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Research Project

Beyond the Human: Anthropocentric Voice and Form in Contemporary Poetry

Project funded by own resources

Project title Beyond the Human: Anthropocentric Voice and Form in Contemporary Poetry

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Organisation / Research unit

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften / Fachbereich Englische Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft

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This Ph.D. thesis adds to a vibrant conversation in contemporary literary studies about the challenging nature of ecopoetry in the twenty-first century. With the introduction of the term 'Anthropocene' into the environmental discourse, attention has turned to the ongoing exploitative and destructive domination of the human over the nonhuman. As a result, contemporary poets confront the human-centred perspective on the nonhuman world that has prevailed post-industrialised Western literature. The unease in projecting human feelings, emotions, or expectations onto nonhuman representation challenges them to scrutinise the literary potential of poetic voice and form beyond the human in their work.

By looking at a broad variety of texts by British and Irish poets, such as, Jen Hadfield, Kathleen Jamie, Karen McCarthy Woolf, Sinéad Morrissey, Caitríona O'Reilly, Alice Oswald, and Jo Shapcott this Ph.D. project investigates how contemporary poetry reacts to the modern changes in the environment. Next to questioning the legitimacy of their own poetic voice to write about the nonhuman world, their works sound out the representation of anthropomorphic voices as well as human-nonhuman entanglements and ecological forms to rethink nonhuman agency. By applying new materialist, ecofeminist, and posthuman theories, my thesis aims to explore the poetic possibilities of shaping an empathetic dialogue with the nonhuman world.

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