



Call for Papers

Fiction in the Age of Globalization
Tübingen University, 22 July 2021

On behalf of [Department of English](#) at Tübingen University, we are convening an international conference which will be held online via Zoom on **22 July 2021**.

We invite doctoral candidates and early career researchers from all disciplines to submit abstracts for consideration. The aim of the conference is to explore different modes and functions of fiction, autobiography and memoir in the age of globalization and how it has anticipated and responded to new forms of global human-induced crises in the twenty-first century.

Our keynote speakers are: Professor Katy Shaw (Northumbria University) and Professor Laura Salisbury (Exeter University)

Proposals can be on any topic related to contemporary fiction and mass migration as well as medical humanities (pandemic, trauma, risk, therapy, etc.). Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Fiction and pandemic
- Fiction, trauma and risk society
- Fiction and controlling society
- Fiction and therapy culture
- Fiction and terrorism
- Fiction and the culture of fear
- Fiction and migration

The standard length of a talk will be **20** minutes.

We plan to publish the selected papers in an edited volume. To apply, please send your proposal not more than 300 words length to arya.aryan@uni-tuebingen.de

Please mention your full name, level of study and name of university and faculty. The deadline for submitting your proposals is midnight **20 June**. We will respond to them by **30 June**.

Storied Deserts (CFP)

Re-Imagining Arid Environments

Deadline for submissions: September 30, 2021

Full name / Name of organization:

Celina Osuna, Arizona State University

Aidan Tynan, Cardiff University

Contact email: tynana@cardiff.ac.uk or celina.osuna@asu.edu

Desert landscapes and ecologies have become central to our perceptions of space and place and to the stories we tell ourselves about the environment. In Western traditions, we frequently see deserts represented as dead or valueless, or merely as exotic backdrops. Such depictions often encode racism and histories of colonial violence. Our conceptions of the desert as wasteland or hostile wilderness can be traced back to Biblical notions of damnation, messianism and salvation, but they also feature extensively in the secular dystopian and apocalyptic vision of the future so widespread today. This volume seeks contributions that interrogate and challenge these stories of the desert while exploring alternative traditions in order to shed light on the multitudinous possibilities of what desert places are and can be.

Storied Deserts: Re-Imagining Arid Environments takes a global point of view on a topic that is too often limited by a regional or national frame. We are interested in the diversity of desert places, which we hope will reflect the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of potential contributors. While recognizing the crucial differences that distinguish arid places from each other, we want to insist that there is something special about them that mark them out from other kinds of places. While the Namib Desert of southwest Africa differs radically from, say, the interior of the Sonoran Desert in the southwestern United States, these places elicit experiences, perceptions, and narratives that can speak to and inform one another. In this sense, deserts embody a singularity and a multiplicity at once.

This simultaneity is complex and rich in intersections and needs to be approached through multidisciplinary perspectives. The volume will draw on work in desert humanities as a field concerned with the flourishings of thought and practice in the arid environments of the world, with multi-ethnic human, nonhuman and more-than-human interrelationships of desert places and the urgent care necessary for them in a time of climate crises. We call on contributors to imagine desert humanities as an emerging field, to explore the range of approaches that deserts demand, and to set directions for future work. We invite nontraditional, creative nonfiction, and experimental pieces as well as more traditional scholarly work. Contributions considering the following topics are welcome, but the volume's scope is not necessarily limited to only these:

- Ecocritical approaches to deserts
- Cinema, media and visual studies
- Speculative projects
- Land stewardship
- The Anthropocene and climate change

- Displacement, diaspora
- Desertification and dust-bowlification
- Science Fiction
- Cultural geographies
- Indigenous studies
- Studies of place and space
- Placemaking and placekeeping
- Ethnographic approaches
- Political geology / geologies of race
- Afrofuturism
- Water management
- Extractive industries
- Post-apocalyptic and dystopian landscapes
- Desert ecologies
- Cultural studies
- Decolonial/Anti-colonial approaches
- Phenomenology and environmental philosophy

Please send the following to tynana@cardiff.ac.uk or celina.osuna@asu.edu by September 30, 2021:

- 1) 300-500 word chapter abstract/proposal
- 2) a brief bio
- 3) a statement of your interest in this project or contextual background/relevant info

If you are interested in writing a piece and would like to discuss it with the editors before submission of the abstract, please contact us via the email address above. Those with accepted proposals will be expected to submit a full draft (6,000-8,000 words).



Voicing Absences/Presences in a Damaged World

BAAHE Annual Conference

3rd December 2021

Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

By many accounts, we are now living on a “damaged planet” (Tsing *et al*), and by the same token *we* are **damaged** as well. This “we” encompasses all earthly life forms, from animals and plants, the soil and natural elements, human beings, to various organisms invisible to the human eye. Environmental degradation and toxification, species depletion, dwindling biodiversity, threatened cultural knowledge and languages, and even recent pandemics are but a few examples of the injuries and losses sustained by earthlings. Arguably, these dynamics of risk, endangerment, and extinction have always been an intricate part of life, and thereby an incentive for survival. Yet, the accelerating pace and global scale of the damage in today’s era, which some call the “Anthropocene,” has sparked up much wider concerns, as human species will be no exception to the series of mass extinctions lying ahead. What kind of remains will human/non-human cultures and natures leave behind for some future dominant subject to discover (Pratt G170)? What will these ruins tell about all those that are gone?

