poets living: Rita Dove, Yusef Komunyakaa, Natasha Trethewey—all Pulitzer Prize winners—as well as Nikky Finney, Terrance Hayes, Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, Tyehimba Jess, Patricia Spears Jones, and Kevin Young. This ekphrastic initiative might seem unique, but, as Barbara K. Fischer writes in *Museum Mediations: Reframing Ekphrasis in Contemporary American Poetry*, such a move is rather commonplace: “Poets in recent years have come to museums . . . because museums have invited them in, commissioning ekphrastic poems about works in their permanent collections” (17). Fischer argues that the poetry in such museum anthologies has been overlooked as subjects of critical scrutiny (18), and indeed, this is true of the “Poetry Suite,” as no scholarship exists on these ekphrastic poems. Alexander, troubled that the historical, narrative weight of the panels may present a “closed door” for the poet, asks us to see how Lawrence's work is “also open-ended, inventive, allusive, fascinatingly strange” (170). Her introduction redirects the narrative, asking “what happens” when we “unlace” the paintings from their context or “when a poet writes between the frames?” (170). This paper examines how individual and collective cultural memories of the Great Migration are (re)framed through “Poetry Suite.”

Pérez-Ramos, M^a Isabel (University of Oviedo, Spain)

From Motherhood to Pollination: and Eco-Narratological Analysis of Barbara Litkowski's “Monarch Blue”

In Barbara Litkowski's short story “Monarch Blue” (2018), poor, often migrant women become pollinators while losing the capacity to conceive their own babies. The story, which combines social and gender inequality with an environmental disaster—the die-off of pollinator insects due to climate change—depicts a future where farm labor is reimagined, while keeping with the abusive and toxic practices of times past. In this scenario, two women become friends: one desperate to get pregnant, and another coming to terms with an unwanted pregnancy that will end up in a miscarriage. Forced by their circumstances, they sacrifice their fertility by working in the fields spreading pollen blended with toxic chemicals. These women, while becoming infertile, also become key nurturers, vital for society. By reconceiving California's farmwork in this futuristic and dystopian scenario, the environmental justice history of labor exploitation and toxic exposure of poor and migrant workers is brought back to mind, with a focus on gender and motherhood. Litkowski's story inevitably reminds of Chicana literary works such as Cherrie Moraga's drama “Heroes and Saints” (1994), or Helena María Viramontes' novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), where infertility, fetal congenital malformations, and premature deaths in farmworker settings hunt female characters. This presentation explores the way in which Litkowski depicts environmental and gender injustices, looking at how this dystopian

evolution of nurturing (from motherhood to pollination) is transmitted not only through the plot but also through specific narrative techniques. Narrative techniques such as a limited third person narration, analepsis, and an extended metaphor, are crucial to bring the readership closer to the experience of the protagonist and her friend, while questioning society's role in bringing about climate change, species extinction, and social and gender inequality.

Perry, Leah (SUNY-Empire State University, USA)

Eating Empire: Foodways, Settler Colonial Racial Capitalism, and the Public Pedagogy of US Empire

Foodways—always already undergirded by matters of mobility and borders, embodiment and knowledge, and gender and racialization—are key to US empire. Historically and into the neoliberal context, foodways have been essential to what Aileen Moreton Robinson (Goenpul) calls “white possession,” the white heteropatriarchal property interests structuring settler colonial racial capitalism. In the US, entangled foodways “public pedagogies”—which I define as policy and mainstream media discourses—about Indigenous peoples, Black people, and racialized immigrants literally feed empire even as it positions them differently and often antagonistically, with imperialism generating chattel slavery (and its anti-Black afterlives) and international migration, while expecting people of color to pursue access to white possession. The early US government erased Indigenous peoples' geopolitical sustenance systems to rationalize genocide, starvation, dispossession, and the forcing of Euro-American farming, dietary, and heteropatriarchal kinship models upon them. Proximally, the US was built on anti-Black fungibility and immigrant exploitation connected to foodways: enslaved Africans cultivated stolen land and prepared “American” foods as they too were systematically starved and malnourished. Gendered, racialized policy channeled immigrants into indentured agricultural and food industry labor, dispossessed farmers, and demanded their dietary assimilation. Racialized foodways pathologization and appropriation has persisted. Neoliberal food systems devastate economies and environments, necessitating migration; food insecurity and food deserts are prevalent on reservations and within impoverished communities of color, as are gendered health disparities created by a lack of access to healthy culturally and environmentally appropriate food. I argue that entangled foodways pedagogies of empire have been crucial to every stage of US empire, and that in turn, foodways are key to its end.

