

**Interspecies Friendships and Non-Human
Companionships**

**2024 Conference of the Polish Association for the
Study of English**

SWPS University, Warsaw

27 – 30 June 2024

Keynotes

Courtesy Request Markers in the History of English. The Long Diachrony.

Andreas H. Jucker (University of Zurich)

Today's courtesy request marker please is a relatively recent innovation in the history of English. It goes back to the end of the nineteenth century when it replaced its predecessor pray. But the history is more complex with a range of phrases with a similar function. Previous research has generally focused on the grammaticalization processes involved in the development from "I pray you" to pray and from "if it pleases you" or "be pleased to" to please (e.g. Akimoto 2000; Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Faya Cerqueiro 2007). In this presentation, I focus on the larger picture by tracing the long diachrony of courtesy request markers in the history of English based on a range of diachronic corpora (including the Helsinki Corpus and ARCHER). The development starts in Late Middle and Early Modern English with explicit performative speech acts, such as "I pray you", "I beg you" and "I beseech you". In Late Modern English, pray grammaticalized while some of the other performative speech act formulae continued to be used until they were replaced by phrases with please, which eventually grammaticalized into today's parenthetical please itself. I will show how these developments reflect changes in the politeness culture of English. While the earlier forms manifest a form of supplication politeness in which speakers frame themselves as supplicants begging a favour from an addressee, current forms reflect a more egalitarian politeness system in which speakers disguise their requests as non-imposing suggestions and hints.

Learning English in the Age of AI: Will Dictionaries Become Obsolete?

Robert Lew (Adam Mickiewicz University)

For decades, learners of English have relied on dictionaries as lexical reference tools in the language-learning process. Millions of learners of English worldwide have relied on monolingual English learners' dictionaries, including the renowned *Big Five* titles (*OALD*, *LDOCE*, *COBUILD*, *CALD*, *MED*), alongside bilingual dictionaries and adapted bilingualized versions of the Big Five, especially popular in Asia. In December 2022, ChatGPT was made available to the general public. Technically a chatbot built around a family of *Generative Pre-trained Transformers*, a flavour of Large Language Models, ChatGPT can produce natural-sounding English prose, as well as hold human-like conversation. A number of early studies explored the possibility of engaging this technology to produce dictionary entries, with encouraging results. This raises the question: do English learners still need dictionaries as intermediaries, or could they interact directly with a chatbot for tasks traditionally done with dictionaries? I will look at the emerging evidence of how good generative transformers are at such tasks, compared to traditional dictionaries.

All Critters Great and Small. On Terrapolis and Crittership

Tadeusz Rachwał (SWPS University)

In this lecture I will read Donna Haraway's re- de- categorization of traditionally humanist vision of the world in the Anthropocene as a, however radical, proposal opening a possibility of exiting the Anthropocene without our self-destruction. The passage from the Anthropocene to what she calls the Chthulucene demands some radical transformation of, among others, creatures to critters and of the public space of polis to Terrapolis – a space of multispecies connections and compositions which “world the world”. Haraway's original fabulation of the world, however original, is also a literary endeavour in which neologisms are offered not as renditions of something absolutely new, but which, like Terrapolis, allude to humanist ideals (here to ideal urban spaces like Platopolis), simultaneously earthing them within the materiality of the world. The question which I will try to answer (relating Haraway's writings to Michele Serres's idea of natural contract and Rousseau's idea of citizenship) is that of crittership in Terrapolis, a seemingly simple question of the where and who/what/when will inhabit, or world, the Chthulucene.

Abstracts

Time Lapse Novel - Vegetal Extravaganza in *North Woods* and *The Overstory*

Patrycja Austin (University of Rzeszów)

When the French film-maker Jean Epstein created his early time lapse videos of plants in 1935, he was astounded by what they revealed. Cinema provided a surprising way to synchronize the radically different time experiences of humans and plants, and to disclose the by then invisible movement, expressiveness, and intentionality of the vegetal other. It allowed the viewers to clamber outside their limited frame of reference and to better understand alien temporalities.

I propose that *The Overstory* by Richard Powers and *North Woods* by Daniel Mason can be read as time lapse narratives that achieve a similar purpose. In his seminal *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur writes that “time becomes **human** time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative”. (1:3) These two novels experiment with narrative time by means of introducing a range of **vegetal** polytemporalities, they both focus particular trees across centuries, with human life flashing in the background. In *The Overstory* there is a photo album with about a thousand photographs of a chestnut planted in Iowa in the late 19th century. When looked at separately, these are static images presenting an immobile plant. And yet, when flipped through, the tree comes to life. Interestingly, the human stories disappear into the background in a reversal of a typical story where it is nature that disappears behind human stories. In *North Woods*, an apple tree functions as an object-through-time, from a seed sprouting from a dead man’s body, it becomes a stable point of reference while human protagonists flip in the background across centuries.

By imaginatively bridging the gap between incommensurable worlds, these time-lapse narratives create a fecund ground for inter-species kinship.

Patrycja Austin is Assistant Professor at University of Rzeszów, where she teaches British and American literature. She received her PhD from Warsaw University for her work on postcolonial writers from India. In her current research she examines the ways botany features in contemporary American novel.

Against Solipsism: the Autistic Ecology of David Foster Wallace in *Infinite Jest*

Łukasz Barciński (University of Rzeszów)

For David Foster Wallace, all bodies are physically and metaphysically disabled and simultaneously disabling. Wallace's engagement with physical and mental disability spans his career and typifies his most iconic characters. It is in *Infinite Jest* that his interest in anomalous embodiment features most centrally, or the imagery of bodies is rendered more grotesquely than anywhere else. Mario Incandenza and Gertraud Marathe are two of his most explicit examples of extreme physical disability: these characters demonstrate a persistent concern with the lived experience of disability and living with the disability of others. Giving expression to the experiential reality of disability, Gertraud and Mario present other characters with opportunities for meaningful interpersonal connection otherwise unavailable to them, overcoming solipsism, which the novel diagnoses as our culture's central problem.

Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace delves into the theme of mental health and explores characters dealing with various psychological challenges. His portrayal of mental disability is multifaceted, reflecting the complex nature of these issues and their impact on individuals and society, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of the characters' mental landscapes. The presentation will argue that the experience of mental and physical disability is performatively expressed in the textual tissue of *Infinite Jest* by creating an autistically ecological world in the form of the so called 'encyclopaedic novel'. The analysis will also take into consideration the aspects of the Polish translation entitled "Niewyczerpany żart" (2022, W.A.B.) by Jolanta Kozak.

Łukasz Barciński, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the Section of Translation Studies (Department of English Studies) at the University of Rzeszów. He is a translator of literary and specialist texts. The scope of his research includes text typology from the functionalist perspective, postmodern and experimental literature, poststructuralism, contemporary translatology, trauma studies, and performance studies. His publications include *A Study of Postmodern Literature in Translation as Illustrated through the Selected Works of Thomas Pynchon*; *National Identity in Literary Translation* (ed.); and "Birds of a Feather? The Painted Bird in Polish Translation".

Archiving Among the Species. How Memory is Produced and Stored.

