



**Planetary Precarity and Future Habitability**  
An International Online Conference | February 18 & 19, 2022

Organized by School of Liberal Arts and School of Management,

Bennett University, India in collaboration with

**Challenging Precarity: A Global Network**

All times are in IST | GMT -5:30 | CET -4:30 | PST -13:30 | EST -10:30

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Date Time: Feb 18, 2022 09:30 a.m. Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi

Topic: Planetary Precarity and Future Habitability

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**Day 1 (February 18)**

1	<b>Inaugural</b> Dr. K. Sreenivasa Rao Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi  Prof. Janet Wilson, University of Northampton, UK Chair, Challenging Precarity Research Network  Prof Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp University of Bonn, Germany  Prof Nilanjan Chattopadhyay Dean, School of Management, Bennett University  Prof Om Prakash Dwivedi Head, School of Liberal Arts, Bennett University	09:30 am	10:05 am
2	<b>Keynote 1:</b> Wai Chee Dimock “Habitable Precarity: Salmon and the Indigenous Food Cycle” Yale University	10:05 am	10:50 am
3	<b>Session 1: Genre and Media</b>  1. Tatiana Konrad “The Global South, Ruined Environments, and ‘Slow Violence’ in James Bond Films” University of Vienna	11:30 am	1:00 pm

	<p>2. Dylan Couch “The Pastoral Problem: Settler Agrarianism, Postcolonialism, and an Embodied Georgic” University of Idaho</p> <p>3. Sonja Frenzel “Women’s Writing as Eco-Translation: The Creative-Critical Edges of Precarious Presence in Sharon Dodua Otoo’s <i>Adas Raum</i> and Bernardine Evaristo’s <i>Girl, Woman, Other</i>” Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf</p>		
4	<p><b>Session 2: Indigenous Narratives of Environmental Crisis</b></p> <p>4. Chiara Lanza “Precariousness and Resistance: Petro-despotism and the Imaginative Power of Literature” University of Ferrara</p> <p>5. Gita Mohan “Cho. Dharman’s <i>Koogai The Owl</i>: How Translations Enrich the Dialogue on Planetary Precarity” Independent Scholar and Editor, Bangalore</p>	1:00 pm	2:00 pm
5	<p><b>Keynote 2:</b> Sharae Deckard “Precarious Work: The Labour and Ecology of Social Reproduction in World-Literature” University College Dublin</p>	3:00 pm	3:45 pm
6	<p><b>Session 3: Planetary Narratives</b></p> <p>6. Sule Emmanuel Egya “The Human, the Sea, and Planetary Precarity: A Reading of Chuma Nwokolo’s ‘Sea Legs’” Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Nigeria.</p> <p>7. Klara Machata “Entangled Agency in a Planetary Narrative” University of Freiburg</p> <p>8. Isabella Engberg “Tracing ‘Global’ Environmental Concerns in Nineteenth Century Scientific Travel Writing: A Comparison of Alexander von Humboldt’s and Charles Darwin’s Travel Accounts” University of Aberdeen</p>	4:00 pm	5:30 pm
7	<p><b>Session 4: Art and (Audio)Visual Aesthetics of Environmental Crisis</b></p>	5:45 pm	7:15 pm

	<p>Chair: Tatiana Konrad</p> <p>9. Rachel Hill  “Like Electronic Techno Music’: The Accelerating Rhythms of Collapsing Cryospheric Auralities”  University College London.</p> <p>10. Kelsey Dufresne  “Reframing Art with Nature: Flowers, People, and Art in Bloom”  North Carolina State University</p> <p>11. James M. Salvo &amp; Jasmine B. Ulmer  “A Rhetoric of Preservation: Artistic Interventions in a Damaged World”  Wayne State University, Detroit</p>		
<b>Day 2 (February 19)</b>			
1	<p><b>Keynote 3:</b> Gabriele Schwab  “Precarious Boundaries: Reflections on Transspecies Imaginaries”  University of California, Irvine</p>	9:30 am	10:15 am
2	<p><b>Session 5: Planetary Survival Aesthetics: New Forms of Collaborative Art and Media Practices</b>  Chair: Lisa Bloom</p> <p>12. May Joseph  “Dalit Trance and Possession Techniques as Sea Methodologies: A Collaborative Approach”  Pratt Institute, New York City</p> <p>13. Sofia Varino  “Water Activity: Non/Human Collaborations with the Venetian Lagoon”  University of Potsdam</p> <p>14. El Glasberg  “Roni Horn, Inner Geography, and The Shifting Waters of Iceland”  New York University, New York City</p> <p>15. Lisa Bloom  “Science Fiction and Populist Media: Reimagining a More Just World”  University of California, Berkeley</p>	10:15 am	11:45 am

3	<p><b>Session 6: Ecopoetry, Poetics, and Affect</b></p> <p>16. Jan Rupp  “Planetary Precarity and Ecopoetry: Poems to Solve the Climate Crisis?”  University of Wuppertal</p> <p>17. Leonor María Martínez Serrano  “Earth Is <i>Oikos</i>: Peter Sanger on the Vulnerability of the Biosphere as Life’s Home”  University of Córdoba</p> <p>18. Mikol Bez  “How does precarity make you feel? Attempts toward a phenomenology”  Northwestern University, Illinois</p>	12:00 pm	1:30 pm
4	<p><b>Session 7: Language, Discourse and the Internet</b></p> <p>19. Richard Chapman  “‘The Devil has all the best tunes’: linguistic elements in the crisis of neo-liberalism and western democracies in the age of climate emergency”  University of Ferrara</p> <p>20. Kanak Yadav  “The Precarious Case of Zero-Waste Solution to the Planetary Problem”  Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi</p>	2:00 pm	3:00 pm
5	<p><b>Session 8: Catastrophe Narratives and Dystopias</b></p> <p>21. Rebekka Rohleder  “Working Through Disaster in the Post-Apocalyptic Community: Margaret Atwood’s <i>MaddAddam</i> and John Lanchester’s <i>The Wall</i>”  The Europe University of Flensburg</p> <p>22. Cristina Gámez-Fernández  “Vulnerable Habitability and Precarious Life in <i>Le Transperceneige</i> (1986) and <i>Snowpiercer</i> (2013; 2020)”  University of Cordoba</p>	3:30 pm	4:30 pm
6	<p><b>Keynote 4:</b> Jason W. Moore  “Planetary Justice and the Planetary Proletariat”  Binghamton University, New York</p>	6:00 pm	6:45 pm
	Closing Remarks	6:50 pm	6:55 pm