Pochmara, Anna (University of Warsaw, Poland)

Black Cultivation Beyond Binaries: Toni Morrison's Reimagined Pastoral

In *12 Million Black Voices*, Richard Wright argues that “in crowded northern cities, elderly black women, hungry for the South but afraid to return, will cultivate tiny vegetable gardens in the narrow squares of ground in front of their hovels. More than even that of the American Indian, the consciousness of vast sections of our black women lies beyond the boundaries of the modern world.” Wright's depiction reflects a mid-twentieth-century African American attitude that views land cultivation as “backward,” regressive, and tied to the legacy of slavery. In his account, Black modernity is defined through oppositions—slavery/freedom, South/North, country/city, male/female, past/future. Toni Morrison's fiction, however, challenges these assumptions, portraying relationships with the natural world as sources of strength, agency, and healing. Across her novels, Morrison unsettles the binaries structuring Wright's narrative: in *Song of Solomon* (1977), Ruth Foster Dead's garden symbolizes suffocating domesticity; in *Jazz* (1992), male and female characters' interactions with plants and animals complicate traditional gendered associations with nature; in *Home* (2012), the city apartment's absence of natural life contrasts with the

Southern gardens cultivated by women, which serve as sites of renewal and restoration. By reimagining Black cultivation beyond region, time, and gender, Morrison reconceives nature as a space of survival, creativity, and hope, challenging reductive notions of modernity and affirming the transformative potential of Black pastoral practice. Thus, throughout her oeuvre, Morrison redefines Wright's dichotomous vision of modernity, opening a space for understanding Black cultivation as a practice of survival, creativity, and hope that transcends the boundaries of region, time, and gender.

Poks, Małgorzata (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland)

Decolonizing Climate Change: Indigenous Alaska

Anthropogenic climate change in Alaska dates back to Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition and the ensuing colonization of the Peninsula. Over nearly three centuries later, Alaska's Indigenous populations are still struggling with the aftereffects of the colonial disruptions of their lives and the overall dismantling of their traditional kin-based worldviews. The delicate ecology of their lands has been so thoroughly disturbed that the 49th state of America has been identified as one of the places most endangered by the rising sea levels, with the village of Shishmaref already threatened with evacuation. Having grown up in Shishmaref among her Indigenous relatives, Leslie Thomas leaves some intriguing observations on the colonial-ecological devastation of the "Far North" in her 2010 novel *Flight of the Goose*. I propose to read the geopolitics of devastation depicted in this novel through the critical lens of Indigenous Climate Change Studies (Kyle Whyte) and decolonial ecology (Malcolm Ferdinand).

Popescu, Veronica Tatiana (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)

The Transformative Powers of Nature: Resistance, Healing and Belonging in Margarita Engle's *The Surrender Tree* (2008) and *Enchanted Air* (2015)

A prolific Cuban-American author of Children and Young Adult (CYA) books, Margarita Engle's verse narratives often rewrite Cuban landscapes and culture through the imaginative lens of love and nostalgia for a country that is (and has been for a long time) more of a place in the mind for many Cubans living in the United States—an unhealed trauma that Engle explores and explains to younger generations through fiction. Like Cristina García, fascinated by Cuba's natural beauty scarred by successive historical wounds (Spanish colonialism, American occupation, and Castro's dictatorship), Margarita Engle's imagination also takes its cues from the island's history as well as the half-remembered, half-imagined Cuban landscapes, flora and fauna of her childhood, shaping a diasporic colourful and magical dreamscape to which she keeps returning in her books in the hope of discovering, for herself and her young readers, how healing and a sense of belonging can be achieved through a better understanding of how space, nature, culture and history (personal and communal) determine cultural identity. The paper will analyse *The Surrender Tree* (2008) and *Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings: A Memoir* (2015) as illustrations of Engle's special brand of ecocultural writing, focusing on the complex ways in which Cuba's natural environment becomes a transformative site of resistance, trauma healing, identity and creativity.

