

**Theses of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation**

**Empathy Matters:  
Embodied Encounters and Entanglements  
in Anthropocene Fiction and Film**

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## **I. Topic and the objectives of the dissertation**

The dissertation engages with works of literary fiction, television and cinema—including Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Victor Kossakovsky’s slow animal film *Gunda* (2020), Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan’s sci-fi series *Westworld* (2016), Spike Jonze’s film *Her* (2013), Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021), Ursula K. Le Guin’s short story “Vaster than Empires and More Slow” (1971), and Jeff VanderMeer’s weird novel *Borne* (2017)—in its endeavour to explore the complexities of “inter-creatural” empathy. This is a neologism I introduce to indicate that the textual and filmic relations that I analyse extend beyond the human-animal binary, and involve vegetal, (bio)technological and entirely artificial entities as well. The primary objectives of the dissertation are reflected in its title: “Empathy Matters” signals, on the one hand, that I aim to shed light on the “dark sides” and contentious nature of empathy, and the difficulties inherent in attempts to extend it beyond the sphere of humanity. On the other hand, it asserts that empathy *matters*—that is, it gestures toward my contention that, in the age of the Anthropocene, thinking about the expansion of empathy and concern beyond the (purported) boundaries of humanity is a political and ethical imperative, one that has vital implications for the restricted category of “the human” as well. The subtitle of the dissertation, “Embodied Encounters and Entanglements in Anthropocene Fiction and Film,” refers to the dissertation’s central endeavour to reconsider and rehabilitate the role of the embodied forms of empathy (long considered inferior in philosophical and psychological literature), especially when it comes to (mediated) engagement with nonhuman creatures. It also locates my inquiry in the context of the Anthropocene, and refers broadly to the nature of the narratives comprising my corpus. I argue that such an inquiry into the affective aspects of earthly relations is timely, if not inevitable, in the Anthropocene: as this “new human epoch” unfolds in its chaotic and unpredictable ways, humans finding themselves amidst perpetual and inherently interlinked ecological, medical and socio-economic crises are increasingly forced to recognise that “the fate of humanity is deeply intertwined with the fates of all sorts of other entities” (Shaviro 1).

A primary aim of the dissertation, then, is to foreground the environmental, affective and embodied interdependencies between the nonhuman and human beings represented in the corpus, and to consider how the emerging connections and vulnerabilities can potentially contribute to a reconfiguration of (affective) hierarchies among entities of biological, artificial and hybrid origin. In tracing the promising and problematic aspects of empathy in a fairly wide range of cinematic, serial, and literary narratives, I intend to point towards an intrinsic correlation between the anthropocentric hierarchy of care (C. Adams 15) and what I call the

internal hierarchy of empathy—more precisely, I suggest that the anthropocentric hierarchy of care builds on, but also bleeds into, the hierarchy of empathy. I propose that dismantling this restrictive vision of caring—described by Carol J. Adams as a framework that treats care as a limited reserve, prioritising human needs above all else, and proclaiming that only after *all* humans are taken care of can concern be extended to nonhumans (16)—is predicated on dismantling the long-standing hierarchical view of empathy.

Based on an overview of philosophical and psychological literature on the notion(s) and dynamics of empathy, provided in the Introduction titled “W(h)ither empathy?”, I argue that the tendency to distinguish between somatic-affective and imaginative-cognitive versions or components of empathy implies an internal hierarchy of empathy as well, since most accounts favour cognitive and imaginative variations of empathy as more important, sophisticated or advanced. Thus, by a hierarchy of empathy, I refer to the common perception that cognitive empathy (mostly conceptualised as involving a *volitional* mental simulation of another’s internal state or experience, resulting in some level of understanding of their mental state) is somehow superior to affective or embodied empathy, usually conceived as relying on visceral, unconscious, and instinctual responses like emotional contagion and various forms of somatic mimicry, defined as an “ephemeral and contingent affective state that is hardly more than a somatic reflex, which is shared by *all animal species*” (Assmann and Detmers 5, my emphasis). My contention is that the framework that prioritises cognitive variants of empathy—frequently considered as a *uniquely human* quality—over embodied forms which have been linked to animal existence, usually associated with a lower, somatic realm, both echoes and reinforces the logic that gives absolute primacy to human perspectives, interests and concerns and denies nonhuman beings the most basic level of recognition and mattering.

