

Utopian Eco-Witches, Climate Chaos, and Earth Repair: Posthuman Regeneration Narratives and the Non- Human as Allies in the Age of the Symbiocene

(16th December 2024 & 7th March 2025- Complutense University of Madrid)



Organized by:



GIECO (Research Group on Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities) **Benjamin Franklin Institute of North American Studies**, Alcalá University



In collaboration with **GIELCEG**-Complutense University of Madrid and the
Institute of Feminist Studies-**Instifem UCM**

In the constant shadow of a global environmental collapse, “We know the climate change is already here...nonetheless, in the Global North, we live in a complete collective denial” and inaction (Wagner and Wieland 2022: 1). As a result, we are witnessing more frequent and devastating events and communities everywhere struggle with the aftermath of disasters: torrential storms in North Carolina and Florida, fires in California and British Columbia, floods in Uganda, the Philippines and just recently here in Spain..... And yet, as the latest report on Climate Change

from United Nations states¹, annual greenhouse gas emissions are at an all-time high, and urgent action must be taken to prevent catastrophic spikes in temperature and avoid the worst impact of climate change. ‘Climate crunch time is here²,’ scientists warn us, we have entered a very dangerous and life-threatening stage where humanity’s survival will depend on how well we are preparing for climate chaos right now.

In these trying times, as Glenn A. Albrecht reminds us in *Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World*, “we need to pay attention to both destructive and creative forces in our universe” (2019:2); that is, not just the terrors of apocalyptic scenarios but also the possibilities implied in times of collapses, degrowth (D’Alisa et al. 2015), and rewilding (Tafalla 2019); and for that, we desperately need utopias. Visions of hope (Weik von Mossne 2017: 164-66), not just as the projection of perfect worlds but as the ability to imagine “something sustainable and just through the Anthropocene’s despair and still finding hope” (Wagner and Wieland 2022: 1-2). Hopefulness and optimism that emerge from the very act of imagining alternatives, because, as the editors of *Multispecies Cities. Solarpunk Urban Futures* interrogate “what if stories could plant the seeds of hopeful futures worth living in?” (Rupprecht et al. 2021: 1): stories of resilience, regeneration, and possible futures that are inclusive, intersectional and decolonial in which not only to envision ecological technologies to counterbalance our current ecocide (Higgins 2015) but to embrace “the more than human kinship as a core element of world-building” (Rupprecht et al. 2021: 5).

In this vein, utopian eco-witches (Sotelo 2025) such as Starhawk (1993) are actively engaging in resilient permaculture and climate adaptation to show us the way in which to envision the non-human as allies and to help us remember that we do not have to fight climate chaos alone. Indeed, in the recent *Bioluminescent. A Lunarpunk Anthology* (Norton-kertson 2023), Starhawk’s story and other contributors’, become Earth’s healing words and hands that re-imagine how to collaborate with plants, fungi, and microorganisms to remove, break down, or immobilize contaminants to create healthier and more resilient ecosystems (Darwish 2013).

Reclaiming therefore the magic and wisdom of the natural world, those whom the Judeo-Christian Inquisition wrongly accused of being ‘devil witches’, have known for millennia that plants, trees, and animals are not only our relatives, teachers, and guides (Wall Kimmerer 2013:7) but they can be our environmental allies in times of climate change and in the preservation and repair of biodiversity loss. By recognizing thus that the presence of intelligence does not only come from a nervous system (Coccia 2018; Trewavas 2016), it can be claimed that modern and ancient ‘eco-witches’ embody posthuman subjectivities and agencies that align with current trends and theories within Plant and Animal Studies, Ecocriticism and environmental Humanities that characterize our current time as the age of the Symbiocene (Albrecht 2019: 102).

