

Department of English and American Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University, Slovakia

invite you to attend the 17th November literary colloquium, this year on the topic

LITERATURE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

The colloquium is organised on **6-8 November 2023** as a hybrid event.
Physically, it takes place at Department of English and American Studies
at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia.

Address:

Štefánikova trieda 67

94901 Nitra

International presenters and attendees can join the event via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4382027861?pwd=m3I1ICDx8wJfC88W2dg4BCUARx46lV.1>

Meeting ID: 438 202 7861

Passcode: LAKt8f

Most sessions will be recorded and published afterwards on the department's YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiQ0cksAZYFWfLXH-tUcl_g

Presenters who wish to have their papers considered for publication, can submit them to the department's

literary journal *Ars Aeterna* at: <https://forms.gle/mcAxiZ61Jc27Vke7A>

This event is organised as a part of the project

KEGA009UKF-4/2022 Poetry as lingua franca – effective approaches to teaching poetry as a vehicle for personal growth within the context of international cross-cultural communication.

**ALL TIMES IN THE PROGRAM ARE GIVEN IN
CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME ZONE,**

SO CHECK YOUR TIME ZONE CAREFULLY IN ORDER NOT TO MISS THE SESSIONS.

Mind that Slovakia changes to Winter Time on 28th October.

Check your time here: <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>

PROGRAM

Monday 6 November

9:15 – 10:45

Hurt in/of Darkness: Green Forest vs. Dark Space in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"

Bouregbi Salah, professor

Faculty of Letters & Languages; Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba, Algeria

Nature and identity are dialogically related to one another. Nature is but the extension of the insights of identity: it represents the within through metaphors and symbols. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a good illustrative example for such relationship. Two settings serve as ground for the novella: the river Thames in London (England), and the Congo River, where the major events of the story did take place: it is enveloped by the green savage forest and accessible only through three stations: Company Station (Kinshasa), Central Station (Katanga) and Inner Station (Stanley Fall). The story is narrated through flash-backs and happened in the dark 'primitive' Africa. In the story, the White-white culture and the Black-black culture come into play. What is noticeable is that all what are white turn to be the source of strife, killing and murder and all what is black becomes a part of nature. In other words, those who kill, grab and destroy are whites more than blacks. What we have learned from such experimentation is that all what make sense in Europe do not make sense in Africa. Whites have become what they were not: Darkness of Africa has unveiled the real nature of the 'pilgrims'.

Unraveling Contemporary Climate Change and Environmental Issues through History in Nutmeg's "Curse"

Bhakti Vaishnav, PhD.

Government Arts and Science College, Bavla, (State - Gujarat) India

As declared by the Stanford University Team and discussed by Robert Macfarlane, we have entered another epoch of the earth and we belong to Generation Anthropocene. Anthropocene has emerged as an influential term in the field of literature and cultural studies in terms of its application as a critical tool. In 2016, in the year 2003, Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined the term solastalgia which means a "form of psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change". On the other hand, through an analysis that bridges non-fiction and fiction, Gib Prettyman's argues that the Anthropocene challenge conceptions of what it means to be human, forcing us to 'un-see our traditional perceptions of self-separation from our environment and work to perceive more accurately our intra-active entanglement with matter'. Some of the contemporary writers are occupied with intra-active entanglement and solastalgia when they are writing about the Anthropocene. Amitav Ghosh through his *Nutmeg's Curse* unravels the passages of history and colonialism to provide an insight into man nature relationship/ issues of our times. The proposed presentation/ paper aims at studying this text in order to study, analyse and understand the ways in which the author brings out the multi-fold aspects of Anthropocene with his skilful blending of contemporary theories and examples across the world. The paper also seeks to understand the way in which this ardent researcher and story teller weaves his work on history, climate change and environmental issues together and puts forward his arguments and insight in order to explain the fact that the monster of climate change or aftermaths of anthropocene require an interdisciplinary, inclusive, historically grounded, politically informed, non-consumerist, sustainable and 'human' approach, human narrative.