Therefore, in the chapters comprising this dissertation, I explore how the analysed cinematic and literary works enact or at least hint at the subversion of these stratified structures, and I make the case for the affirmative potentials of affective resonance, mimicry and emotional contagion in inter-creatural relations. In my readings, particularly in Chapter Three, focused on the textual configurations of (hyper)empathy and mimicry, I attempt to demonstrate that the widespread aversion to or dismissal of such instinctual empathic processes not only results from the threat of “painful emotional overload” (Aaltola, *Varieties* 201) and its ethical consequences (such as the lack of altruistic action), but also points to an anxiety related to the excessive features of the somatic resonance involved in the phenomenon, and to the resulting fear of vulnerability. Yet, I suggest that the sense of shared materiality and the commonality of embodied experience foregrounded by processes of somatic mimicry and emotional contagion

have considerable affirmative potentials (largely neglected so far), especially for “speculative empathy,” another term I introduce to denote the mode of empathic relating that emerges in the inter-creatural relationships portrayed in and enabled by the texts, films and series discussed in the dissertation.

Referring to both the speculative nature of most of the narratives explored here, and to an imaginative-inventive element that I consider to be vital to it, speculative empathy is conceived as an active response that emerges as a manner of resonant feeling-with and *being-with*, wherein the entities in contact are open to the affective expression of the other. Reflexive, receptive *and* reflective, speculative empathy entails an awareness and an acknowledgment that empathising with creatures other-than-human always involves a speculative element: we can never fully grasp their experience or map their mental content, but we can approach and attend to them with curiosity, uncertainty and wonder. Reflected in many of the screened and literary narratives I examine, this empathic attitude is rooted in emotional contagion and embodied mimicry, whose boundary-breaking potential is vital to speculative empathy’s inter-creatural dimension, because they expose our involuntary affinity for receiving and responding to the affective-somatic articulations of the embodied minds of other creatures. Yet, and crucially, the instinctual resonance involved in speculative empathy points towards a bodily kinship that does not necessitate or presume understanding. Rather, this is a mode of empathy that, I suggest, is about ascertaining the appropriate distance necessary for a non-intrusive and non-invasive relationship with nonhuman creatures. Such distance, as gauged by the films, texts and series, does not entail detachment, as in most formulations of cognitive empathy, but requires the empathiser to stay connected *across* that space, grounded in the affective impressions induced by the other, while remaining appreciative and attentive of the inevitable gap between human and nonhuman experientialities. Speculative empathy, as I trace its emergence in the corpus, serves as evidence that, despite its asymmetrical and detrimental aspects, empathy also has the potential for a more balanced, *reciprocal* kind of relating, where the beings in relation do not dominate one another. In this way, through its exploration of this mode of feeling-with, affirming the sense of an intimate susceptibility to all kinds of bodies and affects that is rejected by strictly cognitive configurations of empathy, the dissertation aims to offer a contribution to the dismantling of the hierarchy of empathy and the hierarchy of care. Through dissecting the role of perception, cognition and, particularly, affect in the empathic processes that the selected works of cinema and literature envision and engender, my goal is to show how these texts and films expose the mechanisms of those hierarchies and enact, whether explicitly or not, their subversion.

## II. Overview of the chapters and the methods employed

Undermining the autonomy and superiority of humanity that anthropocentric perspectives and discourses take for granted, the Anthropocene as a cognitively and, crucially, affectively unsettling experience also calls for a re-negotiation of relations with other-than-human beings. Engaging with the emotional by-products of such an unsettlement, the works discussed here—ranging from conventional wildlife television and non-anthropocentric slow cinema through speculative literature and film to New Weird fiction—imagine potential paths of coping and “coming to terms with our Anthropocene condition” (Vermeulen, *Literature* 5). These literary and cinematic works present nonhuman beings as agents and objects of empathy, exploring inter-creatural empathy and care as part of their more or less subtle efforts to problematize, critique, or try and move beyond anthropocentrism.

My reading of the corpus is informed by dynamically evolving theoretical discourses including animal studies, ecocriticism, affect studies and critical posthumanism—which all aim to subvert human-centred approaches and challenge traditional conceptions of the human as an isolable and self-contained category. With its focus on shared embodiment, vulnerability, and inter-creatural relations—and “its invocation of what beings, bonds, and worlds might become possible and apparent if and when human exceptionalism is abandoned” (DeFalco, *Curious* 8)—, the themes and objectives of critical posthumanism align particularly well with my interrogation of the hierarchy of empathy, which, I contend, also largely denies, or at least heavily restricts the possibility of empathic engagement with nonhuman creatures.

