

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, HYBRID CONFERENCE,
ORGANIZED BY THE CHAIR OF EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY



NARRATING THE MULTISPECIES WORLD

STORIES IN TIMES OF
CRISES, LOSS, HOPE
AUGUST 3 TO 5
MULTISPECIES CONFERENCE 2023

ABSTRACTS



NARRATING THE MULTISPECIES WORLD

STORIES IN TIMES OF CRISES, LOSS, HOPE
MULTISPECIES CONFERENCE 2023, Würzburg/online

We are living in a multispecies world. Although the world is constantly changing, this change has accelerated extraordinarily in recent years, bringing forth substantial and manifold crises. Essentially caused by the capitalist pervasion of almost every corner of our everyday, we are currently experiencing an increasing loss of diversity, particularly in the more-than-human world: due to changing circumstances in their original habitats, numerous living beings such as plants, insects, and mammals (including humans) migrate all over the world; some of them become extinct, and others are forced to adapt to new ecologies.

Technical organisation

The conference is a hybrid event. ZOOM will be used to broadcast the events. By participating, you also agree to the data protection guidelines of this platform. Persons who have registered for online participation will receive all Zoom accesses shortly before the start of the conference.

Contact: multispecies.conference@uni-wuerzburg.de

INTERDISCIPLINARY, HYBRID CONFERENCE,
ORGANIZED BY THE CHAIR OF EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY WÜRZBURG
Am Hubland, 97074 Würzburg



THURSDAY

08/03

09:00-11:00 SESSION 1: OPENING

	MICHAELA FENSKE, WÜRZBURG	9
	NARRATING THE MULTISPECIES WORLD: OPENING	
D	JOSHUA WODAK, SYDNEY	9
	STORY TIME FOR THE END TIMES: NARRATING CONSERVATION IN THE FACE OF EXTINCTION DEBT	

11:30-13:00 SESSION 2: CARING

	SARAH MÖNKEBERG AND MARKUS KURTH, KASSEL	9
	CARE, COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITY: THREE STORIES OF COMPANIONSHIP IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PETS AND PEOPLE	
	GURBET PEKER, UPPSALA	11
	SHEEP RELATED NARRATIVES IN EVERYDAY LIFE ON THE ISLAND OF GOTLAND	
	FELIX REMTER, MÜNCHEN	11
	RESONANT DISTANCING: OVERCOMING THE WILD/DOMESTIC NARRATIVE WITH FORESTAL HONEYBEES AND COWS	



THURSDAY

08/03

14:30-16:30 SESSION 3: TRANSFORMING

D	VERÓNICA JIMÉNEZ BORJA, QUITO	12
	AFTER THE END: THE PLANTHROPOCENE IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN ART	
	PETER ARNDS, DUBLIN	13
	EXILE AND MIGRATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MULTISPECIES NOVEL	
D	HILAL ALKAN, BERLIN	14
	TALES OF ROOTS AND BRANCHES: TURKISH MIGRANTS AND THEIR PLANT COMPANIONS IN GERMANY	

17:00-18:30 KEYNOTE 1

	MAIREAD NIC CRAITH, INVERNESS	
	TRADITIONAL (GAELIC) FOLK-NARRATIVES FOR A MULTI-SPECIES FUTURE	





FRIDAY

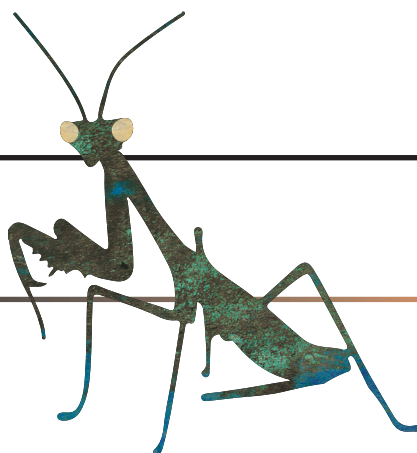
08/04

9:00-11:00 SESSION 4: FORGING

AHMET EMIN BÜLBÜL, ISTANBUL	15
HONORIFIC ECOLOGY: MULTISPECIES PORTRAITURE OF REN HANG	
ZHONGHAO CHEN, SUZHOU/ ANDRÉ KREBBER, LEIPZIG	15
NARRATING NATURE'S MULTISPECIES EXPRESSION	
JULIA KRUPA, WARSAW	16
FITOGRAFIES. CREATING A VISUAL ARCHIVE OF PLANT-HUMAN ENCOUNTERS	
CHRISTINE NEUBERT, HAMBURG	17
GREEN POWER HOUSES IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION	

11.30-13.00 KEYNOTE 2

MAYAKO MURAI, YOKOHAMA	18
MAKING A MULTISPECIES FAIRY-TALE LIBRARY	



13.00-13.30 FITNESS

ANDREA PALASTI, BELGRAD	19
FITNESS FOR UNLIKELY SPECIES	



FRIDAY

08/04

14:30-16:00 SESSION 5: STUDENT PANEL

CHIARA BENEDEUCE, PARIS	19
FLOWING NARRATIVES. SKETCHES FROM BLASTED WATERSCAPES	
LUISE STARK, WÜRZBURG	21
TALKING ABOUT LICHENS	
ADELIA H. RACHMAN AND SETIADI, YOGYAKARTA	22
ANGLING FOR HEALING: REBALANCING LIFE	

17:30-18:30 SESSION 6 AT BOTANICAL GARDEN

MARTIN ABBOTT, LISSETTE LORENZ AND AMY CHEATLE, NEW YORK	24
GREENING OUR THUMBS: THE NARRATIVE PRACTICE OF CARING FOR PLANTS AND PEOPLE	
ARNIKA PESELMANN, WÜRZBURG	24
STORIES OF LOSS AND HOPE: THE MAKING AND GROWING OF APPLES FROM A MULTISPECIES PERSPECTIVE	



SATURDAY

08/05

9:00-11:00 SESSION 7: COMMUNICATING

	MARIA ILHÉU AND MARIANA VALENTE, ÉVORA	25
	LEARNING TO NOTICE AND LOVE A MULTISPECIES WORLD	
	ERICA MONDE, EDINBURGH	26
	NARRATION AS EMBODIED PRACTICE. RELATING PLANTS AND ILLNESS IN TIMES OF PLANETARY CRISIS	
D	ALLY BISSHOP, BRISBANE	27
	LIKE SHIVERS THROUGH AN IMMENSE BODY: THE INTERSPECIES PROMISE (AND RISK) OF VIBRATIONAL NARRATIVES	
	PAULINE SCHUSTER-LÖHLAU, WÜRZBURG	28
	SNAKES, SCORPIONS AND LICE: METAPHORS OF LIFE, DEATH AND LIMIN- ALITY IN THE SOUTH INDIAN ORAL NARRATIVE OF MANTESVAMI	

11.30-13.30 SESSION 8: PROTECTING

	JES HOOPER, EXETER	29
	CIVET SURVIVAL STORIES: NARRATIVES FROM AN ENDANGERED SPECIES CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAM	
	SIRAN LIANG, BRAUNSCHWEIG	29
	BEYOND SOWING GRASS -- TIBETAN HERDERS' EFFORT TO RESTORE DEGRADING GRASSLAND	
	UTE HÖRNER, MATHIAS ANTLFINGER, KÖLN AND VANESSA WIJNGAARDEN, JOHANNESBURG	30
	PARROT PEOPLE. A MULTISPECIES STORY OF THE CONVIVIALITY OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS AND PEOPLE	
	ELINE D. TABAK, BRISTOL	30
	STORYING EXTINCTION IN MULTISPECIES WORLDS: MONARCHS AND MILKWEED	



SATURDAY

08/05

14.30-16:30 SESSION 9: SPECULATING

FERNANDA HASKEL, SÃO PAULO

NARRATING MULTISPECIES ASSEMBLAGES IN THE POLYPHONY NATURE-CULTURE:
STORIES OF BRAZIL 31

SIOBHAN LEDDY, BERLIN

PLAYING THE PLANT:
SPECULATIVE FABULATIONS IN MORE-THAN-HUMAN SENSORIA 33

REGINA F. BENDIX, GÖTTINGEN

TRACING, EXPRESSING, AND ASSERTING MULTIVOCALITY IN THE
MULTISPECIES WORLD: CONCLUDING REMARKS 33



1: OPENING

MICHAELA FENSKE, WÜRZBURG

NARRATING THE MULTISPECIES WORLD: OPENING

As the initiator of the idea and the person who set up the call, Michaela Fenske will provide a thematic introduction to the conference.

STORY TIME FOR THE END TIMES: NARRATING CONSERVATION IN THE FACE OF EXTINCTION DEBT

This paper presents a storytelling approach to the question of what conservation could possibly become commensurate with the rates of human-induced biophysical change unfolding at the advent to the Sixth Extinction Event. Any such conservation would not only require time-critical interventions into both ecosystems and evolution itself, for these interventions would also require domains of risk and ethics that shatter normative understandings of conservation. And yet, normative critiques against such experimental conservation serve to retain conservation practices that are null and void against the extinction debt facing multitudes of species.

To probe these issues, I present a storytelling-based case study of current and proposed conservation for endangered *Chelonia mydas* sea turtles on Raine Island, a small coral cay on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. *Chelonia mydas* and Raine Island are presented as synecdoche for conservation across diverse species across the world,

because turtles are among the most endangered of all reptiles, and Raine Island is the largest and most important rookery in the world for this species.