Keynote 1: Wai Chee Dimock

**Habitable Precarity: Salmon and the Indigenous Food Cycle**

Bionote:

Wai Chee Dimock is William Lampson Professor of English and American Studies at Yale University. She has published widely on American literature of every period, and is best known for *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2007). Editor of *PMLA*, her essays have also appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. Her team-edited *American Literature in the World: An Anthology from Anne Bradstreet to Octavia Butler* (2017), which was published by Columbia University Press. Her latest monograph, *Weak Planets: Literature and Assisted Survival* (2020), was published by University of Chicago Press.

Tatiana Konrad:

## **The Global South, Ruined Environments, and “Slow Violence” in James Bond Films**

Abstract:

One way to perceive inequality today is through the perspective of the environment. The postcolonial and environmental studies scholar Rob Nixon has coined the term “slow violence” to explain environmental inequality experienced by postcolonial nations (see Nixon 2011). While the Global North still remains in a privileged position when it comes to living in a world that is being transformed by climate change, the Global South, and especially postcolonial nations, has been struggling to survive on the planet transformed by pollution, climate change, and other environmental issues. The stark difference in the ways climate change and environmental degradation impact the Global North and Global South is overt in James Bond films created during the Daniel Craig era. These films recognize environmental injustice as a way to oppress individuals and nations. As they do so, they not only dramatically influence the image of James Bond as a white savior, his masculinity and heroism, but also foreground environmental injustice, particularly in the Global South, where people and the environment have continuously been exploited and abused through systematic “slow violence.” This essay argues that while the images of “slow violence” that affects the postcolonial world serve as a background in every Bond film in the Craig era, their omnipresence makes “slow violence” conspicuous, and the devastation of the Global South ultimately comes to the fore in each of these films. James Bond fights against evil in a world dramatically altered by “slow violence,” frequently committing or contributing to “slow violence” himself. The essay explores the role of the Global South, and postcolonial nations and environments in particular, in the recent Bond films and reenvisions these films as examples of ecocinema that display environmental injustice and both call for and sabotage pro-environmental action.

Bionote:

Tatiana Konrad is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of English and American Studies, University of Vienna, Austria. She holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Marburg, Germany. She was a Visiting Researcher at the Forest History Society (2019), an Ebeling Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society (2018), and a Visiting Scholar at the University of South Alabama, USA (2016). She is the author of *Docu-Fictions of War: U.S. Interventionism in Film and Literature* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), the editor of *Cold War II: Hollywood’s Renewed Obsession with Russia* (University Press of Mississippi, 2020) and *Transportation and the Culture of Climate Change: Accelerating Ride to Global Crisis* (West Virginia University Press, 2020), and a coeditor of *Cultures of War in Graphic Novels: Violence, Trauma, and Memory* (Rutgers University Press, 2018).

Dylan Couch:

**The Pastoral Problem: Settler Agrarianism, Postcolonialism, and an Embodied Georgic**

Abstract:

This paper confronts the colonial roots of the pastoral and georgic traditions in American literature. Pastoralism is a literary mode that remains problematic in its anthropocentric depiction of the countryside, often characterized by nostalgic and aestheticized depictions of farm work and rural life. The ‘pastoral problem’ lurks in the idealization of agricultural life that masks the actual violence of colonization. In addition, two important tenets of the georgic—settlement and stewardship—historically justified seizing lands from indigenous populations, ignored entire demographic groups that operate outside the traditional scope of an agrarian conception of land management, and continue today to embrace Western values such as commodification. Through a close analysis of the pastoral and georgic tropes in Wendell Berry’s nonfiction, Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, and Helena María Viramontes’s *Under the Feet of Jesus*, this paper argues for a New Materialist perspective that appreciates the environment’s material agency and the ability of place to transfer bodily knowledge. I use this textual analysis to develop what I call the “embodied georgic,” a paradigm that demonstrates the extent to which environments are permeable, recognizing the corporeal as a site of knowledge interconnected with the processes of earth. The embodied georgic critiques the Western-dominant epistemology underlying the pastoral and georgic traditions by revealing how the material agency of place disrupts our understanding of bucolic experience and, conversely, how migrant workers exhibit ethical agency by practicing embodied knowledge not derived from their immediate landscapes. The goal of the embodied georgic is to acknowledge how traditional agrarian thought has contributed to various forms of planetary precarity and to identify alternative approaches to agriculture that may enhance the planet’s habitability.

Bionote:

Dylan Couch is a graduate student seeking an MA in English at the University of Idaho. His recent research interests focus on the intersection of colonialism and agriculture in the American literary tradition.

Sonja Frenzel:

**Women's Writing as Eco-Translation: The Creative-Critical Edges of Precarious Presence in Sharon Dodua Otoo's *Adas Raum* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other***

Abstract:

“We think back through our mothers, if we are women”, asserts Virginia Woolf in her seminal essay “A Room of One’s Own” (1928, 88). And indeed, the expanding Anglophone corpus of women’s writing offers sound foundations for “us”, as women, to build upon when “we” set out to contemplate what it means to be human today. And yet, how do “we” think forward? How do “we” tell stories that appreciate humankind’s past and “our” place in it, while at the same time imagining new, more holistic and sustainable, futures? To offer tentative answers to these questions, this paper will examine how Bernardine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) and Sharon Dodua Otoo’s *Adas Raum* (2021) draw on and imagine literary foundations for the writers and their female characters think back through their “mothers”. All the while, these foundations are thoroughly shaken by a pervasive experience of precariousness that, as I contend, thoroughly entangles writerly and readerly ecologies. To examine these entanglements, I conceive of writing and reading as eco-translational practices (sensu Cronin, Scott). In this sense, writing becomes an equally embodied and epistemic practice that translates a writer’s psycho-physiological response to their multi-faceted experiences of being in and with the world into narrative. Reading, in turn, becomes a creative practice of habitation, in which textual ecologies are (re-)translated into embodied experiences of being in and with the world. It is in these dynamics that the selected literary texts’ material and imaginary ecologies perpetually crack open the foundations of what it means to be human, only to imagine new stories of fully inhabiting the creative-critical edges (Skinner) of our precarious presence in the Anthropocene.