Katarzyna Bojarska (SWPS University)

In her presentation Katarzyna Bojarska offers an analysis of artistic projects by Polish female artists, Agata Siniarska and Karolina Grzywnowicz, that go deep into the archives of both human and nonhuman histories. They adopt feminist and posthumanist environmental perspective in addressing both the historical traumas and the present catastrophes, while creatively questioning the distinction between natural and human history. Racist violence, white supremacy, colonialism, economic exploitation, and slavery do not belong exclusively to the archives of human history but are also storied by the 'natural archives.' These archives demand specific approaches and empathetic forms of investigation. Bojarska's analysis is inspired by the works of Karen Barad, Judith Butler, Catherine Malabou, and Elisabeth Povinelli, and by discussions of memory's numerous interdependencies.

Katarzyna Bojarska is Assistant Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies at SWPS University in Warsaw and editor of the academic journal *View: Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*. She has received numerous grants and awards, including Fulbright, Horizon 2020, and the National Centre for Science, Poland. Her research interests include cultural memory, gender and memory, trauma, and visual culture studies, as well as contemporary arts. She is the author of *Wydarzenia po Wydarzeniu. Białoszewski – Richter – Spiegelman*, as well as editor of *Ernst van Alphen's Krytyka jako interwencja: sztuka, pamięć, afekt* and *Knowledge in the Shadow of Catastrophe* (. She has translated Achille Mbembe, Michael Rothberg, Susan Buck-Morss, Cathy Caruth, Marianne Hirsch, Lauren Berlant, and other thinkers.

The Racialized Whiteness of Milk and More-than-Human Nurture in *Titus Andronicus*

Katarzyna Burzyńska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

In *Titus Andronicus* Aaron, attempting to save his infant son, presents a fantasy of a shared human animal nurturance (*Titus*, 4.2.177-182). He conjures up an image of a she-goat in place of a human female nurse. The goat nursing a human child replicates various mythological precedents, which play into the early modern masculine myth of self-sufficient nurture independent of a threatening impact of human mothers. These narratives fashion superhuman masculinity fostered through animal-exclusive nurture. However, stories of animals nursing humans in early modern midwifery books often signal a threat of contamination; a terrifying blurring of lines between humans and animals. As I argue, Aaron's nurturance fantasy is imbued with various, often conflicting, meanings that spill into our modern ways of interpreting the "whiteness" of milk. Since, as a result of miscegenation, Aaron's son is already implicated in the blurring of human/nonhuman lines, I argue that the mammalian lactation fluid engenders another level of the racialized politics of more-than-human milk. The aim of my paper is twofold. First of all, in a presentist stance I wish to bring maternal mammals such as the goat in *Titus* to the centre of my discussion in order to reflect on modern mammalian mothers. Secondly, I investigate the significance of mammalian milk for the early modern culture. By looking at the racialized milk and human-animal nurturance in early modern culture I hope to underline the intersecting natures of misogyny, racism and speciesism as well as their pervasive continuance into modernity.

Katarzyna Burzyńska, D.Litt., is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She teaches translation, culture studies, and early modern English drama. Her research interests include (eco)feminism and vegan studies, pregnant embodiment, and maternity and motherhood in early modern drama. In 2016, she published *The Early Modern (Re)discovery of 'Overhuman' Potential*. Her monograph titled *Pregnant Bodies from Shakespeare to Ford* has recently been published in the Routledge Studies in Literature and Health Humanities series. She has also published on the trans*formative nature of the pregnancy experience and its intersection with the early modern conceptualizations of subjectivity, race and gender.

Alterhumans as Otherkin in J. R. R. Tolkien's and U. K. Le Guin's Fiction

Anna Cholewa-Purgał (Jan Długosz University)

The paper attempts to explore the intrinsic interconnectedness between humans and animals, as well as the notion of otherkin with regard to the dual nature of alterhumans, viewed here as human-cum-animal beings, featured, for instance, in fantasy fiction. The paper addresses the nature of alterhumans from the perspective of hominization and transindividuation of Bernard Stiegler's philosophy, as well as of some Jungian elements. The three alterhumans discussed in the paper are skin changers: Beorn, a man-cum-bear from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, and two women-cum-dragonesses: Therru\Tehanu from U. K. Le Guin's two Earthsea novels: *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind*, and Dragonfly\Irian from Le Guin's story 'Dragonfly'.

Anna Cholewa-Purgał has authored the monograph *Therapy Through Faërie. Psychotherapeutic Properties of Fantasy Literature by the Inklings and by U. K. Le Guin*. Her research interests include mythopoeia, metaphysics and therapy in fantasy fiction, as well as logotherapy and other polemics against nihilistic thought.

Blurring Boundaries: Wyndham Lewis's Hybrids, Puppets, and Wild Bodies

Izabela Curyłło-Klag (Jagiellonian University)

The paper delves into Wyndham Lewis's literary fictions and visual artworks, revealing a thematic emphasis on the interconnectedness of all life forms. Through his portrayal of characters and scenarios where the boundary between human and animal blurs or is intentionally questioned, Lewis invites contemplation on the fluidity of identity and the shared essence of existence. Drawing inspiration from Bergsonian philosophy, Lewis introduces the concept of "the wild body," suggesting a common essence or instinctual vitality that transcends conventional species distinctions. Additionally, Lewis's oeuvre challenges not only the divide between human and animal but also blurs the boundary between machine and organic life, reflecting broader modernist concerns about the transformative impacts of industrialization and modernity on the human condition. Nature is often depicted by Lewis as hostile, akin to a world dominated by malignant machines. Confronted with Lewis's creations, we are left pondering, like the protagonist of the story "The French Poodle," whether "the savagery we arrive at [is] better than the savagery we come from." In the worlds conjured by Lewis, life emerges as a violent process where human beings, whether animal-like or automata-like, tend towards monstrosity, sadism, and excess.

Izabela Curyłło-Klag, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the Department of Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture, Institute of English Studies, at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her research interests include the study of modernism along cross-cultural and international lines. She has published a monograph on representations of violence in early modernist fiction (Conrad, Wyndham Lewis, and D.H. Lawrence), as well as numerous articles on avant-garde, modern and contemporary literature and art. She has also co-edited an anthology of immigrant memoirs, and four volumes of critical essays: on literary representations of the past, on dialogic exchanges between literature and the visual arts, on incarnations of material textuality, and, most recently, on cultural representations of housing across media.

Making Friends with Data: Autobiographical Projects on the Fringes of the Quantified Self Movement

Wojciech Drąg (University of Wrocław)

The notion of “quantified self” (QS) was introduced in 2007 by two editors of the *Wired* magazine, Gary Wolf and Kevin Kelly, as an umbrella term for various self-monitoring practices enabled by self-tracking wearables technologies, such as bracelets, smartwatches, sensors or fitness trackers. The main motivation behind self-tracking is to gain “self-knowledge through numbers”—a phrase that has served as the QS movement’s catchphrase since its inception. Melanie Swan maintains that “self-trackers have an increasingly intimate relationship with data,” whereas Minna Ruckenstein notes that “once visualized, the data generates new kinds of affective ties between people and their measured actions and reactions.”