This is not, however, a paper about conservation per se. Rather, the paper reframes any-and-all conservation in the context of the radical asymmetry and radical contingency of life to the vicissitudes of the cosmos. In this vein, the paper formulates a cosmology based on Raine Island's unintentional creation via coral formation and guano from nesting sea birds, highlighting the relevance of pre-human ruptures to the one currently unfolding. This cosmology is presented as a synecdoche for how life has altered the lithosphere and atmosphere of the planet since its first appearance. Therein, in response to the question - of how storytelling may reframe the ethics of conservation experiments that are commensurate with the ecological and climate crisis - the paper contemplates the unthinkable questions that our current situation demands we ask, and perhaps even try to answer.

2: CARING

SARAH MÖNKEBERG AND MARKUS KURTH, KASSEL

CARE, COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITY: THREE STORIES OF COMPANIONSHIP IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PETS AND PEOPLE

A central part of many stories dealing with the current multispecies crises is the aspect of losing connection with the more-than-human world. Entire species are disappearing from the earth and the hope for a better coexistence with them has been

HS 1

DIGITAL
JOSHUA WODAK, SYDNEY

HS 1

1: OPENING/ 2: CARING



extinguished. At the same time, however, a renewed turn to animals can be observed, which produces completely different stories. It is the reality of countless humans to share their daily lives with non-human species in close relationships. These relationships with so-called pets are often in no way inferior to those between human family members. Today, at least one pet lives in every second household in Germany, around 35 million of them in total. Unlike other non-human animals, they are neither eaten nor slaughtered, and they usually share more than just a place of residence with their keepers. This interspecies living together gives rise to relationships with a special quality. For this reason, the animals involved here can also be understood, with Haraway (2003), as “companions” that are significant for humans in many ways.

Currently, we are investigating how this significance and the companion status of animals are constituted in animal-human relationships in the ongoing project “Animals as Companions. Animal-Human Relationships: Between Liveliness and Normalization” (German Research Foundation, DFG, project number 443785427). We are working with a broad set of qualitative research methods from a micro-sociological and cross-species perspective. So far, we have conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with keepers of various animals (in addition to dogs and cats, also various small animals, birds, exotic animals and horses), 30 interviews with service providers in the field of animal-related services and several ethnographies, all within the German-speaking countries.

In the proposed presentation for the conference, we focus on the stories of the animal keepers. With Care, Community and Activity we highlight three narrative patterns, by which the interviewed keepers describe the living together with ‘their’ animals. In a first step, we show how these narratives express different qualities of relationships, various forms of shared life between animals and humans, but also specific images of animals held by the keepers. These images include

a rather anthropomorphizing individualization, where the companions become part of the human world. In a second image, companion animals are generalized on the basis of species or breed. They appear in this image more as wild animals with a domestication heritage and corresponding needs. In a second step, we also trace the influence of the lived animal-keeper relationships on the narratives themselves and thus on the attitudes of the keepers towards their animals. Here, our presentation highlights the interaction of storytelling, material circumstances and (also biographical) situations for the emergence of a narrative pattern. Influential in this regard are the concrete animal individuals and the particular temporalities of the species involved, the animal-keeper biography, and the places where inter- and multispecies cohabitation takes place.

Altogether, our presentation contours a material-discursive (Barad 2007) spectrum of companionship. Against this background, we would like to discuss at the conference which stories of companionship hold potential for a convivial life between animals and humans (see van Dooren & Rose 2012) and what we can learn from them for the possibility of and the desire for a peaceful cohabitation in the multispecies world.

--

References

Barad, Karen (2007): Agential Realism: How material-discursive practices matter. In: *Ibid.: Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, p. 132–185.
 Haraway, Donna (2003) *The Companion Species Manifesto. Dogs, People and Significant Otherness*. Prickly Paradigm Press.
 van Dooren, Thom & Bird Rose, Deborah (2012): *Storied-Places in a Multispecies City*. In: *Hum-animalia* 3, 2, p. 1–27.



GURBET PEKER, UPPSALA

SHEEP RELATED NARRATIVES IN EVERYDAY LIFE ON THE ISLAND OF GOTLAND

Sheep related narratives and practices form a crucial part in the place making processes on the Swedish Island of Gotland. The sheep are frequently used in advertisements of the island as a tourist destination and sheep related products dominate the souvenir shops on Gotland. Additionally, the Gotlandic sheep heritage breeds as well as wool handicrafts constitute a vital part in the production of stories and notions about Gotlandic cultural heritage. The sheep also have a key role in individual stories about place attachment among sheep farmers and rural lifestyle migrants. Thus, the sheep are important – not to say fundamental – actors in the practices and narratives producing Gotland as a place, which is the main topic of this study.

Based on collected data from magazines, brochures, ethnographic observations and interviews with sheep farmers, this study actualizes three overlapping themes. The first theme deals with how sheep are used in stories and in other representations of Gotland. In advertisements, the sheep appear in green meadows, with sunny weather far away from urban environments. Gotland's municipality flag and its landscape coat of arms both contain sheep. The Swedish military on Gotland uses a living sheep as its mascot. These are only a few examples of how the place and the animal are deeply connected. Accordingly, the sheep clearly have a crucial symbolic charge in the (re) production of Gotland as a place.

The second theme focuses on how the production of cultural heritage is linked to narratives and (re)negotiations related to the sheep on the island. There are different gatherings, associations, discussions, and conflicts regarding sheep, sheep farming and sheep breeding on Gotland. Among sheep-related actors, there are many dif-

ferent opinions on how to keep the animal. These social negotiations highlight issues of cultural heritage production and notions of the past. The opinions about cultural heritage commonly relate to how the breeding and lambing of the Gotlandic breeds should be handled. In various social contexts, such as local heritage associations and sheep breeding associations, the question of the sheep's authenticity as well as its genetics, is raised. Focusing on these narratives and (re)negotiations thus opens up for analyzing the complex relations between multi-species relations, cultural heritage production and place.

The third theme explores personal narratives connected to the multifaceted roles of the sheep. The focus is on the understanding of them as livelihoods and products, on the one hand, but also as friends, on the other, and the conflicts these understandings give rise to. According to the collected data, the basic day-to-day interactions and activities between the sheep farmers and the sheep create various forms of embodied meaningful experiences among the sheep farmers. At the same time, practices such as slaughter develop feelings of unease and raise conflicting existential questions regarding life and death. How do these ambivalent embodied practices as well as narratives affect the interspecies relations at hand?

Analyzing these narratives about human and more than human everyday relations, in this case sheep and human relationships on Gotland, is a way to develop knowledge about placemaking, cultural heritage production and embodied existential questions about life and death in interspecies contexts.

FELIX REMTER, MÜNCHEN

RESONANT DISTANCING: OVERCOMING THE WILD/DOMESTIC NARRATIVE WITH FORESTAL HONEYBEES AND COWS

The domestication and farming of live-

HS 1

2: CARING



stock is not only a success story of human superiority but the narrative starting point of a divide between what is supposed to be wild and what domestic. A divide that is decisive for our anthropocentric understanding of where a species or individual belongs and where not. Whether a species is considered wild or not changes its rights of movement and protection and the responsibilities of ownership.

Two stories about the negotiation of distance and proximity in the relationship between humans and other animals in farming changed my perspective on that divide. One about a young cow that ran away and spend some days outside in the wild and one about a colony of honeybees that lived high up in a tree until the tree was cut down. The connected multimedia stories will lead us to new practices in farming and to a renegotiation of distance and proximity that can't be understood within the anthropocentrism of "wild" and "domestic" animal lives.

While at first "domestication" of farm animals might have generally allowed for an aligned outer and inner proximity (resonance), the later rationalization and industrialization in agriculture brought forth processes of distancing through technical and digital detachment or as a device for emotional shielding when applying instrumental and objectifying cruelty. A distance understood as alienation in opposition to resonance. In the ongoing socio-ecological transformation of agriculture new forms of cooperation and co-living emerge. The emergence of mother herds in meat production and tree bee keeping in honey production show how distancing can uphold a resonant mode of relating that allows for a new narrative which transgresses modernist notions of "wild" and "domestic".

3: TRANSFORMING

DIGITAL

VERÓNICA JIMÉNEZ BORJA, QUITO

AFTER THE END: THE PLANTHROPOCENE IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN ART

Rather than a geological epoch, the Planthropocene (Meyers, 2021) is an invitation to consider the common world we share with plants. This paper explores works by Latin American artists that envision new forms of plant/people survival in the face of our uncertain, disappearing and fragmented futures. These works offer aspirational epistemes that are markedly speculative, as they re-imagine how novel plant/people alliances can foster novel forms of worldmaking.

The projects I consider ground themselves in decolonial languages, and indigenous perspectives and traditions that reject fetishistic accounts of the natural world. These artistic and literary works require us to engage with the violence wrought by extractivism, colonialism, and capitalism on human and plant bodies. If we are to imagine new forms of multispecies survival, we can only do so in the context of our already ravaged worlds. For example, Emerson Munduruku (Brazil)—also known as Uýra Sodoma ('the tree that walks')—compels us to come to terms with the ways in which colonialism wrought violence on plant and indigenous bodies. Chilean artist Patricia Dominguez's work at the intersection of ethnobotany and science fiction, explores how decolonizing ethnobotany can offer new multispecies alliances in the face of increasingly corporatized plant/people relationships. Likewise, PLANTASIA OIL Co --the collaborative project between Ecuadorian artist Adrian Balseca (Ecu-



dor) and the Amazon Visual Archive –offers new forms of plant survival in territories plundered by petrocapi-talism. While these works resist utopic visions of replenished nature, they do not circumscribe to apocalyptic imaginaries. Rather, these works invite us to animate new alliances with plants.