Crucially, I do not wish to present an extended, inter-creatural empathy as an easy or comprehensive solution to socio-ecological crises, environmental injustices and the mistreatment of nonhuman beings: indeed, the challenging and problematic traits (or what I would call the “dark potentials”) of empathy are addressed too. Although in my analyses, I try to foreground the affirmative potentials and the mutually beneficial implications of (certain kinds of) empathic relating, I also recognise, along with Danielle Sands and Elisa Aaltola, that any discussion of inter-creatural empathy must be carefully navigated, keeping in mind that empathy “can serve many purposes, among them highly problematic ones” (Assmann and Detmers 9). Therefore, as I navigate the diverse and often conflicting approaches to empathy, I aim to productively exploit the ambiguity that dwells in the notion while I also map the dynamics and (mis)uses of empathy when it comes to engaging with nonhuman creatures. My aim with this is twofold: in each of the chapters, I discuss what I consider to be major issues or hindrances in inter-creatural empathic relations, and then, from various perspectives, I attempt

to delineate paths of how approaches to empathy may be re-envisioned to encompass the cross-creatural kinships and connections that need to be accounted for in our Anthropocene present.

Chapter One, “**Narrating nonhumans: anthropomorphisation and trans-species empathy in *Our Planet*, *Gunda* and *Cow*,**” first maps the treacherous mechanisms of anthropomorphism in David Attenborough’s *Our Planet* (2019), foregrounding the issues entailed by the projective version of cognitive empathy favoured by the series, an example of traditional wildlife television. Then, it moves on to a discussion of *Gunda* (2020), which rejects the use of voiceover and an explanatory framework in its rendering of the lives of “ordinary” farmed animals. While Kossakovsky’s contemplative film may seem, at first glance, to embody a diametrical contrast to Attenborough’s *Our Planet* series, my comparative analysis shows that the two actually share similarities that are more significant than the differences that divide them. Even though it putatively aims to foreground other-than-human forms of vocal and material self-expression, *Gunda*’s visual language is dominantly as anthropocentric as Attenborough’s human vocal authority. Finally, the chapter looks at Andrea Arnold’s *Cow* (2021), a film that, I suggest, is more effective in undermining the sense of a hierarchical, distanced gaze. Unlike *Our Planet* and *Gunda*, *Cow* explicitly features bodily encounters between human and nonhuman animals and produces pronounced instances of tactile visibility that can potentially invite audiences to attune in embodied and affective manners to the animals it represents, and, crucially, *engages* with.

Chapter Two, “**Empathy for the machine: android affect in *Westworld* and *Her*”** aims to engage with both “technophobic” and more techno-optimistic serial and cinematic portrayals of humandroid relationships, providing analyses of the film *Her* and the first series of *Westworld*. As opposed to *Westworld*, which ostensibly belongs to the technophobic tradition with its tropes of robots gaining consciousness and rebelling against their human masters, Jonze’s *Her* is set apart from many other sf narratives dealing with AI-human relationships by its unusually benevolent atmosphere and its featuring an artificial companion represented only through her *voice*. Analysing *Westworld* and *Her* in juxtaposition, I first and foremost explore the phenomenological, ethical and affective implications of the artificial human voice and face. In my investigation of how AI beings’ vocal and affective agency is related to (the failure of) evoking empathy and related responses in human characters and viewers, I also address the problematics of embodiment, continuing to unravel the controversial effects of anthropomorphisation (started in Chapter One) with regard to techno-creatures.

Chapter Three, reading **Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and Ursula K. Le Guin’s “Vaster Than Empires and More Slow” (1971)**, concentrates on issues of

mimicry, self-loss, numbing, empathic and personal distress via fusion-type identification in literary texts that envision speculative versions of transgressive empathy, entailing extreme vulnerability for the protagonists, both of whom suffer from hyper-empathic disorders. Interrogating how the experience of (hyper)empathy is constructed within the fictional worlds, the chapter argues that the ceaseless affective-sensory contamination endured by the protagonists foregrounds an affirmative potential inherent in emotional contagion. Focusing on the (often disturbing) aspects of mimicry and the evolutionary implications of (hyper)empathy, the chapter traces how the protagonists' hyperempathic conditions, initially presented as maladaptive disorders, eventually turn into adaptive abilities.