11:00 – 12:30

Middle-earth herbarium

Eva Zahradníková, PhD.

Department of Botany, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia

This lecture takes the listeners on a walk through Middle-earth and shows them the remarkable plants born from the imagination of Professor Tolkien. Among other things, they will learn how tall trees can grow in Middle-earth compared to our world, what Old Man Willow has in common with shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), how plants were domesticated, if trees can really walk, why there are no tomatoes in Middle-earth (in the books, at least) and if athelas is an invasive plant.

PROGRAM

Tuesday 7 November

9:15 – 10:45

Ecofeminist resonance in Instapoetry

Tisha Roy, professor

Christ College Rajkot India

This article begins with an overview of ecofeminism and its evolution into a socio-environmental movement. It seeks to unravel the interconnectedness between women and nature, conceptually and symbolically. The platform to study this interjection is the digital world of Instagram poetry. The article investigates how Instapoets employ the concise form to communicate complex ecofeminist ideas. It discusses how the digital nature of Instapoetry enables rapid discussion and global conversations. It intends to study how works of Rupi Kaur, Nikita Gill, Lang Leav, Atticus, Cleo Wade, Amanda Lovelace, Tyler Knott, Sarah Kay, Yrsa Daley Ward, Nayyirah Waheed and such prominent poets weave ecofeminist narratives through nature symbols. Also is specific detail, I would like to introspect the published works of Rupi Kaur through the lens of ecofeminism.

Ecocritical Emphases in the Poetry of Zoltán Németh

Rudolf Radics, lecturer

University of Prešov, Institute of Hungarian Language and Culture, Slovakia

In Zoltán Németh's poetry, the dissolution of the distinction between man and animal, the destruction of nature, the inevitability of facing human responsibility, and the questions of identity raised by these issues also offer themselves to the interpretive directions of literary studies and cultural studies, such as biopoetics, zoopoetics, ecology or ecocriticism, which emerged as a new interdisciplinary science in the 1980s. Drawing on this insight, this presentation will seek to draw on insights from ecology and ecocriticism, while examining whether the natural environment plays a more important role than usual in the interpretation of the poems selected from the author's volumes *Tektonika* (Tectonics) and *Állati férj* (Animal Husband), or whether it is given the same attention as any other building block of the text. The interpretation of the chosen lyrical texts is possible not only from the perspective of the nature of human – animal interactions, but also from the perspective of ecocriticism along the lines of the untouched – contaminated motifs. The theoretical background of the study is mainly provided by the relevant aspects of Greg Garrard's ecocritical tropes outlined in his book *Ecocriticism* and Hubert Zapf's concept of sustainable text, which allow us to approach the subject of ecocriticism in a more concrete way and the image of nature that emerges in the volumes of an iconic author of contemporary Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

Merlin's Body in Bragdon Wood: How Lewis Understood both the Mystical and the Divine as Natural

Vincent Wise, independent researcher

United States of America

This paper examines the confluence of the magical, divine, and natural in C.S. Lewis' third novel of the cosmic trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*. It is in this story that Lewis' conception of nature as a convergence of mystical and divine is most apparent. I will be using three major examples from the story to showcase this view. Starting with the dead head

of Alcasan I will dedicate the first third of this paper to discussing the anti-natural elements of the story's antagonists. I will dedicate the second third to the book's descendant of Arthur and his followers at St. Anne's, focusing on the Eden-like elements of this group and its leader's qualities as a "new Adam." Finally, I will finish with a focus on Merlin the wizard, who is resurrected in a well in Bragdon Woods. Who critics consider not just a representative of the Arthurian tradition in the story but also an important figure "in his own right as a representative of magic." I will dedicate the third and final part to the naturalistic elements of Merlin's magic and his relationship with nature. I believe that these three major naturalistic themes of Lewis' work can help a reader understand the significance of nature in the text.