Bionote:

Sonja Frenzel is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Modern English Literature at Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf, where she coordinates the programme in artistic research/creative writing. Following up on her recently completed second academic book (Habilitation) – which was titled “London EcoPoetics: A Critique of Modern Urban Dwelling in Contemporary Long Poems by Kate Tempest and Mary Coghill” – she is currently working on a research project that accommodates both creative and scholarly pieces. Her research interests include ecology and eco-translation, urban studies, gender and queer studies, modern aesthetics and philosophies of modernity, as well as creative writing. She works as a free-lance translator and her own short stories have appeared in print and online magazines.

Chiara Lanza:

## **Precariousness and Resistance: Petro-despotism and the Imaginative Power of Literature**

Abstract:

As Marco Grasso and Stefano Vergine write in *Tutte le colpe dei petrolieri* (2020), both international and national oil companies are the big “elephant in the room”: causally and morally liable for global warming and pollution, they are seldom, if ever, held accountable for the damage caused. It took them years, after the publication of the first assessment report by working group I of the IPCC in 1990, to acknowledge the direct, causal link between their activities and climate change. The fact that fossil fuels were mentioned and discussed during the COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 is undoubtedly an achievement, but the polarisation between those who wanted to phase them down and those who aimed at phasing them out is a clear indicator that much work still needs to be done, and that oil companies should be involved in the debate. The aim of the present paper is that of exploring the environmentally calamitous effects of oil extraction, and its harmful consequences on local populations, by offering an analysis of Imbolo Mbue’s 2021 novel *How Beautiful We Were*. Set in the fictional African village of Kosawa, this novel retraces and re-writes the history of petro-despotism, clearly drawing on Ken Saro-Wiwa’s fight for the Ogoni people and the Ogoniland, with a specific focus on the environmental degradation wrought by the activities and policies of an American oil company. Not only is precariousness an important theme throughout the novel, but the very habitability of the village is constantly questioned. In spite of their defeat, the citizens of Kosawa show great commitment, and their collective action could be read as a road map to facing future challenges and to making our Earth more sustainable.

Bionote:

Chiara Lanza is a Ph.D. candidate in Sustainable Development and Climate Change at the IUSS of Pavia, Italy. She received a master’s degree in Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Turin. Her current research project focuses on land and water pollution as represented in works of literature written by contemporary Anglophone and Francophone authors.

Gita Mohan:

**Cho. Dharman's *Koogai The Owl*: How Translations Enrich the Dialogue on Planetary Precarity**

Abstract:

In his book, *Translation and Globalisation*, Michael Cronin explains how "...translation's *raison d'être* is its implicit ability to universalize... (Cronin 43). A little later, he declares, "A fundamental tenet of anti-globalisation thinking is that local problems are global concerns and that our interconnectedness makes indifference a non-viable option (Ibid., 47). When analysing the potential translation offers "for genuine biocultural diversity in the contemporary world" (Ibid., 85), he explores the role of Memory and says, "Translation allows us to remember what has been done and said and thought before in other languages and in our own. Without it, we are condemned to the most disabling form of cultural amnesia" (Ibid.).

In light of the above, my presentation aims to look at the ways in which the English translation of Tamil Dalit writer Cho. Dharman's novel, *Koogai The Owl*, paves the way for a more enriching discourse on neoliberalism, globalisation, and indeed, planetary precarity. This novel is set in rural Tamil Nadu, and aims to portray an agrarian universe unfamiliar to most readers, without aiming to shock them. Indeed, what comes across is the determination and resilience of an oppressed people, who take matters into their own hands and try alternate means to survive, while aware that things are no different elsewhere – and THIS is where the narrative has much to contribute to other similar narratives globally. As Neelam Srivastava says, "The categories of 'world literature', 'literature of human rights', 'working-class literatures', 'protest literature', all present themselves as possible frameworks of interpretation that have attempted to incorporate (translated) Dalit autobiographies into their purview... (Srivastava 122).

My presentation will close with a brief analysis of how contemporary geopolitics has much to learn from Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), and how global citizens today need to work in tandem to mitigate planetary precarity.

Bionote:

Dr. Gita Mohan has completed her PhD in Postcolonial, Francophone and Translation Studies from the University of Salford, UK (2009). Her thesis was a comparative study of Indian Anglophone and Maghrebian Francophone literary works, with a focus on Translation Shifts and the Quest for Self-Identity. She currently works as an Editor at CSTEP, a Bangalore, India-based research and policy-making think-tank, working in the areas of Climate Change, Energy and Power (including Renewables), AI and Data, Strategic Materials and the like.

Keynote 2: Sharae Deckard

**Precarious Work: The Labour and Ecology of Social Reproduction in World-Literature**

Bionote:

Sharae Deckard is Associate Professor in World Literature at University College Dublin. Her books include *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism and Globalization* (Routledge 2010) and *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (co-authored with the Warwick Research Collective, Liverpool UP 2015). With Rashmi Varma, she is co-editor of *Marxism, Postcolonial Theory, and the Future of Critique: Critical Engagements with Benita Parry* (Routledge 2018), and with Stephen Shapiro, of *World Literature, Neoliberalism and the Culture of Discontent* (Palgrave 2019), winner of the BACLS Edited Collection Prize. She has edited or co-edited five special issues of journals, including: “Food, Energy, Climate: Irish Culture and World-Ecology,” for the *Irish University Review* (2019); “Experimental Writing and the Globalizing World” for *ARIEL* (2016); and “Global and Postcolonial Ecologies,” for *Green Letters* (2012). She is currently editing a new Routledge *Companion to Literature and Environment*, and a special issue of *Feminist Theory* on social reproduction theory and world-literature.