Likewise, works by Gilberto Esparza (Mexico), Ivan Henriques (Brazil), and the art collective Panósmico (Mexico), ask themselves what common worlds can possibly flourish in places of contamination and environmental destruction. Their proposals offer speculative technologies and habitats for future societies that call for novel ways of being and existing. As speculative practices they invent techniques of relation that offer new zones of friction and creative resistance. Indeed, these works experiment with multi-sensory ethnography that activate the unique perspectives, senses, and relations of the vegetable world. These plant/people alliances offer speculative narratives, visions, and sensibilities for alternative forms of worldmaking.

PETER ARNDS, DUBLIN

EXILE AND MIGRATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MULTISPECIES NOVEL

My paper will present a new type of text in contemporary world literature in which various types of species, loathed, revered but also often endangered, become the protagonists and feature as catalysts in ecologically sensitive art on migration, biocultural diversity, and precarity in the Anthropocene. In German literature alone, contemporary species-fiction took its beginnings in the 1980s with novels like Günter Grass's *Die Rättin* (1986) on the effects of acid rain decimating European forests and upsetting ecosystems. A few years later, W.G. Sebald's *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1995) then marks the beginning of a particular brand of this type of narrative that views animal species and their isolation as a reflection of

human loneliness and melancholia, and focuses on topics such as migration, exile, and the links between specicide and genocide.

This kind of politicization of species in the context of human trauma caused by wars, genocide, and exile is at the heart of species-fiction on forced migration. It is in particular the search for sanctuary on a planet facing increasing devastation and forcing millions to flee their homes that receives attention in this genre so redolent with creaturely metaphors. In recent years such narratives exploring the metaphors of a wide range of species have increasingly shown us highly politicized animal metaphors that serve as a reminder of the precarity of all life, human and non-human. In our time that sees various growing global crises affecting both the environment and the migration of humans and non-human animals, such metaphors are ideal forms of representation for artists in engaging with topics such as vulnerability, resilience, and the blurring of boundaries between species.

Drawing on political and anthropological theories by Giorgio Agamben, Donna Haraway, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and by engaging with world literature including the work of Günter Grass, W.G. Sebald, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* (2008), Norbert Scheuer's *Winterbienen* (2019), Sarah Hall's *Wolf Border* (2015), and others I want to show how species metaphors become a constitutive element for this type of genre that explores exile and migration. How do these authors resist and destabilise the dehumanizing agency some of these metaphors contain? How do they redeem certain creatures from their frequently negative cultural associations while making them serviceable as a representational tool for the political context of forced migration? The texts and authors in focus will show how fluid such metaphors are and how, in the sense of Haraway's concept of companion species, contemporary literature of forced migration has the potential to liberate culturally and politically blighted species metaphors into expressions of solidarity.



DIGITAL

HILAL ALKAN, BERLIN

TALES OF ROOTS AND BRANCHES: TURKISH MIGRANTS AND THEIR PLANT COMPANIONS IN GERMANY

The narratives that are the subject matter of this paper do not come from the realm of cultural production. They are the narratives of my research participants, who generously shared their life stories with me in the course of my research on human-plant relations in the context of migration. They are Turkish and Kurdish migrants who moved or fled to Germany within the past 50 years from different parts of Turkey and created new lives in Berlin, where I have been conducting this ethnographic research since October 2021. Upon my request they (re)construct their biographical narratives, punctuated with their relations to various plants—plants of childhood, of loved ones, in current homes and as companions in migration journeys. In this paper I explore why, how and in what capacities plants emerge in life stories that are marked by spatial mobilities, multiple losses and varyingly successful new emplacements. My focus will be on the narratives of two participants. In Orhan’s life-story plants accompany his coming of age and personal change and development, which he weaves together with his migration story. In Zahide’s account, however plant companions point to yearnings, absences and nostalgia. While for Orhan, his plant companions are metaphorically rooting together with him in Germany and assisting him in this new home-making, in Zahide’s, although the material plant roots are in Berlin soil, they signify Zahide’s roots in Turkey. The plants root for her too, but not here in Germany. In both accounts, home-making is a multispecies practice and belonging is a multispecies question.

KEYNOTE 1 HS 1

MAIREAD NIC CRAITH, INVERNESS

TRADITIONAL (GAELIC) FOLK- NARRATIVES FOR A MULTI-SPE- CIES FUTURE

This keynote focuses on traditional folktales and questions whether they have any role in our current, constantly changing world. It explores the extent to which traditional folktales engage with an other-than-human world and examines the role of multispecies temporalities in such folk-narratives. Theoretically, the paper draws on the concept of “patchy Anthropocene”, which is designed to counter the homogeneous rate of destruction that is implied in the unqualified use of the concept “Anthropocene”. Tsing, Mathews, and Buband (2019) propose that “the Great Acceleration is best understood through immersion in many small and situated rhythms.” The big story of destruction is re-envisaged as a culmination of “seemingly minor contingencies, asymmetrical encounters, and moments of indeterminacy”. In common with “Patchy Anthropocene”, folk narratives tend to focus on the local. Woven together over a number of centuries, the human and non-human folk-narratives are linked with specific places and their geomorphology. Drawing on the Celtic ontological concept of Dúchas, and folktales from Gaelic culture, this keynote argues that a re-engagement with traditional folk narratives can teach us lessons for sustainable futures within the context of a multi-species world. With scientific knowledge at one end of the spectrum, it places folk knowledge at the other and asks whether traditional tales are a part of our narrative heritage that should be maintained in the face of constant change. The paper investigates the extent to which folk-narratives preserve memories of historical ecologies and asks whether these can be revived, re-envisaged or re-purposed to develop new possibilities for a peaceful cohabitation in the multi-species world.



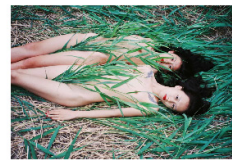
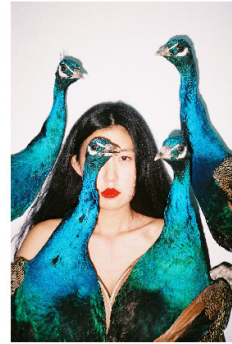
4:FORGING

AHMET EMIN BÜLBÜL, ISTANBUL

HONORIFIC ECOLOGY: MULTISPECIES PORTRAITURE OF REN HANG

Influenced by the divine, mythological statues of early Greek culture as well as by the consolidation of the unique individual in the Renaissance period, classical portrait photography is based on, comprises of, grounds in human as the central element of the universe. Indexical in nature, it has mainly aimed at representing, documenting, contextualizing, and commemorating the existence of the sitters, ranging from prominent historical figures to modern subjects. In doing so, it creates a photographic moment in which questions of identity, subjectivity, body, and soul arise and intersect. Defying the anthropocentric views of portraiture, this paper attempts to reassess such questions from both a nonhuman and human perspective. I analyze Chinese photographer Ren Hang's oeuvre with regards to two theoretical concepts: more-than-human sociality and mesh. First one belongs to Anna Tsing who suggests that nature and society are not exclusive to one another; rather, sociality is an interaction and collaboration, an entangling connection performed also by nonhuman actors. As one of the key concepts in Timothy Morton's ecological thought, mesh, on the other hand, accounts for a queer, liquid and fluid conjunction that does away with any strict boundary among worldly matter, and fosters new modes of intimacy. My overall argument is that Ren Hang's multispecies portraiture builds an anti-hierarchical, nonbinary space where such vital elements as

sunflowers, bushes, fishes, birds, peacocks, and human bodies coexist, radically reform and deform each other. The emergent, ecologically engaged sociality his photographs visualize is not only honorifically more-than-human, but it is also polymorphously intimate.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY REN HANG
INSTAGRAM: @RENHANGRENHANG

ZHONGHAO CHEN, SUZHOU
ANDRÉ KREBBER, LEIPZIG

NARRATING NATURE'S MULTISPECIES EXPRESSION

Images of nature as a passive resource and commodity have been widely challenged in recent years. The enormously diverse range of entities subsumed under the term is instead seen as a sphere of self-producing and self-willing activity, whose creatures are in myriad ways interwoven and interdependent with the activities of human cultures. If we want to move towards a more sustainable future, this interdependence calls for the consideration of nonhuman concerns

HS 1

4: FORGING



and needs into our decision-making, which in turn requires the ability to understand these concerns. It requires, in other words, to recognize and listen to nonhuman entities and tell stories of multispecies origin.

In our presentation, we will explore through a theoretical reading of Theodor W. Adorno's and Walter Benjamin's aesthetic theories alongside the tradition of Chinese literati landscape painting of Shanshui and our own artistic production, in how far moving virtual reality (VR) image making offers the potential to access and translate the language and expression of nonhuman entities and narrate multispecies stories.

In his late work *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno accounts for a self-expression of nature on which the expressivity of human art depends. Benjamin, in turn, developed a sophisticated philosophy of language that is predicated on human language as a specific case of language as a multispecies phenomenon. Both considered this language as one of images, connecting their thoughts to the literati landscape painting practice of Shanshui. In Chinese culture, nature is indeed always already expressive, for example in the tradition of recognizing animal forms in stones and rocks. Shanshui counters here the linear narrative of modernization and its objectification of nature by representing an entangled process, wherein speculation of multispecies configurations, representational techniques and generative recognition of otherness are constantly correlated and co-fabricated, for example in the work of Shanshui literati painter Shi Tao (1642-1708).

We will finally reflect on this inter-reading of German and Chinese aesthetic theory through our own attempts of rendering natural expressivity eloquent to humans and narrate multispecies stories through an experimental moving VR image work based on the collection of images of nature from around the Chinese province of Jiangsu. More generally, we thus will explore how nature's language might be made eloquent for us by image-based forms

of narration that build on a recognition and registration of multispecies voices, both registering and representing multiple human and nonhuman voices as well as the creation of multispecies narratives.