11:00 – 12:30

An Ecofeminist Criticism of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's "Sultana's Dream"

Hossain Al Mamun, professor

Department of English, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

As a utopia fiction, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's (1980-1932) *Sultana's Dream* narrates a fantasy of a young woman-Sultana, who visits a 'Ladyland' run solely by women where she encounters perfect order and harmony everywhere using natural resources applying technologies and following 'love' as their religion. The author invites women of colonial Indian Muslim society to have an illusory experience of freedom by criticizing the selfishness of patriarchy and the self-slavery of women in a similar way showing how only education can be the driving force of women's emancipation in the context of using natural details and recourses, as much as possible. In the story, a native guide for Sultana, Sister Sara introduces how they make nature yield as much as they can and they dive deep into the ocean of knowledge and try to find out the precious gems that Nature has kept in store for them and how they enjoy their lives in the availability of electricity and aerial transport, clean streets and lush gardens; pleasurable labour and plenty of leisure in a 'no crime and no disease' Herland where women are out of zenana (seclusion in four walls) who are studying in universities and conducting marvellous researchers with the inventions of machines for reserving rainwater and the sun heat. Therefore, Rokeya's story explores a techno-scientific utopianism within a broader Ecofeminist perspective. This paper examines how Ecofeminism relates women and nature with the tendency toward 'domination of the environment as an extension of the logic of patriarchy' to claim that the treatment of women and nature requires analysis which should not be male-biased.

13:20 – 14:30

Generating Climate Healing: Post-apocalyptic Spirituality in Octavia E. Butler's "Parable of the Sower"

Meriem Chebel, PhD.

Badji Mokhtar University-Annaba, Algeria

Octavia E. Butler stresses the importance of spirituality in rebuilding the connection between humans and the world they live in. In the post-apocalyptic setting of *Parable of the Sower*, she portrays characters of different religious backgrounds. These characters share the willingness to hope even against common sense because religion is necessary in reconnecting the human with Earth and its ecosystems in a constructive rather than a destructive way. Unreligious characters are more destructive towards nature; the reason does not lie in the writer's belief that religious people are superior in understanding. Religion simply helps overcome the climate trauma experienced after the "cultural war" that destroys America. Overcoming climate trauma and having a sense of spiritual fulfilment that comes from the belief that there is an afterlife select religious believers as better survivors in the community. However, the religion that is celebrated in the novel by the main protagonist is called Earthseed, and it is different from other established religions.

Earthseed shares with other religions the belief that humans change and thrive through adversity, yet the change does not affect humans only; God also changes in the same way nature does, which explains the name given to the new religion.

Paro-dying Nature: ‘Ecosophy’, Anti-literature and Ecological Entropy in Samuel Beckett’s “Nohow On”

Rahil Dellali, PhD.

Badji Mokhtar University-Annaba, Algeria

Most of the modern and postmodern literary productions flaunt obdurate images of death and disintegration, where nature, both as a space and place, is reduced to a mere emptied site. Samuel Beckett’s fiction falls more within the ‘anti-literature’ and absurdist travails whose comic cruelty surpasses the relief that natural images provide. In Beckett’s Endgame play, the characters entertain the ideas that “there’s no more nature”, and that “the earth is extinguished”. In Waiting for Godot, the earth is referred to as “the abode of stones”. Inspired by Felix Guttari’s ‘ecosophical’ theory of the three ecologies (environment, society, and subjectivity), this paper is an ecocritical reading of Beckett’s collection of three prose pieces entitled Nohow On (1989). Nature, like Beckett’s characters in this collection, is mostly anonymous; it is equally silenced and hardly depictable especially in the first piece entitled Company and the last one entitled Worstward Ho. The story in the middle is entitled Ill Seen Ill Said where the pronouncement that there’s “No more sky or earth” is made; it is a pure parody of nature through the withering life of an unnamed old woman. In Nohow On, nature is reduced to absence. It is intentionally eliminated into static silence to serve the rather decaying parodies of its existence.