In this paper, I wish to examine several twenty-first-century examples of autobiographical projects whose aim is to give an account of one’s experience through numbers and accumulated data: Lucy Kimbell’s *LIX Index* (2002-03), Nicholas Fenton’s *The Feltron Annual Report* (2005-2014), Alan Bigelow’s electronic “My Life in Three Parts” (2013) and Steve Giasson’s radically cryptic *Autoportrait* (2014). My analysis will focus on the ways in which data can assume the capacity to act as an important component of its gatherer’s identity and on their emotional investment in one’s own data.

Wojciech Drąg is Associate Professor in the Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław. He is the author of *Collage in Twenty-First-Century Literature in English: Art of Crisis* (2020) and *Revisiting Loss: Memory, Trauma and Nostalgia in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (2014), and co-editor of three edited volumes, including *The Poetics of Fragmentation in Contemporary British and American Fiction* (2019) and *Critical Perspectives on Max Porter* (2024). Mr Drąg has been awarded academic fellowships by the Kosciuszko Foundation (University of Utah, 2018), the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (Dartmouth College, 2021) and the French government (École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, 2023). His academic interests focus on contemporary British and American fiction and life writing and on formal experimentation in literature.

Caliban's Friendships and Companionships

Jacek Fabiszak (Adam Mickiewicz University)

Caliban is one of the most intriguing Shakespearean characters, somewhat mysteriously dubbed “a salvage and deformed slave”. Vaughan and Vaughan decode this heading (1999: 141-142) and amending it to “a savage and deformed slave” and explaining particular elements as well as authoritatively ascertaining Caliban’s humanity: “though he is ... *deformed*, he is nevertheless human” (141; also 33). At the same time, Caliban’s humanity is repeatedly questioned in the play, which makes his nature and condition liminal and dual: Caliban is called different names and none of them describes him as a human being. Whoever meets Caliban is astonished; indeed, shocked by his looks and smell. The fact that he is constantly insulted and looked down upon, does not prevent him from longing for companionship and friendship; instead, he is offered some ersatz, and finally left alone on the island. Except, Shakespeare does not continue the story and we never see Prospero and Alonso and their family/followers actually leave the island.

The aim of the paper will be to investigate how Caliban’s identity is defined through the companionships he finds himself in: from Prospero’s and Miranda’s (and Ariel’s), to Trinculo’s and Stephano’s, to Prospero’s mysterious acknowledgement of Caliban at the end of the play, which, hopefully, will help further examine the liminality of the humanness and humanoid nature of the figures Caliban deals with.

Jacek Fabiszak is Head of the Department of Studies in Culture at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University. He teaches theatre history, and drama in English, and Shakespeare at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. He has published on English Renaissance theatre and drama and their stage, televisual and filmic transpositions (Polish Televised Shakespeares). He has also written on Christopher Marlowe, both on his plays (focusing on imagery) and their screen versions (especially *Edward II*), and guest co-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*.

The Summer I Befriended a 400 Pound Steer: An Ethnographic Reflection on the Limits of Interspecies Friendships

Craig Frayne (Independent)

This presentation draws from the author's childhood recollections to discuss interspecies borders imposed by cultural and socio-economic context. The author reflects on childhood memories growing up on a farm in Ontario, Canada, and a summer-long friendship with a steer (steers are male cattle raised for beef). The presentation explores why, even 30 years later, this memory continues to leave such a lasting impact on the author's consciousness and sense of coming of age. Consideration is given to a discursive process whereby the animal was brought into a companionship role in the spring season and then sent to the mechanized, industrial meat industry in the fall. The story invokes juxtapositions of the natural/techno-industrial and complexities of redefining interspecies relationships in agrarian worlds (Galvin, 2018) given historical and socio-ecological contexts. This memory, it is argued, raises challenging questions related to the central theme of the paper: cultural and material limits or borders placed between species. To place the discussion in macro context and open broader discussions, the recollection is followed by a brief historical/colonial analysis of domestic animal agriculture in North America (Ficek, 2019; Krasna, 2022), the modern mechanized animal industry, and associated interspecies psychic wounds that linger in the collective consciousness. Through rhetorical style and a layered account (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), the discussion is placed in literary and scholarly context, with themes from agrarian Romanticism (Indriyanto & Angelianawati, 2023) as well as scholarship in political ecology and environmental philosophy. By combining personal memoir with broader questions, this paper offers a novel and thought provoking perspective on interspecies friendships.

Craig Frayne is an independent writer and researcher. He completed a doctoral dissertation entitled *Language Games and Nature* at TU Bergakademie Freiberg and has published on topics including corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and environmental philosophy. His work and writing can be found online at palabra.ca.

Human and Posthuman Representation: Margaret Atwood's Posthuman Species in the *MaddAddam* Trilogy.

Antonia Iliadou (Aristotle University Thessaloniki)

This paper focuses on Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy and the way Atwood depicts the posthuman species she invents in her *MaddAddam* trilogy. It also concentrates on the representation of the relationship between the human characters and the posthumans. The goal of this critical investigation is to clarify whether Atwood promotes the symbiosis of the human and the posthuman or whether she sees no future for *Homo sapiens*. In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Margaret Atwood dares to imagine not only a different version of society, but also a new version of humanity itself. Her post-apocalyptic narrative takes into account recent scientific and technological practices and depicts a future populated with hybrid animals and a posthuman species which originates from a laboratory. In her representation of the Crakers, Atwood is closer to the posthumanist idea of the self as it is articulated by Braidotti as "a nomadic, relational self that functions in a nature-culture continuum and is technologically mediated" ("Posthuman Critical Theory"). In her trilogy, the author, through the representation of the posthuman Crakers, comments upon their design and examines the kind of relationship that is forged between them and the human survivors. In her post-apocalyptic narrative, Atwood brings the human species to near extinction in order to envision a future determined by the interbreeding between the human and the posthuman but stops short from telling us what such kind of future will be like.

Antonia Iliadou received her Ph.D from the School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in 2023, after successfully completing her dissertation, *Apocalypse, Technoscience, and Survival in Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam Trilogy and Hugh Howey's Silo Trilogy*. She has presented her research at international conferences, while publishing articles and chapters on topics pertaining to American literature and culture. Her research interests include apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, and contemporary American literature and culture.

The Role of Animals in English Literature of the Horror and Crime Fiction Genres

Irena Jerzemowska (WSB Merito University, Gdańsk)

It is well known that animals have accompanied humans since the beginning of the world and are an indispensable part of the nature that surrounds them, which is why they are quite often depicted in literature in the context of symbols (showing human traits) and metaphors up to full-fledged protagonists contributing to a specific plot.

This study explores the integral role of animals in English crime and thriller literature, aiming to identify their narrative functions in plot construction, character development, and atmosphere creation. Employing an interdisciplinary approach involving literary history, theory, psychology, and cultural anthropology, the analysis spans both classic and contemporary works in the genre. Notable examples include E.A. Poe's 'The Black Cat,' T. Harris's 'The Silence of The Lambs,' Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Hounds of Baskervilles,' H.G. Wells's 'The Island of Dr. Moreau,' H.P. Lovecraft's 'The Call of Cthulhu,' and William Golding's 'The Lord of the Flies.' The study also examines verbal manipulation techniques used to evoke tension and emotions in readers.

