

4th HELAAS Young Scholar Symposium

(E-co)nnections: The Humanities in a Time of Climate Change

March 2, 2024

Book of Abstracts & Bios



▪ **Name:** Sofia Kokkini

Title: "From German Romanticism to 21st Century Ecocriticism"

Abstract: To a large extent, ecological thinking has its roots in German Romanticism. Many German romantic writers, including Joseph von Eichendorff, sharply criticized modernity and the subsequent destruction of nature. The scientific examination of eco-topics in literature, for example in literary works such as Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) or Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfisters Mühle* (1884), began at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century (Sessions, 1995). In the course of historical development, however, ecocriticism has received many different definitions. Nevertheless, modern ecocriticism draws on the past two centuries and on a largely romantic tradition of opposition to the destructive tendencies of the Enlightenment ideals as regards the conquest of nature, the market economy and the individual. Since the 1990s and increasingly since 2000, the literary treatment of the ongoing global environmental crisis has given rise to new genres such as climate change literature, eco-thrillers and eco-dystopias; a common characteristic of these new literary genres is the mixture of different genre elements (Dürbeck, Stobbe, 2015).

My presentation relates to the development of ecocritical thinking. At the beginning, I will present various definitions of the term. Since the roots of ecocriticism can be found in Romanticism, I will also show examples of writers from German, English and American Romanticism, who criticized the invasion of the new technology that was meant to change their world. In the end, I will deal with ecocriticism in contemporary texts.

Sofia Kokkini is a PhD candidate at the School of German Language and Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with a dissertation entitled "Scenarios for a better world? Social concepts in contemporary post-apocalyptic literature." Her research interests relate to German Romanticism, ecocriticism, ecology and eco-dystopias, as well as questions of comparative literature in European literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Among her publications: 1) *Resakralisierung der Natur im 21. Jahrhundert. Eine Studie zur Entwicklung der Naturauffassung seit der Romantik*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag. 2) "Gesellschaftsentwürfe in zeitgenössischen griechischen Ökothrillern." In: Albrecht, Monika / Antonopoulou, Anastasia (eds.): *Anthropogene Klima- und Umweltkrisen. Griechisch-deutsche Beiträge zu Ecocriticism und Environmental Humanities*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, pp. 217-226.

- **Name:** Aikaterini Delikonstantinidou

Title: Ecodramaturgies and Ecopedagogy —Allied and Applied

Abstract: Ecotheatre builds on two related assumptions: the impacts of the climate crisis, and any proposed solutions, are mediated by cultural values, attitudes, desiderata, which also means that socially vulnerable populations suffer disproportionately the effects of one or the other manifestation of the crisis. Gender, ethnoracial provenance, social class, age, disability, immigrant or refugee status, and other such markers, are factors that determine the degree of vulnerability of a person or group to the crisis. At the same time, populations prone the inequitable shouldering of the crisis' damaging repercussions are excluded from the decision-making processes vis-à-vis its management. Identities and power relations construct and regulate both ecological responsibility and the response-ability of societies to the crisis. This forms the basis of the kind of intersectional ecological thinking which much of today's ecotheatre mines for its praxis. Affected and inflected by this kind of thinking, what Theresa J. May calls "ecodramaturgies" reveal how theatre and performance practices interact with the more-than-human world; how they facilitate the development of new ways of thinking, meaning-making, and acting in relation to the environment and the bioethical assumptions, experiences, complexities, injustices integral to it—in other words, the redirection and remediation of our ecological habits; and how they can propel a shift from counter-productive anthropocentrism to intersectional, ecological paradigms. In this paper, I will discuss the ecodramaturgies animating Lucy+Jorge Orta's *Symphony of Absent Wildlife* (beginning in 2014), Violeta Luna's *NK603: Action for Performer & e-Maiz* (2014), and Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2015). But, more than that, I will show why and how these could ally with ecopedagogy, a Freirian discourse and an educational movement that sprang from the Earth Charter in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to not only reconfigure and respond to contemporary educational needs in/across diverse applied contexts through updated ecological, ethical, and aesthetic lenses, but also to push for material, structural changes by bringing education and art to the center of political action on environmental issues.

