



KEYNOTE LECTURE

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Cultural Ecology, the Environmental Humanities, and Literary Studies in the Anthropocene

Cultural ecology is a direction within ecocriticism that specifically addresses the role of literature and of literary studies in the ecological transformation of the humanities. The keynote discusses some of the main issues that are raised by this transformation. With the ecocritical turn in literary studies, the archives of literature have become newly relevant as storehouses of (proto-)ecological knowledge, which anticipate contemporary concerns and leading-edge directions of the environmental humanities such as material ecocriticism, biosemiotics, plant studies, critical animal studies, multispecies ethnography, or posthumanism. At the same time, literary responses to the Anthropocene are, more often than not, characterized by a productive tension and creative feedback relation to the deep-time archives of literature as intertextual sources of contemporary experimental poetics. In describing these processes of transcultural and transgenerational creativity, literary studies can contribute in distinct and unique ways to the interdisciplinary dialogue of the environmental humanities and to the vision of a more sustainable culture and society. I will illustrate this in selected examples from American and German literature.