Finally, Chapter Four, **“Companion creatures – speculative empathy, tactile response-ability and the potential of embodied proximity in *Fifteen Dogs*, *Borne* and *Klara and the Sun*,”** examines how empathic connection, increasingly established and expressed via tactile encounters—especially where verbal communication fails or is impossible—is textually conveyed. André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs* concentrates on the relationship between a woman called Nira and a hybrid dog called Majnoun; Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun*, narrated by the eponymous artificial friend, focuses on the connection between Klara and a human child, Josie, while Jeff VanderMeer's *Borne* explores the intricacies of the relationship between a human scavenger and a shape-shifting biotech entity. Reading these three novels in conjunction, the chapter ultimately aims to trace how the initially unsettling—and paradoxically, estranging—sense of proximity and intimacy between human and nonhuman companion creatures may generate a productive discomfort (R. Adams 712). Such discomfort, as I argue, may be construed as a way of “staying with the trouble” (Haraway, *Staying* 3), opening up a space of critical re-engagement with the nature of inter-creatural encounters and with the (power-)dynamics of empathy and care when it comes to cross-creatural relations.

One of my central aims in the chapters is to map how empathy functions as both a strategy and a theme. By combining an exploration of diegetic empathy (empathy as it is portrayed within the literary and filmic narratives) with that of spectator and readers' empathy (empathy as it is elicited by engagement with the text or the moving image), the dissertation aims to address a gap in existing scholarship, which tends to focus either on empathy and readership (e.g. Suzanne Keen's *Empathy and the Novel*), or empathy and spectatorship (e.g. Alexa Weik von Mossner's *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion and Environmental Narrative*). Therefore, in Chapters One and Two, besides attending to the dynamics of diegetic empathy, cognitive and phenomenological film theory is applied: the former framework is used to dissect the narrative and cinematographic strategies employed to cue empathic responses in

audiences, while the latter helps me to consider the spectators' potential, embodied experiences in response to the filmic body and the sensuous spectacle it (re)presents. I also read literary fiction, because the textual configurations of empathy are vital to my investigation of how the versions of inter-creatural empathy that emerge in the corpus may help or hinder the establishment of affirmative and balanced relations among creatures; and because it is in the novels included in my last chapter that the possibility—indeed, perhaps the necessity—of developing a speculative empathic openness is most convincingly illuminated. In the analyses, I look at how empathy functions and how it becomes dysfunctional, and discuss the ways in which nonhuman creatures invite different kinds of relating by expressing their mindedness or sentience through their voice, bodily behaviour and fluctuation, or pervasive and piercing affective resonance. I also consider how these expressions are received by human characters, and how they are captured by filmmakers and writers in order to elicit certain responses in audiences. I refrain from discussing whether these attempts are successful or not, since such an examination falls beyond the scope of my dissertation; however, I aim throughout to offer a critique of the narrative and cinematic employment of empathy, especially with respect to its manipulative and anthropomorphic aspects.

All chapters combine methods of close reading and comparative analysis; the former approach is also part of my attempt to avoid an issue inherent in the application of the term inter-creatural, namely, that it may threaten to weaken analytical precision if it is taken to suggest a reduction or an erasure of the vital distinctions between the embodied experiences and lived realities of the animals, plants, (bio)tech and human beings represented in the corpus, and the ensuing differences in the nature of the relationships that may develop between them. In order to steer clear of giving the impression that the same mode of empathising and connection is involved in all of these encounters, my close readings zoom in on the specificities of the connections that are forged between nonhuman and human beings, emphasising the diversity of affective-sensory expressions and modalities of the creatures in contact, as well as attending to the ethical implications of their often divergent ontological status and of the discontinuities in their particular embodied, perceptual and affective experience. On the other hand, the comparative analyses aim to expose certain patterns of empathic relating (or its lack) that underlie the variety of chaotic, transgressive and intimate inter-creatural encounters staged in the texts and films, allowing me to interrogate biopolitically produced and controlled boundaries between human and nonhuman beings, and to gesture towards potential ways of overcoming these boundaries by exposing them as always-already penetrable and permeable.