Dr. Aikaterini Delikonstantinidou received her PhD in anglophone theatre from the School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She conducted postdoctoral research on applications of digital theatre at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Athens, on a full scholarship by the Greek State Scholarships Foundation. She serves as adjunct faculty at the same department, while she also works as independent dramaturge and assistant editor for *Critical Stages*, the journal of the International Association of

Theatre Critics. Her first monograph, *Latinx Reception of Greek Tragic Myth: Healing (and) Radical Politics*, was published by Peter Lang in 2020. She is currently putting together, with Dr. Dimitra Nikolaidou, an edited volume on the intersection of and crossovers between theatre and digital games. Her research interests include (applied, digital, and ecologically responsive) theatre, intermediality, education, and myth studies.

▪ **Name:** Nikoleta Zampaki

Title: Nature in Comparative Children Literature: Zacharias Papantoniou's *The High Mountains* and Roderick O'Grady's *Bigfoot Mountain*

Abstract: The aim of this comparative case study is to examine the concepts of nature, space, place, landscape and materialities through a series of representations from *The High Mountains (Ta Psila Vouna)* written by Zacharias Papantoniou and *Bigfoot Mountain* of Roderick O' Grady, focusing primarily on the relationship between the human and more-than-human world through the theoretical framework of ecocriticism, material ecocriticism and ecopsychology. In both works the mountains are for the portrayal of nature by serving as an immensely productive tool for environmental storytelling for children. In both titles the authors describe the natural world and how a natural landscape is perceived by individuals and groups of children while exploring the beauty and 'purity' of mountain landscapes. Mountains are not only part of an ecosystem and environment's spatiality, but they also play a central role in shaping children's behavior and psychology. We also learn about local habits, myths and legends close to the place that both Papantoniou and O'Grady's protagonists live. In contrast to Papantoniou's group of children whose life on mountains are full of adventures and joy, O'Grady's central protagonist, Minnie's mourning for her mother's death, addresses the impacts of grief and how mountains 'heal' naturally the loss and internal trauma. Here we will refer to ways by which grief poses a mental health risk, but it can motivate an environmental behavior for overcoming eco-anxiety, as well. Both authors' narrations also remind us to consider the impact on the environment and reignite an ecological awareness of nature and joy in life by opening new possibilities and truths for living in harmony with nature.

Dr. Nikoleta Zampaki is Post-doc Researcher at the Faculty of Philology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece. She was Instructor at the Utah University in the U.S.A. Her disciplines are Environmental Humanities, Posthumanities, Digital Humanities, and Comparative Literature. She is editor and reviewer at many journals overseas, Associate and Managing

Editor at the Journal of Ecohumanism, and current member of Education Team of NASA, V.I.N.E.-Glenn Research Center. She has also participated in many conferences and she is a multilingual student by working on English, French, Romanian, Russian, Chinese, Hungarian, Maori, and Turkish. She is also co-editor with Professor Peggy Karpouzou of the book series "Posthumanities and Citizenship Futures" at Rowman & Littlefield, and "Environmental Humanities" at TPLondon based in the U.K.

- **Name:** Vasileios N. Delioglanis

Title: Climate Change and US (Eco)migration in Ambient Literary Narratives: The Case of Duncan Speakman's *It Must Have Been Dark by Then*

Abstract: The present paper concentrates on the ways in which the American narratives of ecomigration presented in sound artist Duncan Speakman's *It Must Have Been Dark by Then* (2017) trigger the discussion of the impact of climate change on the experiences of migratory tribes across intercontinental borders globally—in Europe and Africa. In incorporating ubiquitous computing technologies, Speakman's work is a piece of ambient literature, and is also an example of postdigital transmediality, "moving between and across digital and non-digital domains" (Jordan 183). Consisting of an audio walk (available via a mobile application) and of a printed book, the work captures experiences of migration in the states of Louisiana and Mississippi in the US caused by environmental destruction, climate change, and landscape transformations. The fictional ecomigrant experiences are reenacted through the participants' interaction with the digital (audio) locative narratives in the mobile app, the changing form of the printed pages of the book which remediate digital textuality, and the physical space in which participants move. The paper explores how the relationship between mobile location-aware technologies and the print medium in Speakman's work is reflected in fictional literary narratives on climate change-induced migration in the US: the ongoing dialogue between digital and non-digital narratives of climate change enhances the understanding of the migrant feelings and experiences presented.