Findings reveal diverse roles for animals, including contributing to the mystery atmosphere, symbolizing human traits, acting as crime victims or witnesses, and serving as tools for perpetrators or masterminds. Additionally, animals increasingly feature as main characters, playing roles as detectives, helpers, and embodiments of entities. The study underscores the multifaceted nature of animals in crime literature, emphasizing their metaphorical reflections of human characteristics, contribution to mystery and dread, and use as tools for emotional manipulation.

Irena Jerzemowska is a junior lecturer at the WSB Merito University in Gdansk since September 2023, where she teaches English at the long-cycle masters, complementary masters and bachelor's level. In July 2023, she received her master's degree at the University of Gdansk in English philology, focusing on syntactic analysis of artificial languages. In July 2023, she participated as a speaker at the 3rd Young Science Conference at the University of Gdansk. She has been a member of PASE since November 2023. Her interests include medical translation in English, linguistics, and literature.

More-than-Human Tales of Extinction in Contemporary British Plays

Aleksandra Kamińska (Jagiellonian University)

Death-centred narratives are so prominent in the Anthropocene that they have prompted scholars to offer the label 'Necrocene' to describe the current age (McBrien 2016). For McBrien, the Necrocene epitomises the 'fundamental biogeological moment of our era' driven by the destructive forces of world capitalism, which he describes as *becoming extinction* (2016: 116). *Becoming extinction* happens across species: 'it is the extermination of peoples, either through labour or deliberate murder; it is the extinction of the earth in the depletion fossil fuels, rare earth minerals, even the chemical element helium; it is ocean acidification and eutrophication, deforestation and desertification, melting ice sheets and rising sea levels [...]' (McBrien 2016: 116–117).

As Ursula K. Heise (2016: 5) argues, extinction stories 'become part of the stories that human communities tell about themselves: stories about their origins, their development, their identity, and their future horizons.' As a result, the view of species in these narratives becomes a potent tool for framing the perception of interspecies relationships. In the proposed paper, it is argued that contemporary narratives of extinction dramatize these relations and interdependencies in several different ways – often juxtaposing humans with other-than-humans in the accounts of human-driven mass extinction event (see Elizabeth Kolbert's Pulitzer-winning *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, 2014), or using the elegiac mode (see e.g. Vinciane Despret's elegy for the passenger pigeon, *It Is and Entire World That Has Disappeared*, 2017 or Margaret Atwood's poem *Elegy for the Giant Tortoises*, 1968). Alternately, *becoming extinction* is explored as a shared predicament where the boundary between the human and other-than-human becomes permeable through the shared state of precariousness. The proposed paper will trace these different modes in a selection of contemporary British plays: from Caryl Churchill's canonical *Far Away* (2000) to the more recent surge in extinction-themed dramas (such as *Extinct* by April De Angelis, Miranda Rose Hall's *A Play for the Living in the Time of Extinction* or Chris Bush's *[Not] the End of the World*).

Aleksandra Kamińska is Assistant Lecturer in the Institute of English Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her academic interests include contemporary British drama, ecocriticism and translation theory.

Interspecies relationships in *La mirada de Humilda* by Alonso Sánchez Baute

Anna Maria Karczewska (University of Białystok)

Alonso Sánchez Baute's *La mirada de Humilda (Humilda's Gaze)* (2022) is a book about love between the author and his dog, Humilda, a West Highland White Terrier, in which the author describes the story of a friendship of two beings who observe, support and love each other, and who are made to say goodbye one day. The paper's aim is to analyze how, in a story of co-habitation and cross-species sociality, a human and a dog maintain their relationship, how they communicate, and how they reach a high degree of understanding and intimacy. To explore the abovementioned themes, the impact of the companion species on a human being will be analyzed, and also their communication and the process of grieving after the dog's death. Sánchez Baute's book serves here as a lens for understanding how a narrative form presents "becoming with" a companion species and identifies post-human practices in a multi-species household.

Anna Maria Karczewska is a graduate in English and Spanish Philology. She is Assistant Professor at the University of Białystok, where she teaches in the Department of Comparative Literature. She holds a Ph.D. in cultural studies from SWPS University, Warsaw. She has published articles related to her current research interests, which revolve around Latin American culture and Latin American literature.

Archives as Non-human Companions. Queer Artistic Cases.

Ewa Majewska (SWPS University)

In the feminist research on non-human companions, animals occupy a prominent position (Haraway, 2003). The archive had never been seen as companion, although it was given the ambivalent status of a "frenemy" in the majority of post-structuralist work (Derrida, 1995), not in a literal sense of the word. Could the archive be analyzed as an example of a friend? And/or a companion? How about artistic archives of the LGBTQ+ populations? Following the artworks and collections of two Polish gay artists, Karol Radziszewski and Paweł Żukowski, I discuss such a perspective.

Ewa Majewska, Associate Professor at SWPS University, is a feminist theorist of culture working on the queer studies/archive theory project entitled *Public against their will. The production of subjects in the archives of "Hiacynt Action"*. She examines the archives of the surveilling police action targeting gay men in 1980s Poland. Majewska has taught at the UDK Berlin and University of Warsaw. She has been a visiting scholar at the UC Berkeley, ICI Berlin, and IWM in Vienna. She has published seven books, including *Feminist Antifascism* (Verso, 2021), as well as numerous articles and essays in *e-flux*, *Signs*, *Third Text*, *the Journal of Utopian Studies* and others. Her research focuses on archive studies, dialectics of the weak; feminist critical theory and antifascism. She co-curated the exhibition of Mariola Przyjemaska at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw. In 2023, she received the Emma Goldman Award from the Flex Foundation for her research work on equality.

“I Could Never Make Up My Mind Whether I was the Master”: Varieties of Interspecies Communication in Twentieth-Century British Texts

David Malcolm (SWPS University)

In my paper I discuss four twentieth-century British texts in terms of the human-non-human relationships enacted in them. They are: *Finn the Wolfhound* (1908) by A.J. Dawson; *Tarka the Otter* (1927) by Henry Williamson; *The Goshawk* (1951) by T.H. White; and *Perdido Street Station* (2000) by China Miéville. All show varieties of human-non-human relationships. Dawson's *Finn the Wolfhound* is highly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic. The “Master's” relationship with his champion wolfhound is never questioned. Indeed, the heroic wolfhound betrays his own species to save his master. In *Tarka the Otter*, the human narrator makes a clear attempt to see the life of his subject in non-human terms, despite the revenge story material that anthropomorphically organizes parts of the text. Despite the clear and formal power relations in *The Goshawk*, those relations are clearly shaken and questioned throughout. The sheer non-human difference of the goshawk is emphasized. At times, it is not clear who is master - the austringer or the tiercel. In the non-mimetic *Perdido Street Station*, Miéville depicts a world of considerable species variety in which human beings have complex and intimate relationships with animate and non-animate beings. A movement from anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism is suggested by a discussion of the texts considered.