JULIA KRUPA, WARSAW

FITOGRAPHIES. POST-INDUSTRIAL LIFE-STORIES OF PLANTS

I would like to present and discuss some literary texts that are being written in the framework of a transdisciplinary project "Fitographies. Post-industrial Life-stories of Plants" implemented in Katowice between November 2022 and October 2023. The project aims at designing conscious all-encompassing encounters with plants growing in the post-industrial areas of Upper Silesia. The encounters take place outdoors, in plants' actual environment, and gather a small group of scholars and students from the fields of arts, creative writing, and cultural studies. They are accompanied, if possible, also by botanists or herbalists. The project is inspired by Julia Krupa's art-based herbalist method which involves a group drawing of plants. In this case, however, the method is extended also by a group story which forms a collection of literary impressions. This literary form is inspired by the school of Matsuo Basho. In my presentation, I would like to discuss how, in contemporary more-than-human reality, we adapt the Japanese haiku genre and its philosophy to create non-anthropocentric plant stories. I would also like to present English translations of some exemplary literary texts created in this way.

HS 1



CHRISTINE NEUBERT - HAMBURG

GREEN POWER HOUSES IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION



At the street corner, I see a larger construction hole. I register the insane amount of roots exposed here. It is a broad bundle of medium and finer roots. Then I see the dug pit, here stronger roots protrude from the tree slice over into the sidewalk. Underneath there are wires visible, to me it looks like there could be problems with the wires here. A step further on, stronger roots are visible coming out from under the borders that surround the tree slice. They seem to come out through a narrower spot between two borders, then spread out again and grow past the trumpet shortly after. There is a very severe thickening here, and the roots appear very wide and crowded.

Past this narrow point, they again become wider in area, while still remaining strongly in an area of the secondary surface - under the sidewalk. The tree surgeon who is supervising the construction work today, in order to protect the street tree as best as possible, does not understand this. Why didn't it grow under the parking lot? Perhaps because there was large paving that does not allow water to pass through when it is sealed?

...

I am standing in my area along the road, in the middle of a small spot that is not paved over. Around my neck I am currently wearing a chain made of rough wooden slats, which

is supposed to protect my life during the construction work. It prevents me from getting unsightly scratches from a wheel loader kicking out the back, for example. I'm not very interested in that. I'm rather pleased that some air is finally getting to my vessels and capillaries. The open construction site is also getting to me, no water for a few days. But the density of the ground, the weight of the pavement and the tanks standing on it I am freed for a moment. Maybe things will go well for me and they will also remove the garbage bags, the old wheels and stones leaning against my lower neck trunk. I'm tired of putting up with everyone else's trash. Let them leave it in their apartments and in their houses, yes their gardens and yards! In their habitat; I have it already hard enough here in mine.

...

Behind the borders that define the tree plate, the pit is dug, about thirty or forty centimeters deep. There is still soil life at this depth, says the tree surgeon. The trumpet now lies exposed. Only on one of its sides are two large paving stones still lying. The tree surgeon asks the construction worker if it would be possible to remove them so that the roots can be examined underneath. "No, it's a lot of work". After a short time, the tree surgeon asks again. The other agrees and lends

a hand. When the stones are gone, the tree surgeon brushes aside the earth with the fine roots with his bare hand. He grabs the slightly thicker roots and bends them around to see how flexible they are.

...

To another person, he shows pressure pads that I form under the ground to relieve myself of heavy stones. People could see the imprint of the paving stones lying on top if they looked closely. My main roots go wide in these places and are even stronger. That's my strategy to be able to stay here at all.

(Field Diary 2022-09-01)

...



One goal of my ethnographic research on the everyday life of road construction sites is to point out the disturbance and negotiation of diverse habitats. In Hamburg’s civil engineering and road construction, the road tree and the protection of “hedges and other plantings” (Hamburg Building Code 2005, §14/4) have a separate position. Its protection as well as the protection of animals housing in the treetops can cause a change in the construction process, a so-called construction disturbance. In the spirit of a multispecies ethnography, I narrate the interweavings and interdependencies between plant, animal, and human habitats. I use practice-theoretical vocabulary as a theoretical tool. By describing interlinked, socio-material activity of non-human and human actors, I can clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of flora and fauna. Under the ground and above the rooftops lie the green power houses I am narrating.



Copyright © Christine Neubert

KEYNOTE 2

HS 1

MAYAKO MURAI, YOKOHAMA

MAKING A MULTISPECIES FAIRY-TALE LIBRARY

What kind of multispecies storyscape may emerge if we make a library of multicultural fairy tales by classifying them according to the experiences of other-than-humans? When re-classified from a multispecies point of view, the same old stories may reveal hitherto unnoticed narratives that have been unfolding in the more-than-human world. In this talk, I will first explore the possibilities of repurposing the existing tale classification systems, such as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale type index and The Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, in order to design a new system that would better reflect other-than-human worldviews across different narrative traditions. I will then give a report on the process of making a physical example of a multispecies and multidisciplinary fairy-tale library based on my private book collection in collaboration with a multicultural team of fairy-tale researchers, biologists, librarians, and artists. Finally, I will reflect on the responses of the library visitors and suggest the possible uses of this fairy-tale library for imagining a multispecies future.



4: FORGING/ KEYNOTE 2



Friday August 3, 2023 13.00-13.30 Fitness for Unlikely Species
14:30-16:00 Session 5: Student panel

FITNESS

for Unlikely Species' welcomes participants of all movement abilities, they do not need to have performance and/or training experience.

ÜR 11

ANDREA PALASTI, BELGRAD

FITNESS FOR UNLIKELY SPECIES

Have you ever wondered how it is to ruffle due to a light breeze or to withdraw with the low tide? How to dance as wrigglers, or to burrow yourself as a clam?

By blending conceptual art with pedagogical impulses the 'Fitness for Unlikely Species' is a 30 minute fitness training and an illustrative lesson all rolled into one. 'Fitness for unlikely species' is an attempt to challenge humans to channel their bodily experience through physical movement while rethinking fitness practices as connected to the environmental concept of entanglement by mimicking more-than-human worlds. Physical exercises improve muscular strength and boost endurance, but they also increase cognitive performance. By using the practice of mimicry, these shape-shifting somatic exercises can be regarded as relational tools for finding new ways of learning, understanding, connecting, and moving between worlds. The exercises are transforming our bodies into a performative choreography by mimicking other entities whose shapes, movements and existence are affected by climate change, for example the freshwater mussel, by mimicking clams' movement and burrowing behaviour, because understanding how clams' move across space and time can be a fundamental question in Danube's ecology. Other entities are ripples, rough waves, extreme high tides and extreme low tides, dancing the world's deadliest animal - the wrigglers, swimming like the endangered dogfish or mimicking the unken reflex of the endangered fire-bellied toad. 'Fitness



Copyright © Andrea Palašti

4:STUDENT PANEL

CHIARA BENEDEUCE, PARIS

HS 1

FLOWING NARRATIVES. SKETCHES FROM BLASTED WATERSCAPES

My Master research project in Environmental Anthropology focuses on the mobilization of Italian river communities against small-sized hydro-power plants and more broadly on the artificialization of rivers. Narration plays an important role in these waterscapes, as imagining a thriving future for rivers seems more and more difficult: new power plants and water management structures are being built nowadays, even though ecologists have long warned us on the impact that these human activities have on waterscapes (from preventing fish migration, to the erosion of the soil, and the effects of hydropeaking). In this regard, the Camille Stories by Haraway is a fascinat-

FITNESS / 4:STUDENT PANEL



ing form of narration as it shows the infinite possibilities of speculative fabulation in narrating both the ruins and the possibilities of our more-than-human world. I find it interesting that the Children of Compost start restoring the earth by taking care of ecological corridors, which «it is how they imagine and practice repair of ruined lands and waters and their critters, human and not» (2016, p. 140). Rivers can in fact be considered blasted ecological corridors, but they are also sites of resistance and reparation.

In this last year, I have attempted to follow the river flow in the Italian peninsula, starting from the Alpine streams (Friuli Venezia Giulia) and then going down to central Italy, where in September 2022 the Misa River flooded, killing ten people in the province of Ancona (Marche). Further south, in the mystical early Christian Baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte (Campania), I have encountered for the first time the rare Italian crayfish, an endangered species living in quiet and clean waters. Activists from different regions have taken this animal as a symbol for their fight against private and public constructions on rivers.

Infrastructures such as dams and channels have shaped our collective memoryscape (Butler, 2009) and our imagination: they imposed their impressive and brutalist presence; they changed the landscape, moving water, drying out wetlands (such as in Senigallia) and flooding villages (such as Curon Venosta); they prevented access to clean water for both humans and non-humans, condemning multiple species to extinction. This is why petitions for the conservation of water bodies talk about a “creek-cide” (torrenticidio). Activist movements such as Free Rivers are trying to provide a less anthropocentric storytelling and, at the same time, a narration that is a call for action.

During my ethnography, I’ve taken long walks along rivers and streams (Tagliamento, Isonzo, Misa and Tanagro, among others) with people involved in the defense of the

territories and members of local communities (journalists, environmental guides, peasants), women and men dealing with a yet another foretold catastrophe (October 2022). I’m going to do a second longer research trip in May 2023, during which I will hopefully meet the so-called “dam busters”, environmental engineers that repair the ecosystem by “blowing up” dams. These social actors and their actions have inspired me to produce a short fictional story, Ruins Lake (Il Lago delle Rovine), intersecting anthropology and literature. Thanks to a double channel, writing and orality, I have tried to improve the idea of an “eliciting prophetic speech” (Benedetti, 2018) as an acrobat of my time, or saying otherwise I have tried to find words that can world better worlds (Haraway, 2017). I am also gathering photographs and narratives of trouble and recovery, where even non-humans and non-living (such as Bennett’s “vibrant matter”, 2009) shape lands and local memories, and experience sorrow and solastalgia (Albrecht, 2019).