Dr. Vasileios (Vassilis) N. Delioglanis has taught as an adjunct lecturer in Greek universities, while also teaching English at Primary State School Education in Greece. He holds a Ph.D. from the School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, funded by the Board of Greek State Scholarships Foundation (I.K.Y.). He also holds an M.A. in American Literature and Culture, and a B.A. in English from the School of English, AUTH, Greece. His

monograph, entitled *Narrating Locative Media*, was published in 2023 by Palgrave Macmillan. Some of his published articles appear in *Ex-centric Narratives: Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Media* (HELAAS), and *GRAMMA: Journal of Theory and Criticism: The Cultural Politics of Space* (AUP). He is the webmaster of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), a Board Member of the Hellenic Association for American Studies (HELAAS), and a member of the *Multimodal Research and Reading Group* of the School of English, AUP. His research focuses on contemporary American literature and culture, and digital humanities.

▪ **Name:** Christina Koukouli

Title: Dried Bodies, Ashen Earth: The Grotesque Corporeal Aesthetics of Environmental Catastrophe in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

Abstract: This paper explores the intersection of grotesque aesthetics and environmental devastation in Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel *The Road*. Evoking the contemporary pressing issues of rapid environmental degradation and climate change, the story centers on a father and son and their struggle for survival as they traverse a landscape of destruction and decay, scattered with decomposing human bodies. Utilizing Mikail Bakhtin's literary trope of the grotesque body, this paper examines the ways in which the emphasis placed on the gruesome corporeal imagery in the novel reflects the intricate and fragile relationship between the human body and the natural environment. Reading the novel through an ecocritical lens, the grotesque body operates as a striking manifestation of ecological collapse; a metaphorical and visceral tool that mirrors the impact of ecological catastrophe on human corporeality. The paper also applies Timothy Morton's term 'dark ecology' to further deepen the analysis of the grotesque by encouraging an acknowledgment of the dark and unsettling aspects of the environment, thus emphasizing the need for coexistence with ecological realities and the disturbing impact of impending environmental catastrophes. By examining the convergence of ecological and corporeal grotesquery in *The Road* this paper aims to present the potency of literature in highlighting the intimate and uncanny relationships between human life and the environment.

Christina Koukouli holds a Ba in English Language and Literature from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and an MPhil in Comparative Literature from Trinity College Dublin. Her main academic interests include ecocriticism, posthumanism, and post-colonial studies with a specific focus on

the portrayal of the relationship between the human body and the natural environment in literature.

- **Name:** Evipidis Karavasilis

Title: Environmental Degradation, Corporate Capitalism and Posthuman Ecological Futures in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009)

Abstract: The present paper critically engages with Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* and explores the interrelation between climate change, hypercapitalist mass production as well as the rights of non-human bodies in a post-apocalyptic world. Following planetary degradation and the expansion of biotechnological food production, the novel is set in 23rd-century Thailand, which has secured its borders in order to prevent the so-called "calorie companies" from imposing their genetically engineered products. The narrative circulates around Anderson Lake, a calorie man working for the AgriGen Corporation trying to uncover foodstuffs in Bangkok that are obsolete in the rest of the world. His search leads him to Emiko, a member of the New People, who are engineered beings created to serve and/or sexually please corporate businessmen. The New People are pursued in Thailand by the Environment Ministry, which seeks to cleanse the nation from outside environmental threats and corporate profit. An outcast in a world ravaged by global warming, climate change, bio-terrorism and genetically-modified food production, Emiko dreams of reclaiming her rights and reuniting with her own kind. Evidently, environmental crises, capitalism and posthuman subjectivities amalgamate in Bacigalupi's imaginary of a grave ecological future. Rosi Braidotti discusses the connection of non-human bodies and ecocide in her seminal work *The Posthuman*, published in 2013. Braidotti blurs the hitherto rigid boundaries between humans and non-humans and invites a re-consideration of posthuman subjects by adding an environmental dimension. Through this lens of ecological posthumanism, the current research project scrutinizes Bacigalupi's novel as representative of the human's role in environmental degradation in view of biotechnology and corporate capitalism and further investigates the posthuman condition in the narrative's ecological future.

As an independent scholar, **Evipidis Karavasilis** conducts research in the field of American Studies, with a special interest in North American fiction. He finished his M.A. in English and American Studies at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2023. He is currently working as an ESL teacher, with the aim to inspire students of all ages to engage with the English language and

Anglophone Literature. He is also part of the “Campus Narratives” research group, whose cause is to revitalize the university campus in the post-Covid-19 era, stimulate creativity in campus spaces and build a sense of belonging. His research interests include Contemporary American Literature, Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, Gender and Queer Studies.