Powers, Peter (Messiah University. USA)

Learning Otherwise: Race, Environment, and the Counter-Classroom in the Work of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Cole Arthur Riley

This paper explores how Ta-Nehisi Coates and Cole Arthur Riley construct alternative modes of learning rooted in Black cultural identity, embodied experience, and the

environments—physical, social, and spiritual—that shape racialized life in America. Both writers resist traditional educational institutions as exclusive sites of intellectual and spiritual formation. Instead, they imagine deep, culturally situated forms of knowledge-making emerging from Black communities, family life, landscapes, and the body itself. Coates's *The Beautiful Struggle* and *Between the World and Me* reject official curricula in favor of what might be called a curriculum of the social environment. His education unfolds through West Baltimore's streets, his father's Black nationalist bookstore, and the cultural dynamism of Howard University, "The Mecca." These environments, charged with cultural memory and collective striving, offer more vital lessons than the sanctioned meritocracy of institutional schooling. Cole Arthur Riley's *This Here Flesh* similarly challenges disembodied pedagogy, turning instead to intergenerational memory, the church, and encounters with the natural world as spaces of spiritual and cultural formation. Her writing affirms the dignity of Black embodiment, locating sacred knowledge in kitchens, woods, and communal prayer. These spaces nurture resilience and hope, revealing how learning can be an embodied, environmental practice of survival and meaning. In dialogue, Coates and Riley reimagine liberal learning through Black embodiment and environment, showing that education is not simply institutional but a lived experience. Their work suggests that intellectual and moral formation are inseparable from cultural identity and racialized experience. Framed within MESEA 2026's focus on ethnicity and environments, this paper argues that their writing expands the meaning of education itself—grounding it in the material and spiritual realities of Black life.

Räisänen, Ari (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

Mobility and Transcultural Memory in Atticus Lish's *Preparation for the Next Life*

The 'American dream' narrative of upward immigrant mobility underpins U.S. national ideology and often obscures the political and social histories that drive migration. This paper examines how the embodied experience of kinetic mobility facilitates the emergence of a transcultural memory that reveals these masked histories in Atticus Lish's novel *Preparation for the Next Life* (2014). Drawing on Michael Rothberg's concepts of memory as "multidirectional" (2009) and "knotted" (2010) and the New Mobilities Paradigm which emphasizes the social, political, and cultural implications of the act of moving (Cresswell 2006), I argue that this emphasis on multi-scalar mobilities acts as transcultural memory work with aesthetic and narrative function. Physical mobility thus emerges as an important avenue for mnemonic meaning making by imagining ambivalent possibilities of belonging outside national binaries. "Preparation" thus links individual memories with broader historical and political legacies of exploitation and labor through narrative representations of concrete mobilities. Ultimately, this paper argues that the relationship between memory and mobility represents an underutilized yet useful tool in the analysis of literary transcultural memory.

Ricketts, Jellisa M. (York University, Canada)

Black And Free: Diasporic Memory, Culture and Storytelling in Trinidad Carnival

Every year, across the Caribbean and its diaspora, the streets are flooded with technicolor beads and feathers as masqueraders dance their way through their cities for Carnival. The festivals began during the late 1700s, when enslaved Africans were excluded from the masquerades of French plantation owners (Murphy, 2024). The enslaved Africans created their own masquerade, utilizing their cultural memory of their own folklore and practices that were retained from their pre-colonial homelands. This paper explores the ways in which the collective diasporic cultural memory that led to the Trinidad Carnival has allowed enslaved Africans and their descendants to utilize ancestral African masking

techniques, oral history and storytelling to re/frame narratives of their identity and cultivate freedom through artistic expression. Carnival characters such as the Jab Jab and Moko Jumbie, will serve as an analytical trajectory into tracing the genealogies of the freedom narratives that they represent/ed in times of subjugation. This paper draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and was created within my capacity as a PhD research assistant for Dr. Naila Keleta-Mae's research creation project, Black And Free.

Rohrleitner, Marion Christina (The University of Texas at El Paso, USA)

“Becoming Flesh”: Translation and Non-Human Agency

In her short story “Sin Embargo” Sabrina Vourvoulias, best known for her 2012 dystopian novel *Ink*, recounts an unnamed forensic psychologist's sessions with Marijoe, a Guatemalan survivor of torture. These sessions are interspersed with mundane details of the narrator's background as a Nipo-Peruvian immigrant, her daily life with her partner and co-workers, and philosophical meditations on the vicissitudes of language and translation. The seemingly realistic setting is disrupted, unexpectedly, when the narrator picks up Marijoe on her way to court, and witnesses a large, bird-like creature sitting on Marijoe's shoulders. The creature is a zopilote, a “carry-on memory”, that takes material shape whenever Marijoe's PTSD resurfaces. Not merely metaphorical, the creature manifests materially in the story several times, and is in conversation with the Arne-Thompson Index, which catalogues folktales and creatures, including bird-women, in global cultural contexts. Taking Vourvoulias's text as a starting point for reading the fantastical in Latinx fiction as neither Magical Realism redux nor an oblique expression of PTST, but, drawing on Alexander Weheliye, as political violence “becoming flesh.” Thinking Marijoe's and the narrator's Latinidad through Habeas Viscous gives me the opportunity to discuss how the disciplining of racialized bodies extends to immigrants and refugees from the Southern hemisphere. I suggest that the zopilote is an example of non-human agency; visible only to Marijoe and the narrator, it embodies their shared knowledge of “histories of brutalization”. Given the centrality of translation, I argue that the creature communicates Marijoe's experience for the narrator (and for readers) as a kind of “assemblage.” The narrator, too, develops feathers at the end of the short story and her and Maryjoe's “becoming flesh” is relationally intertwined as they are both interpellated as racialized others.