Sule Emmanuel Egya:

**The Human, the Sea, and Planetary Precarity: A Reading of Chuma Nwokolo's "Sea Legs"**

Abstract:

My main interest in this paper is to show the role of literature in representing the precarious condition of the planet earth, but also in the way in which fiction draws our attention to, and keeps us alert of, the increasing realities of climate change. "Sea Legs" is a short story that depicts the life of a local fisherman who is alarmed at the disappearance of the sea, as this spells doom for him and for the entire community. Using the theories of ecocriticism, I read this story as a critical message at a time of climate adversity, pointing out the ironic situation of humans creating the possibility for the disappearance of the sea, which consequences they must face. I also dwell on the postcoloniality of the condition of climate adversity, in that the story is set in a postcolonial Nigeria and the characters struggle with its peculiar problems of existence. A crucial dimension of my reading is the form and structure of the short story, and the tropes the author deploys to relate the urgent message of planetary precarity. I conclude by pointing out that Nwokolo's story, in spite of its fictional exuberance, can be instrumentalised in any cultural efforts to create awareness about the fate of the planet earth.

Bionote:

Sule Emmanuel Egya is professor of African Literature and Cultural Studies at Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria. His research interests include the intersection of literature and politics in Africa, feminism, cultural studies, and ecocriticism. He is the author of over hundred scholarly articles and literary essays some of which have appeared in *Journal of African Literature Association*, *Research in African Literatures*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Matatu*, and *English in Africa*. He also writes poetry and fiction under the style name E. E. Sule. His latest books are *Makwala* (2018), a novel, and *Nature, Environment, and Activism in Nigerian Literature* (Routledge, 2020).

Klara Machata:

## **Entangled Agency in a Planetary Narrative**

Abstract:

The global environmental crisis is characterised by an increasing sense of urgency that stands in striking contrast with the disorientation and lack of agency that many people feel in regard to their own response to it. While critics have argued that stories are essential to mobilise people and guide their actions, the planetary scale confounds dominant notions of agency and autonomy and presents a challenge to storytelling. In contrast to many disaster narratives that focus on a single protagonist and their quest to ‘save the world’, Vandana Singh’s 2015 novella *Entanglement* presents a complex narrative network of entangled human and non-human actors and their seemingly isolated contributions to the collective struggle against a variety of repercussions of the planetary environmental crisis. I argue that Singh not only draws attention to the often neglected other agents and entities the protagonists interact with, but she also suggests a variety of ways in which they realise the potential of their own actions and their entanglement, inspired by non-Western spirituality, art, technology or personal connection. By interweaving five loosely connected plotlines set on four continents the small-scale efforts of individuals are projected onto a planetary canvas and the protagonists’ success depends on fragile connections in a chaotic web of relations. The deconstructive force and complexity of the socio-ecological problems of the Anthropocene present a challenge to storytelling, but an examination of Singh’s approach suggests that the renegotiation of agency and forms of entanglement, both in fiction and otherwise, can contribute to a broader paradigm shift towards planetary solidarity.

Bionote:

Klara Machata is a PhD candidate and research assistant at the University of Freiburg. She holds an advanced degree in English and Geography; her research focuses on space, place, and the anthropocene in contemporary Anglophone fiction. Research interests include ecocriticism, spatial literary studies, political ecology and postcolonial studies.

Isabella Engberg:

**Tracing ‘Global’ Environmental Concerns in Nineteenth Century Scientific Travel Writing: A Comparison of Alexander von Humboldt’s and Charles Darwin’s Travel Accounts**

Abstract:

Investigating scientific travel writing from the nineteenth century, this paper traces the historicity of imagining the planet as ecologically interrelated by considering how local environmental concerns have been depicted within a global context. Providing historical references to examples from two travel narratives, Alexander von Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative* (1814-29) and Charles Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle* (1839, sec. ed. 1845), it offers a broad overview of their scientific and rhetoric developments in the understanding and depiction of an ecology *avant la lettre*. The two authors, whose scientific findings contributed significantly to how ecology is perceived today, may also be said to have developed new and engaging narrative responses parallel to their ecological contemplations of the different places that they visited. These responses include, among others, the use of the motif of travel and movement to interlink global scientific data and adapting to an increasingly scientifically interested public readership.

Bionote:

Isabella Maria Engberg, born and raised in Denmark, is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of Aberdeen, where she also teaches modules in German translation and Victorian speculative fiction. Following her undergraduate studies, which saw her undertake a year’s study at Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany, she graduated in 2020 with a degree in German and English literature from Aberdeen, awarding her several prizes. Her doctoral project investigates the imagination of ecology in scientific travel narratives from the nineteenth century.

Rachel Hill:

**“Like Electronic Techno Music”: The Accelerating Rhythms of Collapsing Cryospheric Auralities**

Abstract:

With its mutating cracks, bleeps, and booms, the contemporary cryosphere speaks in accelerating volumes. A number of contemporary artists transform these sounds of collapsing, disappearing ice into broadcastable frequencies. Rather than a remote distance beyond the reach of relevance, these artworks translate the effects of Antarctica’s melting ice into galvanizing sonic affects. These strange sonics make the pre-existing, myriad connections between ice shelves and human selves apparent. This paper surveys the work of artists Andrea Polli, Adrian Wood (in collaboration with glaciologist Grant MacDonald), Luftwerk, and Himali Singh Soin, in order to think through a phenomenon which I call ‘collapsing cryospheric auralities’. More than purely doom-laden didactics, these sonic artworks strive to propagate hope in equal measure: gestating new trajectories and other futures beyond the seemingly intractable impasses of the present.