▪ **Name:** Foteini Toliou

Title: Re-Membering Disembodied Subjects and Landscapes: Cultural Survival, Indigenous Environ-Mentalities and Ecological Activism in Linda Hogan’s novel *Solar Storms* (1997)

Abstract: This paper re-reads Linda Hogan’s novel *Solar Storms* (1997) through an ecofeminist lens. The novel delineates how Angel, a disoriented Native American teenager, who grew up in foster homes, returns to the home of her two great-grandmothers and reunites with her indigenous cultural heritage and its ecological cosmology. Hogan traces how the indigenous female protagonists, who belong to three different generations, embark on a journey across the U.S-Canada borderlands in an attempt to re-visit their original homeland up north. I suggest that the mobilities of the Native American female characters across this borderland space reveal that eco-destruction, species extinction and the ravaging of the area’s natural resources coincide with the disembodiment, racism, sexism, and abuse hurled against its indigenous inhabitants by colonial and neocolonial agents of power. Upon arrival to their motherland, the characters realize that the construction of hydroelectric dams, which is changing the flow of the rivers, severely impacts the natural landscape and its non-human inhabitants. It also threatens the indigenous community with displacement and cultural erosion, as a destructive flood hits the area due to the disruption of its ecosystem and climate. Nevertheless, the mobilities, the collective activist gestures and alliances that the female characters perform to resist eco-destruction and socio-political injustice put forward the preservation and revitalization of Native American cultural mentalities. These indigenous mentalities emerge as ‘environ-mentalities,’ since they closely attend to the interdependencies between humans and the natural environment and emanate a strong environmental ethic. Angel transforms into an environmental and political activist who actively defends the encroached rights of her indigenous community and offers the hope that the younger generation of Native American identities will not only achieve cultural survival but will also foreground the enactment of a more ecological and more humanistic way of being-in-the-Americas and being-in-the-world.

Foteini Toliou received her B.A. in English Language and Literature from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2019. She completed her M.A. in English and American Studies in the Aristotle University in 2012, with a high mark. The title of her M.A. thesis was "Re-Routing Chicana/o Identity in Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Heart of Aztlán: Community, Hybridity, and Transformation.*" Her paper, titled "*Mestizaje* and Intercultural Communication as the Analeptics to the Transhistoric Borderland Crises in Alejandro Morales's novel *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992)" has been published in the journal *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, Universidad de la Laguna, no. 81, in 2020. Her research interests include American Literature, Ethnic and Cultural Studies, Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, Caribbean American Literature, transcultural theory, mobility theory and border theories. Her interests also focus on urbanism, urban ecologies, ecocriticism and ecofeminism. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of American Literature and Culture of the Aristotle University. Her doctoral thesis, under Dr. Roupakia's supervision, will focus on diasporic, urban writings of contemporary women authors of diverse Caribbean backgrounds. She recently presented her paper, "Hybridizing Toronto: (Im)mobilities, Affective Networks and Transcultural Urban belonging in Dionne Brand's Novel *What We All Long For*" at the International Conference, "E-Motion in Changing Worlds," organized by HASE and the Aristotle University on November 3-5, 2023 in Thessaloniki.

▪ **Name:** Niki Georgia Karamanidou

Title: After the Ruin': Narrating Ecological Disaster and Envisioning Communal Restoration in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*

Abstract: This paper contributes to the flourishing interest – within Canadian studies, and N. American Studies more broadly – in Native land and environmental rights represented in literary works, as well as in the impact of environmental destruction on processes of Native Canadian identity negotiation. It constitutes an ecocritical analysis of the novel *The Back of the Turtle* (2014), written by Native Canadian author Thomas King. Focus is placed on explorations of what Rob Nixon has defined as "slow violence" and the complex interrelations that can be located in contemporary Native Canadian literature between identity, environmental destruction and the active struggle against capitalist appropriations of Native land.