Rubio, Raúl (The New School in Manhattan, USA)

Desire, Dissent & Disobedience: Ethnic Narratives in Latin American Performance Art

It can be argued that since the 1980s and even more so over the last three decades there has been a significant trajectory of body art in Latin American artistic performance. Body art (also known as performance art) has permeated art museums, performance spaces, protest events, and public art exhibitions, as well as media formats that archive these performative genres. Equally important are the archival literature pieces that intend to situate, frame, explain, and denote the significance of these performances, their public fora, interaction with viewers, reaction, and even interaction between artists and witnesses. This presentation focuses on primarily highlighting the artistic and symbolic roles of artists Tania Bruguera, Deborah Castillo, and Carlos Martiel over the last decades, also taking into consideration their role in underscoring race and ethnicity in the Latin American artistic archive.

Schneider, Nicole (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, Germany)

Response-able Archives: Transethnic Gazes, Ecological Crises

Taking a transethnic perspective, this paper engages in the archival dimensions of visual culture that focus on people's relations to the environment they live in. Both LaToya Ruby Frazier's *Flint is Family in Three Acts* (2022) and Joe Sacco's *Paying the Land* (2020) chronicle capitalist and economic interferences into ecologies and institute the image—photographic and comics-journalistic—as witness to destruction and neglect, as well as to the community's resilient responses. Following Ariella Azoulay's theory of Civil Imagination (2012) and Tina Camp's concept of Listening to Images (2017), this paper practices an attentive look at images which was originally established in relation to photographs and is, here, further applied to the genre of comics journalism. Without comparing the two case studies, I seek to analyze the relations between places, archival images, and people's responses to (looming) ecological crises in order to fathom the archive's role in representation and larger socio-political fields. Thereby, the talk's main focus is on the reflection of a reciprocal transethnic gaze that informs and transposes a sense of responsibility onto the spectator and the respective book's audiences, while opening room for discussions of kinship and solidarity, activist and community work, resilience and defiance of systemic exclusions. Read as archives, these two books allow to consider relations and responsibilities beyond the frameworks of ethnic-identifying communities or transethnic engagements to include "a response-able" (Harraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 2016) commitment to ecologies in place. By reinscribing place into the visual archives of North America, the black-and-white images of fine arts photographer LaToya Ruby Frazier and the artistic panels of comics artist and journalist Joe Sacco both foster an awareness of and reflection on the ecological crises at the fault-lines of socio-political life and deliberation.

Selaimia, Amal (Université de Haute Alsace in Mulhouse, France)

Memory, Environment, and Cultural Survival in Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California*

Mori's narratives, set before, during, and after World War II, constantly reveal that cultural survival is an accretive process, built not upon the bedrock of grand political acts or formal political interventions but also on ordinary, everyday practices and acts. In particular, Mori's characters enact and sustain culture through small acts of care, humor, attentiveness, and routine. In addition, Mori's fiction draws attention to the critical role of memory and storytelling in the maintenance of cultural identity. Furthermore, by linking memory, bodily practice, and social interaction, Mori constructs what this paper terms as an Affective Architecture of Community, which is a conceptual structure in which feelings, care, and belonging are not confined to individuals alone but also emerge within shared spaces of connection and reciprocity. Such architecture is, in fact, built from Mori's deceptively simple prose which relies on tiny fragments of everyday life, very modest moments of interaction and attentiveness that, when taken collectively, form this sort of network of community. Hence, through these simple moments, readers feel closeness and togetherness without it ever being stated directly. Instead, this feeling emerges naturally from the small actions and shared experiences in his stories. This study investigates these exact ideas through a close reading of Mori's short story collection *Yokohama, California*, with reference to other works, if needed. It will focus on his meticulous attention to the everyday by analyzing how routine, care, and connection can operate both formally and thematically. Furthermore, this research shall stress on the ways Mori models the survival of culture and identity in challenging environments. Ultimately, this paper argues that

Mori's fiction exemplifies a form of everyday eco-humanism, in which culture, memory, and community persist through ordinary practices that echo ecological resilience and that is by showing how literature can model community from the inside out.