David Malcolm is Professor at SWPS University in Warsaw. He co-edited a *Companion to the British and Irish Short Story* and *On John Berger*. His edition of Hubert Crackanthorpe's *Wreckage* was published by Edinburgh University Press. He is co-editor of *A Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Poetry, 1960-2015* (2020) and of a special issue of *Anglica* on contemporary English verse (2023). In 2018, he was Visiting Professor at *École Normale Supérieure*, Paris. He has been involved with the *Between.Pomiędzy* Festival of Literature and Theatre in Sopot since 2010.

Mutating Insect: Digital Media and the Posthuman in Lucrecia Martel

Thomas Matusiak (SWPS University)

After digital media overtook cinema as the dominant mode of exhibiting moving images, contemporary theorists began to highlight the fundamental inhumanity of media. In recent years, the concept of mediation has been expanded to encompass non-human agents, from animals and insects to plants and minerals. This presentation looks to the figure of the insect in Lucrecia Martel's 2011 digital short *Muta*, a fashion film created in collaboration with the brand Miu Miu, to theorize the wider mutations of the cinematic image in the twenty-first century. Like the insect, the pixel flickers, swarms, and mutates. Indeed, insects — as Jussi Parikka argues — have long served as a model of organization in computer science and digital media. I explore how, in her first digital production, Martel herself offers an insectoid theory of media that reframes concerns with the materiality, production, and distribution of the audiovisual in terms of non-human forms of life. I then consider how Martel grounds *Muta* — her first incursion into advertisement and digital media — highlights the queer potential of the digital. I conclude that Martel critiques the production of gendered subjectivities by means of fashion through her association of the insect, the pixel, and the queer body.

Thomas Matusiak is Assistant Professor in the Institute of Humanities at SWPS University and Assistant Professor of Latin American Cultural Studies at the University of Miami. He holds a Ph.D. in Spanish & Portuguese from Princeton University and was previously Postdoctoral Fellow at Dartmouth College and Visiting Scholar at Columbia University. His scholarship addresses the relations between aesthetics and politics in Latin American cinema. His book manuscript, *The Visual Guillotine: The Cinematic Cut and the Form of Politics in Latin America* is under contract with the University of Minnesota Press. His publications have also appeared or are forthcoming in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, *Romance Quarterly*, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, and other venues. His research has been supported by the Polish National Science Center and the US Fulbright program.

“Mechanical as the Notes Were”: Replaying the Sympathetic Transactions between Human and Non-Human Animals in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Visual Culture

Mary Newbould (Kazimierz Wielki University)

In the discourse of eighteenth-century sensibility, non-human animals embodied the ideal object of spectatorial sympathy, given the speechless vulnerability of a wounded or dying animal that allowed the man or woman of feeling to exercise their sentimental inclinations with peculiar affect. However, the entirely ‘natural’ processes involved in such transactions were continually juxtaposed with awareness of their mechanical performativity, problematizing their supposed authenticity, and exposing them as problematically transactional. The language of mechanism, in fact, frequently enters descriptions of how men or women of feeling acted towards fellow humans or non-human animals in exhibiting their sensibility: for instance, Laurence Sterne, a focal point of this paper, described the plaintive song of a caged starling as ‘mechanical’ in its ‘notes’.

As a movement manifested in literature and visual culture, sensibility attracted as many critics as it did adherents: satirical responses highlighted the extent to which mechanistic reproducibility entered the very language of the discourse, with the repeatability of character-types, scenes, descriptions and phrases compromising authenticity of feeling and its expression, to the point of becoming clichéd. The very forms of reproduction – the pages of a book, the columns of a newspaper or magazine, the mass-printed illustrative plate – provided material correlates to these aesthetic arguments.

Drawing on examples of human and non-animal sentimental interactions from eighteenth-century novelistic fiction, book illustration, and graphic satire, this paper also examines how both engagements with and critiques of sensibility recirculated extensively in newspapers and magazines which, by the very mode of their production, allowed for arguments about re-repeatability to circulate among a virtual community of readers and contributors.

Mary Newbould is Assistant Professor at Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, where she is PI on an NCN-funded project: *Networks of Reception: Sterne and Sterneana in Eighteenth-Century Newspapers and Magazines*, with a short monograph contracted with CUP. She has published extensively on Sterne and his reception, including co-directing (with Helen Williams) *Laurence Sterne and Sterneana*, an Open Access dataset hosted by Cambridge Digital Library. Mary also works on eighteenth-century visual culture, and with Jakub Lipski has co-edited *The Edinburgh Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and the Arts*.

Companions? Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" and the Environmental Humanities

Dominika Oramus (University of Warsaw)

The aim of this paper is to read Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves" (1979) through the lens of selected concepts coined in the 21st century and currently used within the environmental humanities. I juxtapose the way this famous short story was interpreted in the previous century by, among others, Margaret Atwood, Sarah Gambe, and Lorna Sage with my own environment-oriented reading. "The Company of Wolves" has canonically been interpreted as a postmodern re-writing of the traditional "Little Red Riding Hood" fairytale and a coming-of-age story (Sage), as well as a study of gender role reversal (Atwood) and a postmodern text playfully subverting the nature/culture dichotomy (Gamble). Seminal and illuminating as these interpretations are, in my paper, I attempt to add to the body of Carter's criticism by reading her story in an "environmental" fashion. The terms coined by Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett enable me to structure this reading. The most important of these are INTERCONNECTEDNESS—the Buddhist term recently introduced to environmental discourse—and SYMPOIESIS, famously defined by Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. In my conclusion, by referring to Mark Bould's *The Anthropocene Unconscious*, I propose a modern way of reading older texts: our Anthropocene unconscious makes us see, both on screen and on the printed page what is always on our mind: fear, guilt and frustration caused by the anthropogenic environmental catastrophe.

Dominika Oramus is Professor of contemporary literature at the Artes Liberales Department, University of Warsaw. Her areas of research include science fiction and climate fiction. She has published *Grave New World. The Decline of the West in the Fiction of J.G. Ballard*, *Ways of Pleasure. Angela Carter's Discourse of Delight in her Fiction and Non-Fiction*, *Charles Darwin's Looking Glass. The Theory of Evolution and the Life of its Author in Contemporary British Fiction and Non-Fiction*, *Darwinowskie Paradygmaty. Mit teorii ewolucji w kulturze współczesnej*, *Stany splecione. Fizyka a literatura współczesna*, and *(Eco)Anxiety in Nuclear Holocaust Fiction and Climate Fiction. Doomsday Clock Narratives*.

