



THE ANTHROPOCENE, NATURE, AND THE GOTHIC

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTY TIDWELL

Michael Fuchs
University of Oldenburg

Christy Tidwell is an associate professor of English and humanities at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, and she is one of the leaders of the ecomedia interest group at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and the Digital Strategies Coordinator at ASLE as well. Christy is the co-editor of the volumes *Gender and Environment in Science Fiction* (Lexington Books, 2018) and *Fear and Nature: Ecohorror Studies in the Anthropocene* (Penn State UP, 2021) and a special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television* on creature features. Her essays have appeared in journals such as *Extrapolation*, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, and *Gothic Nature*. She has also contributed to volumes such as *Posthuman Biopolitics: The Science Fiction of Joan Slonczewski* (Palgrave, 2020), *Fiction and the Sixth Mass Extinction: Narrative in an Era of Loss* (Lexington Books, 2020), and *Creatural Fictions: Human-Animal Relationships in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Literature* (Palgrave, 2016).

Keywords: Gothic, popular culture, ecohorror, Anthropocene, science fiction, interview.

.....

Michael Fuchs: I will start by asking a seemingly simple and straightforward question: could you define ecohorror? You know, the first thing that most people will probably think of when they hear “ecohorror” (if they can think of anything) will be revenge-of-nature films such as *Day of the Animals* (1977), Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds* (1963), and *The Ruins* (2008). That is, films in which animals and plants attack humans. Is this also in line with your understanding of ecohorror, or is there more to it?

Christy Tidwell: Revenge of nature is definitely a big part of what counts as ecohorror and what people think of as ecohorror. As a result, this is where many scholars writing about ecohorror start. However, I tend to have a broader understanding of ecohorror. In an *ISLE* article, Stephen Rust and Carter Soles lay out a broader definition of ecohorror, which centers on the idea that these are narratives about the harms that humans have done to the natural

world or that might promote ecological awareness or that might blur the lines between human and nonhuman (Rust and Soles). At that point, the definition becomes quite capacious because, suddenly, texts become ecohorror that one would usually not see as such. Nevertheless, ecohorror is a different way of looking at texts—finding ecohorror in horror texts that might generally not be considered ecohorror or finding markers of ecohorror in texts that are not necessarily horror.

For example, there are a number of movies and novels about pollution, many of which are not necessarily horror. However, they illustrate this idea that ecohorror tells stories about the harm done by the human world to the natural world. Nuclear fallout is a similar example. *Godzilla* is a monster, for sure, but we created it. Or climate change. *Godzilla* (1954) and climate change fiction also showcase how traditional genre boundaries begin to blur in this context because I have a hard time separating science fiction from ecohorror. Think of films such as *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004): these are science fiction films, but they have elements of ecohorror, too. Or even a classic example such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), which is less about nature fighting back and more about how what we have done to animals and the rest of the world comes back to get us. In this particular case, ecohorror then is also closely connected to Carol Clover's idea of urbanoia (115).

There is so much that could count as ecohorror that I could go on for a while, but I seem to always return to Rust and Soles's definition because it opens up the question of defining ecohorror in some really interesting ways.

MF: This idea of “opening up the field” ties in with an article that you contributed to the latest issue of *Gothic Nature*. In that article, you read *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) as ecohorror; that is, as the type of film that, to quote from your article, “does not immediately declare itself to be ecohorror” (“The Ecohorror of Omission” 85) but that nevertheless reflects on our interactions with the natural world.

CT: I honestly felt a little strange about that article up until it was accepted and published, because I argue that *Nightmare on Elm Street* can be read as ecohorror even though no one ever views it as ecohorror. And there is, in fact, no obvious reason to look at the film in that way, but one day I found myself thinking about the Elm Street of the title and asking, where are the trees in this movie? What kinds of trees are in this movie? The more I dug into it, the more I found it really interesting to consider the ways that the trees are, in fact, absent. “Elm Street” stands in for something larger than just the trees, particularly in twentieth-century US culture.

But I ultimately argue for what I call an “ecohorror of omission”—an argument that is really more about the silence about environmental harms than their presence in these texts. There are lots of texts and practices that we could look at in this way and we would find practices and ideologies that are just below the surface: the history of deforestation, planting certain kinds of trees, and Dutch elm disease (and how we have dealt with that or failed to

deal with that). And there are some interesting connections between that movie and its gothic sense of itself and the haunting of the trees.