Prefiguring such future excavations, the injured world we currently live in is already saturated with “**absences/presences**,” or “ghosts,” i.e. “the vestiges and signs of past ways of life still charged in the present” (Gan *et al* G1). Turning to Latin etymology, somebody or something that is “absent” does not occupy the same space as a given group: they are “away.” For millennia, human beings have devised ways to keep those absences integrated within day-to-day life and to preserve their memory for posterity. Absences are thus also presences in the sense that these entities do not disappear completely. Conversely, the presence of those that remain encodes the emptiness left by the departed: the survivors’ adaptation would not have taken place without the absence of their former “companion species” (Haraway; see Gan *et*

al). They may also continue to perform their role in a collaborative task or behaviour, an enduring reflex through which the departed is made present again.

Thus, the constant absence/presence interplay implies a tense, dynamic interrelation between **visibility and invisibility**. A **non-exhaustive list** of such remains, vestiges, or “ghosts” and of the practices engendering them can include:

- All forms of environmental exploitation (e.g. deforestation and the paper industry)
- Species extinction, including humankind’s
- Toxification of the soil and bodies
- Waste, the discarded, and their politics
- Physical and psychological wounding: disease, virus, physical disability, after-effects
- Endangered traditional cultures, knowledges, and languages of the so-called “minorities”
- Distancing measures and digital means of communication, especially videoconferences
- Online teaching (e.g. the “camera-off syndrome” of some students)

On the occasion the BAAHE 2021 conference, we invite contributions that reflect on contemporary instances of absences/presences, either in nature, culture, or both, and on the possible **means of voicing, narrating, and representing them** in a wide sense. To paraphrase Donna Haraway, we have to **live with the damage** and the uncanny absence/presences it creates: “staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings” (*Staying* 1). In an echo of Mary Louise Pratt’s vision of the Anthropocene as a concept, absences/presences “enable reflection” on “how to live” this complex moment (Pratt G170). If this last question is “inseparable from the question of how to write” the damage (170), the issue of how to express various forms of absences/presences, or how to let their voice emerge, should be considered too. These strategies ultimately aim at affirming endurance against the forces of extinction, construed as “**a breakdown of coordinations**” (Gan *et al* G5), as well as foster an **ethics of care**, both pragmatically and imaginatively, for our world at risk (Heise).

In addition to the cross-disciplinary issues outlined above, specific questions and answers according to disciplines can be considered:

Literary and cultural studies: To what extent can we narrate life forms, cultures or languages which are less or no longer visible, both thematically and aesthetically? Is it humankind's responsibility to give them a voice? What are the implications for the human writer's own voice and agency? Can (eco)narratology (James & Morel) and ecopoetics (Rigby) offer possible strategies? Does the choice of medium, writing modes, and genres matter? How, in the face of threat and extinction, do texts balance humans' process of "self-understanding" with "forms of multispecies justice and multispecies cosmopolitanism" (Heise 6)? To what extent can we – as a human collective or individual – imagine our own absence? What role do trauma and affect play in this scenario of planetary damage (Heholt & Downing; Kaplan; Weik von Mossner)? What cultural and ideological discourses underlie the representations of absences/presences and of damage in general? To what degree do instances of absences/presences reinforce either a postcolonial or decolonizing project or, on the contrary, a neo-colonial way of living in the world? How much visibility have gender and cultural "minorities" gained on today's political and artistic scenes and what are current and future challenges?

Linguistics: Do today's health and ecological crises go hand in hand with a crisis in/of language, especially with regard to communicating the damage? How are crises which are not readily visible or fathomable (e.g. remote ecological disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change) both affecting and affected by our discursive representation of them, in terms of linguistic structures and rhetorical devices for instance (Anand; Hudson; Zhang & Li)? In human interactions, is the interlocutor's physicality or visual presence necessary to ensure smooth, productive communicative acts? How are the latter impacted and/or re-assessed in online contexts where AI and chatbot software replace the human contact person? What insights can gesture studies and semiotics (along with eco- and bio-semiotics) bring to these debates? In terms of socio-linguistics and linguistic typology, what is the current state of "language endangerment"? How present/absent are vernacular Englishes, world Englishes, and other "non-standard" linguistic varieties today? In an effort to address inequitable under-representation, what research, teaching, and institutional strategies can potentially tend both towards a "revitalization/reclamation" of "minoritized" languages and their users (Charity Hudley *et al* e210) as well as towards an "environment of greater inclusiveness" (Montoya e236)?

Translation studies: Is the human translator, or “bio-translator” (Loock), a species at risk in today’s era of automated translation? Can the human and machine translators co-exist? How are the translating arts, and by extension one’s perception and relation to language, influenced by this specific absence/presence tension? Do the concepts and realities of our “damaged planet,” along with the issues delineated above, translate equally in various languages?

Our **keynote speakers** will be **Kate Rigby** (Bath Spa University) and **Alexa Weik von Mossner** (University of Klagenfurt) (confirmed). Kate Rigby is a major figure in the field of literary environmental humanities and ecopoetics, with an expertise in British and German Romantic literary traditions, as well as in eco-philosophy and eco-theology. Her recent book-length publications include *Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times* (2015) and *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization* (2020). Alexa Weik von Mossner is one of the founding voices of the flourishing fields of affective and empirical ecocriticism, which stand at the crossroads of affect, cognitive, media, literary, and cultural studies. She is the author of *Cosmopolitan Minds: Literature, Emotion, and the Transnational Imagination* (2014) and *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* (2017).

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Submission Guidelines:

Please send your abstracts (300 words) to Jessica.Maufort@ulb.be and Marc.Maufort@ulb.be by **15th June 2021**. Please also specify in the abstract whether you will be presenting a paper in the fields of literature, cultural studies, linguistics, or translation studies, or a combination of them. Acceptance notification will be sent by 30th June 2021.

Should you have any question, please feel free to contact the conference convenors (email addresses as above).

Organising Committee / Convenors:

Jessica Maufort (ULB)
 Marc Maufort (ULB)

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