Bionote:

Rachel Hill is a PhD Candidate in the Science and Technology Studies Department of University College London (UCL), and is funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). She is a co-director of the London Science Fiction Research Community and explores the subversive potential of speculative fiction as a member of the research collective Beyond Gender. She is an affiliate of the Centre for Outer Space Studies at UCL.

Kelsey Dufresne:

## **Reframing Art with Nature: Flowers, People, and Art in Bloom**

Abstract:

In extending Bernard Stiegler's conceptualizations of life as the economy of death and Alexander Marshack's historical tracings of early-human artifacts in relation to flowers, I strive to 2 situate and read flowers as media and argue that they carry an embedded history and infrastructure that reflects and challenges the anthropocentrism that has cultivated, commodified, and curated blooms throughout time. In looking to theorists such as Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett, I study a specific event in which flowers are presented to the public as art: the North Carolina Museum of Art's Art in Bloom. Art in Bloom offers and sustains a complex media ecology, where paintings and sculptures readily and more permanently adorn the gallery spaces, living blooms are used as accompanying pieces of floral art for four days a year, text embeds all signifying information through the museum, money gains admittance to the space, and visitors experience the collective forces of mediation – and contribute to it by documenting their experience through personal digital photography. Such a study of flowers as both media and art must simultaneously recognize the humanist structures blooms are cultivated and commodified within, emphasizing Art in Bloom as a prime instance in which the tensions surrounding nature, gender, art, and media collide – and where traditional perceptions and understandings of what constitutes art is deconstructed and reverted for the human-oriented benefit and economic gains.

Bionote:

Kelsey Dufresne is a PhD student in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at NC State University in Raleigh, North Carolina where she focuses on experimental and experiential learning, teaching, and critical making. With her work, she explores the capacities of digital humanities and community-centered learning with writing, reading, digital literacy, and American literature. In doing so, Kelsey prioritizes work that employs a data feminist methodology and design justice framework.

James M. Salvo & Jasmine B. Ulmer:

## **A Rhetoric of Preservation: Artistic Interventions in a Damaged World**

Abstract:

Rereading Walter Benjamin's often overlooked theme of preservation in his work, we offer an interpretation of an art installation that appeared in the winter of 2018 in The Heidelberg Project in Detroit, Michigan, USA. By interpreting this installation and Benjamin's insights on preservation, we make recommendations on how to make readable rhetoric that might be used to positively shape digitally disseminated climate change activist media. We examine three types of preservation: 1. preservation that makes inaccessible, 2. dialectical preservation, and 3. the preservation of the collected. In so doing, we show how performative acts of publicly available art might directly respond to the environmental crisis and how the legibility of that art might offer hope for survival in the age of climate change.

Bionotes:

James M. Salvo (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) lectures in the College of Education at Wayne State University in Detroit and the College of Media at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Salvo's research interests are in new media, theory, qualitative inquiry, and ethics. His books include *Writing and Unrecognized Labor: The Rejected Manuscript* (2021) and *Reading Autoethnography: Reflections on Justice and Love* (2020). With Norman K. Denzin, he founded and co-edits the book series *New Directions in Theorizing Qualitative Research for Myers Education Press*. To date, the series has published volumes on Indigenous inquiry, performance, theory, and arts-based research.

Jasmine B. Ulmer (Ph.D., University of Florida) is an associate professor of educational evaluation and research at Wayne State University in Detroit. Her research develops inclusive inquiry methodologies and pedagogies. Ulmer recently co-edited a collection on *Transdisciplinary Feminist Research Approaches: Innovations in Theory, Method, and Practice* (2020). Her most recent book is *Shared and Collaborative Practice in Qualitative Inquiry: Tiny Revolutions* (2021). She has been a Humanities Center Faculty Fellow at Wayne State University, a visiting scholar at Appalachian State University, and a visiting scholar at Ghent University in Belgium. With James M. Salvo, Ulmer is a founding co-editor of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* and the book series *Developing Traditions in Qualitative Inquiry*.

Keynote 3: Gabriele Schwab

**Precarious Boundaries: Reflections on Transspecies Imaginaries**

Bionote:

Gabriele Schwab is Chancellor's Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. Her latest monographs include *Radioactive Ghosts* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (University of Columbia Press, 2010). Her other important publications include *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*; *Accelerating Possessions: Global Futures of Property and Personhood* (Columbia University Press, 2007); and *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen: Otherness in Literary Language* (Indiana University Press, 1996).

May Joseph:

**Dalit Trance and Possession Techniques as Sea Methodologies: A Collaborative Approach**

Abstract:

May Joseph explores collaborative ocean experiments with Dalit performers along the Malabar Coast in her paper titled “Dalit Trance and Possession Techniques as Sea Methodologies: A Collaborative Approach.” In 2011 she collaborated with a group of Dalit performers from the Theyyem and Kalaripayyatu performance traditions to delve into the history and ecology of the Fort Cochin shoreline in Kerala, India. It was a transformative durational performance in Cochin called “When the Sea Rises,” staged on the 16<sup>th</sup> century seawall of Fort Cochin addressing mythologies and stories of the nonhuman and other-than-human ontologies. She will present a powerpoint on the interweaving of divine modalities with ecologies of the nonhuman where she unpacks the precarity of Dalit embodied histories- of those who have been considered less-than-human- alongside the endangered forces of the nonhuman along the Kerala coast.

Bionote:

May Joseph is Founder of Harmatton, Theater, Professor of Social Science at Pratt Institute, and the author of the *Ghosts of Lunumba*; *Sealog: Indian Ocean to New York*; *Fluid New York: Cosmopolitan Urbanism and the Green Imagination*; and *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship*. See her website: [www.mayjoseph.com](http://www.mayjoseph.com).

Sofia Varino:

**Water Activity: Non/Human Collaborations with the Venetian Lagoon**

Abstract:

This paper by Sofia Varino, titled “Water Activity: Non/Human Collaborations with the Venetian Lagoon” explores transmarine immersive pedagogies in the Venice Lagoon. Approaching the phenomenon of *acqua alta* seasonal flooding in Venice in the context of climate change requires collaborative modalities of thought and action. In this presentation, she deploys Harmattan’s *Acqua Alta* performance in 2014 and their postponed 2020 Venice Project as a case study to consider how the medium of site-specific performance enables both performers and audiences to participate in a multispecies praxis of collaboration in public space, activating bodies in real time in relation to the materiality of climate change events and the volatile agency of water.