Nixon's approach is employed in this research project in order to examine King's critique against the capitalist appropriation and pollution of Native land which represents a form of slow violence. More specifically, the paper investigates how the novel addresses the repercussions of a disastrous toxic spill, referred to as 'The Ruin' which has killed or driven away the members

of the Native community and wiped out the local flora and fauna. The ethics of science and its relation to the growing number of polluted and desolated landscapes of terror constitute a major concern of this novel. Furthermore, the analysis examines the novel's commentary on knowledge dissemination and manipulation as this is exercised by the media. Most importantly, the paper explores the move from dislocation and alienation to a proactive cultural reclamation of space through storytelling, traditional singing and dance which function as healing rituals. It also comments upon the novel's flexible negotiation of transcultural exchange and positions of belonging. Finally, this paper demonstrates that in *The Back of the Turtle*, King promotes the importance of human agency and responsibility against neo-imperial schemes which aim to appropriate Native land.

Niki Gregoria Karamanidou is an EFL teacher focused on literature-based education. She has received a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and a Master's degree in English and American studies, both from the Aristotle university of Thessaloniki. Her current research touches upon selected works of Native American literature in relation to issues of identity, space, dislocation, cultural rejuvenation and transcultural negotiations. She is interested in ecocritical readings of Native American/ Native Canadian fiction, explorations of slow and epistemic violence as well as on restorative cultural practices and sustained communal resistance to these types of violence.

▪ **Name:** Panteleimon Tsiokos

Title: Could Indigenous Civic Engagement Supersede Eco-Dystopian Futures?

Abstract: Indigenous communities have long been the victims of European environmental imperialism. Cherie Dimaline (Métis) through an eco-dystopian narrative, *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), manages to recreate colonial history centered on an Indigenous- understanding of environmental apocalypse, climate change, and ensuing displacement. The novel features protracted "Water Wars," resulting from the contamination of the interconnected water system of the Great Lakes. The fictional government auctioned and sold rivers to the highest bidder, diverted bodies of water to the south and the east; earthquakes and hurricanes led the ocean water levels to rise and submerge coastal lands like California, eventually reshaping the world; the northern ice cap melted, and the north was flooded. The environmental catastrophe took its toll on mankind, resulting in half of the population dying and, in most survivors losing the ability to reproduce without the doctors. All survivors, but the Indigenous,

lost the ability to dream, rendering them essentially living dead and displaced in an attempt to escape “catchers” who longed to harvest Indigenous bone marrow as cure for dreaming.

Dimaline’s eco-dystopian narrative, then, showcases grave disruption to both outer and inner equilibriums, with Indigenous communities particularly targeted due to their capability to supersede the eco-apocalypse by means of “wahkohtowin,” a complex Indigenous concept of human and other-than-human (eco-)interconnections, occurring in “Biidaaban,” a temporal continuum. My paper will explore the above observation by approaching the aforementioned Indigenous concepts as tangible examples of Indigenous civic engagement in response to climate-induced migrations. Lastly, I will claim that the imaginative space, ample in literary humanities, can elevate such fictional narratives into works of communitivist (in Weaver’s terms community+activism) wonderworks (a uniquely Indigenous genre converging empirical realities and fiction) whose scope may be essential in environmental education at a time of climate crisis.

Pantaleimon Tsiokos is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Western U, Canada. He holds a B.A. (Honors, with Distinction) in English and an M.A. in English and American Studies from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. His research interests include issues of identity politics, (post)nationalism, migration, mass human rights violence, and transitional justice as those unfold in works of ethnic, and minority literatures. He is a member of MESEA and EAAS and his research has been part of numerous international research dissemination fora.

▪ **Name:** Tania Diamanti

Title: Pathways through Winter Landscapes and towards Confronting Haunting Memories in David Park’s Novel *Travelling in a Strange Land* (2018)

Abstract: This paper will explore the interconnections between the natural space and the human psyche in David Park’s novel *Travelling in a Strange Land* (2018). Focus will be placed on the active role of landscape in both exacerbating the protagonist’s struggle with recurring memories of a traumatic past that slip into his conscious throughout his journey and contributing to his process of making piece with the past. Suppressed memories buried into the unconscious rise to the surface and unsettle Tom’s emotional and mental state as he travels alone through the frozen landscapes of Ireland and England in order to bring his ill son back home

for Christmas. In this literary work, the snowy landscape does not function merely as a background for the narrative to unfold but rather assumes a major presence. The scenery provides stimuli that activate the traveller's memory and mentally transport him into times and places that have left an indelible mark upon his psyche, while it also allows Tom to reflect upon the loss of his eldest son and acknowledge the great impact of carrying such a family trauma. In her seminal essay *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* (2008) Michelle Balaev sheds light on the prominent presence of place in trauma narratives, highlighting the contribution of the natural world to the traumatized person's turbulent process of delving into memories of the past and alleviating pain. To further illustrate the topic in question, Paul Rodaway's argumentation on the intimate links between geography, the senses and perception as was developed in his 1994 book *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* will be employed. Ultimately, this analysis aims to bring forth the two parallel journeys that are in progress; that is, Tom's winter road trip and an inner journey through mental and emotional landscapes of traumatic memory.