A Story of Killing, a Story of Respect. Anthropocentrism and Non-Anthropocentrism in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

Monika Orent (University of Gdańsk)

Ernest Hemingway stands as a somewhat ambiguous figure in the realm of ecocritical studies. His works are replete with motifs of hunting, fishing, and bullfighting, themes which in today's world may provoke considerable controversy. On the other hand, his literature often serves as an expression of adoration for the wild nature and animals, and as a condemnation of human activities destructive to the environment. This paper constitutes a thorough ecocritical analysis of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. An attempt was made to interpret relationship between human and nature depicted in the novella, and to examine the text in terms of anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric philosophies. The paper incorporates a historical perspective on Hemingway's literature as well as on the author himself, taking into account the changes which occurred in his view on nature. Its aim is to characterize the overall resonance of the work in the field of ecocriticism. Additionally, the paper seeks to subject the text to a moral evaluation, settling Hemingway's ideas and beliefs in contemporary context.

Monika Orent is a graduate of the Faculty of Languages at the University of Gdańsk. In 2021, she earned a master's degree, completing her studies in English Philology with a specialization in Translation Studies (publishing and audiovisual translation). In 2023, she published an article in the field of translation studies titled "Translating emotions: Emotive aspect in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and its Polish translation by Bronisław Zieliński". Her primary area of interest lies in literary translation, with a particular focus on the aspect of literary style, especially in contemporary literature.

Archival Memory and the Nonhuman

Agnieszka Pantuchowicz (SWPS University)

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida suggests that justice may be seen as the antonym of forgetting. What he thus critiques is the archival memory as an objective or neutral record of what is what and who is who, to the exclusion of possible intergeneric exchanges and concoctions. In this paper, I will read Derrida's reading of the archive with an eye on the possible change of the archival paradigms of identity responsible for the Anthropocene's schism with the nonhuman in light of some possible shifts of that paradigm which requires what Nora Almeida and Jen Hoye see as "an interrogation of archival theory and a gradual transformation of systems and spaces that are both materially and temporally exponentially larger than us". What this demands is a radical change of seeing justice not in the context of guilt and punishment, but as a kind of care for the Other possibly brought in by a change from archiving to "life writing" or to a "living archive" (Almeida and Hoye) as both a "method for interrogating the past and an irreducible experience of the future". This demands an ability to forget the Anthropocenic furrows of judgement and justice.

Agnieszka Pantuchowicz is Associate Professor and Vice-Director of the Institute of Humanities at SWPS University. Her academic focus is on literature and the theory of translation. Her areas of expertise include: translation studies, cultural studies, comparative literature, and feminist criticism. She is the author of sixty articles and co-editor of six collections of academic essays. With Elżbieta Tabakowska she is editor of the series *Cultures in Translation*. At SWPS University, she heads two interdisciplinary projects: the first deals with processing natural language and its social impact; the second aims to establish to what degree and how reading literature influences attitudes manifested in the choice of specific linguistic expressions. She conducts classes in translation analysis, literature, and stylistics.

Digital Companions in Translation Practice and Research: Friends or Foes?

Anna Popławska (SWPS University)

Most translators welcomed digital translation aids and tools which made their work faster, easier, and better. The few who had initially been reluctant had to either convert or conform, and embrace computers, word processing software, as well as various online services and resources. New technology was reliable, fair, non-judgemental, occasionally funny or foolish, and always available and ready to help--- in other words, a good digital friend that even facilitated networking among human translators. However, the technology was not satisfied with the status of a junior partner in a relationship controlled by a human translator. A shift in the relationship came with the arrival of CAT software giving a new direction to translation, followed by machine translation tools which have openly intruded on translators' job opportunities and incomes. Thus, a trusted friend has turned into a foe, with literary translators still holding the line, although their positions cannot be regarded as fully secure either.

On the other hand, in translation research, the course of events has been quite the opposite compared to translation practice, with successive digital technologies creating new opportunities for researchers. Advanced digital language processing tools have accompanied scholars not only in applied translation studies, as evidenced by a recently published study on the history of Polish literary translation in the 19th century by Karolina Dębska. Another example of literary translation research using digital language processing technology may be a project currently underway by the author of the paper, concerning the phenomenon dubbed as "aging of literary translations."

Anna Popławska is a Ph.D. candidate in English Studies at SWPS University, Warsaw.

Weird Kinships. Interspecies Entanglements in Pulp Narratives and Conspiracy Theories.

Paweł Pyrka (SWPS University)

The aim of the paper is to explore the complex, ambiguous and uncanny entanglements between human and non-human entities present within the (not-unrelated) realms of pulp fiction and conspiracy narratives. The presentation examines key characteristics of interspecies connections established (or hinted at) in the works of two major authors of pulp, H. P. Lovecraft (*At the Mountains of Madness*, "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family") and Robert E. Howard ("The Shadow Kingdom", "Worms of the Earth", "The Children of the Night") along with their reverberations in the contemporary discourse within the context of the so-called Reptilian conspiracy.

The paper delves into the issues of: identity as becoming with the non-human Other, models of power dynamics in interspecies entanglements and narrative rhetoric which shapes them (as found in conspiracy/contingency theories), and the resilience of 'weird kinship' themes and motifs, especially with regard to the concerns of anthropocene (and Haraway's Chthulucene), as well as questions posed by speculative/weird realism.

Paweł Pyrka is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Humanities in Warsaw, SWPS University, where he teaches American literature and critical theory. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the golden age of American pulp fiction and published articles on E. A. Poe, H. P. Lovecraft and S. Grabiński. His research interests include popular literature and culture, interactive narratives and cooperative storytelling as embodied by role-playing games, as well as exchanges between technology and culture.

The Mexican War, Friends of Freedom, and Slavery

Jerzy Sobieraj (SWPS University)

This paper focuses on the connection between the Mexican War and the issue of slavery. The War raised a heated debate over the potential extension of slavery on the territory of the post-war United States. The proponents of that extension, mainly Southerners, faced its opponents such as Abraham Lincoln, and many abolitionists, including the leading transcendentalists, Theodore Parker, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The burning issue was the new stricter Fugitive Slave Law, part of the 1850 compromise coined in its final version by Stephen Douglas, which was strongly criticized by many abolitionists including Emerson and Thoreau.

Jerzy Sobieraj is Associate Professor of American literature at SWPS University, Warsaw. He has also taught Southern fiction at the Universitat Jaume I in Spain. His research focuses on Southern literature and African American studies. As a recipient of several academic grants, he conducted research at Brown University, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Vanderbilt University. Among his books, he has published the first Polish monograph on the Ku Klux Klan. Professor Sobieraj is the author of *Collisions of Conflict: Studies in American History and Culture, 1820 – 1920*. His most recent publications include “Lynching, Memory, and Memorials,” published by the *Polish Journal for American Studies* and *Misuse of Power*, published by Peter Lang.

Meaning making in the realm of linguistic make-belief: conlangs as tools for inter- and intraspecies communication with special reference to Klingon

Agnieszka Solska (University of Silesia)

Among the myriad constructed languages there are some, crafted as components of a fictional world, which have evolved beyond the confines of the narrative they were designed for and have become conduits for cultural exchange and real word communication. This presentation, while referencing a number of such languages, focuses on Klingon, an iconic conlang created for the *Star Trek* universe, inhabited by a diverse array of sentient beings. Originally intended to bolster the portrayal of a formidable galactic 'warrior race', it has transcended its role within the *Star Trek* franchise inspiring a multitude of initiatives, in the United States and beyond, including the establishment of the Klingon Language Institute and the publication of numerous translated and original works. Ultimately the global interest in Klingon gave rise to a unique, multi-lingual, and multicultural community learning the language and using it in ways that mirror the ways natural languages are employed, undeterred by the conlang's design features, meant to add credibility to the story-telling within a make-belief world, not to facilitate real life communication. The presentation aims to examine – through the lens of linguistic pragmatics – how members of this community achieve their communicative purposes by leveraging their cognitive and linguistic resources to decode, infer and co-construct meanings.