Bionote:

Dr. Sofia Varino is a writer and cultural historian working at the intersection of body theory, history and philosophy of science, political ecology and gender studies. Varino holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from SUNY Stony Brook and is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Potsdam.

El Glasberg:

## **Roni Horn, Inner Geography, and The Shifting Waters of Iceland**

Abstract:

El Glasberg's paper, "Roni Horn, Inner Geography, and The Shifting Waters of Iceland" drawn from Chapter 5 of Lisa Bloom's forthcoming book titled *Climate Change and the New Polar Aesthetics: Artists Reimagine the Arctic and Antarctic* (Duke UP, forthcoming 2022), looks at Horn's work from 1991-2007 arguing that Horn's work, too often understood in the frame of abstraction, guides audiences to more genuine attachments to material environments by involuting and entangling the organization of psychic, material, and political realms. Working from a queer perspective that focuses on human and nonhuman interactions, she focuses on the way Horn's work in and about Iceland offers -- really, insists on -- the dissolution of a human-centered experience. But more, it asks if humanity can migrate, geographically but also spiritually and materially away from individualistic identification, both as a concept and as a destination. What if humans could flow like water -- or migrate, like birds and what might such a migration from the category of human look like? For this turn Glasberg reconsiders an encrusted identity such as butch lesbian -- one which Horn has both embodied and yet avoided (her art never names sociological identity categories directly). Looking at Horn's *Roni Horn AKA Roni Horn* (2009) Glasberg delves into its elaborate cross-referencing index to flow along with Horn's self-portrait as and through "bird."

Bionote:

El Glasberg teaches in the Expository Writing Program at New York University. Glasberg writes about the ceaseless draw of the South Pole in *Antarctica as Cultural Critique: The Gendered Politics of Scientific Exploration and Climate Change* (Palgrave 2012). As the ice melts and perceptions shift, Glasberg persists, writing about art, music, and environment.

Lisa Bloom:

## **Science Fiction and Populist Media: Reimagining a More Just World**

Abstract:

This paper by Lisa E. Bloom, “Science Fiction and Populist Media: Reimagining a More Just World” inspired by the epilogue of that book focuses on the work of collaborations between activist artists, writers, and filmmakers in web-based media in expanding how we understand the climate crisis by foregrounding global warming’s entwinement with other pressing issues of our time. It shares with the earlier papers a focus on the role of art to imagine a world of planetary care and repair and the issue of future habitability. In her discussion of the short SF films, by Molly Crabtree, Naomi Klein, et al. *Message from the Future with Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez* (2019), and *Message from the Future 2: The Years of Repair* (2020), she links climate change and COVID-19 to its social roots in capitalism and colonialism. The role of expression, especially handmade, is especially important since the films turn a realist hand-drawn aesthetic into a popular form of dissent accessible to millions of viewers. Feminist utopian fiction, as well as community care practices and worker’s rights struggles, also contribute to reframe the climate crisis and spark alternative futures that influence humanity’s non-fictional one.

Bionote:

Lisa E. Bloom is a research scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of *Gender On Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* and *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity*. Her new book is *Climate Change and the New Polar Aesthetics: Artists Reimagine the Arctic and Antarctic* (Duke University Press, Fall 2022).

Jan Rupp:

## **Planetary Precarity and Ecopoetry: Poems to Solve the Climate Crisis?**

Abstract:

Poetry has come to occupy a prominent place in current environmental thought and praxis. Creative contributions by poets are a staple of international climate action, and poems like Kathy Jetñ il-Kijiner's "Tell Them" (2011) or Warsan Shire's "Home" (2015) have arguably done more than many other literary responses to highlight environmental catastrophe and refugee migration as related factors of planetary precarity. With respect to ecocritical debates, this conspicuous visibility of poetry lends additional urgency to questions of genre: Where the novel's potential to tackle climate change under the sign of the Anthropocene has been viewed sceptically (cf. Ghosh 2016), many critics regard poetry as better placed to render the complexity and multiplicity of environmental issues (cf. Clark 2019). In the proposed paper, I will take up this debate over genre and representation to inquire into a range of poetic works in the context of the recent UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021 (COP26). Among a variety of readings and performances, a writing challenge calling for "Poems to Solve the Climate Crisis" powerfully articulated the case for poetry. While many submissions envisioned reformed conceptions of humannature relationality, others expressed lingering Romantic ideas of nature, highlighting a need to further assess and differentiate the growing body of ecopoetry. Here, I will complement my case study of the COP26 with a reading of selected poems by writers from the global South, which are frequently informed by a long (post-)colonial history of the Anthropocene and thus offer instructive allegories to attend to planetary precarity today (cf. DeLoughrey 2019).

Bionote:

Jan Rupp currently serves as interim professor of English at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. He has published widely on postcolonial Anglophone writing, cultural memory studies, and narrative theory. Among his current work is a project on figurations of world writing and environmental memory in literatures of the global South.

