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The 5th Paris Conference on Arts & Humanities (PCAH2026)

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11:00-12:40 | Room 116 (1F)

Wednesday Onsite Parallel Session 1

PCAH2026 | Literature Studies

Session Chair: James Geidner

11:00-11:25

106624 | *Care Ethics and the Limits of the Pastoral Mode: Rereading James Herriot's Veterinary Memoirs*
Chak-kwan Ng, Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong

British country veterinarian James Alfred Wight, writing under the pen name James Herriot, authored a beloved series of memoirs—often read as autobiographical novels for their crafted, semi-fictional anecdotes—detailing his career in North Yorkshire from the 1940s. These memoirs, which he began writing at the age of 50, were not only bestsellers; they were also adapted for film and television, making “James Herriot” a household name that is celebrated by many readers attracted to the joys and meaningfulness of veterinary practice. His animal stories have elicited a powerful cultural phenomenon: the “James Herriot” effect. Herriot’s influence drives significant interest in veterinary medicine, but also risks generating unrealistic expectations of the profession among the public. This presentation aims to examine how Herriot’s memoirs can be crucial sites of ethical negotiation. In her monograph “Animal Stories”, scholar Susan McHugh suggests that: “stories might be seen as key points of ethical negotiation across artistic and scientific models of species and social life”. My analysis of James Herriot’s animal stories, particularly “All Creatures Great and Small”, aims to demonstrate how the narratives dramatise the lived experience of a veterinarian, embedding the application of veterinary science within a framework of care ethics. However, I will also evaluate the limitations of Herriot’s pastoral mode, demonstrating how his romanticised language and narration idealise veterinary practice. This analysis will reveal how these literary strategies carry significant ethical influence, shaping public perceptions and professional expectations in ways that both illuminate and obscure the complex realities of veterinary care.

11:25-11:50

102781 | *Frankenstein's Legacy Across Science, War, and Posthuman Identity*
Natalija Pop Zarijeva, Goce Delcev University Stip, North Macedonia
Krste Iliev, Goce Delcev University Stip, North Macedonia

This paper analyses the transformation of the Frankenstein myth from Shelley’s creation into a war-time world in Baghdad, and further shaped by the rise of advanced technology of artificial intelligence. We explore reimaginings of the story which depict novel anxieties about how bodies are engendered. The original work began as a warning about the dangers of scientific creation, whereas here we discuss it as an embodiment of political violence and collective trauma, and in another rendering of this classic creation, brought to the steps of the twenty-first century in a world of AI where the instability of the human form is investigated. We draw on the concept of transcorporeality as proposed by Stacy Alaimo. The paper examines how bodies cannot be isolated from the forces that create or shape them. They absorb and retain history, conflict, and technological effects. The paper aims to show how the “monster” becomes a space where science, war, and new technologies converge, and thus problematises the idea of the autonomy of the body and immutable identity. Finally, the study seeks to expose the way this myth adapts to various cultural moments as it moves from Shelley’s nineteenth-century galvanic laboratory to battlefields and then laboratories of artificial intelligence. What the paper argues is that Frankenstein is not merely a story that is retold in hundreds of novels, stories and film adaptations, but a continuing interaction between corporeality, technology, and the historical context which essentially keeps alive our critical inquiries into the ethics of creation and responsibility.

11:50-12:15

103393 | *Activism and Decoloniality: Intersections Between Environmental Degradation and Colonial Legacies in How Beautiful We Were*
Delzi Alves Laranjeira, State University of Minas Gerais, Brazil

Although not a contemporary prerogative, concern for ecosystems and their protection has become more active, organized, and efficient in the 20th and 21st centuries. Environmental activism, dedicated to the defense of terrestrial ecosystems, manifests in multiple ways across the most diverse spheres: political, social, governmental, and aesthetic. In the latter, we can point to literary manifestations that address environmental activism. Such is the case with Imbolo Mbue’s novel, *How Beautiful We Were* (2022). The narrative explores the relevance of activism to fight environmental injustice. This paper examines how Mbue’s work engages with themes addressed by Ecocritical and Decolonial Studies, such as the exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation, ecological activism, resistance to the Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP) (Quijano 2010; Mignolo, Walsh 2018), and decolonial activism. This investigation analyzes the interrelations among plot, characters, setting, narrative voice, figurative and symbolic elements, and how these elements connect to the effects of human actions in the Anthropocene. It also examines the prevalence of the Colonial Matrix of Power as a determining factor in the characters’ behaviors and attitudes. From this perspective, we can infer that the novel establishes a correlation between colonial violence and environmental degradation, demonstrating how the CMP operates. The characters’ activism is an attempt to defend and save their way of life, as they experience hopelessness and the possibility of annihilation while witnessing the disappearance of the world they know through the criminal exploitation of its natural resources.

12:15-12:40

108531 | *Trauma Theory in Literature and Psychology Through the Eyes of French Continental Philosophers*
James Geidner, University of Wisconsin, United States

Classical Trauma Theory in literature and psychology both make unique contributions to our current understanding of one’s experience of suffering. Classical trauma theorists, such as Carnuth and Felman are deeply rooted in psychoanalysis (repression, language, unconscious). Merleau-Ponty shifts our focus from the hidden mind uncovered in psychoanalysis to the lived body of phenomenological inquiry. Merleau-Ponty offers several important contributions in reconceptualizing classical trauma theory. First, as we inhabit lived bodies, rather than being bodies, trauma fundamentally changes how we perceive the world. For example, in the “I can become the I cannot,” trauma shatters our ability to experience the world as a place of possibility, rather it becomes a place of fear. Second, Merleau-Ponty’s view of our automatic self, our habit-body, suggest naturally experience the world without thinking becomes stuck. The habit-body is stuck in the moment of trauma, the eternal recurrence, or Freud’s return of the repressed. They body become situated in the past. Finally, trauma creates a de-worlding experiences, a void between the self and the world. Merleau-Ponty described this as the breakdown of the chiasm. All of these concepts are critical in both literature and psychology for understanding how an individual client or character experiences trauma and are explored in this paper.