14:45 – 16:15

Effects of evil on nature in Tolkien’s stories

Lenka Prágerová, master’s degree student

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia

This essay depicts three significant locations in Tolkien’s Middle-earth - Utumno, Angband and Mordor - as symbolic representations of moral consequences, akin to the concept of Hell in various mythologies and religious texts. These fortresses that are built by Morgoth symbolize the consequences of choices driven by the pursuit of power, control and malevolence. Utumno is described as a subterranean labyrinth of darkness, fire and torment and likened to the biblical depiction of Hell. This essay also draws parallels between Angband and Hell, it explores the moral fall associated with Morgoth’s actions and the physical and metaphorical descents into a darkness within Angband. Mordor is described as a land steeped in evil and corruption and is compared to traditional representations of Hell with its fiery landscapes and unrelenting darkness, which creates a powerful and oppressive atmosphere.

The Autumn of the World - An Ecocritical Perspective on J.R.R. Tolkien’s “The Fall of Arthur”

Daniel Kephart, doctoral student

The University of Rochester, New York State, USA

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of The Fall of Arthur’s publication. The work is an unfinished masterpiece, a brief but intricate attempt by Tolkien to defragment the fractured world of Arthurian mythos. Blurring the lines between the natural and artificial worlds, Tolkien creates a cast of characters who seem to embody the rhythms of the natural world. Arthur becomes an embodiment of the natural world as it “dwindles in autumn days,” Gawain a splendid image of “the westering sun,” and Lancelot and his banner of lilies a sorrowful image of a figurative Spring that will never

come (FA I.10, III.178, IV.156-7). In this paper, I examine how these vibrant natural images complicate Tolkien's lone Arthurian narrative, romanticizing and estranging a pseudo-historical narrative while simultaneously dissolving the traditional barriers in romantic stories between the natural and the civilized worlds.

The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury and the Two Trees of Valinor

Giovanni Costabile, independent researcher

Italy

An old wooden church in Glastonbury rose on the site of the Abbey church taking its place after a fire burnt it. This old church is traditionally considered to have been the eldest church in England, founded by Joseph of Arimatea after landing upon the British shore. Such a legend, probably spread after the Norman Conquests by the Abbey monks who needed to fund the monastery, also relates that Joseph planted his staff upon the highest hill in Glastonbury, and the staff grew branches and roots, transforming into a wonderful thorn tree which, unlike common thorns, bloomed twice a year, once in May, as usual for the species, the other at Christmas. Even today Queen Elizabeth receives a twig from the Glastonbury thorn each year at Christmas, connecting the plant with the heritage of the English Crown. Since it can be proven that Tolkien was aware of the legend, I propose to ponder the chances he might have been inspired therefrom in the conception of the White Tree of Gondor and all trees descending from the Two Trees of Valinor.

PROGRAM

Wednesday 8 November

8:00 – 9:00

Imagery of Nature and Seasons in Haryanvi “Lok Sahitya”

Sumitra Dahiya, PhD.

Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa, India

Not only Sanskrit, but all Indian kinds of regional literature, such as Haryanvi Lok Sahitya, are rich in depictions of nature and the seasons. However, it is not irrational. Humans have had a relationship with nature from the beginning of time. He first opened his eyes amid nature and grew. He has long acknowledged this fundamental relationship between man and nature in religion, philosophy, literature, and art. Writing is a reflection of human life, and the portrayal of Nature in literature is clear. Nature and seasons are described in Haryanvi literature in a variety of forms, including alambana, uddipan, upmaan, prishtbhumi, pratik, alankara, updesha, dyuti, bimb-pratibimb, manvikaran, and rahasya. In Haryanvi literature, Kalpanik Bimb is an important literary figure that makes poetry and music more vulnerable. This article aims to highlight nature and season imagery in Haryanvi folk songs, tales and music with the help of the interpretation of metaphors, symbols, rituals, taboos, hidden moral messages and folk words.