Leonor María Martínez Serrano:

## **Earth Is *Oikos*: Peter Sanger on the Vulnerability of the Biosphere as Life's Home**

Abstract:

Canadian poet and critic Peter Sanger (b. 1943) is the author of a very prolific work, including poetry collections, essays and edited books. This paper looks into his ecological thinking as put forward in an essay titled *Oikos*, published as an elegant chapbook by Gaspereau Press in 2014 and originally delivered as an address at the Nova Scotia Agriculture College on 4 May 2012. *Oikos* is the ancient Greek word for *home*, which in Sanger's thinking is synonymous with *Earth*, *planet* or *biosphere*—the home life has built for itself—and appears to be indebted to Heidegger's (1993) thinking on nature, poetry and dwelling. At a time of alarming environmental degradation that is seriously compromising the habitability of the Earth and the survival not just of *homo sapiens*, but also of a myriad of nonhuman species, it is wise to listen closely to what poetthinkers have to tell us of value about the urgent need to protect the Earth and its life forms. Sanger is not alone in thinking of the biosphere as a fragile place that needs our protection and respect, as we are not its owners—we don't own what we know, as ecopoet Don McKay elegantly puts it. He is part of a long tradition that comprises the ancient pre-Socratic poetphilosophers, the ancient Chinese poets and Buddhist sages, the Transcendentalists Emerson (2003) and Thoreau (1906;1986), Heidegger, Leopold (1949; 1991), Abram (2010) and a host of contemporary ecopoets and thinkers intent on denouncing the ferocious, shameless exploitation of the planet, our shared home, with different degrees of belligerence and explicitness. Time and again, they remind readers that there is another way to live on Earth, with a sense of duty and responsibility, that life (not *homo sapiens*) is the *raison d'être* of the biosphere, that it is biocentrism, and not anthropocentrism, that we should embrace instead. In the spirit of Iovino's (2010) concept of "nonanthropocentric humanism," this paper explores Sanger's ecotinking and his intellectual roots in a long tradition sensitive to the fragility of the Earth.

Bionote:

Leonor María Martínez Serrano is a Lecturer at the University of Córdoba. Her research interests include Canadian and American Literature, High Modernism, and Ecocriticism. She has co-edited *Modern Ecopoetry: Reading the Palimpsest of the Morethan-Human World* (Brill, 2021) and authored *Breathing Earth: The Polyphonic Lyric of Robert Bringhurst* (Peter Lang, 2021).

Micol Bez:

**How does precarity make you feel? Attempts toward a phenomenology.**

*La solitude est une absence de temps.* — E. Levinas

Abstract:

Let us talk about feelings as modes of existence of consciousness (Sartre), be it individual, generational, national or social. I want to ask: how does precarity make you feel? How have such feelings emerged, and how are they limiting the kind of meaning-making activities you're capable of, our socio-political modes of existence? I will focus on the affects of generational politics, asking: what does it mean to resent the parents that have left us only with futureless ruins, a whole generation on the brink of economic precarity and environmental disaster? And how does it feel to say, "I don't want to have children, because of climate change, and temporary employment"? How are we living with such limits, with the impossibility of projecting ourselves in time and across generations? It is a futuricide. A loss of future and, possibly, of world. What we are being denied is the possibility of protention (Husserl) and futurity, and this is why precarity entails an existential loss, a deprivation that touches on the very structure of consciousness: our need to project onto the world and onto the future (Crépon). I would like to focus on the way in which the virus altered our experience of time, and more fundamentally on what it revealed about the ongoing transformations of our social relationship to the future. This paper will argue that pandemic altered our relationship to time by altering our relationship to other people. Firstly, it will develop the link between time and Other (Levinas), or better on the necessity of the other in order to have a temporal projection, or to have a nonpathological relation to time. Secondly, the paper will propose to extend this Levinassian analysis as a general phenomenon of the precarisation of contemporary society, proposing that the alteration of some fundamental networks of interpersonal trust has created the conditions for the erosion of our confidence in the future —creating a fundamental melancholisation of discourse (Joseph). Finally, this relational model will be put to work to question the relationship between time, future and community, hoping to ask: what notion of future does community-building require? Can we live without a future?

Bionote:

Micol Bez is pursuing a double Ph.D. in Philosophy and Comparative Literary Studies, affiliated with the Department of French and Italian at Northwestern and with the Philosophy Department at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris. She is also a Mellon Cluster Fellow in Critical Theory. Her research interests are situated at the intersection of Political Epistemology, Critical Theory, and Phenomenology.

Richard Chapman:

**“The Devil has all the best tunes”: linguistic elements in the crisis of neo-liberalism and western democracies in the age of climate emergency.**

Abstract:

The present paper attempts to outline a curious and perhaps decisive aspect of the current climate crisis and the inadequate human response to it. Even in its death throes, Neo-liberalism shows a remarkable dexterity with language and slogans, and its proponents and supporters enjoy a privileged position to communicate these politically-driven linguistic moments of performance. Taking the recent COP 26 as an example (among others) of the contrast between institutional linguistic behavior and actual economic and social actions, the paper suggests that, however effective the communication of climate science might be, one of the greatest dangers we face as inhabitants of this planet is the essentially unsustainable and unhealthy relationship between the rhetoric of governments, new tech, large commercial concerns on the one hand, and their own actions on the other.

Phrases such as ‘carbon neutral’ or ‘carbon zero’, while clearly used to embellish unrealistic and long-distant policy goals, are found to be highly effective in the arena of political and economic discourse concerning climate change and mitigation. A comparison between statements given at climate conferences and policy decisions taken immediately following illustrates the intensity of the problem: even if the political debate on the current emergency is decisively won, this is no guarantee of the slightest real change in human activity.

It is also to be observed that much of the debate on climate related issues, and indeed the solutions touted, are highly skewed towards the developed western economies, and risk reinforcing colonial, imperialistic and racist practices with little awareness of the essential disparity of life in a potentially cataclysmic world future. All of this is concealed in language play that is as effective as it is dangerous to our shared environment.

Bionote:

Richard Chapman is Researcher in English Language in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Ferrara, Italy and is a member of the Doctoral programme on sustainability, “Sustainable Environment and Wellbeing” (UniFe). Publications include numerous course-books for language learners (both teenagers and adults) and studies reflecting interest in developments in the language from a sociolinguistic, textual and pragmatic point of view. Recent publications include work on computer-assisted language testing, on the pragmatics of language test instruments, corpus linguistics and the possible roles of English as a Lingua Franca and as a language of social division.

Kanak Yadav:

## **The Precarious Case of Zero-Waste Solution to the Planetary Problem**

Abstract:

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of human impact on the planet and how it threatens to annihilate human existence itself if remains unchecked and uncontrolled. The topicality of this man-made crisis has not only led politicians and policymakers to recognize climate change and look for effective solutions at a global scale but it has also forced individuals to reassess how their consumeristic lifestyles might be destroying the planet.