Siltanen, Elina (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)

“Earth is ruined, though I deny this to my children”: Care and Narratives of Mobility in Craig Santos Perez’s *Habitat Threshold*

Craig Santos Perez’s poetry collection *Habitat Threshold* (2020) addresses climate change with a mixture of care and despair. Perez is a native of Guam and has lived in California and Hawai’i, and his work comments on the effects of global warming and environmental justice from this perspective. Much of the book is given to reflections on the poetic speaker’s daughter, whom he wants to shield from the knowledge that “Earth is ruined” (64). Narratives of mobility are prominent, in poems such as “Care,” which contrasts the experience of Syrian refugees who crossed the Mediterranean with the speaker’s imagined catastrophe scenario where the Pacific becomes uninhabitable, and the father is forced to flee with his daughter. In *Enduring Time*, Lisa Baraitser suggests that “care” might be conceived of as something “that requires time not passing” (11), implying that care and waiting are connected (1-2). In the proposed paper I argue that Perez’s *Habitat Threshold*, through its focus on holding protection from the truth as a form of care in view, explores the ways in which care is a form of waiting. Contrasted with the collection’s emphasis on narratives of mobility, which implies movement but often also entails forms of waiting, *Habitat Threshold* forms a complex picture of the strange temporality of climate change.

Smith, Marquita (University of Mississippi, USA)

Framing the South: Identity, Environment, and Cultural Narrative

This paper examines how cultural narratives in the U.S. South address the intersections of race, ethnicity, environment, and identity in the Anthropocene. Drawing on historical and contemporary media portrayals, I analyze how cultural environments are shaped by both physical geographies, including land, climate, and ecological crises, as well as intangible forces such as memory, spirituality, and digital technologies. Using a transnational perspective, I connect Southern stories of place and belonging to broader global struggles for ecojustice, particularly in communities historically marginalized by race and class. I argue that cultural environments are not static backdrops but contested spaces where identity and belonging are constantly reshaped. In African American, Indigenous, and immigrant narratives, the South appears as both a place of ecological vulnerability and cultural resilience. These stories highlight alternative imaginaries, dreamscapes of survival, restoration and resistance that challenge dominant narratives of the environment exploitation and displacement. By tracing the connection between the tangible and intangible in media, literature, and oral traditions, this project underscores how cultural identity is maintained and reimagined in response to geopolitical crises, labor histories, and climate change. Ultimately, this paper contributes to discussions on cultural environments by demonstrating how ethnic narratives from the South convey both the uncertainty and potential of belonging amid ecological and social change.

Szücs, Anna (Independent Scholar)

More-Than-Human Silences: Multispecies Erasure and Chamorro Language Loss in Craig Santos Perez’s *from unincorporated territory*

This talk examines how Craig Santos Perez’s *from unincorporated territory* project narrates intertwined forms of human and more-than-human erasure, linking the decline of the

Chamorro language with the disappearance of Guam's non human voices—most notably its avian species decimated by militarization, invasive predators, and ecological disruption. Through close reading and ecocritical analysis, I argue that Perez positions linguistic loss and multispecies loss as mutually reinforcing processes rooted in the same colonial histories. His multilingual poetics and strategic techniques—unstable translation, non-translation, and the expanded use of strikethrough—materialize a broader field of silencing that exceeds the human. Environmental degradation in Perez's work—coral reef collapse, military expansion, infrastructural reshaping, and the afterlives of nuclear testing—foregrounds how non-human ecologies become casualties of empire. The extinction of birdlife in Guam, an absence evoked in Pacific cultural memory, functions as a parallel “language loss”: the erasure of birdsong, migratory knowledge, and ecological communication networks. This multispecies silence mirrors the precarity of the Chamorro lexicon itself, both endangered by the island's ambiguous political status as an “unincorporated territory,” where land, bodies, and more-than-human relations are rendered visible yet expendable. Reading Perez's shifting translations, crossed-out testimonies, and catalogues of untranslatable Chamorro terms alongside his references to damaged ecologies reveals how his poetry conceptualizes survivance as a shared condition across species. Cultural knowledge—embedded in names for plants, tools, animals, and celestial markers—operates as ecological memory, while non-human voices form an additional archive of place-based knowledge. Ultimately, I argue that Perez frames the revitalization of Chamorro language and the recovery of Guam's ecological communities as interdependent acts.