Ramayana as an Eco-centric Epic

Gohil Hardeepsinh Ranjitsinh, professor

Gujarat College, Gujarat, India

A text which has been emanated from poets despair about Man's annihilation of nature; has more relevance in present polluted times, than thousands of years before when it was written. Ramayana has been venerated, preached, read, recited and performed in various parts of the world in 'variety of ways over the centuries'. (Richman: 2008) The poet sage Valmiki compelled to write the epic on intolerable incident of killing the male Saarus (crane) enjoying conjugal company of his counterpart. The present paper will try to evaluate employment of language and literary aspects to figure out poet's bondage with mother earth and his dexterity to formulate it into the magnum opus. The application of various poetical devices (rhyming- Anustup chanda, allusions- from Vedas, and Upanishads, ironies – prince and princess spending their lives as wayfarers) description of the various geographical locations (Ram's exile in woods, Chitrakut, Dandakaranya forest, Ganga, Yamuna, Kaanan, Mountains and Ocean), along with poet's artistic exertion of personified metaphors (Ahalya, Maricha, Jatayu, Hanuman) leads to the sublime realization of 'nature, The strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.' (Scheese:2002) It will illuminate the unexplored eco-centric angles from one of the most ancient texts.

11:00 – 12:30

Like a Tree which is (not) and A River that Flows (not): Reading Poetry, Speculating Motifs

Sanjay Mukherjee, professor

Department of English & Comparative Literary Studies, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India

Literature emerged as one of the earliest opposites of nature, and yet according to this working paper, it has been one

of the earliest and most significant oppositional elements vis-à-vis nature. It is difficult to measure all of nature (ecological, or, for that matter, human) in literary works; similarly, a paper or even a book would be grossly inadequate measuring up literature on nature. So, this paper would confine itself to two recurring natural motifs that have fascinated poets / writers over the ages: the tree, and the river, and arrive at certain tentative observations through a selection of Indian, British, and American poems. The metaphor of flowing time like the river and that of being rooted to a place like a tree have been used in countless works. Conversely, the absence of these two elements of nature is seen to be apocalyptic and damning. The paper would attempt an accommodation of these two oppositional / oppositional thoughts.

River and Human Being: Survival of the Fittest or the Fiercest?

Dhwani Vaishnav, professor

Shantilal Shah Govt. Engineering College, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India

Rivers have been the cradles of civilization and ideal place for settlement. However, it is astounding to see respect versus rape of the rivers. Rivers are important scapes which are not exceptional from human induced hazards. Humans have now realized that their material predicaments have led to catastrophes and exploitation of resources – primarily environmental. In the 21st century, humans would have to understand the fact that climate related calamities caused by humans are threats against the survival of the ecology. Universal yearning for progress is driven by consumerist demands for resource extraction and profit which ignores the earth. Thus, there is a pressing need for rethinking about subsistence of human beings against the calamities they keep inviting. With this backdrop, this paper attempts to study span of the river Ganga and the frail ecology around it. For India, a river is a mini cosmos and also an emotion. The Ganga has been one of the oldest among all. Unlike the perspective in the West, rivers are traditionally revered in Indian culture. But it is observed that people are in race of making the Ganga feeble with their more of functional use of the river. Thus, a study is must to assess the current scenario around this river. Lived lives around the river Ganga is portrayed realistically in travel writings and through selected travelogues, this paper will try to evaluate issues that imbalance nature-culture dichotomy and offer a few working solutions.

The Duality of Nature in “Tsunami Simon” by Damodar Mauzo

Dr Itika, independent researcher

Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana, India

The paper to be presented is an attempt to locate the dualism present in Nature in the translated novel Tsunami Simon which was authored by Damodar Mauzo and translated from Konkani into English by Xavier Cota. This novel bagged an award, that is, the Vimla V Pai Vishwa Konkani Puraskar in 2011. Besides this, the translator too is the recipient of the Katha Award for Translation. The presentation will focus on underlining the embedded aspects of masculinity and femininity in the literary text by Mauzo. This dualism is allegorically interwoven with the story of the people living in the coastal areas. And how the activities of the female and male characters reflect the different shades of their feminine and masculine behaviour respectively. As Nature is an embodiment of the Prakriti and the Purusha, similarly one can have a glimpse of the flora and fauna in the text. The Sankhya Philosophy is also metaphorically related with the storyline of the novel.