Soultana (Tania) Diamanti holds a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in English and American Studies from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her MA thesis focuses on the concept of intergenerational trauma and offers a comparative reading of novels written by Dominican American and Vietnamese American writers. She is currently working as an EFL teacher and is also participating in the Campus Narratives project organized by the Laboratory of Narrative Research of the School of English (AUPh). Her interests concern trauma narratives, memory studies, the immigrant experience, and the transformative power of creative writing in contemporary Anglophone literature.

▪ **Name:** Eleni Tasioula

Title: Ecological Crisis and a Pilgrimage to Self-Discovery in Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations* (2020)

Abstract: Fictional representations of the environmental crisis bring to the fore the distressing awareness that climate change is irrevocable and its consequences far-reaching. Reading Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations* (2020), a novel situated within the context of contemporary climate fiction, offers a meditation on the aftermath of ecological collapse and the crisis surrounding the human condition. McConaghy introduces the female protagonist's pilgrimage to the Antarctic Circle - to monitor the last remaining Arctic terns - which is set against the backdrop of a massive

ecological degradation. Rather than insisting on humanity's crimes inflicted on nature, the novel portrays an engagement with a depleting natural world intertwined with an intimate testimony of guilt, unresolved past trauma and a quest for redemption through migration. A common eagerness for fleeing encompasses both the last wildlife animals and the troubled protagonist. McConaghy fleshes out the values of human responsibility, comradeship, relationality, survival, and self-forgiveness whilst dueling with loss, mass extinction and emotionally painful flashbacks of the protagonist's life. Environmental catastrophe unfolds in parallel with a voyage towards self-discovery. First-person narration combined with a fractured timeline create an affective pull and make for a visceral experience.

The writer weaves together an intimate tale of loss and grief set against the global implications of climate change. Situated within the surrounding space of an imminent ecological collapse and enveloped in hints of hope, the novel seeks to salvage what to all appearances remains unsalvageable. Reading the novel as an extended metaphor allows for a nuanced understanding of migration - both as the aftermath of the ecological crisis and a getaway towards personal redemption.

Eleni Ermioni Tasioula is a graduate student of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and a Master's degree in English and American Studies. Her master's thesis focuses on American immigrant literature as well as issues of identity, belonging, contemporary crisis, feminist care ethics, spatial theory in literature, and individual/ communal reconstruction. Her research interests encompass contemporary transcultural Anglophone literature, cultural theory, multiculturalism and narrative ethics. Her recent research includes works of Latin American female writers and focuses on identity negotiation, belonging, spatial theory in literature and theoretical approaches to contemporary crises.

▪ **Name:** Elena Koumarianou

Title: The grandiose in-humanity': Decolonizing the Humanity of Being and Life in Patrick Chamoiseau's *The Old Slave and the Mastiff*

Abstract: In this presentation, I aim to explore what it means to "bear the unknown tablets of a new poetry" (Chamoiseau 140), one that has to attend not just to the "grandiose *in-humanity*" (17) found in the histories of humans and of the human that are circumscribed by what decolonial thinkers such as Sylvia Wynter call the 'coloniality of Being,' but, in equal measure, to histories of a grandiose in-humanity in the literal sense? In his

