

CfP

Peter Lang *Studies in Literature, Culture, and the Environment*

Eco-narratives Across Human and More-Than-Human Realms: Bridging Nature-Culture Divide

Edited by Dario Martinelli, Katarzyna Machtyl, Inna Livytska, Nicola Zengiaro

The idea of the special issue originated from a collaboration between the scholars from narratology, cultural anthropology and biosemiotics in a series of academic events that took place at Justus Liebig International Graduate Center for the Studies of Culture in January 2026. Inspired by the affordances of the interdisciplinary cooperation and responding to the challenges raised during this intellectual exchange on the topics of culture-nature relations, animal agency and eco-narratives, a more general interest in further intensification of this dialogue among narratologists, philosophers, anthropologists and biosemioticians emerged. Consequently, this special issue is dedicated to widening the interdisciplinary research on eco-narration (Stibbe 2024), subjectivity and agency across human and non-human landscapes (Petrilli, Ponzio 2024), by integrating insights from zoosemiotics (Sebeok 2001, Martinelli 2010), biosemiotics (Pierce, Hoffmeyer 1998), ecosemiotics (Maran, Kull 2020), cultural anthropology (Ingold 2000, Latour 2014), embodied narratology (Herman 2018, Caracciolo, Kukkonen 2021), and an emerging field of biosemiotic literary (eco)criticism (Maran 2014; Coletta 2021; Livytska 2023). The aim is to provide a more sophisticated conceptualization of *eco-narration* and *agency* across human and non-human realms within a contemporary paradigm of “Humanities” (Martinelli 2016), which is devoted to the rethinking the role of the humanities in contemporary society.

We argue that ecosemiotics (Maran and Kull 2014), biosemiotics (Sebeok 2001, Hoffmeyer 1998), and cultural anthropology (Ingold 2000, Latour 2014) can be important and natural methodological extensions to literary approaches to meaning-making in complex systems like literary narrative, because “they generalize the views on semiosis as communication to the whole ecosystem” (Maran and Kull 2014), and make it possible to approach human and non-human agency from the embodied narrative perception of the observer. Ecosemiotics, biosemiotics and ecostylistics (Viridis 2022) thus, become close allies to ecocriticism, environmental anthropology, environmental culture studies, and

other fields that focus on the various aspects of the representations of nature in human culture.

Ecocriticism, as defined by Lawrence Buell (1995: 430), is the “study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis.” And while practitioners of the developing field of “biosemiotic criticism”, called “literary biosemiotics” by Coletta [1999] and then “biosemiotic criticism” by Maran [2014], generally share the goals and concerns of ecocriticism by contributing a distinct set of analytical perspectives, ecocritics, grounded in the field of biosemiotics, bring a specific and unique set of intellectual tools to the field of ecocriticism, sharpened by the field of biology as transformed by the field of semiotics (which is to say, by biosemiotics).

On another side, narrative research can profit from the synergetic methodology coming from semiotic domain on interspecies communication, biosemiotic agency (Tonnessen 2015) and meaning “mediation” (Sebeok 2001; Martinelli 2010) in animal and plant communication (Calvo 2017; Haraway 2015; Marrone 2018). For example, the use of the “eco-field model” (Farina and Belgrano 2004), and the biosemiotic concepts of *umwelt* (von Uexküll), *habit* (Peirce), “zoosemiotic modeling,” “linguistic modeling,” and “artistic modeling” (Maran 2014) can be beneficial for the studies of non-human species in narratology too, hence it makes it possible to describe human activities in the landscape (Maran and Kull 2014), and to relate these to the use of other animals and plants. Therefore, eco-field modelling can also be applied to the analysis of the interactions between humans and other species in artistic fictional discourses. In this way, ecosemiotic and biosemiotics implications bring additional theoretical and empirical stimulus for the environmental scholars and narratologists to understand the role the non-human plays in the human experience, and vice versa.

This call seeks contributions that critically engage with and analytically explore human and non-human agencies (Latour 2014; Svorcova 2024) in fictional and artistic econarratives. Contributions which are based on interdisciplinary methodologies, and utilize synergetic biocentric approaches (e.g. ecosemiotic, biosemiotic, zoosemiotic, etc.), with contemporary narrative theory (embodied narratology, enactivism, 4E and 5E cognition, ecocriticism), and environmental anthropology are particularly encouraged and welcome.