MF: Indeed, this emphasis on what remains unsaid or unseen is much-needed and in line with Lawrence Buell's notion of the environmental unconscious—this idea that the physical world is repressed, forgotten, and/or distorted in a literary text (18). And Mark Bould's book *Anthropocene Unconscious* argues, in ways that are similar to your argument in your article on *Elm Street*, that cultural artifacts do not have to address global warming explicitly in order to be about global warming and/or the Anthropocene. There's just so much interesting work being done at that intersection of ecohorror, the ecogothic, and sf.

I would like to return to something that you mentioned earlier—the entanglements between humans and nonhumans. As we know, both horror and the Gothic are transgressive genres (see Botting). And if you go back to the roots of the American gothic, you have the narrative (or even myth) of the Puritans going into the wilderness, which is often framed as a confrontation with nature. In an article on Mira Grant's *Parasite* (2013), which was published in the *ISLE* special issue that Rust and Soles edited that you mentioned earlier, you express concern about this binary thinking when looking at ecohorror, and instead highlight the entanglements between humans and nonhumans ("Monstrous Natures Within"). Could you briefly elaborate on how that idea plays into your scholarship?

CT: Binary thinking is really common in ecohorror. If the animals are the enemy and we are separate from them or if the plants are the enemy and we are separate from them, that is worth paying attention to because it says something about how we see ourselves and our relationship with the natural world. Simon Estok's idea of ecophobia is useful for thinking about these oppositions and even for looking at examples such as how *Jaws* (1975) has had real-world impacts on the way people see and treat sharks. These binaries reveal our fears and how we respond to them.

However, if we only focus on this aspect, we ignore a lot of what's going on in ecohorror. After all, there are all these places where we are crossing the lines between human and non-human in much more interesting ways. To return to Rust and Soles's definition, the third point that they bring up is that ecohorror "texts and tropes [...] blur human/non-human distinctions" (509–510). Sometimes that looks horrific. Think about a film such as *The Fly* (1986). When Jeff Goldblum's character Seth Brundle transforms into Brundlefly, that's not a good thing. The film blurs the lines between human and nonhuman, but it doesn't turn out well. And the movie does not want us to think that it's going to turn out well.

But then there are other texts in which things are more complicated. For example, in Mira Grant's *Parasite* series, the line between the parasites that get into the characters' bodies and the characters themselves is harder to see. The sense of self and personhood becomes really fuzzy in these texts. The article I've written for the *SFFTV* special issue you mentioned is about another text with a more complicated attitude toward blurring these boundaries:

Blood Glacier (2013), a film that didn't get a ton of attention. In short, the film is about climate change and glaciers melting in the European Alps. As the glaciers melt, a kind of bloodred microorganism is set free that infects other beings and creates mutant hybrids. Although this is really scary, part of the film is about embracing the mutant or the mutation. The film thus draws our attention to questions such as "What is our role in this?" and "Why do we think we're so special?"

These texts open up lines of connection even if, ultimately, a lot of these texts also close them down. There's a lot of that tension in ecohorror, where you start to think "maybe the monster is not so bad" or "maybe I sympathize with the monster," but then the generic structure requires it to be killed at the end. Stacy Alaimo has written about the "muddled middles" of horror movies ("Discomforting Creatures" 294), where we have sympathy for the monster. And that's where the emotional response is being generated and where the real work is being done. I have been very influenced by this idea because I tend to watch these films in this way, too.

MF: I am so glad that you've mentioned *Blood Glacier*. You know, the film is set in the border region between Austria and Italy and Austrians were involved in the production, from actors to the director, and I happen to be Austrian—and there is not too much Austro-horror around. Interestingly, what you were just saying also connects to the other interview that I had for our series, with Kyle Bishop on zombies, because, for example, a video game such as *The Last of Us* (2013) also suggests that the infection (with a parasitical fungus in that case) re-unites humans with nature. You first need to get over that gap between the human and the nonhuman before you can really embrace the nonhuman.

Let's turn to the volume *Fear and Nature*, which you co-edited with Carter Soles. The cover looks awesome, and you assembled a lineup of great scholars, such as Dawn Keetley, Robin Murray and Joseph Heumann, and Bridgitte Barclay. Could you tell us a little bit about the genesis of that entire project? How did it get started? Why such a volume now?

