



INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE WORKSHOP

## **ECOCRITICISM & NARRATIVE FORM**

**9th to 10th December, 2019**

**Graduate Center for the Study of Culture  
Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, Germany**

Organized by Oikos, GCSC Giessen, in cooperation with the  
European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment (EASLCE).  
Guests: Prof. Erin James (University of Idaho) and Dr. Michael Basseler (GCSC)

While ecocriticism has traditionally focused on thematic literary analysis, a growing number of scholars working in the field today examine the role of narrative form in literature's exploration of our environments (James and Morel 2018). In reaction to a growing, methodologically diverse ecocritical scholarship, calls for a refocusing on the "aesthetic" dimensions of environmental literature (cf. Roos, Hunt, and Tallmadge 2010, Heise 2010) and, more precisely, the "cross-fertilization" of ecocritical and narratological scholarship (Lehtimäki 2013, James and Morel 2018, Neumann 2019, Rupp 2019) are becoming louder.

More and more scholars ask: What can ecocritics gain from narratology and narrative theory – and vice versa? Might a more formal analysis of environmental literature help us to explore the role of narrative in building our 'eco-social imaginaries' and even to overcome the "representational obstacles" (Nixon 2011) posed by the environmental crises of our time? As literary animal studies have long stated, an exploration of non-human perspectives and -agency, non-/bio-centric viewpoints, and non-human temporal and spatial scales (McHugh 2011, Herman 2018) will help us explore the capabilities of narrative to multiply perspectives, trace nonhuman experientiality, or present the breach of unacknowledged environmental background into the well-ordered diegesis. What is more, postclassical narratology offers a sophisticated array of contextualist, cognitive, or transgeneric approaches, which fruitfully interact with ecocritical concerns, particularly the 'third wave' of ecocritical theory (Zapf 2016). Additionally, as James and Morel have suggested, narratological concepts such as Prince's conception of the "dis-narrated" (1992) or Herman's "storyworld" (2002) and a reconsideration of the role of so-called "unnatural narratives" (cf. Richardson 2000, 2002) and 'low-brow' genres (i.e. science fiction) will grow ecocriticism's analytical depths. And more recently, empirical ecocritics have called for an empirical investigation of the influence of environmental narratives on their audiences, which requires us not only to rethink our methods, but also to strengthen awareness of narrative strategies and their affective impacts (cf. Weik von Mossner 2017).

Furthermore, a range of narratological concepts are put into question by environmental writing. Conceptions of description or stasis as the opposite of narrative have been contested, whereas David Herman and Ursula Heise have continually focused on hitherto under-examined categories such as space and scale as central elements of environmental writing (Heise 2008; Herman 2018; Lehtimäki 2013). Anthropocene time scales (deep pasts and futures, slow environmental violence and the 'great acceleration') call for a reconsideration of temporal analytical categories, while new materialist ecocriticism and human-animal scholars put common definitions of actors and agents in any given narrative into question (Iovino 2012; Iovino and Oppermann 2012; McHugh 2009; Borgards 2016).



In this workshop, we encourage PhD students and Postdocs working in Ecocriticism and the Environmental Humanities to specifically consider the formal and narratological dimension of their research and to exchange insights into the gains and limits of importing narratological scholarship into ecocritical inquiry (and vice versa). We invite contributions dealing with the following topics (and beyond):

- Econarratology
- Anthropocene narratives
- Non-human narrators / characters
- Representations of slow violence through climate change, (radio)toxicity, extinction
- Narratives of non-human minds and trans-species cognition
- The fictionality of environmental facts, the factuality of narrative environments
- Speculation, weird ecologies, uncanny natures
- Trans-media, trans-locality, trans-species narratology
- Empirical Ecocriticism
- Ecocriticism and film analysis
- Stasis, description, slowness in environmental writing
- Scale, planetarity, focalization in eco-narratives
- Environment and storyworld

The workshop sessions will be complemented by a **Masterclass and a Keynote Lecture by Prof. Erin James (University of Idaho)** on her current book project "Narrative in the Anthropocene".

### **Workshop Format:**

The collaborative workshop "Ecocriticism and Narrative Form" seeks to provide a productive space for 10-12 early-career researchers to exchange ideas and give feedback on each other's work. To achieve that, participants will prepare a **10-minute presentation** on the eco-narratological dimensions of their research, which will be complemented by a **30-minute feedback session** based on the presentation and some **pre-circulated material** of no more than 10 pages or 3000 words (e.g. a short text sample, an exposé or project summary). Each participant will be allocated a partner who prepares an informal response (max. 5 minutes) to the pre-circulated material. Participants who wish to partake are kindly asked to send their material by 28th November 2019.

Coffee breaks and lunch on both days as well as dinner on Monday will be provided. All participants should be or become members of EASLCE (15€/year for PhD students, others 50€/year). A small number of travel bursaries will be available for those without financial support and for independent scholars. Please state in your application if you would require such support and how much your travel will cost approximately. The organizing team can support participants with finding affordable or free accommodation in Gießen.

**To apply, please send an abstract (250-300 words) to [liza.bauer@gcsc.uni-giessen.de](mailto:liza.bauer@gcsc.uni-giessen.de) by 16th October, 2019. The abstract should specify how the narratological angle relates to the overall doctoral or postdoctoral project.**

### **Organizing Team:**

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