My research is still ongoing, therefore I will share just some sketches of narrations and sensory knowledge (what a town smells like in the aftermath of the flood, the consistency of mud, the new habits of Italian shrimp, etc.), that I would return as such: fragments of prophecies unheard, that as a researcher I have a response-ability to witness (Rose, Van Doreen, 2017) and to transform in hydarchies from below.

Bibliography :

- Albrecht, G. (2019). *Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World*. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press.
- Benedetti, C. (2018). «Acrobati del tempo». *Anders, Pasolini e l’efficacia della profezia*. *Laboratoire italien*, n. 21, <https://doi.org/10.4000/laboratoireitalien.2259>.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Butler T. (2008). «Memoryscape: integrating oral history, memory and landscape on the river Thames». In Ashton, P., and Kean, H. (eds.), *People and their Pasts: Public History Today*,



Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 223-239.
 Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, Duke University Press.
 Rose, D. B., Van Dooren, T. (2017). «Encountering a more-than-human world: ethos and the arts of witness». In Heise, U. K., Christensen J. & Niemann J. (eds.), *The Routledge companion to the environmental humanities*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 120-128.

LOUISE STARK, WÜRZBURG

TALKING ABOUT LICHENS

Initially, gardeners are concerned when they discover them on their fruit trees, but after a short investigation it is obvious: lichens are not dangerous. The fungus-alga-cyano-bacterium compound – unremarkable as it is - can be found everywhere in a wide variety of shapes and colours. This symbiont, as one of the first life forms on this earth (and presumably one of the last), has so far received limited attention in the field of cultural studies. As a metaphor for love, fate or exploitation, symbiosis provides scope for interpretation in art and literature, and quite a bit is known about the historical re-appraisal of taxonomy on lichens, but what is about beyond „higher“ culture and science?



Lichens of the street, on paving stones and roof shingles, garden fences or other plants... cultural research tells us not much about it. My master thesis research takes

this gap as an opportunity to find out how everyday lichens are narrated and what they tell by themselves. Because of improved air quality and colder exterior walls of new, well-insulated houses, lichens are growing significantly. They are becoming an aesthetic nuisance. So they are not only the subject of discussion among gardeners, also among building researchers, experts on facades and pesticide manufacturers. The specific, but also multifaceted aesthetics of lichens are coming to the centre of attention. At the same time, in other contexts, they are described as a „healing herb“ or as the „food of the future“ - so somehow they become a symbol of hope for certain everyday lives.

In addition to the question of the agency of everyday lichens in garden and urban assemblages, the focus is also on the stories that people tell about them. Because these stories often decide: Are lichens allowed to stay or will they be removed?

Within the context of the conference, I would like to present first results of the study, expressed in a short, introductory lecture followed by an ethnographic video collage that uses interview excerpts and visual impressions to create a connection between human narratives and the vivid aesthetics of the Anthropocene using photographs and video footage with/ about lichens.



Copyright © Luise Stark



ADELIA H. RACHMAN AND SETIADI, YOGYAKARTA

ANGLING FOR HEALING: REBALANCING LIFE

In the last decade, the Earth has shown its alarming condition through its natural phenomena nor disasters inspired as a serious threat to a living systems totality. Hot zones in the world predicted already hit one percent and are declared 'virtually uninhabitable' even will triggers prolonged droughts, scarcity of clean water, to food insecurity which later potentially encourages a forced displacement of villagers in some atrocious climate change affected areas (Rigaud, et. al. 2018, 4, 112; Lustgarten 2020).

Germany is one of the temperate climate countries – nemoral (kühlgemäßigte Klima) – a warmer temperate climate lies on the climate transition trajectory from the maritime climate of Western Europe to the continental climate of Eastern Europe (Laschewski and Jendritzky 2002, 93; Briem, et. al. 2018, 12; Ebert, Houts, and Noce 2022, 6; RU-GELD. DE 2022). The country hasn't been unleased from the world's spotlight on climate change issue. Anthropogenic disasters, let say heat waves, forest fires, and catastrophic floods have reduced the functionality of its natural environment (Fountain 2021).

Climate concerns are quite resonant among climate activists and scientists today, they call for the importance of the dangers and safety priorities of climate change (Carmin, et. al. 2015, 179). Climate change is seen as the most serious global problem by 28% of respondents in Germany, while 56% of respondents are aware of their personal responsibility to tackle climate change in addition to economic activities in the business and industrial sectors, and 79% of respondents have taken concrete actions to fight climate change for example 51% of respondents chose to reduce meat consumption (European Commission 2021, 1).

Concerning meat consumption, fisheries

sector is relatively connected. The fisheries sector remarkably supporting German food security. In 2008-2018, the fish and fish products import percentage increase almost four times of the exports (OECD 2021, 2). Salmon, for example, considered as one of Germans favourite fish (Brot für die Welt 2022). This type of fish has a dynamic migratory ability and can thus be an indicator of environmental quality which the species requires good water quality with medium summer water temperatures habitat (Ingendahl and Beeck 2011, 147). In general, fish supply is affected by resources consumption of commercial fisheries business actors (e.g., capture fishermen) and recreational fisheries (anglers), therefore fishing control necessary to be taken (Gullestad, et. al. 2017, 105; Funge-Smith 2018, 125; Arlinghaus, et. al. 2019, 5209).

Angling, leisure activity proposes firm opportunity of support for rebalancing life. It has been existing in the whole world, as well as taking place in German traditions since time immemorial, descending from subsistence, economic livelihoods, cultural traditions, to offering the enjoyment of natural exoticism. The qualitative ethnographic research was conducted in the Baden-Württemberg and Hessen, Germany through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and literature studies in exploring the practice, perception, and meaning of angling in Germany and its resilience towards disparate nuisance of vulnerabilities, including climate change impacts which reflected in the angling adaptive behavior trajectories of the recreational fisheries sector in particular and fisheries in general. Currently, anglers display a prodigious motivation of angling, it's beyond just catching fish. Both human – non-human and cultural-ecological relations in angling activities have such a magnetic muse – an overwhelming power of influence. Someone solitary presence in nature, and/or together with his close people provides a unique enjoyment rather than the other physical leisure activities. Angling encompassing four dimensions: personal, social, cultural, and ecological which em-



phasize sustainable leisure practices implementation. Collective ecological awareness and responsibility are eminent in conceiving angling resilience. Eventually, the strict recreational fisheries management in Germany had purposely made for preserving ecosystem balance which essentially assuring long term angling sustainability.

References

Arlinghaus, Robert, Joshua K. Abbott, Eli P. Fenichel, et. al. 2019. "Governing the recreational dimension of global fisheries." *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* 116 (12): 5209-5213. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1902796116.

Briem, Felix. 2018. "Explorative Data Analysis of *Drosophila suzukii* Trap Catches from a Seven-Year Monitoring Program in Southwest Germany." *Insects* 9 (125): 1-16. doi: 10.3390/insects9040125.

Brot für die Welt. 2022. "Nur noch jeder fünfte Fisch aus deutschem Fang – "End of Fish Day" 2022 so früh wie noch nie." 10 March. Accessed May 10, 2022. <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/pressemeldung/2022-nur-noch-jeder-fuenfte-fisch-aus-deutschem-fang-end-of-fish-day-2022-so-frueh-wie-noch-nie/#:~:text=Am%2011.,Fische%20und%20Meeresfr%C3%BCchte%20rechnerisch%20verbraucht.>

Carmin, JoAnn, Kathleen Tierney, Eric Chu, et. al. 2015. "Adaptation to Climate Change." In *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*, edited by Riley E. Dunlap and Robert J. Brulle, 164-98. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ebert, Karin, Renate Houts, and Sergio Noce. 2022. "Lower COVID-19 Incidence in Low-Continental West-Coast Areas of Europe." *GeoHealth* 6: 1-18. doi: 10.1029/2021GH000568.

European Commission. 2021. "Special Eurobarometer 513 – Climate Change: Germany March-April 2021." Accessed September 18, 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/clima/system/files/2021-06/de_climate_2021_en.pdf.

Fountain, Henry. 2021. "Climate Change Contributed to Europe's Deadly Floods, Scientists Find." *The New York Times*, 23 August. Accessed September 18, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/climate/germany-floods-climate-change.html>.

Funge-Smith, Simon. 2018. "Review of the State of the World Fishery Resources: Inland Fisheries." *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular*

No. C942 Revision 3. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca0388en/CA0388EN.pdf>.

Gullestad, Peter, Anne Marie Abotnes, Gunnstein Bakke, et. al. 2017. "Towards ecosystem-based fisheries management in Norway – Practical tools for keeping track of relevant issues and prioritising management efforts." *Marine Policy* 77: 104-10. doi: 10.1016/j.marpol.2016.11.032.

Ingendahl, Detlev, and Peter Beeck. 2011. "Critical review on the re-introduction of flagship species." *Science Eaux & Territoires, Public policy and biodiversity (03 bis)*: 146-51. doi: 10.14758/SET-REVUE.2011.3BIS.27.

Laschewski, G., and G. Jendritzky. 2002. "Effects of the thermal environment on human health: an investigation of 30 years of daily mortality data from SW Germany." *Climate Research* 21: 91-103. doi: 10.3354/cr021091.

Lustgarten, Abrahm. 2020. "The Great Climate Migration." *The New York Times Magazine*. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2021. "Fisheries and Aquaculture in Germany." Accessed May 10, 2022. https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/topics/fisheries-and-aquaculture/documents/report_cn_fish_deu.pdf.

Rigaud, Kumari, Kanta, Alex de Sherbinin, et. al. 2018. *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. Accessed March 8, 2022. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29461/WBG_ClimateChange_Final.pdf.