CT: Some of this is just because Carter and I are friends and we go to the ASLE conference every other year, and we end up presenting together and talking about ecohorror. At one of those conferences—maybe four or five years ago—we were just talking with Steve Rust and thought, "Maybe this should be our next thing?" You know, we were just hanging out, having dinner, and then it became a real project. So, some of it was just that we thought it would be fun. And I really enjoyed the process of co-editing *Gender and Environment in Science Fiction* with Bridgitte Barclay, so I was ready to embark on another co-editing project.

Although there is a lot of work coming out about ecohorror and the ecogothic recently, when we started this project, there was less of it and there had not been any edited collection that focused on ecohorror. Indeed, ours will still be one of the first. There are a couple of monographs that deal with ecohorror and a couple of edited collections that have been really influential, and these are more focused, such as Dawn Keetley and Angela Tenga's *Plant*

Horror (2016) and Katarina Gregersdotter, Johan Höglund, and Nicklas Hällén's *Animal Horror Cinema* (2015). So, we saw a real opening for us to get something out there and to present our ideas about ecohorror. Carter and I are very much on the same page and have influenced each other on how broad ecohorror can be. We are really invested in looking for those places where we can connect that conversation to films or texts that might not be immediately obvious. And, as we note in the book's introduction, we're living in ecohorrific times. This feels like something we cannot escape—how frightening the real-world news is and then how popular culture takes up those fears in various ways.

MF: Great point. In view of “how frightening the real world is,” Elizabeth Parker and Michelle Poland also note in their introduction to the latest *Gothic Nature* issue that we're living in an age of ecohorror: there are all the images of wildfires, there's COVID, there's biodiversity loss, etc. Without picking apart the concept or the term now, let's accept that we are living in the Age of Man, the Anthropocene. Part of the assumption of naming the current age the Age of Man is that humankind will vanish sooner or later. Human extinction is implicated in the concept of the Anthropocene. Returning to your point about the interconnections between sf and ecohorror and your interest in the Jurassic Park/World franchise, what do these films tell us when read as ecohorror, in particular in the current moment?

CT: I am obsessed with *Jurassic Park* (1993) and the whole series. And, in fact, dinosaurs and popular culture, generally. I am very slowly working on something bigger about that topic, but I also do have a chapter out about *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World* (2015) in *Fiction and the Sixth Mass Extinction*, in which I argue that *Jurassic Park* and movies that are very much like it address our fears about our own potential extinction by displacing them. And this is also another place where the genre issue comes up because *Jurassic Park* is both science fiction and horror. It is a creature feature, which is science fiction and horror combined. You have these elements in the film that are very science-fictional, which ask, “What if we could do this?” But then you have these elements that are very horrific: “Oh no! What if this happened?” So, there is this tension between the hopeful potential of questions like “What if we could bring back species after they're extinct? What kind of hope does that give us for the sixth mass extinction that we're living through or for ourselves in the future?” and the consequences of those questions. When we bring those species back, they turn out to be a real problem. We do not actually have as much control as we think we do, which undermines a lot of that hopefulness with fear and anxiety.

Jurassic Park is so fascinating to me because it's a big studio movie, it's very polished, and it seems like it should know what it's saying, but there's so much conflict in these different ideas about animals and about extinction and about human control and science that it ends up being one long argument inside of itself that never quite gets resolved. The role of sympathy, which I've mentioned before with respect to some of the other monsters, is really important, too. It's hard for me not to sympathize with the dinosaurs when I watch *Jurassic Park*

and all of its sequels. You see this coming through even more in the Jurassic World movies. There's a lot of room for sympathy for the dinosaurs—for example when we see cute little babies and, in *Fallen Kingdom* (2018), the scene in which a *Brachiosaurus* dies. This is a really interesting extension of that initial kind of argument that *Jurassic Park* puts forward.

MF: It's also interesting that in *Jurassic World* (2015), the *Indominus rex* adds a new dimension. You have a creature that's on the one hand this artificial creature—there's all of this discourse in the film that this is not a real dinosaur but something else—but on the other hand, it's an animal. And it's this creature that goes on a killing spree. And *Fallen Kingdom* then turns things around, with the *Brachiosaurus* scene in particular, as you indicated, evoking extremely strong emotions, sympathy. Of course, it's the magic of film—the way that the music accompanies the visuals and all—but it nevertheless works. I can definitely understand the excitement for the Jurassic Park franchise.