Agnieszka Solska is Associate Professor at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, where she holds the position of a deputy director of the English Studies degree programme. Her research interests focus on linguistic pragmatics (especially inferential models of communication such as Relevance Theory), non-literal language as well as utterances which exploit ambiguity to communicate meanings, especially puns in their many guises. She is a co-translator of Sperber and Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* into Polish.

Assigning Agency to Nonhumans. A Computational Study of Animal Characters in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*.

Marcin Szwed (SWPS University)

The paper explores the narrative strategies and thematic implications of assigning agency to animal characters in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* through a computational analysis. By employing natural language processing (NLP) techniques, the textual representation and linguistic patterns that endow animals with human-like qualities are analysed, including in the scope of their roles as agents in the narrative. The study sets out to identify key lexical and syntactic markers that contribute to the personification of Buck, the canine protagonist of *The Call of the Wild*, and Richard Parker, the Bengal tiger in *Life of Pi*. Furthermore, the study attempts to examine how these markers differ across the two texts and discusses their implications for reader perception and engagement.

The computational approach, including corpus queries, relative frequency measurements and network data visualisations, allows for a quantitative assessment of the extent and nature of agency attributed to the nonhuman characters, revealing nuanced differences in their portrayal. The findings suggest that the works in question utilise substantially different narrative techniques to convey the behaviour and actions of their nonhuman protagonists, reflecting broader thematic concerns regarding their structure, relationship to humans and the nature of self. By positioning itself at the intersection of literature and computational analysis, the study contributes to the robust field of digital humanities and offers insights into the role of nonhuman agency in literary narratives.

Marcin Szwed is an English philologist and graduate of the University of Warsaw. He is a sworn translator of English, LSP translator and conference interpreter. As a lecturer in the Department of English at SWPS University in Warsaw, he studies and teaches translation, interpreting and computational linguistics. He is the author of a number of publications on computer-assisted translation, LSP, and terminology database management.

Darkly Romantic: The Uncanny (and) Nature in Gray, Blake and Wordsworth

Przemysław Uściński (University of Warsaw)

The paper will look at the somewhat uncanny presence of nature in some Preromantic and early Romantic poems, chiefly in the poetry of Thomas Gray, a poet who influenced, in important ways, both William Blake and William Wordsworth. Though 'nature' in much of Romantic poetry (in Wordsworth in particular) is often read as that which may provide a safe and homely retreat from, say, the madness of the crowd, I will look at the ways in which those poets also challenge the homeliness of nature. Thus, I want to juxtapose the 18th-century rhetoric of retirement (as well as the role of nature in that rhetoric) and the trope of a "return to nature" with a more uncanny understanding of nature (as discussed, for instance, by Geoffrey Hartman) in (early) Romantic literature as that which challenges the domesticating or "humanising" approach. I will argue that already in Gray's poetic texts nature's disturbing powers, linked with such themes as death and madness, somehow resist their cultural domestication attempted, for instance, through gardening or art. Later, the English Romantic poets would look with some suspicion at the cult of the picturesque, refusing, in many ways, to reduce nature to a mere space for homely retreat and spiritual recovery, thus prefiguring some aspects of the "dark" understanding of ecology and non-human companionship as discussed in the 21st century by Timothy Morton and others.

Przemysław Uściński is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, and an editor of *Anglica. An International Journal of English Studies*. His book *Parody, Scriblerian Wit and the Rise of the Novel* was published in 2017. He has also published articles and chapters on the eighteenth-century English novel and satire, Romantic poetry and travel writing. Together with Magdalena Pypec, he co-edited the volume *Travel and Otherness in Nineteenth-Century British Writing* (Warsaw University Press, 2022). In 2022 he received an individual research grant from Poland's National Science Centre to study eighteenth-century travel writing. He is a member of the research team "From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria" and co-organizes the *Warsaw Literary Meetings* seminar cycle. His research interests also include film studies, postcolonial studies, literary and critical theory.

Animal Stereotypes in the Process of Animalistic Dehumanization

Małgorzata Waśniewska (SWPS University)

Animalistic metaphors have been used since the dawn of humanity to dehumanize individuals and outgroups, deny their rights, and justify acts of violence towards them. Rooted in the broader GREAT CHAIN BEING metaphor, which draws a clear distinction between humans and animals based on vertical comparison, the highly conventionalized PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor relies on a theriophobic ontological stance manifesting itself in animal stereotypes such as *animal as alien, child, moral paragon, demon, and machine* (Benson 1983). The paper examines the implications of these stereotypes for both the animal species used as source and the targets—people conceptualized as these species in the process of animalistic dehumanization (Haslam 2006, 2013). Based on the linguistic manifestations of PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, the paper aims to explain the interplay between two seemingly antithetical psychological processes, dehumanization and anthropomorphization.

Małgorzata Waśniewska (Ph.D., Linguistics, University of Warsaw, 2023) is a discourse analyst and cognitive linguist working as Assistant Professor at SWPS University in Warsaw. Her primary research interests focus on the issues of dehumanization and linguistic violence in various discourses. She is also the author of several publications on the embodiment of body part terms.

Animals in Selected Narrative Works by J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis

Andrzej Wicher (University of Łódź)

In the represented world of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, animal lovers will not find much to their liking. The animals depicted there are mostly obnoxious monsters, such as dragons (assuming that dragons are animals) or giant spiders. But we do find a moderately likable character of a dog in Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham*. His name is Garm and he is described as a cowardly, snobbish, and servile creature. He has apparently no virtues, apart from blind loyalty to his master, but I would argue he is still likable because his vices are shown as pardonable and understandable. In his name, we find a good example of Tolkien's use of irony, in Scandinavian mythology, Garm (or Garmr) is a blood-stained guardian of Hel's gate, that is, another monster. But in the same tale, a dragon, called Chrysophylax, in spite of being a big, fierce, and fire-breathing monster, is reduced almost to the position of a domestic dog. An important feature of both Garm and Chrysophylax (and other Tolkien's dragons) is that they are talking animals. Also in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, all important animals are talking animals. Unlike Tolkien, Lewis makes a sharp distinction between talking and non-talking ("dumb") animals, the latter are treated, even by the former, as inferior, which naturally raises the question of racism, or rather "speciesism". The most interesting of those talking animals, I would argue, even more interesting than the divine lion Aslan, or the heroic mouse Reepicheep, is the self-questioning horse Bree from *The Horse and His Boy*. He also, like Garm, has his vices, but, unlike Garm, is capable of overcoming them up to a point. As can be seen, the problem of animals, in both authors, deserves some attention.