Tasioula, Eleni (Independent Scholar)

Ecological and Mythic Reimaginings in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*

Derek Walcott's narrative poem *Omeros* (1990), one of the most notable works of postcolonial poetry, vivifies African Caribbean inheritance through a reimagining of the Homeric epic. Walcott's reworking of Greek mythology—originating from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—revives the histories of St. Lucia and weaves a counter-narrative to Western colonial tradition. Through mythical references, *Omeros* offers an ecological vision in which natural elements, such as the sea, the earth and the island's landscape, become cultural and spiritual agents mediating Caribbean memory, dispossession and identity. This paper examines how Walcott's convergence of myth and natural environment forms a counter narrative to colonial legacies, one that transforms natural geography into a repository of Caribbean cultural identity, ancestral tradition and postcolonial hybridity. Natural elements emerge as symbolic and gendered. The feminized sea appears as a life-sustaining force, a muse and mother, while the male voyager—embodied in Philoctete, Achille and the narrator—oscillates between postcolonial suffering and revival. By engaging with myth reception studies and postcolonial ecocriticism, this paper offers a reading of *Omeros* as an alternative act of eco-mythopoesis, that reimagines the Homeric voyage within a Caribbean cartography. Drawing on Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation, Helen Tiffin's canonical counter-discourse and Elizabeth DeLoughrey's archipelagic eco-consciousness, I argue that Walcott's reimagined epic fuses myth, ecology and Glissantian relationality to propose a creolized sense of Caribbean ethnic identity that counters, and resists, Western dominant hierarchies.

Trifunjagić, Danica (TU Darmstadt, Germany)

Rivers as Witnesses to a Turbulent History in Post-Yugoslav Prose

Rivers have long occupied a paradoxical position in the cultural and historical imagination of the Balkans—perceived simultaneously as connectors and dividers, lifelines and

boundaries. In the post-Yugoslav literary context, rivers such as the Danube, Sava, and Drina emerge not only as geographical features but as charged symbols that bear witness to the region's turbulent political and historical transformations. This paper examines how these rivers function as natural and metaphorical borders in the prose of Slobodan Šnajder, Bekim Sejranović, László Végel, and Miljenko Jergović. Through close readings of their works, I explore how each author reconfigures the river as a narrative space where histories of empire, war, and displacement intersect. The study argues that the rivers in post-Yugoslav prose transcend their role as territorial markers, becoming fluid sites of memory, trauma, and identity—witnesses to both the fragmentation and persistence of cultural continuity in the region.

Tsiokos, Panteleimon (Western University, ON, Canada)

Literary Agency in Creating Cultural Environments of Memory: The Case of Japanese American WWII Internment Camps in the USA

In the age of speed, connectivity and social media, literary narratives are often regarded as obsolete or even redundant. However, when new technologies prove inconducive to cultivating empathy, imagination may be humanity's only way to think that which is not, live somebody else's life, consider new perspectives, or even to safeguard personal and/or collective memories, raise awareness of human rights violations, or even demand justice. Literature's plasticity can make this all the more possible. My paper will, thus, consider how contemporary literature, such as Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011) can commemorate the diachronic Japanese experience of existing in the American cultural space before, during and after WWII. Taking into consideration the intersections of race, physical and emotional space in the midst of crises characterised by global geopolitical changes and open conflict such as WWII, I will explore how a proposed new literary genre, that I provisionally call the Transitional Justice text, may make palpable the extent of human rights violations, in this case against Americans of Japanese descent, commemorate trauma and demand redress. This way I hope to prove that literary agency can remain relevant and necessary especially in contemporary multiracial and/or multiethnic cultural contexts such as that of the USA.

Ty, Eleanor (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada)

Flora and Fauna in Nnedi Okorafor's *After the Rain*

A graphic adaptation from a short story called "On the Road" by Nnedi Okorafor, *After the Rain* explores a Nigerian American woman's search for identity and struggle with traumatic memories. Using bold colors, richly textured backgrounds and floating panels, collaborators John Jennings and David Brame portray Choima's trip to visit her extended family in a small Nigerian town. The graphic novella uses elements of adventure, horror, science fiction, myth, and trauma narratives. Most importantly, the adaptation emphasizes the power of setting, the way the flora, fauna, and the landscape in Nigeria contribute to the narrator's development. In "Comics Adaptations," Jan Baetens proposes that in adaptations to comics from literature, there are three possible considerations: "1.) elements or aspects of the original text that can respectfully be transposed, ... 2) elements or aspects that have to be modified, ... 3) elements that are not present in the source text, but that are added in the adaptive process" (152-153). In *After the Rain*, much of the first-person narrative from the short story is used verbatim either in narrative boxes or in the dialogue. What is "modified" is the visual rendition of the narrative in terms of the size and placement of panels and narrative boxes. Comic artist David Brame makes very creative use of layout and panels. For the third consideration, Baetens notes that one typical element added is "color" (156), which is one of *After the Rain*'s most striking elements.