CT: *Indominus rex* is so interesting because it is set up as this monstrous villain, but at the same time *Indominus rex* gets kind of the Godzilla effect—yes, it's monstrous and it's going on a rampage, but Chris Pratt's character makes the point very early on that any animal would go a little insane if you kept it in the cage like this and didn't let it connect with anything.

MF: Again, the humans are to blame and the real problem. You mentioned *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World* as these big studio movies, but you recently finished a special issue on creature features, which are thematically sometimes similar but in other respects the polar opposite because these are usually B-movies. Of course, there are people who claim that *Jurassic Park* is just a big-budget B-movie. Anyways, what led to your interest in B-movies? Do creature features convey any particular messages pertaining to human-animal or human-nature relations? What makes them worth looking at for scholars in the environmental humanities who might not watch horror movies, let alone B-movies?

CT: Bridgitte Barclay—who co-edited the issue with me—and I have been fascinated by creature features for ages. In part, they are just fun—if you're into that sort of thing. They are not fun for everyone in the same way, but they are a place where you can just embrace a little bit of campiness and not expect everything to make sense and enjoy that. But this level also feeds into what is the more serious argument here: the distinction between B-movies and studio productions. B-movies are messier in pretty much every way, from production to the ideas and ideologies that they represent. In part because of this, they are more revelatory of the underlying ideas in a culture. There's not necessarily an effort to make a big argument in a B-movie—and if there is, it's pretty shallow most of the time. As a result, you can see the underlying assumptions and values bubbling under there. Thus, B-movies reflect cultural trends in a way that bigger studio movies sometimes have a harder time doing because they're more intent on polishing things up and figuring out how they'll make the most money.

Looking at, for instance, 1970s environmental science fiction and ecohorror, there is simply so much there, and a number of scholars have been writing about these movies. Each one individually may not be super-rewarding for film analysis (some more so than others), but when you get this kind of collection that we're editing, it shows patterns and also manages to connect these films to studio films.

I've got posters in my office for *Night of the Lepus* (1972) and *Frogs* (1972). These movies are not good, but they're fascinating and reflect contemporary anxieties and fears about pollution, the balance of nature, and all the changes in US environmental legislation that were ramping up at that point. In *Night of the Lepus*, the monsters are giant bunnies, and, in *Frogs*, it's a whole range of swamp creatures that don't fit together. Ultimately, the humans are revealed as the monsters because they created the problems. The bunnies are really likeable—they are just bunnies.

You can also see patterns in the early twenty-first century, such as Syfy Channel movies and films produced by The Asylum. What jumps out to me is the prehistoric. There are a number of films that ask the question, "What would happen if this thing had just been dormant for millennia or even millions of years or was revived?" Dawn Keetley's article for the *SFFTV* issue deals with that topic, as does my essay about *Blood Glacier*, and Bridgitte Barclay explores *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), which does something similar. It's a recurring theme.

And building on Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism*, I would argue that if we don't pay attention to these types of films, comics, video games, silly TV shows, and all the things that we don't think of as "high art," then we miss out on a lot of the conversation taking place in culture.

MF: Absolutely. Since you're teaching at a type of school that is not necessarily that well-known in Europe, what is it like to teach humanities, in general, and the texts that you teach, in particular, at that type of school? And since you seem to be interested in the connections between science technology and popular culture—has teaching at this type of school influenced your thinking in a certain way?

CT: Teaching humanities at a school such as the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, where our students are all studying science and engineering, is quite different from my previous experience, which was at a big state school in Texas. In part, the difference is that students here don't see themselves as writers or humanities people or as readers. Thus, some of my job is to bring them on board. Some of them are the stereotypical engineer types who really want the answer and it needs to be logical, who are like "You need to show me the steps." As a result, it's a little harder to have some of the kinds of humanities conversations that you might have at different universities. The flip side of that is that they're also really happy to be taking these classes because it's a break from doing math and building things. They enjoy getting into some of the stories and getting to think about these big ideas in a way that their

other classes don't ask them to. It's definitely an interesting experience, and I've found over time that there are some things that I would love to teach that just won't fly here. It's just not for them, but there are other things that I don't have to sell them on. Some of the texts that I love teaching and love talking about, such as *Jurassic Park* and *Godzilla*—they're all over that. If I can connect the text to what they're into, they're really on board.

As far as the second part of the question: honestly, not really. I was already working on feminist science fiction and feminist science studies in my dissertation. Maybe it has broadened my understanding of what I would like to include in these conversations, but what shaped what my research looks like more has to do with connections with people at conferences. Then I come back and try teaching these things, and my students help me think through some ideas—as they always do when you're teaching things that are related to your research. I think I came into this job because I was already working in that direction.

Open Q&A session

Trang Dang: Thank you very much for the fascinating talk. You mentioned the entanglements between humans and nonhumans in ecohorror and ecogothic and how these relationships in these texts are very much complicated. I wonder whether you could talk a little bit more about how films and literature complicate these relationships?

CT: I'm going to give a rather general answer because I haven't prepared an example: I'm building on the idea of trans-corporeality (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*). Stacy Alaimo argues that the line between human and nonhuman is not an actual line. Rather, we're embedded in the nonhuman world, and it's embedded in us. The useful thing about this idea is the recognition that this can be both harmful and helpful. Some kinds of trans-corporeality, some connections between us and an Other are damaging. For instance, Alaimo writes about different kinds of sickness, which are harmful, but other kinds of connections are helpful, such as organisms inside of us helping our bodies work; or connections with other creatures outside of our actual bodies that mean something to us and help us see the broader world differently and act differently. To return to *Blood Glacier*—because it's the freshest in my mind—some of the kinds of blurring the lines are very harmful. Some characters die horribly because of the mutations that are introduced by breaching that boundary between human and nonhuman. However, the film ends with the birth of a little mutant puppy sort of thing that is legitimately weirdly cute and there is some sort of an emotional connection established between some of the human characters and this mutant creature. However, the movie ends abruptly, which is why we don't get to see what would happen. Nevertheless, there is this sense that, maybe, this would create a different way of seeing the world and of being in the world.

TD: The quick second question is: you mentioned the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* and noticed how ecohorror texts often engage with images and figures of deep history such as Cthulhu or

mythical kind of figures. I wonder if you could talk a bit more about why ecohorror could engage with those kinds of figures?

CT: My answer will have more to do with dinosaurs than Lovecraft, but I think they connect. One of the reasons why we keep coming back to this is connected to my answer about *Jurassic Park* and our own fear of our own extinction. The Gothic is part of ecohorror, and in the Gothic the past often haunts the present. Environmental takes on the past tend to emphasize what we'll leave behind. So, this is about transferring what we already know about the prehistoric past, what's left, and what's lost into trying to imagine how we might be leaving traces or what might be lost. I highly recommend David Farrier's book *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (2020) because he does that kind of work. He speculates about what marks we'll leave behind based on the knowledge we have now.

As far as the Lovecraftian element is concerned, when I think about Lovecraft in this context, it's less about deep time and more about the cosmic sense of confronting something bigger than us. The Lovecraftian dimension is very much connected to the Anthropocene and climate change in that it is something that one person cannot do much about, and it can feel overwhelming as a result. It's this big process that is ongoing. Similarly, Lovecraft's Elder Gods are something that just completely dwarfs humans. We can't individually do anything about that. So, it's a little bit less direct maybe than deep time, but there's a similar logic.

TD: Absolutely. I think that's what's happening—making us reflect on kind of our deep relationship with nature that we always have. Thank you very much for your answers. Very interesting.

CT: I found the most recent *Color Out of Space* (2019) adaptation really interesting to think through as an ecohorror film.

Sladja Blazan: I really like what you said about your teaching. I think it's super-important not to always preach to the converted and to talk to people who don't spend so much time thinking about the narratives that we tell each other and how they work. In part, we're probably in this mess because we didn't do that enough. I have a question about this sense that more and more narratives center on embracing the mutant and, connected to this, this sympathy for the predator—the dinosaur, for example. Is that social activism? After all, most of these narratives return to an original order—that seems highly problematic. Do you share this fear?

CT: Yes. I do share that fear and anxiety. And it's something that we tried to address in the introduction to *Fear and Nature* because ecohorror is not activism. It's not actually doing anything. Looking at, say *Jurassic Park*, yes, there is this sympathy for the dinosaurs and all that—and that's all well and good, but when the movie's over, it has this comforting effect of returning to your life, where you don't have to worry about this anymore.

I do want to believe—although I have no evidence for it at this point—that these patterns that I was talking about not only reflect the anxieties we have but could have an impact on what we think is normal. If we have enough stories asking us to think differently about our relationship to the nonhuman, over time those add up to something. However, looking at one movie, it's hard for me to see that as making that big of a difference.

SB: No, certainly not one movie. I was thinking in comparison to, say, the 1950s, where plant horror was a huge topic and there were all kinds of monsters that grew out of an anxiety about the then-current world order and pressing fears. Apparently, now we have environmental problems, so horror addresses this issue. Do we really tell these stories differently than we did in the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s?

CT: I think that's an excellent question. Part of where I've wound up for right now is thinking that there's some hope for some change but maybe not incremental. Teaching is where you're more likely to have an impact than making these movies. There are some scholars, such as Matthew Schneider-Mayerson and Alexa Weik von Mossner, who are doing empirical research into what kinds of impact these films might have. They are doing some really cool things, and I hope that we'll find more useful evidence about what makes a difference or what does not, to help people think through these things and actually change patterns of behavior.

Anna Marta Marini: When you were talking about *Jurassic Park*, I was thinking of movies such as *Splice* (2009), in which we construct another being for our own benefit and then it gets out of hand. *Splice* is very much about humans projecting their own needs, issues, and emotions onto nonhumans. So, next to this sympathetic, empathetic, and/or cute sense of human engagement with the nonhuman that you mentioned, do you think that these projections see the nonhuman in human terms? And does that contribute to the horror?

CT: Maybe. *Splice* is a great connection to make because it's a Frankenstein story—and so is *Jurassic Park*. Many of these stories are going all the way back to *Frankenstein*, in which you already have this tension between being sympathetic to the creature and being horrified by it. Who's the real monster here? All those kinds of questions have a long history in science fiction, the Gothic, and horror.

Just to stick with the *Jurassic Park* example, there are moments in which the film asks us to see humans and dinosaurs as being very similar, but I'm not sure if that's horrific in those in those moments or not. Some of them may be, such as the moment when the great white hunter is killed by the *Velociraptors*. It's horrific that they're clever—the *Velociraptors* are very scary because they can, for example, open doors. But then there are other moments. For example, I see the *T. rex* at the end in terms of mimicking human triumph—celebratory, standing up, and roaring in a “This is my island” kind of way. And they keep coming back to those

visuals. That doesn't seem horrific to me because the music is very like triumphant. A lot of these movies simply want to have it both ways.

AMM: I really like narratives that offer identification and then there's a twist so that the monster, in the end, does not behave the way that we believe it will. For example, in *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2016), in the end, she does what she wants to do because she is the vanguard of a new lifeform. She doesn't do what the humans expected her to do. That's scary. We assume that the non-/posthuman is going to behave in a human way, but then it doesn't.

CT: That points to one of the ideas that keeps coming up in my writing, which is human control—the human expectation of having control. We really want to be in charge. And we want the rest of the world to do what we expect it to do, but it keeps on not doing that. You're right—that's where a lot of the horror comes from.

I was thinking about in what ways they seem more human but in what ways do they behave as expected when they don't—yes, that is frequently set up as horrifying for the human audience because it undermines our sense of ourselves as the pinnacle of everything and the endpoint of evolution.

Alissa Burger: I love every single text that you talked about, so I had my own little bingo card here while I was listening. What I specifically wanted to ask about is the B-movie aspect of it. I have a chapter coming out that I co-authored with a biologist. We team-taught a course on the biology of monster movies and the biology of B-movies. What we ended up writing about was Syfy original films and all that ridiculousness. I'm wondering: is that a productive avenue? Now, the biologist I worked with is a very special biologist. He's a lot more fun than a bunch of the other scientists who would go, "No, I don't do that." But from your experience, both where you teach and with your own research, and going back to that question of how we can make a difference—is that maybe one way?

CT: Do you mean teaching the actual science behind it? Or getting science students to think about these things?

AB: Really any of that. The approach we took in our class was that we watched the films and I talked about horror from a cultural studies angle, then he gave them research questions, and they would have to research questions about how feasible the different things were and such. A lot of them were science students because it was a technical college, but a lot of them were also taking it as a Gen Ed. So, they were gaining research skills and scientific literacy, but the fun stuff.

CT: It depends on what you mean by "productive." In terms of getting students to think critically about what they're taking in and to do that kind of research, that sounds like a fun way to do that. I'd be curious to know how the students responded to it. Concerning some of the bigger questions about what kind of social difference might this make—that's always hard to answer. One thing I'm thinking about is whether it matters if the science is right in B-movies;

and if it matters, why it matters. I don't have an answer to this. My approach to B-movies has been "it doesn't matter—just do what you're doing and as long as you've decided what you're doing, we're good." Maybe the bigger question is about how people watch them: if people watch these movies and think that is how science works, then addressing that would be important.

WORKS CITED

- Alaimo, Stacy. "Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Nature in Recent Films." *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, edited by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, U Virginia P, 2001, pp. 279–296.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana UP, 2010.
- Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 1995.
- Bould, Mark. *The Anthropocene Unconscious: Climate—Catastrophe—Culture*. Verso, 2021.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and the Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Belknap, 2003.
- Clover, Carol J. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton UP, 1992.
- Estok, Simon C. "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2009, pp. 203–225.
- Farrier, David. *Footprints: In Search for Future Fossils*. 4th Estate, 2020.
- Gregersdotter, Katarina, Johan Höglund, and Nicklas Hållén, editors. *Animal Horror Cinema: Genre, History and Cinema*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Keetley, Dawn, and Angela Tenga, editors. *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous Vegetal in Fiction and Film*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Parker, Elizabeth, and Michelle Poland. "We Live in EcoGothic Times: Gothic Nature in the Current Climate." *Gothic Nature*, no. 2, 2021, pp. 1–12.
- Rust, Stephen A., and Carter Soles. "Ecohorror Special Cluster: 'Living in Fear, Living in Dread, Pretty Soon We'll All Be Dead.'" *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2014, pp. 509–512.
- Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. "The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers." *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2018, pp. 473–500.

- Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. "‘Just as in the Book’? The Influence of Literature on Readers’ Awareness of Climate Injustice and Perception of Climate Migrants." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2020, pp. 337–364.
- Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew, Alexa Weik von Mossner, and W.P. Mafecki. "Empirical Ecocriticism: Environmental Texts and Empirical Methods." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2020, pp. 327–336.
- Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew, et al. "Environmental Literature as Persuasion: An Experimental Test of the Effects of Reading Climate Fiction." *Environmental Communication*, 2020, 10.1080/17524032.2020.1814377.
- Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. U of Minnesota P, 2018.
- Tidwell, Christy. "Monstrous Natures Within: Posthuman and New Materialist Ecohorror in Mira Grant’s *Parasite*." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2014, pp. 538–549.
- Tidwell, Christy. "'Life Finds a Way': *Jurassic Park*, *Jurassic World*, and Extinction Anxiety." *Fiction and the Sixth Mass Extinction*, edited by Jonathan Elmore, Lexington, 2019, pp. 31–48.
- Tidwell, Christy. "The Ecohorror of Omission: Haunted Suburbs and the Forgotten Trees of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*." *Gothic Nature*, no. 2, 2021, pp. 84–109.
- Weik von Mossner, Alexa. "Green States of Mind? Cognition, Emotion, and Environmental Framing." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2018, pp. 313–323.
- Weik von Mossner, Alexa. "Popularizing Climate Change: Cli-Fi Film and Narrative Impact." *Research Handbook in Communicating Climate Change*, edited by David C. Holmes and Lucy M. Richardson, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020.

Films and TV Series

- Blutgletscher [Blood Glacier]*. Directed by Marvin Kren, Allegro Film, Filmfonds Wien, Filmstandort Austria, 2013.
- The Fly*. Directed by David Cronenberg, Brookfilms, 1986.
- Godzilla*. Directed by Ishirō Honda, Toho Co., 1954.
- Jurassic Park*. Directed by Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures, Amblin Entertainment, 1993.
- Jurassic World*. Directed by Colin Trevorrow, Amblin Entertainment, Legendary Pictures, 2015.
- Nightmare on Elm Street*. Directed by Wes Craven, Media Home Entertainment, 1984.
- Splice*. Directed by Vincenzo Natali, Dark Castle Entertainment, 2009.