### III. Results

#### *1) The scope of the dissertation and the diverse nature of the corpus*

One of the main novelties of the dissertation lies in the fact that it considers the intersecting problems of naturecultures, nonhuman sentience, and artificial consciousness in conjunction, through the lens of empathy, a contentious phenomenon in and of itself. While a growing number of scholarly investigations have been dedicated to the issues and possibilities of empathy (attesting the pertinence of the matters raised in my dissertation), they have either limited their focus to empathy as implicated in animal-human relations, or have concentrated on affective dimensions of and relations towards technological beings. The decision to expand my focus in such a way was carefully considered: I wanted to include a diverse array of literary and filmic works dealing with exotic and ‘mundane’ animals, humanimal hybrids, murderous androids and “artificial friends”. Such an approach allowed me to raise vital questions concerning the problematic and auspicious aspects of inter-creatural empathy, and to consider its manifestations from several angles, in various contexts and mediums.

As the filmic and literary works analysed in the chapters demonstrate, it is not only the lives of human and nonhuman animals that are intermeshed in vital and often startling ways: the aspects and manifestations of technology are always already implicated in, shaping and complicating those relations. Conceptualisations and representations of vegetal, animal and artificial beings tend to bleed into each other. The dismissive attitudes to the sentience and ‘subjectivity’ of technological entities, for example, frequently echo the callous views on the (inner) lives of animals, and vice versa, the (mis)treatment of artificial beings often appears to rest on the same ethical and psychological foundations—rooted in the long-standing tradition of human exceptionalism—that are used to justify the abuse of animals.

Such overlaps between the representations of differently nonhuman beings not only expose troubling continuities in the hierarchical frameworks that govern human interactions with nonhuman and artificial forms of life, but also reveal some deeply contradictory tendencies in human perception, stemming from our anthropocentric biases. Pointing to the arbitrariness of human categorisation, the intersecting patterns of the exploitation and oppression of nonhuman creatures reveal the fluid and shifting criteria used to designate the boundaries of ‘the human’. For instance, when the cognitive-intellectual capacities of machines equal or surpass those of humans, the distinctive ‘essence’ of the human finds its locus in emotion or affect, claimed to be unavailable to the technological nonhuman—as is the case in *Westworld*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Klara and the Sun*, and, at least initially, even in the film *Her*. Conversely, in the case of animals, even when their capacity for emotion and suffering

is proven to be equal to that of humans, their presumed lack of intelligence and consciousness (defined by human standards) is invoked to ensure difference. Indeed, a crucial objective of this dissertation is to reveal the subversive implications of inter-creatural enmeshments by juxtaposing representations of animals, humans *and* machines. This approach, combined with an exploration of the dynamics of inter-creatural empathy in the corpus, allows me to illuminate an unsettling, yet potentially also liberating breakdown of boundaries among creatures belonging to diverse modes of existence.

## *2) Expanding the sphere of empathic relating*

Although, at least according to Lori Gruen, “[e]mpathy does not appear to be the appropriate ethical response to the non-sentient world” (68), in Chapter 3, I also discuss the possibility of navigating a contagious affective engagement with vegetal entities, and thereby aim to cross a limit that other iterations of inter-creatural empathy—including Gruen’s concept of entangled empathy, defined as “a type of caring perception focused on attending to another’s experience of wellbeing” and “an experiential process involving a blend of emotion and cognition” (3)—have been subject to. It was also an important objective to demonstrate that, despite its problematic aspects, empathy matters, and that its somatic-material elements—particularly the contentious concepts of emotional contagion and embodied mimicry—are due for re-appraisal.

## *3) Introducing the term “inter-creatural”*

Though it may appear odd, the introduction of the term “inter-creatural” was also necessary for the arguments presented in the dissertation. I have chosen this word because I found the more commonly used category “interspecies” too restrictive for my purposes. Rather than effacing differences among vegetal, human, (bio)technological and animal creatures, and the various modalities or manifestations of empathy that develop among them, the term inter-creatural is intended to signal that, next to all of these discontinuities, there are also commonalities and continuities between the forms of sentient life populating—and engaging with—the filmic and literary works analysed here: indeed, this is precisely what makes empathic relations possible. When used with reference to humans as they connect or conflict with an extensive range of organic and inorganic material agencies, the word “inter-creatural” simultaneously expresses the often renounced creaturely aspects of human existence (here denoting not just animalistic but also mechanistic dimensions), and signals a sense of continuity between human and nonhuman forms of being in their countless manifestations.