In such a context, there has been a rapid rise of bloggers and activists advocating for a sustainable zero-waste lifestyle. A lifestyle that aims to minimize human impact on the environment by reducing, and preferably, removing waste at its origin. This presentation is interested in examining the cultural phenomenon of “zero-waste lifestyle” and its sustainable solutions to the perils of neoliberal capitalism. For this purpose, it looks at American environmental activist Lauren Singer’s website “Trash is for Tossers” and its Indian counterpart, Sahar Mansoor’s “Bare Necessities” as case studies to analyze the solution of “zero-waste lifestyle” as an alternative to the problem of environmental degradation. By analyzing the ideology and the material culture of zero-waste consumption that they promote, this presentation aims to situate their counter-politics and evaluate the effectiveness of their resolutions to the planetary crisis at a time when world leaders fail to come up with stricter regulations.

Bionote:

Kanak Yadav is a Ph.D. scholar at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She has also worked as an Assistant Professor (English) at various Delhi University colleges. She has recently submitted her doctoral thesis which studies the representation of Indian megacities in select Indian English Nonfiction. Her articles and reviews have appeared in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, *Akados*, *The New Leam* and *World Literature Today*. Her research interests include cities of the global south, Dalit Autobiographical Narratives, Indian English Novel, and Narrative Nonfiction.

Rebekka Rohleder:

**Working Through Disaster in the Post-Apocalyptic Community: Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* and John Lanchester's *The Wall***

Abstract:

The 2010s saw a number of novels that imagined catastrophes that completely transform life on earth. In front of the backdrop of the generalised precarity of the neoliberal age, the historical moment before the catastrophe, the planet after catastrophe is depicted in a differently precarious state. In this paper, I want to look at two novels: Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2013) and John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019), both of which imagine societies after catastrophe. In Atwood's novel, this society is cast as inclusive and partly utopian; in Lanchester's, it is unquestionably dystopian and absolutely not inclusive. It is implied there that the catastrophe in question, the "Change", was caused by climate change, and that while Britain, where most of the novel is set has been hit hard, other regions have it worse, resulting in climate refugees trying to breach the wall that surrounds the coast. Those who get through after all are forced to work as "help". And that is not the only kind of mandatory service: all young people have to spend two years as "Defenders" on the wall. The society depicted here relies on a strict allocation of tasks instead of paid work and a labour market. In *MaddAddam*, too, work after the catastrophe no longer consists of paid work. The small community of survivors live in a world without money, with work largely self-organised. Here, too, work is radically transformed. The preceding catastrophe is brought about by characters who believe that overpopulation is a problem, one of whom deliberately causes a deadly pandemic. This goes along with a dystopian pre-catastrophic society in which individuals are dispensable to the corporations who run society. Economic and ecological precarity are thus connected in both novels, tying the comparatively small community in question back to a planetary perspective. This is the nexus I want to explore in this paper.

Bionote:

Rebekka Rohleder wrote her doctoral dissertation at Free University Berlin, about literary space in Mary Shelley's novels (published 2019). She has taught British literature and culture at the University of Hamburg and at Leuphana University Lüneburg. At the moment, she works at the English department of Europa-Universität Flensburg. Her research interests include British Romanticism, literary space, and depictions of work in contemporary British culture.

Cristina Gámez-Fernández:

**Vulnerable Habitability and Precarious Life in *Le Transperceneige* (1986) and *Snowpiercer* (2013; 2020)**

Abstract:

The interest arisen on social media and the Internet about *Le Transperceneige* graphic novel (1986), the 2013 film *Snowpiercer* (directed by Bong Joon-ho), and the 2020 eponymous TV series—produced by TNT and available through Netflix—is beyond question (see for instance [looper.com](http://looper.com) in English). The inhabitability of the world in some of these cultural products is caused by a last and desperate attempt to unsuccessfully revert the global warming effect that extractive, neoliberal logics exerted in the name of “modernity” and “progress.” In turn, inhabitants in this dystopic world survive thanks to a train that incessantly moves around a frozen and deserted planet Earth. These three cultural texts narrativize distinct survival strategies that simply reproduce the same economic and neo-imperialist productive dynamics it sought to turn in the first place, and which continue to bring about the disenfranchisement and overexploitation of the other, placed in the rear cars of the train, a vertical version of north-south migration attempts adapted to the train material structure. This proposal aims to compare the evolution in ideological, socio-economic, and ecological concerns that pervade each of these dystopic cultural manifestations, separated by a time span of 27 and 34 years respectively from the original French creation. Such concerns reveal the contemporary evolution in the ontology of human vulnerability in their attempt to survive in a postapocalyptic world. Ranging from the exhaustion of global resources, the unequal distribution of wealth, the value of human and non-human life against global economic profit as devised by neo-imperial and neoliberal practices, the role of technology as cause and consequence of the problem, to the human need to thrive and survive through resilience, I will approach this analysis through the critical lens of precarity (Butler 2004, 2009; 2020), the precariat (Standing 2011), ecoprecarity (Nayar 2019), global economy (Sassen 2014), and slow violence (Nixon 2011).

Bionote:

Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and German at the University of Córdoba. She is one of the Founders of Challenging Precarity: A Global Network, to which she serves as Membership Secretary. She is currently working in several publishing projects with Routledge and Peter Lang.

Keynote 4: Jason W. Moore

**Planetary Justice and the Planetary Proletariat**

Bionote:

Jason W. Moore is an environmental historian and historical geographer at Binghamton University, New York, where he is Professor of Sociology. He is author or editor of, most recently, *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (Verso, 2015), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (PM Press, 2016), and, with Raj Patel, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (University of California Press, 2017). His books and essays on environmental history, capitalism, and social theory have been widely praised, and he has been awarded the Alice Hamilton Prize of the American Society for Environmental History (2003), and the Byres and Bernstein Prize in Agrarian Change (2011).