RU-GELD.DE. 2022. "Climate in Germany: characteristics and peculiar features of the climate, climate region/ belt and zones, climate map of Germany, climate change." Accessed June 30, 2022. <https://ru-geld.de/en/country/weather-and-climate/>.



6:BOTANICAL GARDEN

MARTIN ABBOTT, LISSETTE LORENZ AND AMY CHEATLE, NEW YORK

GREENING OUR THUMBS: THE NARRATIVE PRACTICE OF CARING FOR PLANTS AND PEOPLE

Plants and people meet in the garden. Whether this meeting takes place in a bedroom (spider plants on a bedside table), the backyard (black-eyed Susans in a sunny border/vegetable patch), or the bush (where some people gather their food), plants and people care for one another; sometimes in unexpected ways. We understand gardens to be formal and informal interspecific places where life meets to share stories, exchange dreams, and germinate new imaginaries and relations. In this space at this time of climate crisis, we explore multispecies flourishing by framing the garden as a narrative space to both think through intellectually as scholars and to work in with our hands as gardeners. Above all, relations of care are established in every garden between species and they are constantly negotiated and captured in narrative culture. Too little care and the garden succumbs to neglect. Too much care and a fragile root system declines from overwatering. As this experimental project has found, myriad questions and quandaries come to the fore when species meet in the garden. Exploring both the practice of gardening and the practice of zine making, we have collected and curated stories, artworks, and personal and collective experiences of people and plants coming together in a variety of gardens in the USA and Australia. In making and distributing our zine, we have sought to engender generative ways to deepen our collective understanding of people/plant relations and

raise broader questions from our own practice as gardeners/scholars. Growing content from friends, colleagues, and gardeners, iterations of our zine show how people and plants care for one another. We argue the act of gardening can develop multi-species ethics for collective interspecies thriving. We also argue that caring for or tending to plants (or planning a garden) can be a radical and/or political act. As a narrative practice, crafting gardens and zines alike highlight and honor embodied/tacit knowledge, skill, and applied and speculative design. By focusing on multi-species relations, we break down the subject-object binary of understanding who and what we study. We reconsider plants not only as instrumentally useful objects, but also as research partners and collaborators, as teachers of scientific, philosophical, and practical lessons for a more caring or nuanced way of relating to each other across species. Gardening and zine-making also contribute directly to lowering carbon footprints by growing our own food and encouraging carbon negative planting activities.

ARNIKA PESELMANN, WÜRZBURG

STORIES OF LOSS AND HOPE: THE MAKING AND GROWING OF APPLES FROM A MULTISPECIES PERSPECTIVE

Multiple ecological crises - often summed up under the term Anthropocene or alternatively Capitalocene - have increased scholarly attention for multispecies relations beyond natural sciences. Following the animal turn, the vegetal turn is a more recent attempt to overcome the longstanding plant blindness in the humanities and to develop new perspectives on human-plant relationships in different historical, geographical and social contexts covering various modes of interaction reaching from violence to

6: BOTANICAL GARDEN



affection and care beyond species lines. In my DFG funded research project I focus on the relations of humans and apples, one of the most commonly consumed fruits and an everyday food available throughout the year in many countries. Apples, like barely any other fruit or vegetable, raise societal discussions on the loss of varietal diversity due to agro-industrial standardization processes and at the same time they are at the center of numerous conservational initiatives. Based on ethnographic field research in the Alte Land, one of the largest orchard regions in Germany close to Hamburg, I look at apple breeding as well as forms of commercial and extensive / preservational fruit growing from a multispecies perspective. Thereby I examine the entanglements of plants, humans, and other beings – welcome and unwelcome - but also technical devices or pesticides relevant in the making and growing of apples. In my talk I will investigate the stories that are told in and of these particular multispecies worlds. Some are marked by crises narratives such as memories of former and long-gone ecologies including the grief about lost apple varieties, but also tellings about the challenges professional growers and their apple trees face due to the repercussions of political unrest and military attacks, changing consumer preferences, pressure of global food markets and not least due to anthropogenic climate change resulting in extreme weather conditions but also in new multispecies constellations. However, there are also narratives told with hopeful undertones to the future when it comes to conservational programs or the discovery of new apple varieties. In my presentation I will analyze how people working with apples in their different life forms (seeds, trees and fruits) and under very different circumstances understand, conceptualize and narrate plant life and how they interact with vegetal beings. Thereby I also look at attempts of diverse actors to render oneself more sensitive to the stories apple (trees) might tell.

7: COMMUNICATING

MARIA ILHÉU AND MARIANA VALENTE, ÉVORA

HS 1

LEARNING TO NOTICE AND LOVE A MULTISPECIES WORLD

For several years we have dedicated ourselves to find strategies in order to change world perspectives by “noticing” so many ways of life of more than humans and worlding with them. With this aim we have been working with pupils, students, educators, researchers, and others. It began by following the “delicate empiricism” of J. W. Goethe. Through this method we venture to live direct, sensitive and affective experiences in different outdoor places; we treasure the time and the continuity of experiences and assign their meaning, stimulating the use of different languages in raising short stories. Through these multiple stories we can notice and attend the transformations of each one in these processes. The voices of Michel Serres, Anna Tsing, Natasha Myers and Carla Hustak, Vinciane Despret, Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers, among many others, have helped us to weave the narrative that we bring here. In this narrative made together with the short stories mentioned before, perception and sensibility come together with other forms of knowledge; with them we may develop an ethical and affective commitment. A new model of knowledge is ongoing, as Tsing states; its fundamental characteristic is multispecies love.

Our narrative includes fragments of making-world projects; discoveries of “abundance of reality” in the most unexpected places, both in semi-natural and in urban

7: COMMUNICATING



areas in the South of Portugal, during the lasts 7 years. We accentuate modes of attunement among trees, pupils, streams, rivers, students, mosses, educators, birds, researchers, sounds, colours and others, and stress ways for multispecies love which occur during those making-world projects.

ERICA MONDE, EDINBURGH

NARRATION AS EMBODIED PRACTICE. RELATING PLANTS AND ILLNESS IN TIMES OF PLANETARY CRISIS

In times of ecological crisis, what can we learn from narrating the lives of the “problematic”, whether of plants or illness? How do existing narratives of such “unwanted” biological entities inform our perspective of the world in planetary upheaval? How can working with such narratives contribute to a new way of being in the world that can radically reshape our relationships to other species? Drawing on Donna Haraway’s concept of “staying with the trouble”, I use an embodied lens to explore narratives of invasiveness as applied to two biological phenomena: bodies with endometriosis, and the invasive species the Japanese knotweed.

The Japanese knotweed is a plant native to East Asia that is often used locally for food and medicine. As it has spread rapidly to non-native environments globally, it is also known as one of the world’s worst invasive species. Its growth has severely impacted local biodiversity, flood risk, and erosion around the world, and it is considered notoriously difficult to remove. Endometriosis, an inflammatory condition which occurs when tissue that is similar to the lining of the uterus grows in other places in the body and causes pain and other varied symptoms, occurs in 1 in 10 people with uteruses. Those who suffer from it increasingly find themselves engaging with a complex socio-political phenomenon: due to both diagnostic difficulties, as well as patients’ pain not

being taken seriously by clinicians, it takes on average 8 years to diagnose and treat.

This paper, a creative critical essay, draws initially from a case study on the making of a personal short documentary film in 2022 (*There’s Not Much We Can Do*) about the relationship between the invasive Japanese knotweed and endometriosis, two invasive biological phenomena. This paper aims to reflect on what it means to live with, and alongside, these “problematic” embodied realities, and the socio-political and emotional implications of doing so in times of unprecedented environmental crisis. To achieve this, I apply a phenomenological, ecofeminist lens to the question of visually narrating the female body and landscape themselves as “sick” entities, and exploring what it means to move towards envisioning and embracing the subversive self (and “other”) as a means for a way of being in the world that sustains hope and resistance in times of planetary crisis.

In my proposed presentation, I will discuss how “staying with” invasive species and invasive illness can teach us both tools of resilience and humility, with the aim of employing radical empathy to eschew a binary categorisation of “useful” and “useless” biological phenomena. By narrating both endometriosis and the Japanese knotweed as allegories for the other, I aim to conduct a process of visualizing the relationship between such “problems” of crisis (whether personal, socio-political, or ecological), and to propose a method of entering into a perpetual state of embodied relating that fosters a deeper understanding of ourselves, other plant species, and our entwined ecological futures.



DIGITAL

ALLY BISSHOP, BRISBANE

LIKE SHIVERS THROUGH AN IMMENSE BODY: THE INTERSPECIES PROMISE (AND RISK) OF VIBRATIONAL NARRATIVES

This paper will explore the interspecies narratological promise of biotremology or vibrational signalling – increasingly understood as an important communication mechanism among animals, invertebrates, even plants. Particularly, it will look at the example of vibrational signalling in web-building spiders, for whom the web extends and enacts her vibrational senses: transmitting and receiving tremors that travel along its threads ‘like shivers through an immense body’ (Bergson 1991: 208). Examining artistic experiments in establishing human-spider vibrational dialogues by Tomás Saraceno (Saraceno, Bisshop et al. 2021), it will attempt to locate speculative propositions for interspecies storytelling in more-than-human landscapes understood as ecotremological; with an attention to the ethical implications of a foray into vibrational language.

