



## **Culture and the Impending Ecocatastrophe:**

### **Narratives of Ecology and Sustainable Futures**

University of Turku, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Keynote speaker: **Reinhard Hennig**, University of Agder (Norway)

“Nostalgia, Ecocatastrophe, or Sustainability?  
Environmental Storytelling and Ecocritical Theory”

### **Call for Papers**

Nordic Summer University Study Circle ‘Narrative and Violence’ is inviting proposals for presentations for the Summer Session. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year’s Summer Session has been exceptionally rescheduled to October and will be held online or in hybrid format.

Culture’s interest in nature has a long tradition, as illustrated by the biblical texts, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the ancient Chinese poetry of Li Po, the European pastoral novel and, more recently, eco-dystopian fiction, exemplified by Octavia Butler’s and Margaret Atwood’s prose. However, it is only in response to the impending ecocatastrophe that ecocriticism has emerged as a major field of study. Defined as ‘earth-centred approach’ (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996), it brings into dialogue cultural and environmental studies, and draw attention to culture’s reciprocal relationship with the natural world. More recently, critics have deconstructed and criticised the human-oriented approach of early ecocriticism, raising the question of nonhuman agency and establishing race and gender as ecological concepts. Moving beyond Western prominence, they have also endeavoured to emphasise the global character of ecological concerns.

The one-day symposium hopes to provide a platform for a discussion of culture’s reciprocal relationship with the natural world, as manifest in recent productions. Presentations given at the symposium might address, although need not be limited to, the following questions:

- How does contemporary culture address the ongoing environmental crisis?
- How does culture itself affect the environment (museums, installations, murals, guided tours, memorial practices etc.)?
- How do cultural texts and practices thematise and critique the culture-nature dichotomy?
- What specific representational strategies are used by writers and artists to draw attention to the two-way relationship between culture and endangered nature?

- What parallels do cultural productions draw between the oppression of human groups and our destruction of the natural environment?
- What impact does the figurative language that draws on the natural world have on our relationship with the environment?

Please send proposals for 15-minute presentations (max. 200 words) with a title and a short biographical note (100 words) to Helena Duffy ([helena.duffy@utu.fi](mailto:helena.duffy@utu.fi)) by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

### **Nordic Summer University Membership**

To participate in the symposium, you need to become a member of the Nordic Summer University (NSU). The annual membership fee facilitates the existence of NSU. As a member you can sign up for all events organised by NSU, take part in the democratic decision-making process on which NSU is based, and become part of the extensive network of NSU. There are two rates: a standard fee of €25 and a discounted membership of €10 for students, self-financed/freelance/independent scholars and artists.

Circle 4 ‘Narrative and Violence’ (2000–2022) is one of the nine circles operating under the auspices of the Nordic Summer University (NSU). Founded in 1950, the Nordic Summer University is a non-hierarchical, democratic and volunteer-based organisation that provides opportunities for intellectual exchanges. It builds on the values of equality, inclusion, and sustainability by combining two traditions: the continental ideals of learning and cultivation of the self, and the Nordic heritage of *folkbildning* and self-organization, with its investments in open-access education and collaboration through participation and active citizenship.

For more information about Nordic Summer University, please visit: <https://www.nsuweb.org>.