The topics may include but are not limited to:

- Biosemiotic literary criticism and the limits of anthropocentrism
- Habit, semiosis, and meaning-making in narrative systems
- Peircean semiotics and environmental narrativity
- Ecosemiotics as method in literary and cultural analysis

- Zoosemiotic perspectives on plants in fiction and art
- Semiotic mediation between human and nonhuman realms
- Econarration and the semiotics of more-than-human worlds
- Narrative agency beyond humans: animals, plants, and ecosystems
- Interspecies storytelling and narrative mediation
- Narrative ecologies and distributed agency
- Ecological storyworlds and embodiment
- Ecofields, umwelt, narrative landscapes and spaces.

Submission Requirements

Abstracts of max. 500 words (clearly outlining the central argument, primary texts or artistic practices, and its contribution to interdisciplinary biosemiotic ecocriticism), should be accompanied by a 200-word biographical note with institutional affiliation, a list of 5-7 keywords, plus five key references.

Please send your proposals as a single Word document to machtylk@amu.edu.pl and Inna.Livytska@anglistik.uni-giessen.de by August 30th 2026. Completed papers will be expected by December 2026.

Important dates:

Abstract deadline: **30 August 2026**

Notification of acceptance: **15 September 2026**

Full chapters submission: **1 December 2026**

About the Guest Editors:

Dario Martinelli, a musicologist and semiotician, is Full Professor of History and Theory of Arts at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania, an Adjunct Professor in Semiotics and Musicology at the University of Helsinki, and an Adjunct Professor in Methodologies of Semiotics and Communication Studies at the University of Lapland. He has published 17 monographs and ca. 200 among edited collections, studies and scientific articles, among them *Anche Hitler era vegano – Demagogia e stereotipi della vegafobia* (Mimesis, 2025), *What You See Is What You Hear – Creativity and Communication in Audiovisual Texts* (Springer, 2020), *Basics of Animal Communication* (CSP, 2017), *A Critical Companion to Zoosemiotics* (Springer, 2010). A common denominator in these research paths is the theoretical platform called “Numanities”, which are devoted to the rethinking of the role and paradigm of the humanities in nowadays society.

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Katarzyna Machtyl is a cultural semiotician, Doctor of Philosophy, Assistant Professor in the Department of Cultural Semiotics of the Cultural Studies Institute at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her research interests include general semiotics and the possibilities of the semiotic theory's integration, cultural semiotics, biosemiotics, existential semiotics, nature-culture relation in the view of semiotics, as well as its conceptualizations in contemporary anthropology (esp. Bruno Latour's and Tim Ingold's). She is the author of *Semiotyki obrazu. Reprezentacje i przedmioty* ["Semiotics of an Image. Representations and Objects"] (2017) and a co-editor of collected volumes on visual semiotics, history and theory of semiotics, biosemiotics, and existential semiotics.

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Inna Livytska is a Doctor in Philology, a post-doctoral researcher at Justus Liebig University of Giessen, Germany, working at the intersections of narratology, biosemiotics, embodied cognition and narrative artificial intelligence. Her recent publications include "Narrative Discourse as an Emergent Phenomenon: Global Semiotic Approach" (2021), "The Art of Narration and Artificial Narrative Intelligence" (2019), and "Humans as Natural-Born Cyborgs: Scrutinizing AI's Narrative Intelligence within the 5-E Cognition Framework" (2025).

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Nicola Zengiaro is a biosemiotician specializing in ecosemiotics and environmental humanities. He holds a PhD in Semiotics from the University of Bologna, with a dissertation focused on the threshold between life and non-life within biological and ecological meaning-making systems. His research explores the intersection of signs, materials, and environments, with a particular focus on the semiotic construction of landscapes and the ecological dimensions of meaning. He has conducted research at the University of Tartu (Estonia) and at the Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá (Colombia), where he developed a project on econarratives and environmental storytelling. He is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Turin, working on animal communication and artificial intelligence. He also serves as Associate Editor of Biosemiotics, Managing Editor of Linguistic Frontiers, and Editor of Animal Studies.

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