Scenes that are haunting, confusing, and scary are rendered in reds, purples, and deep pinks. At times, even the characters are imbued with these colours, and they blend into the landscape in fascinating ways. The flora and fauna in the comics become alive; contributing not only to the atmosphere but also to the plot. My paper looks at how they contribute to the shaping of the main character and to the overall theme of regeneration and healing from spectres and from nature.

Valella, Daniel M. (University of Michigan, USA)

Invasive Alien Species: Ozeki's "Kudzu" and Anzaldúa's "Buchones de Agua"

Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* (1998) and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) are both canonical texts in U.S. multiethnic literary studies. Yet scholars have paid very little attention to the agency and symbolism of two "alien" plant species in these books: the Asian "kudzu" in *Meats* and the South American "buchones de agua" in *Borderlands*. My paper argues that Ozeki's and Anzaldúa's literary speakers invoke these plants to perform a shrewd comparative analysis of migration, "border protection," and boundary-crossing—illuminating the hierarchical relations among different species, ethnicities, languages, and nations. Ozeki's narrator calls kudzu an "invasive Asian weed," a "predaceous" "alien twiner" that loves "to shoot its root through the thin mantle of American soil." Anzaldúa's poet figures "buchones de agua" (water hyacinths) as the sea's primary weapon for "attacking the fence" ("atacar la cerca") that separates the U.S. from Mexico at the San Diego–Tijuana border. Both kudzu and buchones reproduce quickly, have no difficulty living alongside other plants ("native" or non-native), and exasperate humans who spend large sums of money attempting to eradicate these species from the North American lands and bodies of water where they now dwell. So much of the cultural discourse around kudzu and buchones matches the discourse around human migrants to the U.S. (especially "aliens" from Asia and Latin America). In each of these books, however, the literary speaker does not seek to control her environment and its ecologies; instead, she illustrates how she is powerfully enmeshed with, moved and shaped by, the other beings that dwell alongside her. Building on the work of Mariana Ortega, Brian Russell Roberts, Aimee Carrillo Rowe, and others, I ultimately contend that a deeper appreciation of these non-human agents enhances our understanding of Ozeki's and Anzaldúa's canonical texts—and of the contours of racialization, border-making, and border-breaking.

Varvorea, Alexandra-Camelia (Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania)

Toxic Bodies, Toxic Beliefs: Internalized Sexism as a Trans-Corporeal Process in Margaret Atwood's *Gilead*

This presentation examines Margaret Atwood's dystopias *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* through an interdisciplinary framework that brings together psychological theories of internalized sexism and post-humanist material feminism. Drawing on Steve Bearman's account of internalized sexism, the paper analyses how Atwood's female characters come to adopt and perpetuate sexist attitudes and beliefs. To expand this psychological lens, the analysis incorporates Stacy Alaimo's post-humanist concept of trans-corporeality, which describes human bodies as inseparable from environmental materiality. By combining these perspectives, the paper argues that Atwood's dystopian societies depict cultural environments in which ecological disaster, political repression, and internalized sexism are materially co-produced. In the dystopian world of Gilead, internalized sexism is not only an ideological phenomenon, but a trans-corporeal process, produced and sustained through the intra-action of environmental toxicity, architectural control, sensory deprivation, and state managed reproductive politics. The major points of

discussion will aim at answering the following questions: 1. How do *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* depict internalized sexism as a trans-corporeal process shaped by non-human agencies, such as pollution, climate, and architecture? 2. In what ways do Atwood's novels show women's bodies as archives of ecological degradation and how does this contribute to the internalization of sexism? 3. How do Atwood's characters navigate or resist the internalization of sexism?