Humans lack specialised vibrational sense organs, and more-than-human vibrosapes are largely undetectable by us without the aid of sensors or translational devices that render them audible, or visible as data. We are nonetheless sensitive to vibration – even if we’ve not yet learned to read tremors with the nuance of a spider. Humans also produce vibrations. We make the substrate-borne vibrations implied in biotremology when, for instance, we drum our fingers on a surface. In turn, we can use devices to transduce our airborne vibrations (sounds) into pulses that might be read by a spider, or other creatures whose attention is cued to the vibroscape. These transduction devices allow us to open up channels of interspecies communication previously unavailable to us. Our anthropogenic landscapes also endlessly produce vibrations – machinic, industrial, automotive – and in

ways that may well mask or interrupt other-than-human biotremological signals, as per our effects upon bioacoustic ecologies.

The promise of vibrational interspecies communication is a rich opportunity to reach across species divides and glean something of storied worlds not premised on a human subject. It is also, perhaps, an exquisite risk. If biotremological signals are normally hidden from us, it may well be that these dialogues are not ours to know; that we should be content to rest in “not knowing” (de la Cadena 2021). On the other hand, if we are wreaking yet more ecological devastation through globally distributed vibrations, then the ‘human’ contribution to a more-than-human vibroscape is our responsibility to understand and address.

I propose a third option, which embeds an affirmative premise. That is, opening up biotremological channels of interspecies communication might shift the anthropocentrism of our more-than-human relations, precisely because we are beginners in this language; we cannot assume the sovereign position to which we are accustomed. In turn, vibrational language effects a kind of sensory smudging between hearing and tactility (Friedner & Helmreich 2012); it writes our sensory-cognitive habits otherwise, drawing us differently into our body. In so doing, it opens us to the speculative potential of developing a resonant sympathy with the nonhuman bodies with whom we are in vibrational conversation.

Following this third path: what kind of vibrational narratives might we imagine, might we compose together? What would they feel-sound like, what kind of stories would they tell?

References

- Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
- Cadena, Marisol de la. “Not Knowing: In the Presence of” In *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis*, edited by Andrea Ballesterio and Brit Ross Winthereik, 246–56.



Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478013211-024>.

Friedner, Michele, and Stefan Helmreich. "Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies." *The Senses and Society* 7, no. 1 (2012).

Saraceno, T., Bisshop, A., Mühlethaler, R. "Arachnid Orchestras: Artistic Research in Vibrational Interspecies Communication." In *Biotremology: Studying Vibrational Behavior*, edited by Peggy

PAULINE SCHUSTER-LÖHLAU, WÜRZBURG

HS 1 SNAKES, SCORPIONS AND LICE: METAPHORS OF LIFE, DEATH AND LIMINALITY IN THE SOUTH INDIAN ORAL NARRATIVE OF MANTESVAMI

The oral narrative Mantesvami relates the life and death of the saint of the same name who is said to have founded a particular branch of the Virashaiva religion prevalent in the "wild", hilly, forest-covered southern part of the Kannada-speaking region. Virashivas are particularly fervent devotees of Shiva, one of the greatest gods of the Hindu pantheon. While I am interested in analyzing how the Virashaiva singers portray the relationship between man and creation in the oral narrative, for the purpose of this study, I will rely on the idea of ecocriticism being "a methodology that re-examines the history of ideologically, aesthetically, and ethically motivated conceptualisations of nature, of the function of its constructions and metaphorisations in literary and other cultural practices, and of the potential effects these discursive, imaginative constructions have on our bodies as well as our natural and cultural environments."¹ Based on this approach, I will look at the relationship between human beings, animals and the supernatural through the lens of the Virashaiva belief system and connected religio-cultural practices, which have deeply influenced

the locals' perception of and interaction with their environment (animals, plants, landscape, bodies of water, mountains, etc.). I am particularly interested in how "wild creatures" such as tigers, snakes, scorpions, ants and lice are associated with the philosophical and ethical ideas pertaining to Virashaiva belief.

For example, how is the creation of the universe and the earth depicted in the oral text? How is cosmic (hierarchical) order created according to the narrative? What metaphors are used to articulate the concept of ahimsa, or non-violence (towards all forms of life), and how does this ideal translate into day-to-day practices? And why is it that certain animals, especially snakes, scorpions and various kinds of insects, are associated with specific liminal phases in a human's life, such as birth, death and the process of becoming a "better person", or rather a better devotee, one being able to transcend worldly concerns and desires? In order to illustrate this point, I will take a closer look at the story of a silversmith, who, being captured in a cave with snakes, ants and scorpions undergoes a kind of metamorphosis, and emerges as a reformed man. To sum up, in the proposed paper I seek to shed light on the way theological and philosophical concepts are formulated and understood with the help of natural motifs² within the context of the oral-performative Mantesvami tradition.

1 Gersdorf, Catrin and Sylvia Mayer (eds.). 2006. *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, p. 10.

2 Cf. Hons, Pavel. 2015. "Resistance through nature: Natural motifs in Tamil Dalit literature." *Pandanus: Nature in Literature, Art, Myth and Ritual* 9(1), 71-88.



8: PROTECTING

HS 1

JES HOOPER, EXETER

CIVET SURVIVAL STORIES: NARRATIVES FROM AN ENDANGERED SPECIES CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAM

Through the lens of the civet, an ancient line of Feliformia, this presentation seeks to look closer at the bio-techno-human-animal relationships shaping stories of survival in the Anthropocene. The careful philosophical telling of extinction processes challenges anthropocentric narratives of the current epoch by bringing the animal Other into focus, illustrating the multi-species worlds being shaped and co-created in response to one another in times of ecological crisis. Through the civet it is possible to explore the ways animals disappear from this world, be it figuratively through their exploitation, the disappearance from human conscience, and literally through their physical disappearance from our shared planet. In this presentation, it is the endangered Owston's civet (*Chrogale owstoni*) that is the main protagonist of disappearance stories. Told through the zoo records of the Owston's civet captive breeding program, this presentation traces the lives of individual animals at the fore of conservation initiatives. Their personal stories tell of the tentative intersection between species preservation and the imposed losses encountered by those being "saved". It is through the lived experiences of individual animals that the complexities of multi-species entangling, and unravelling, are portrayed. This presentation asks (1) how might the Owston's civet captive breeding program offer insight into the challenges faced by those living at the

edge of extinction? (2) How does enrolment into a breeding program impact the lives and deaths of the individual animals in question? And (3) if attention is refocused upon the animal's experience, can this knowledge be applied to slow the process of species disappearance?

SIRAN LIANG, BRAUNSCHWEIG

BEYOND SOWING GRASS - TIBETAN HERDERS' EFFORT TO RESTORE DEGRADING GRASSLAND

To combat grassland degradation, Chinese state has been investing heavily in grass sowing projects. Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in Tibet in 2022, I argue that Tibetan herders' grassland preservation practice in Zoige build upon such grass sowing project but went beyond state's conservational goal which aims to make the grassland green (more vegetation coverage). This community understands that in order to restore the grassland, the grassland needs more than the grass seed. First and foremost, herders need to restore the yak-grassland-human relationships which have been disrupted by the fencing policy and household contract system started a decade ago i.e. yak mobility is restricted, households are separated by the fences. Secondly, with the understanding yaks and sheep are part of the multispecies way of life on the highland, their innovative practice involves yaks treading on the seed to mix soil and seed, producing dung as fertilizer for the grass. Thirdly, both literate and illiterate local herders started to use camera to tell their human-non-human stories. With the aid of social media, the powerful story of the community has contributed significantly to the counter narrative against the prevailing official discourse that yaks and their human are to be blamed for grassland degradation on the Tibetan Plateau.

HS 1

8: PROTECTING



HS 1

UTE HÖRNER AND MATHIAS ANTLFINGER, KÖLN / VANESSA WIJNGAARDEN, JOHANNESBURG

PARROT PEOPLE. A MULTISPECIES STORY OF THE CONVIVIALITY OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS AND PEOPLE

We (Ute and Mathias) have been living with African grey parrots for more than 20 years. When our companion – Karl died at about the age of 60, we realised how little we knew about his past (he came from an animal shelter). The only thing we could assume with great certainty was that he had been born in the wild before he was captured and sold. As we could not find out much about him as a person, we became interested in the history of African grey parrots in Europe, which is closely linked to the history of slavery. Today, African grey parrots are endangered due to loss of habitat, especially because they lack large nesting trees. However, their biggest threat is the capture of wild birds for the illegal pet trade. In collaboration with social anthropologist Vanessa Wijngaarden we work on Parrot People, a multispecies ethnography about the entangled histories, politics and cultures of humans and grey parrots, which speaks to the dynamics of African-European mindsets and ecologies. Our common project engages wild and captive parrots as active participants, radically taking their perspective. This is achieved by cooperating with animal communicators who use intuitive interspecies communication (IIC) to translate multisensual information from wild and captive parrots into human language. Whether dead (as specimen) or alive (e.g. in the pet trade), parrots (as other non-human beings) have often been objectified. Through a crosspollination of communicative and artistic engagements we want to show them as individuals and persons, who have dynamic relationships with each other, with trees, with humans and with materials and localities. We will use words, images, sounds and objects to tell the historical and contemporary story of our co-becoming.