novel *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* (1997), Patrick Chamoiseau takes up this very project by crafting a narrative that bears witness to both the complex history of a formerly enslaved old man that flees his plantation by marroning into the Great Woods of Martinique, the history of a resilient human being whose sovereign humanity has nevertheless not been historically recognized, as well as to the entangled 'in-humanity'—i.e. the non-human existents of the text found in the mastiff, the trees, the stone and even the bones—that is by definition actively co-implicated in such histories. Paying attention to how non-human entities are represented in the novel and to the ontological implications of these representations, I will explore the decolonial vision of *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* as one that transcends the binaries of Human/Animal, Subject/Object and Life/Non-Life. Drawing on the works of decolonial thinkers on the question of the human, as well as on works by scholars and philosophers that think through and with the non-human, I will focus on the sympoietic coming together of humans, animals, trees and stones and the radical challenge that this poses to western epistemologies and ontologies that privilege the Human, at that a monolithic version of the human as evidenced by the 'overrepresentation of Man' (Wynter) over all other forms and modalities of existence. In doing so, I aim to suggest that *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* decenters the human from its self-authored monopoly over what constitutes Being and Life, and opens up to a decolonial vision informed by a non-anthropocentric metaphysics.

Elena Koumarianou holds an MA with distinction in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, with a focus on Representations of Marginality and Exclusion, from the Department of English, NKUA and a BA in English Language and Literature from the same department. She is an independent text editor and art curator, having recently co-curated an interdisciplinary project/exhibition conjoining the arts and literature, titled *The TYVEK Project*, at ATOPOS cvc, under the auspices of the Athens School of Fine Arts and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Organizing Committee

- **Thomas Mantzaris** is a literary scholar of 20th and 21st century American literature. He holds a Ph.D. in American Literature from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in which he examined multimodality and experimentation in the context of contemporary American, print-based fiction. He has delivered courses in various academic institutions, is a Fellow of the U.K. Higher Education Academy, and is currently an Affiliated Researcher at Vrije

Universiteit Brussel (VUB). He is a Fulbright Fellow and a Member of the Multimodal Research and Reading Group (AUPh) and the Centre for Literary & Intermedial Crossings (VUB). He has received the HELAAS Young Scholar Excellence Award (2022), has published his work in the journals *Book 2.0*, *Cartographic Perspectives*, *Ex-Centric Narratives*, *Iperstoria*, and *Materialities of Literature*, and is currently preparing his first monograph. His research interests include multimodal and experimental narratives, contemporary American fiction, and photography. He is also serving as the Young Scholar Representative for the Hellenic Association for American Studies.

- **Stavroula-Anastasia (Lina) Katsorchi** is a Ph.D. candidate at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research applies critical posthumanism and gender theory to works of contemporary Anglophone dystopian fiction, aiming to uncover a new posthuman ethics that radicalizes embodiment and social relations. Lina received her M.A. on "English: Literature, Culture, and Theory" from the University of Sussex, UK, and her B.A. on "English Language and Literature" from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has published articles and book reviews on international academic journals, and she has delivered several conference presentations worldwide. She is currently Book Review Editor at the *Journal of Posthumanism*. Apart from her academic duties, Lina has also published two poetry collections in English.
- **Maria Virginia Tsikopoulou** is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of American Literature and Culture, School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and a Fulbright alumna. She holds an MA (2018) in English and American Studies (AUPh) and a BA (2015) in English Language and Literature (AUPh). In 2022, she visited NYU and the Department of English as well as the Brooklyn Art Library in New York City under the auspices of the Fulbright Foundation in Greece for PhD-related research. In 2022, she also visited la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, in Spain, with an Erasmus scholarship. She has taught the courses Computer Literacy and Research Skills: Literary Cycle and Workshop in Critical Writing: Poetry at the School of English (AUPh). Her research interests revolve around urban space, contemporary American fiction, experimental narratives and artistic practices. She is currently working in corporate and as an EFL teacher.

Advising Committee

- **Paschalia Mitskidou** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of American Literature and Culture, School of English Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUPh), Greece. She holds an M.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Western Macedonia and a B.A. in History from the Ionian University. Her Ph.D. project concentrates on virtual reality

in contemporary American culture and the ways in which the historical past is reconstructed through virtual reality narrative practices. She has presented findings of her research in international conferences in Greece and abroad. She was a tutor in the undergraduate courses Workshop in Critical Writing: Fiction (2021-22) and Computer Literacy and Research Skills: Literary Studies (2020-21) at the School of English, ATh. She is a member of the Hellenic Association for American Studies (HELAAS) and the Multimodal Research and Reading Group of the School of English, ATh. Her research interests include contemporary American fiction, digital culture, and virtuality in the context of new media technologies, interactive/multimodal digital narratives and virtual reality as a storytelling tool. She is a freelance editor/proofreader and a tutor of Greek as a foreign language.

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