13:00 – 14:30

J.G. Ballard's *The Burning World*: An Eco-dystopian Reading

Dhwani Vachhrajani, professor

Department of English & Contemporary Literary Studies, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India

The interest and purpose of Postmodern literature have been to predict the condition of natural and human world. Science fiction addresses various environmental issues that need our serious attention. Literature of this kind is evaluated from various Modern theoretical perspectives such as Ecocriticism, Dystopia, Psychoanalysis etc. These perspectives significantly contribute in understanding and analysing Modern and Postmodern literatures. J.G. Ballard, an important name among climate fiction writers, was concerned for human life in the terribly changing natural world. His well-known work *The Burning World* warns people through presenting situations wherein the possibility of survival is rare. The present paper attempts to analyse Ballard's *The Burning World* from the perspective of Eco-dystopia, a subgenre of Ecocriticism. Eco-dystopian analysis would contribute to spreading awareness about our changing environment and need to save our natural resources which, if not saved and nurtured, may lead to a terrible and deadly future. As the title suggests, Ballard imagines a world with scarcity of water, and it is almost burning. How dreadful it is to remain alive in such times, has been predicted and imagined by Ballard. Eco-dystopian reading of the above-mentioned work would contribute both in Ecocritical as well as Dystopian studies.

“Cities survived. Countries did not”: A CoFuturist Reading of Post-Apocalyptic Dhaka in Saad Hossain's “CyberMage”

Anna Juhi John, doctoral student

Central University of Gujarat, Gujarat, India

Saad Hossain is a speculative fiction writer from Bangladesh who effectively fuses science fiction and fantasy, chiefly rooted in the local folklore and myths, to create a post-apocalyptic world where anthropogenic activities have led humans to survive in small clusters or cities in environs made habitable by climate control AIs. These AIs interact with the bacteria-like nanotech that the occupants of the ecosystem produce through their biological body to make the ecosystem sustainable. Cities controlled by corporations that could seek enough populations survived. Hossain's futuristic world appears in his numerous works such as “Bring Your Own Spoon” and *Djinn City*. *CyberMage*, the sequel to *Djinn City*, explores the effect that the corporate-controlled environment can have on its residents especially as many seek refuge in the cyberspace called Virtuality. With the Djinns making a reappearance from the first book the order of (trans)human existence is further plunged into question. This paper attempts to read *CyberMage* as a CoFuturist (Chattopadhyay) rendering of a post-apocalyptic city where the narrative science fiction or rather speculative fiction is told from the margins of the world as we occupy today and as the one in which the protagonists are situated in.

Quitting the Quest: A Remedy for Environmental Problems

Disha Chhatbar, doctoral student

Department of English & Contemporary Literary Studies, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India

Dissatisfaction with one's own place has led to the colonization resulting in the environmental problems like the introduction of new species of plants to the place, imbalance in the productivity of land and the exploitation of it. Colonization also changed the perception of the natives towards nature which became disastrous for it. It also created conflicts among natives which are often because of the temptation for the resources and sometimes because of State Vampirism. Amitav Ghosh in 'The Living Mountain', while presenting environmental dystopian condition, reveals the similar conditions where the aftermaths of colonization on the nature and human relation with nature are focused. He

invokes the colonial history and reveals the pantheism of indigenous people and the impact of anthropocentric view of colonizers on it, the knowledge of the place leading to its exploitation and the current condition of the world where environmental issues are focused by the leaders. The realization that the native perception is more ecocentric is also drawn from the book. With these aspects this paper will deal in order to show the changing perception of nature, its ill-impacts and the solutions required.