Waegner, Cathy (University of Siegen, Germany)

“Landback for the People,” “The Abolition Hour,” and *BlueJay's Canoe*: Transethnic Challenges to Hegemony through Podcasting

The new media format of “podcasting” offers an innovative ethnic-activist approach to interrogation of systemic hegemonic oppression and environmental injustice. A series of broadcast discussions, hosted by skillful, popular influencers, inflected with rap elements and available on diverse radio, internet, and streaming platforms, can reach not only (young) community listeners, but also large virtual audiences. Transethnic alliances play a notable role in the two selected podcast series, “Landback for the People,” presented by Nick Tilsen (Oglala Lakota), and “The Abolition Hour,” hosted by African American Jason Sole, whose appearance on one of Tilsen's programs underscores their commonality. They join forces to express ethnicity as, to quote Rocio Davis's pithy definition, “the lived experience of Otherness” (2015). Both Tilsen and Sole are personally involved in movements to improve the legal, health, education, and security situations of their communities, realizing that “landback” and “abolition” require a change in public awareness of the archives: re-evaluation of the nineteenth-century treaties (cf. Nick Estes 2019) and emancipation laws, for instance, which have traditionally been interpreted and applied to the disadvantage of ethnic groups, indeed which have, according to the podcasters, led to current forms of exclusion, discrimination, extraction, and control. The power of transethnic radio is emphasized in the brand-new play *BlueJay's Canoe*, by Theresa May and Marta Lu Clifford (Chinook, Cree, Grand Ronde), to be staged November 2025 in Eugene, Oregon. Set in the threatening pandemic and wildfire years, with a Hispanic Native protagonist Xak, a radio intern, the play shares the reliance of the podcast series above on the healing effects of broadcasting ethnic archives; the knowledge and stories of elders serve to counter individual, social, and ecological imbalance, furthering a “worldview of kinship rather than domination” (Robin Wall Kimmerer 2025).

Webster, Jenny (University of Lancashire, UK) & Kang-Suk Byun (Kangnam University, South Korea)

Deaf Signers' Role in Assessing Sign Language Vitality: Literary Texts and Linguistic Identity

Thousands of human languages have disappeared in the last 500 years (Krauss 1998). However, the study of endangered languages began only about 100 years ago. Until the 2010s, this involved only spoken languages. Studies of sign language endangerment were non-existent. Deaf signers tend to be marginalised, especially those who use small-scale or endangered sign languages (Zeshan & De Vos 2012), and the human knowledge represented within their languages is at risk of disappearing. There are parallels between language loss and biodiversity loss (Heller & Duchêne 2008; Skutnabb Kangas & Harmon 2017). For instance, small-scale sign languages often evolve in isolated areas where the environment is also threatened. However, institutions and governments often view endangered languages through a supranational lens that magnifies economic functionality and undermines the relationship between language users and their surrounding natural environment (Webster 2022). Our talk describes how the endangerment scores for 15 sign

languages were determined, ranging from 1 for ‘critically endangered’ to 5 for ‘safe’ (Webster & Safar 2019). We take a critical look at the innovations and challenges of this scoring work, with particular reference to the ways in which deaf signers have been positioned as passive observers or mediated voices, rather than active agents, in institutional assessment frameworks (Byun 2025). Then, as 2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the Korean Sign Language Act, we present a systematic evaluation of the vitality of KSL. We show that deaf signers use KSL folklore narratives as both literary texts and as ways to resist oppression and increase intercultural understanding (Byun & Kim 2025). These narratives function not only as collective memory and cultural affirmation, but also as tools for intercultural education and linguistic empowerment, potentially strengthening language vitality in ways that are not fully captured in existing assessment frameworks.

Welizarowicz, Grzegorz (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

DeiXic Gdańsk: Xicanx Geo-Cultural Readings of *Trapped in Amber*

Gdańsk is a city sitting on the ancient mouth of the Vistula River where amber washes up Baltic coast. *Trapped in Amber* is interpreted as offering an imaginary entanglement of various peoples (Kashubs, Germans, and Poles), histories and Earth’s materiality. The play focuses on the role of women in Gdańsk’s history but is narrated by Little Glass, a picaresque Everyman character derived from Günter Grass. It offers an episodic chronological history of the city, but it also engenders a synchronous existence of a parallel universe of signs and intertextuality. Its principle, the differential, turns the play into a zone of multilayered polychronic temporality (where chronology and cosmology, split-second and eternity coexist) and into a human place marked by “the shadow of a place which precedes and thus enables human spatial action” (West-Pavlov 2010 9), not least, through its central metaphor of amber and its inclusions. The play narrates the local people’s collective and Little Glass’ individual trajectory towards “conscientization” and produces an imaginary place—a polyphonic, agonistic consciousness—marked by relational or what Donna Haraway calls, “tentacular thinking” emphasizing connection, co-constitution, and sympoietic relationships. This cocreation is emphasized in the play’s key moment which implicates the spectators on ethical and epistemological levels. I argue that the play is a pedagogical tool as well as a site where an imaginative geo-cultural DeiXic (West-Pavlov 2010) space-time is produced.

