

10-11 June, 2025
Rome

Contact Zones

Human and
Non-Human
Relations

Organising Committee:

Serena **Buti**
Rukya **Mandile**
Vladimír **Marazjuk**
Alberto **Pontiroli**
Serena **Sapienza**
Veronika **Sidó**
Josef **Sikola**
Luca **Veronesi**

Scientific committee:

Petra **Košťalová**
Camilla **Miglio**
Barbara **Ronchetti**

International PhD in Germanic and Slavic Studies



CHARLES
UNIVERSITY



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

Edificio Marco Polo
Viale dello Scalo S. Lorenzo, 82
contactzones.roma2025@gmail.com



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



UNIVERZITA
KARLOVA

International PhD Programme in Germanic and Slavic Studies

‘Sapienza’ University of Rome – Department of European, American, and Intercultural Studies

Charles University in Prague – Faculty of Arts

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE CONFERENCE 2025

CONTACT ZONES:
HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN RELATIONS

10th - 11th June 2025

‘Sapienza’ University of Rome

Call for Papers

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.

TERENTIUS

The third-year students of the joint double-degree PhD Programme in Germanic and Slavic Studies (Sapienza University of Rome – Charles University in Prague), are glad to launch the Call for Papers for their Graduate Conference ***CONTACT ZONES: HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN RELATIONS***, scheduled to take place at Sapienza University of Rome on the 10th and 11th of June 2025.

A long-lasting Western literary and philosophical tradition has interpreted reality in dualistic terms, based on the opposition of human and non-human subjectivities, culture and nature, technology and wilderness. This conception has been recently put into question. A flourishing series of theoretical and methodological studies (e.g. Grusin 2015; Tsing 2015; Haraway 2016; Iovino and Oppermann 2017; Braidotti and Bignall 2018) has proven the liveliness of the scientific debate related to human and non-human agencies in a wide range of disciplines (anthropology, humanities, earth sciences, neurosciences etc.). The aim of the Conference is to sketch out the current reflection on such a topic within the Germanic and Slavic fields of study.

The term “contact zone”, as reconstructed by Donna Haraway (2008: 216), made its first appearance in Mary Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*. Here, Pratt borrows the aforementioned term from the field of linguistics, using it to emphasise “how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other” (1992: 6); relations which might be of co-presence, interdependence, or interaction. However, Haraway proposes to broaden the concept of a contact zone on a global scale: within the current climate of environmental and social precariousness, Haraway states, the concept of contact zone concerns life at all scales, both temporal and spatial, individual and collective. The contact zone therefore becomes an area where “the nature/culture divide collapses and the possibilities of life and death for everyone are at stake” (Rose et al. 2012: 2). As a result of this collapse, contact zones enable exchanges between all kinds of subjectivities, whether of contamination, assemblage, entanglement, kinship, knotting, or of oppression, violence, and exploitation, always resulting in changes in “surprising ways” (Haraway 2008: 219). The cultural and aesthetic expression of such interactions

constitutes the core of the Conference, which aims to explore the richness of human and non-human relations in methodological and theoretical terms, as well as through specific case studies.

Prospective papers may explore topics included in the following non-exhaustive list.

ENVIRONMENT AS A CONTACT ZONE. Beyond the human/non-human divide: cultural interspecies reaction to environmental issues e.g. proto-ecological perspectives (as in Goethe's works); collective response to infected, contaminated or toxic areas, analysis of intra-action praxis and strategies; material, energetic, and non-organic agencies (Dürbeck et al. 2017; Bosco and Latini 2020; Barad 2007; Hennig et al. 2018; Armiero 2021; Luisetti 2023).

REVISITING CONTACT ZONES: Critical and historical analysis of post/trans-humanist theories of the past (e.g. in the Soviet context: cosmism, biocosmism, biomechanics, etc.) and their impact on literary/cultural works.

CONTACT ZONES/CONFLICT ZONES. Reshaping of relations between human and non-human subjectivities through conflict and inhuman violence (Cohen 2015); de-humanization of the Other; expressions and depictions of inhuman violence, such as environmental phenomena (eruptions, earthquakes, extreme atmospheric events, pandemics).

TRANS/CORPOREALITY AS CONTACT ZONE. Representations of the entanglements between bodies and the environment; as well as of the interplay between trans* bodies and technology; cyberpunk techno-bodies as an expression of the crisis of masculinity (Ross 1991); transcorporeal subject/landscape (Alaimo 2010); other-than-human within the human (Wolfe 2003); descriptions of nature as a habitat for the feminist subject in contrast to descriptions of nature as the basis of essentialism (Alaimo 2008).

GENRE AS A CONTACT ZONE. Theoretical research, or case studies, on specific literary genres that may act as literary contact zones in which human and non-human subjectivities and their relationship are imagined (e.g. science fiction, fantasy, utopia and dystopia, speculative fiction, pastoral literature).

TEXTUALITY AS A CONTACT ZONE. Research on written and oral text as manifestation of human mental processes; the application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Cognitive Discourse Analysis, etc.

PHILOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC RESEARCH AS A CONTACT ZONE. Application of digital tools for linguistic analysis; methods in Digital Ecdotics, Paleography and Codicology; research in Computational Linguistics, etc.

HOW TO APPLY

The organising committee welcomes contributions from PhD students currently enrolled in a doctoral programme, as well as research doctors who obtained their degree no more than three years ago. Addressable research areas are the following: literary studies, linguistics, philology, ethno-anthropological studies, visual arts, education, cultural studies and history. Proposals must be rooted in Germanic and/or Slavic Studies.

The Conference working language will be English, and speakers will have 15 to 20 minutes to present their papers. The organising committee is considering the possibility of publishing the Conference proceedings, further details will be provided during the upcoming phases.

Each candidate should provide an abstract, written in English and not longer than 300 words, along with an essential bibliography and a short biographical note (up to 150 words). The proposals should be submitted through a specific Google Form, accessible by clicking [here](#).

Abstract submission deadline: 28th March 2025

Notice of proposals acceptance: 10th April 2025

The event will be held in-person **on the 10th and 11th of June 2025, at [Edificio Marco Polo](#) of ‘Sapienza’ University of Rome (Viale dello Scalo S. Lorenzo, 82)**. Travel and accommodation expenses are to be covered by participants.

For any further inquiry, you may contact the organising committee by email: contactzones.roma2025@gmail.com.

We look forward to receiving your proposals!

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE: Petra Košťálová, Camilla Miglio, Barbara Ronchetti.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE: Serena Buti, Rukya Mandrile, Vladimír Marazjuk, Alberto Pontiroli, Serena Sapienza, Veronika Sidó, Josef Šikola, Luca Veronesi.

LIST OF REFERENCES:

- Alaimo 2010 = Alaimo, Stacy, *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 2010.
- Alaimo 2008 = Alaimo, Stacy, 'Trans-corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature', In: Alaimo, Stacy; Hekman, Susan (eds.), *Material Feminisms*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2008: 237–264.
- Armiero 2021 = Armiero, Marco, *Wasteocene: Stories from the Global Dump*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021.
- Barad 2007 = Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, Durham 2007.
- Bosco and Latini 2020 = Bosco, Lorella; Latini, Micaela (eds.), *Animals and Humans in German Literature, 1800-2000: Exploring the Great Divide*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2020.
- Braidotti and Bignall 2018 = Braidotti, Rosi; Bignall, Simone (eds.), *Posthuman Ecologies Complexity and Process after Deleuze*, Rowman & Littlefield International, Lanham-London 2018.
- Dürbeck et al. 2017 = Dürbeck, Gabriele; Stobbe, Urte; Zapf, Hubert; Zemanek, Evi (eds.), *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture*, Lexington Books, Lanham-London 2017.
- Grusin 2015 = Grusin, Richard, *The Nonhuman Turn*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2015.
- Haraway 2008 = Haraway, Donna J., *When species meet*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2008.
- Haraway 2016 = Haraway, Donna J., *Staying with the Trouble: making kin in the Cthulucene*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2016.
- Hennig et al. 2018 = Hennig, Reinhard; Jonasson, Anna-Karin; Degerman, Peter (eds.), *Nordic Narratives of Nature and the Environment. Ecocritical Approaches to Northern European Literatures and Cultures*, Lexington Books, Lanham- London 2018.
- Iovino and Oppermann 2017 = Iovino, Serenella; Oppermann, Serpil (eds.), *Environmental Humanities. Voices from the Anthropocene*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London-New York 2017.
- Luisetti 2023 = Luisetti, Federico, *Nonhuman Subjects: An Ecology of Earth-Beings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2023.
- McQuillen and Vaingurt 2018 = McQuillen, Colleen; Vaingurt, Julia (eds.), *The Human Reimagined: Posthumanism in Russia*, Academic Press, Boston 2018.
- Morton 2011 = Morton, Timothy, 'The Mesh', In: Stephanie Lemenager, Teresa Shewry, Ken Hiltner (eds.), *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, New York 2011.
- Latour 2014 = Latour, Bruno, 'Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene', in: *New Literary History*, 45, 2014: 1– 18.
- Pratt 1992 = Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, New York 1992.

Rose et al. 2012 = Rose, Deborah Bird; Van Doreen, Thom; Chrulew, Matthew; Cooke, Stuart; Kearnes, Matthew; O’Gorman, Emily, ‘Thinking through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities’, In: *Environmental Humanities*, 1, 2012: 1– 5.

Ross 1991 = Ross, Andrew, *Strange Weather: Culture, Science, and Technology in the Age of Limits*, Verso, London-New York 1991.

Timofeeva 2018 = Timofeeva, Oksana, *The History of Animals: A Philosophy*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2018.

Tsing 2015 = Tsing Lowenhaupt, Anna, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2015.

Wolfe 2003 = Wolfe, Cary, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2003.