#### *4) Delineating and contributing to the disruption of the hierarchy of empathy and of care*

The dissertation seeks to contribute to a destabilisation of anthropocentric structures of differentiation and dominance. It primarily pursues this endeavour by challenging conventional assumptions about the mechanisms and the perceived limits of empathy. The chapters make explicit connections between issues of embodiment, affect and empathy in relation to animals, plant-like and (bio)technological creatures, and highlight the sense of interdependence between various states and forms of being that reverberates through the selected works of cinema and literature.

The dissertation's main focus is empathy rather than care, because of what I deem to be its considerable subversive potential: empathy, with its aspects of mimicry and contagious resonance, is often unconscious and accidental but irresistible, its "spark much less fixed and . . . [able to] work at random, transgressing established borders of in-group and out-group" (Assmann and Detmers 8). Despite having recently become, both in cultural and theoretical discourses, a somewhat "overused" term, empathy is still a phenomenon that is integral to social existence, which is why I considered it extremely important to not only engage with its problematic aspects, as well as to map its healing, connective potentials—which, as I attempt to demonstrate in my analyses, are also abundant. This is not to say, however, that care is not a vital element in my discussions. Indeed, I do suggest that there is an intrinsic connection between empathy and care, and I have aimed to show that certain modes of empathy (particularly what I have called speculative empathic openness) can contribute to dismantling the hierarchy of care, by fostering connections based in mutual vulnerability and reliance that transverse boundaries between animal, human(oid), (bio)technological and vegetal beings.

#### *5) Putting forward the notion of "speculative empathy"*

In agreement with Elisa Aaltola, I suggest that the fact that "there are limits to knowing" (*Varieties* 109) nonhuman others does not, by any means, imply that all attempts at inter-creatural empathy are futile (*Varieties* 167): while cognitive understanding is necessarily restricted, there are no such limits to affect, potentially eliciting resonance, embodied mimicry and emotional contagion, long considered inferior forms of relating. Yet I also diverge from Aaltola's typology of empathy, which excludes emotional contagion; in my reading of the corpus, I try to demonstrate that emotional contagion and the immediate, intense corporeal-sensory attunement it brings to the fore provide vital scaffolding for speculative empathy.

Speculative empathy is not aimed at knowing, but affirms a reciprocal vulnerability via openness and attunement to the embodied-affective resonations of the other, a receptivity that

can be its own form of response. The promise and potential of such a relating are especially significant when it comes to inter-creatural relations, since, as my discussions make clear, in these cases, understanding is often impossible or denied. This mode of empathy appears most prominently in *Cow*'s cautious negotiation of embodied proximity and distance, which refrains from anthropomorphic projection while remaining attuned to the tactile gestures and affective expressions of bovine sentience; and in the connection of Rachel and Borne in Jeff VanderMeer's novel, whose relationship is reliant on non-intrusive *curiosity*—that is, a sort of imaginative openness, in the sense of being invested and interested in the other as they express themselves—and a sense of attentive, embodied resonance, coupled with an attitude of care that is “about the right distance” (Puig de la Bellacasa 5).

#### IV. Conference presentations

- **2023 November:** The Factual Animal: Audiovisual Representations of Real Other-than-Human Animals (Valencia, Universitat de València, SP): **“Speaking for Nonhumans: The Voices of Advocacy in *Our Planet*, *Earthlings* and *Dominion*.”**
- **2023 September:** NYIM18 (Nyelv, Ideológia, Média) Konferencia – Át/változások (Szeged, Szegedi Tudományegyetem, HU): **“Elmosódó énhatárok – A transzgresszív empátia alakzatai Octavia Butler és Ursula K. Le Guin műveiben.”**
- **2023 May:** Recent Approaches to the Posthuman: Cultural Reflections on the (Post-)Human Condition (Zaragoza, Universidad de Zaragoza, SP): **“Vegetal encounters – nonhuman agency and colonizing affect in *Annihilation* and ‘Vaster than Empires and More Slow.’”**
- **2023 January:** HUSSE 2023 Conference / A Magyar Anglisztikai Társaság konferenciája (Miskolc, Miskolci Egyetem, HU): **“Empathy for the Machine: Android Affect in *Her* and *Westworld*.”**
- **2022 October:** The View from the Anthropocene Conference / Antropocén kilátások konferencia (Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem, HU): **“Silence speaks louder: nonhuman voice and post-anthropocentric environmental storytelling in nature documentaries.”**
- **2022 October:** Posthuman Bodies & Embodied Posthumanisms: An Interdisciplinary Conference (University of Warwick, UK): **“‘Those magnetic eyes’: The nonhuman’s face and gaze in *Borne*, *Machines Like Me* and *Our Life in the Forest*.”** (Online.)
- **2022 February:** Abundance and Scarcity Conference (Bordeaux, Université Bordeaux-Montaigne, FR): **“‘From nowhere, a word appears’: (linguistic) abundance and scarcity in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Dancers at the End of Time*.”**
- **2020 December:** Screen Cultures in the 21st Century, Online Conference (Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem, HU): **“‘There’s no cure for the Internet’: Surveillance, Spectatorship and Sanctuary in *Black Mirror*.”** (Online.)
- **2020 October:** EASPOP – Encounters of the Popular Kind: Traditions and Mythologies in Dialogue, Online Conference (Budapest, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, HU):