Andrzej Wicher is Senior Lecturer in the history of English literature and theory of literature in the Institute of English Studies of the University of Łódź. He has published *Archaeology of the Sublime. Studies in Late - Medieval English Writings* (1995), and *Shakespeare's Parting Wondertales - a Study of the Elements of the Tale of Magic in William Shakespeare's Late Plays* (2003) *Selected Medieval and Religious Themes in the Works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien* (2013). He has also translated Middle English poetry, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, into Polish.

Entanglements: The World of Trees and Humans in Contemporary Literature and Art

Katarzyna Więckowska (Nicolaus Copernicus University)

This essay draws on the insights offered by new materialisms and critical plant studies to examine the new relationships between the human and the more-than-human and new ways of representing them in contemporary literary and art projects. The approach to matter as vibrant and agentic (Bennett 2010; Barad 2018) necessitates the acknowledgment that the human is not merely an outside observer but, as Michael Marder argues in *Grafts: Writings on Plants*, “a point of intersection for diverse types of existence,” co-imbricated with the rest of the world (2016: 166). I trace this new way of responding to the environment in a range of literary and artistic projects, focusing on the representation of the relationship between the tree world and humans in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behavior* (2012), Richard Powers’s *The Overstory* (2018), and the public artwork *Future Library* (2014-2114), conceived and curated by Katie Paterson. Depicting the nonhuman environment “as not merely a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (Buell 1995: 7), these works stress the entangled and relational character of thinking and knowing and move towards an ethics of intimacy, care, and growth akin to the “plant ethics” described by Marder.

Katarzyna Więckowska is Associate Professor in the Department of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Comparative Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Her research interests include environmental criticism, contemporary Anglophone literature, post-anthropocentric ethics of care, and solarpunk.

Non-Human Companions in Sara Maitland's Short Stories

Aleksandra Wiśniewska (University of Gdańsk)

From bird-women to mermaids and moss witches – characters in short stories by Sara Maitland, a feminist, amateur theologian and solitary forest wanderer provide a range of literary depictions of a dynamic relationship between humanity, nature and the supernatural. Maitland employs feminist, fairytale and ecocritical content to redefine the established literary conventions and challenge the notion of superiority of man. Also, she hints at the surprising analogies between natural processes and laws (such as tectonic movements, evolution or mathematics) and notions typically associated with humanity (sense of humour, feminism, magic). Finally, she offers imaginary and supernatural elements as a remedy to her heroines' identity crisis.

The article traces these processes through the examination of individual characters, their interactions with others and the environment in a selection of short stories from two volumes, *Moss Witch and Other Stories* and *On Becoming a Fairy Godmother*. The article also provides a broader context of Maitland's writing, including a folklore travelogue *Gossip from the Forest*.

Aleksandra Wiśniewska is Assistant Professor of English Studies at the University of Gdansk. She is a literary scholar interested particularly in British literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Her research interests include: the analysis of prose texts which in their linguistic, structural and thematic layers reveal the relationship between literature and theology/ the supernatural; analysis and interpretation of texts in terms of narrative techniques, characterization and presentation of space.

The Eco-Critical Paradigm in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest*

Ewa Wiśniewska (Academy of Piotrków Trybunalski)

The Word for World is Forest, authored by Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018) and published in 1972, constitutes a novella within the Hainish Cycle. This literary series encompasses additional works, including *Rocannon's World*, *Planet of Exile*, *City of Illusions*, and the highly regarded *The Left Hand of Darkness*. The narrative succinctly delineates a conflict involving two distinct races: the indigenous humanoid species, characterized by their green-furred physicality, and the Terrans, who assume the role of invaders on the planet called Atshe.

The story manifests a tripartite structural configuration intricately associated with the cognitive standpoint of the central protagonist within the narrative framework. The inaugural segment, articulated from the vantage point of the Terran Captain Don Davidson, affords discernment into his cogitations concerning the planet and its denizens. Subsequently, the second segment encapsulates the viewpoint of Selver Thele, an indigenous inhabitant of the planet, while the third segment undergoes a renewed transition to a Terran perspective, that of Raj Lyubov. The latter emerges as an advocate for the promotion of harmonious coexistence between the two distinct races delineated in the narrative.

A central theme explored by the author revolves around humanity and its definition. The polyphonic narrative in the novel paints a complex picture of the relationships between the species (as well as between genders) within the text. The novella not only signifies Ursula K. Le Guin's engagement with the historical facets of colonization and the subjugation of indigenous cultures and nature but also constitutes a vocal intervention in the ongoing discourse pertaining to the essence of humanity.

Ewa Wiśniewska, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor at Academy of Piotrków Trybunalski. Her research interests include feminism in contemporary fantasy and science fiction literature, gender and animal studies, and the history of women.

“O My Friends, There Is No Friend”: On Friendship and Transhuman Condition in the Post-COVID 19 Times

Ryszard W. Wolny (University of Opole)

When Aristotle famously announced, “O my friends, there is no friend,” he astounded not only a close circle of his immediate companions and followers, the philosophers, but, centuries later, the entire Western intellectual world the foundations of which has traditionally been anchored in what may roughly be termed cooperation, mutual understanding, exchange of views and, with an eye on formal and informal religions and cults, brotherhood of men or unity of souls and minds. Yet, Aristotle’s pre-Christian vision of humanity predicted those reversals and contaminations that have made friendship, both public and private, “dangerously and madly unstable,” as Jacques Derrida memorably declared in his 1994 *Politiques de l’amitié* (*Politics of Friendship*, 1997).

Adopting Nietzschean perspectivism, which fundamentally sees the world as a battleground of infections and sicknesses, today also in non-metaphorical sense (COVID-19), alongside Derridean deconstructivism, this article seeks to expose those challenging visions of humanity (or post-humanity) in which nationalisms, isolationisms and collective and individual egoisms deny the principles on which Judeo-Christian civilisation has been built, i.e. a sense of togetherness and belonging, community interests and social bonds cemented by traditions, common root languages and friendships, also interspecies friendships. These egoisms, I argue, inevitably lead to a collapse of interpersonal and emotional relationships between nations, communities and individuals. To fill in the gap, the concept of mateship, so characteristic of the Antipodean egalitarian new democracies, may be taken into consideration as a plausible alternative.

Ryszard W. Wolny is Professor and Director, Institute of Literatures, University of Opole. His interests focus largely on British and Australian literature and culture. He is an author of approximately one hundred scholarly publications which include, among others, *The Ruinous Anatomy: The Philosophy of Death in John Donne and the Earlier Seventeenth-century English Poetry and Prose* (Perth, Western Australia, 1999), *A Cry over the Abyss: The Discourse of Power in the Poetry of Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne* (Opole 2004), *Australia: Identity, Memory, Destiny* (Opole 2008), *Crosscurrents: Culture, Literature and Language* (Kielce 2008), *On Time: Reflections on Time in Culture, Literature and Language* (Opole 2009), *Culture and Postcolonial Studies* (Kielce 2012). The President of the Republic of Poland conferred on him the title of Professor of Human Sciences (Literature Studies) in 2016.