ELINE D. TABAK, BRISTOL

STORYING EXTINCTION IN MULTISPECIES WORLDS: MONARCHS AND MILKWEED

In lieu of real life and possibly life-changing encounters with species on the edge of extinction, storytelling allows people to encounter these animals (and more) from a distance and invites us to care about other-than-human life. But what exactly do we encounter? Many contemporary narratives of species decline are influenced by the scientific notion of classification and taxonomic bias, leaving readers with a relatively narrow story and an unspoken yet ever-present hierarchy of other-than-human life. For example, charismatic megafauna such as elephants, tigers and pandas are often foregrounded when it comes to extinction stories. Living and traversing on similar scales to humans, they are easier to anthropomorphise and encounter at the edge of extinction. Smaller and less visible species, ranging from insects to tiny ocean dwellers to plants, ask for new and different ways to be perceived, written, and connect with. In this paper, I will consider how multispecies relations are storied in extinction narratives by having a closer look at some smaller yet widely known species: the iconic monarch butterfly and the genus with which it co-evolved, milkweed. The monarch is not only known across for the globe for its multi-generational migratory journey, it has long since been a symbol of migration, and life and death. This cultural history has become an important part of the butterfly's appeal, and the stories that people tell about the monarch. However, at the risk of overciting Haraway, 'it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with'. As I will show, with growing awareness of their ecological vulnerability, the monarch is slowly allowed to be its own animal instead of a cultural signifier. I will have a look at the different ways contemporary storytelling approaches the monarch and milkweed. Barbara King-

HS 1

8: PROTECTING



solver’s Flight Behaviour and Wu Ming-yi’s ‘Death is Tiger Butterfly’ 《死亡是一隻樺斑蝶》. The two authors use vastly different (literary) techniques to tell the story of the monarch butterfly, milkweed, and the reality of insect decline in an age of overall biodiversity loss. Both stories show something important about the different possibilities and limitations of the literary form in perceiving and writing multispecies relations, especially when considering a species (the monarch) so vastly different than our own. To conclude, I will briefly reflect on the importance of including insects—and the different species that constitute their lives—in storying extinction in multispecies worlds.



Multispecies landscape on the island of magic: the hill is for sale on the side of the Sangradouro River. Colored pencils, Fernanda Haskell (2022)

9: SPECULATING

FERNANDA HASKEL, SÃO PAULO

NARRATING MULTISPECIES ASSEMBLAGES IN THE POLYPHONY NATURE-CULTURE: STORIES OF BRAZIL

This is a multispecies storytelling with a bromeliad, who is participating in a community for planning the future of the city and county co-produce public politics in a small island in the south of Brazil.

Once upon a time, in a multispecies world not too far from our own, the small island off the coast of Brazil was home to a diverse community of plants and animals that lived together in harmony. An island, in the Atlantic Forest, known as ‘the island of magic’, due to its charms, natural beauties and the witches who lived here a long time ago.

Among them was a bromeliad named Branca Aechmea, who was known for his vibrant green leaves and ability to thrive in even the most challenging conditions. With 2,500 species, 70% are endemic, existing only in Brazil, Bromeliads are biodiversity aggregators.

Branca was an unusual bromeliad, with a deep understanding of the world around her and a desire to make a difference. She had always been fascinated by the complex political systems of the human world, and she longed to be a part of the decision-making process that shaped the future of his home. In the summer of 2022, Branca enchanted the body of a woman artist and researcher with her beauty. The woman called Fêe started to help to build a bridge to dialogue between humans and non-humans in city planning. Branca wanted to guarantee the living conditions for multispecies.

Branca lives between breaks in the rocks on the trail in a nature protection area, surrounded by a diverse group of creatures. There were brightly colored butterflies and hummingbirds, also other birds such as galhas azuis, arapuãs, colorful toucans, and a variety of insects and reptiles. It’s on the side of the river named Sangradouro, who is home to the last remnant of mangroves on the east side of the island. The mangrove is the nursery of marine life. Whales and dolphins arrive every September in the beaches of Matadeiro and Armação, where Sangradouro flows into. Turtles also cohabited the



multispecies landscape. Each species had its own unique role to play in the ecosystem, and they all worked together to maintain balance in the forest.

One day, the animals and plants of the rainforest and of restinga received some disturbing news. A group of humans had arrived in the area with plans to clear the land and build a new development. The river would be silted up, the beach widened and the mouth of the river Sangradouro would become a private marina. The hill already had a “for sale” sign. The humans believed that the development would bring new jobs and opportunities to the island, increasing the tourism industry but Branca and the other plants and animals knew that it would destroy their home and disrupt the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Branca decided to take action and do everything he could to stop the development. She knew that he couldn’t do it alone, so she reached out to the other plants and animals and asked for their help. Determined to save their home, the animals and plants held a meeting to discuss a plan of action. They knew that they needed to convince the humans to change their plans and find a way to preserve the forest. Branca, who was respected by all the members of the community, was asked to lead the meeting. She uses her wisdom and experience to guide the discussion and aggregate the biodiversity in a common. The whales, in a place of honor, were the first to speak.

Branca listened carefully as each member of the community spoke about their concerns and ideas for how to protect the restinga of the Atlantic forest. A multispecies assemblage took place, the polyphony was heard throughout the island. The gralhas azuis suggested sending a delegation to speak with the humans and try to persuade them to change their plans. The butterflies suggested creating a petition and gathering signatures from all the plants and animals on the island. Dolphins offered to use their joy and delight to enchant the humans and

remind them of the loss of biodiversity and climate emergency.

After much discussion, the community reached a consensus on a plan. They would gather signatures for a petition and send a delegation of animals and plants to speak with the humans and try to persuade them to change their plans. They were determined to use all their skills and resources to create obstacles that would slow down the humans’ progress and disrupt the development as much as possible.

The petition drive was a huge success, with almost every plant and animal on the island signing their support. The delegation, led by Branca, set off early the next morning to meet with the humans. After a long and difficult journey, they arrived at the development site and began to speak with the humans about the importance of preserving the rainforest and seaforest for all the lives who lived there.

To the surprise of the animals and plants, the humans listened carefully and agreed to abandon their plans for the development. They recognized the value of the restinga of the Atlantic forest, one of the most endangered biomes and with only 12% of its original territory, and the vital role it played in the local ecosystem. In addition, they pledged that all the money they used in the development would be destined to clean up the river and spared no effort to contribute with the conditions to restore the loss of biodiversity.

Thanks to the efforts of Branca and the rest of the community, the rainforest was saved and the balance of the ecosystem was progressing. Humans recognize forest beings as living beings and nature ceases to be a resource. From that day on, the humans and the animals and plants lived in harmony, working together to create regenerative futures, plant rainforest and take care of its precious lives.



SIOBHAN LEDDY, BERLIN

PLAYING THE PLANT: SPECULATIVE FABULATIONS IN MORE-THAN-HUMAN SENSORIA

As anthropogenic climate change and species collapse pressure us to reimagine what it means to be human, does it still make sense to imagine sensing as we do? Today, it is more urgent than ever to cultivate attentiveness and responsiveness to our more-than-human relationalities — yet these can be remarkably easy to miss. This proposed paper asks how artistic practices function as speculative fabulations, unfolding what Anna Tsing calls “the arts of noticing”¹ — a phenomenological and epistemological endeavour to attune sensory attention.

Might works of art, understood not as objects but rather as constructed intensities of aesthetic entanglement, offer a methodology for speculative fabulation, orienting the senses towards more-than-human relationality? Artworks offer an experimental laboratory for such speculation, directing sensory attention and intensifying aesthetic sensations. Its constructedness makes it a fertile locus for testing out speculative, more-than-human sensoria.

The norms of any ‘historical sensorium’ (Lauren Berlant) are highly contingent, iteratively performed and stabilised only through the ongoing maintenance of these norms over time. Such norms might include, for instance, an Aristotelian five-sense sensorium, but also those that materialise a boundary between sensing (human) subjects and less or non-sensate others. Building on Judith Butler’s groundbreaking work on gender and drag, might more-than-human performative role play denaturalise inherited and iterative norms that demarcate the human sensing subject away from all others? In this proposed paper, I will examine artistic approaches that attempt to SF (Donna Haraway) through and with the body to denaturalise the anthropocentric sensorium and speculate upon more-than-

human sensoria. I look at the performative role-play practices of Natasha Myers and Ayelen Liberona (who are ‘becoming-vegetal’ through plant role play), Mirium Simun (who engages with cephalopods and rare flowers) and Susan Ploetz (with extra-terrestrial life and soft robotics) to ask how role play, as an embodied, collective and open-ended narrative practice, might useful in pointing to the limits of, or even disturbing altogether, the norms of the anthropocentric sensorium

1) Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 37.

REGINA F. BENDIX, GÖTTINGEN

TRACING, EXPRESSING, AND ASSERTING MULTIVOCALITY IN THE MULTISPECIES WORLD: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Taking a multispecies perspective as a point of departure offers an opportunity to assess and enlarge what all constitutes narrating and story. Building on the conference presentations, a preliminary path will be charted for conceptualizing this task. How can extant narrative documentation and research be enriched through the multispecies lens? How does our view of narrating change when we bring together the skills of humanities and natural science disciplines? What happens when the media and means of narration are not necessarily confined to words, voice, text and image? And how does the call to narrate the multispecies world further the need to overcome the Anthropocene?

HS 1

9: SPECULATING



IMPRINT

PROGRAMME VERSION 5.4

LEHRSTUHL FÜR EUROPÄISCHE ETHNOLOGIE/
EMPIRISCHE KULTURWISSENSCHAFT
UNIVERSITÄT WÜRZBURG
AM HUBLAND
97074 WÜRZBURG

EUROPAEISCHE.ETHNOLOGIE@UNI-WUERZBURG.DE
[HTTPS://WWW.PHIL.UNI-WUERZBURG.DE/EEVK](https://www.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/eevk)

CONFERENCE TEAM:
PROF. DR. MICHAELA FENSKE, PEARL-SUE
CARPER M.A., KRISTER STEFFENS M.A.,
VICTORIA PORCU B.A.,
TYPESETTING, LAYOUT, ILLUSTRATION:
LUISE STARK M.A.

COPYRIGHT © 2023 BY LEHRSTUHL FÜR EU-
ROPÄISCHE ETHNOLOGIE/EMPIRISCHE KUL-
TURWISSENSCHAFT, UNIVERSITÄT WÜRZBURG

CONFERENCE WEBSITE:

