

Supernatural Nature: Ecocriticism beyond Realism

University of Konstanz

5 and 6 August 2027

Call for Papers

“What fantasy generally does that the realistic novel cannot do is include the nonhuman as essential ... [R]ealistic fiction is drawn toward anthropocentrism, fantasy away from it. Although the green country of fantasy seems to be entirely the invention of human imagination, it verges on and partakes of realms in which humanity is not lord and master, is not central, is not even important” (Le Guin 2007: 87)

Inspired by Ursula Le Guin’s observation on the importance of fantastic genres in the literary representation of the natural and more-than-human world, this conference on Ecocriticism beyond Realism, which will be held at the University of Konstanz, Germany, aims to further explore the intersection of more-than-human and supernatural perspectives. With specific attention to both the interplay and antagonism between natural/scientific and supernatural/magical elements in fantastic narratives in various media, we encourage a reconsideration of the word “supernatural”, which contains the natural while also surpassing it. Previous critical approaches have seen fantasy and ecology as a “compromised version of humanness” (Gruber 2023: 11): nature is often interpreted as an incarnation of vengeful impulses or pastoral ideals, while fantasy seems to be a playground where the more-than-human acts as a metaphor for human morality. To overcome this human-centered approach, one of the main purposes of this conference is to “reconceptualize and reevaluate threatening, monstrous, nonhuman images of nature” (Horvath 2024: 17) from an ecocentric perspective.

With this goal in mind, we especially encourage proposals engaging with non-realist aesthetics from an ecocritical and non-anthropocentric perspective in different media from researchers at all career stages working in Anglophone literature and media studies.

Potential topics include (but are not limited to):

- Ecocritical engagements with fantastic genres and media
- Fantastic more-than-human perspectives & narration
- Ecofeminism in the supernatural

- The (super-) natural in gothic literature
- Ecomagical realism
- The (super-) natural in dystopian and science fiction literature
- Animal Studies approaches to weird and/or fantastic creatures
- Weird and gothic plant ecologies
- Supernatural intersectionality
- Ecological monsters and monstrosity
- Supernatural inanimate materials & vibrant matter
- The (super-) natural in folklore and fairy tale
- Engagement with the tension between the natural vs. supernatural / the scientific vs. the magical in fantastic postcolonial literature

Please note that the conference will take place in person in Konstanz, Germany. There will be a conference fee of 30 euros. All presentations should be in English and last no longer than 20 minutes. Proposals, including title, abstract (250 words max.), and a short biography (100 words max.), should be submitted via email in a single PDF document to dominique.marrone@uni-konstanz.de and emily.anderson@uni-konstanz.de by 15th of January 2027. Please use the subject line “Supernatural Nature”.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by 1st of March 2027. Please feel free to contact the organisers for any further inquiries at any time.

Some participants will have the opportunity to publish their paper in a special issue on the same topic with a peer-reviewed academic journal.

GRUBER, E. (2023) *The Eco-Self in Early Modern English Literature*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

HORVATH, M. (2024) *Ecogothic Interpretations of the Anthropocene*, «Pangeas: Revista Interdisciplinar de Ecocrítica», vol. 6, p. 15-26.

LE GUIN, Ursula K. “The Critics, The Monsters, and the Fantasists.” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vo. 38, 2007, p. 83-87.