In this framework, following last year’s approach to “(Green) witches, social media, and climate change: posthuman *re-story-ation* narratives in the age of the symbiocene”

¹ <https://unfccc.int/news/new-un-climate-change-report-shows-national-climate-plans-fall-miles-short-of-what-s-needed>

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1156071>

and in line with the recent publication *Utopian Witch: Solarpunk Magik to Fight Climate Change and to Save the World* (Norton-kertson 2024), in these seminars we would like to explore the ways in which we can navigate climate chaos and earth repair *through the power of storytelling*. Moreover, we aim at making visible the posthuman agency of the figure of those who can be approached as ‘eco-witches’ as both harmonizers in the ecological crisis and cocreators in renewing kinship relations (return to the life-death-rebirth ‘ecological model’); that is, as promoters of the symbiocene.

Thus, our seminars aim therefore at providing a space for reflection on symbiotic posthuman narratives of regeneration and eco-utopian imaginaries that help us to envision ways to transform toxic and damaged landscapes into thriving, nourishing and fertile places once more; and that allows to respond to environmental disasters in radical, accessible, and community-empowering ways (Darwish 2013: 1-5) that are intersectional, ecofeminist and decolonial in nature.

Referenced Works

- Albrecht, Gleen A. *Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World*. Cornell University, 2019.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthuman Feminism*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2022.
- D’Alisa, Giacomo et al. *Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*. Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.
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- Darwish, Leila. *Earth Repair. A grassroot Guide to Healing Toxic and earth repair*. New Society Publishers, 2013.
- Higgins, Polly. *Dare to be Great: Unlock Your Power to Create a Better World*. Clint State Publishing, 2015.
- Larrington, Carolyne. *The Feminist Companion to Mythology*. London: Pandora Press, 1992.
- Murphy- Hiscok, Arin. *The Green Witch. Your Complete Guide to the Natural Magic of Herbs, Flowers, Essential Oils and More*. New York: Adams Media, 2017.
- Norton-kertson, Justine, ed. *Bioluminescent. A LunarPunk Anthology*. Android Press, 2023.
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- Rupprecht et al. *Multispecies Cities. Solarpunk Urban Futures*. World Weaver Press, 2021.
- Simard, Suzanne. “Notes from a Forest Scientist.” *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2016.
- Sotelo, Xiana, ed. *Narrativas de Resiliencia y Regeneración. Aproximación ecocrítica, ecofeminista e intercultural de la figura de las eco-brujas*. Editorial Dykinson, 2025.
- Starhawk. *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. New York, Bantam, 1993.
- Tafalla, Marta. *Ecoanimal Una estética plurisensorial ecologista y animalista*. Plaza y Valdés. 2019.
- Thomas, Leah. *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People+ Planet*. Little, Brown, 2022.
- Trewavas, Anthony *Plant Behavior and Intelligence*. Oxford Press, 2016.
- Wagner, Phoebe and Wieland, C. Brontë. *Almanac for the Anthropocene*, 2022.
- Wall Kimmerer, Robin. *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*. Penguin Books, 2013.
- Weik von Mossne, Alexa. *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative*. Ohio State University Press, Cognitive Approaches to Culture, 2017
- Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Wohlleben, Pete. *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2015.

Instructions for submission of abstracts:

The organizing committee invites faculty, research staff, postgraduate students, other academics to participate with one of the following formats:

- Individual communication proposal: submit a presentation summary of a maximum of 300 words to give a 15–20-minute talk.
- Proposal for a round table of 3 people: maximum 1000 words and lasting 60 minutes.

Among the proposed thematic lines are:

- Posthuman Regeneration Narratives and the Non-Human as Allies.
- Ecofeminism-Gender/Feminist Studies, (eco)-witches, the non-Human and climate chaos.
- Symbiotic Posthuman Narratives, Ecocriticism/Environmental Humanities.
- Plant/Animal studies and Earth repair.
- Bioremediation and contemporary animism.
- Literary, Cultural, and Film studies in the Age of the Symbiocene.
- Utopian (eco)-witches and spiritual activism.

Deadline for sending abstracts: **10th December 2024** (to participate on the event of the 16th of December) and on the **15th February 2025** (for the session of the 7th of March). Please, include a brief summary (maximum 100 words) of your academic CV. Please, send proposals to xianasot@ucm.es

They will be in-person and online seminars. It will be a selection of the proposals sent and presented for publication in RCEI-Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses (September 2025). Accepted manuscripts must be sent by the 30th of April 2025.

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