**“New Gods in the Making: The Mythopoeia of *Westworld* and *American Gods*.”**  
(Online.)

- **2020 January:** First Debrecen Postgraduate Symposium and Workshop in English and American Studies (Debreceni Egyetem, HU): **““There’s no cure for the Internet’: Technological Anxiety and the Digital Sublime in *Black Mirror*.”**
- **2017 May:** A Hatvani István Szakkollégium Tavaszi Konferenciája (Debrecen, HU): **“A jelentés keresése: a nyelv és a narratíva identitásformáló szerepe az *Amerikai istenek* és a *The Dancers at the End of Time* című regényekben.”**
- **2017 April:** XXXIII. OTDK, Pécs, Bölcsészettudományi Szekció, Amerikai irodalom és kultúra tagozat: **“A Quest for Meaning – The Role of Language and Narrative in Shaping Identity in *American Gods* and *The Dancers at the End of Time*.”**



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### List of publications related to the dissertation

#### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

1. **Novák, Z.:** Kedvencek és kártevők: társfajok, koevolúció és az empátia határai Kazuo Ishiguro, Philip K. Dick, André Alexis és Alice Hatcher regényeiben.  
*Filológiai Közlöny. 68 (1), 88-115, 2022. ISSN: 0015-1785.*
2. **Novák, Z.:** Rekviem egy fényes jövőért: Felügyelet, megfigyelés és menedék a Fifteen Million Meritsben.  
*Prae. 2020 (4), 100-112, 2020. ISSN: 1585-5112.*

#### Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (3)

3. **Novák, Z.:** Narrating Nonhumans: Anthropomorphism and Trans-species Empathy in Our Planet and Gunda.  
*Pulse. 10, 1-25, 2024. ISSN: 2416-111X.*  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12600874>
4. **Novák, Z.:** "If the world is dystopic, why fear an apocalypse?".  
*Hung. j. Eng. Am. stud. 27 (2), 309-315, 2021. ISSN: 1218-7364.*  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30608/HJEAS/2021/27/2/18>
5. **Novák, Z.:** "There's no cure for the Internet" - Surveillance, Spectatorship, and Sanctuary in Black Mirror.  
*Focus. 12 (1), 115-131, 2020. ISSN: 1585-5228.*

#### Foreign language scientific articles in international journals (2)

6. **Novák, Z.:** Human-nonhuman boundaries and inter-creatural empathy in Klara and the Sun, Fifteen Dogs, the Wonder That Was Ours and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?  
*European Journal of English Studies. 27 (3), 462-482, 2024. ISSN: 1382-5577.*  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2023.2292061>  
IF: 0.4





7. **Novák, Z.:** The Prosthetic Imagination: A History of the Novel as Artificial Life by Peter Boxall (review).  
*Configurations*. 31 (4), 381-384, 2023. EISSN: 1080-6520.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/con.2023.a912118>  
IF: 0.3

### List of other publications

#### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)

8. **Novák, Z.:** Smid Róbert: Az ökokritika dilemmái.  
*Helikon*. 69 (4), 730-732, 2024. ISSN: 0017-999X.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.57226/Hel.2023.4.1>
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**Total IF of journals (all publications): 0,7**

**Total IF of journals (publications related to the dissertation): 0,7**

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

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