

10-11 June, 2025  
Rome

# Contact Zones

In-Between Human and  
Non-Human Agencies

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**International PhD Programme in Germanic and Slavic Studies**

‘Sapienza’ University of Rome – Department of European, American, and Intercultural Studies

Charles University in Prague – Faculty of Arts

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE CONFERENCE 2025

***CONTACT ZONES:***  
**HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN RELATIONS**

10th - 11th June 2025

‘Sapienza’ University of Rome

**Call for Papers**

*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.*

TERENTIUS

The third-year students of the joint double-degree PhD Programme in Germanic and Slavic Studies (Sapienza University of Rome – Charles University in Prague), are glad to launch the Call for Papers for their Graduate Conference ***CONTACT ZONES: HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN RELATIONS***, scheduled to take place at Sapienza University of Rome on the 10th and 11th of June 2025.

A long-lasting Western literary and philosophical tradition has interpreted reality in dualistic terms, based on the opposition of human and non-human subjectivities, culture and nature, technology and wilderness. This conception has been recently put into question. A flourishing series of theoretical and methodological studies (e.g. Grusin 2015; Tsing 2015; Haraway 2016; Iovino and Oppermann 2017; Braidotti and Bignall 2018) has proven the liveliness of the scientific debate related to human and non-human agencies in a wide range of disciplines (anthropology, humanities, earth sciences, neurosciences etc.). The aim of the Conference is to sketch out the current reflection on such a topic within the Germanic and Slavic fields of study.

The term “contact zone”, as reconstructed by Donna Haraway (2008: 216), made its first appearance in Mary Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*. Here, Pratt borrows the aforementioned term from the field of linguistics, using it to emphasise “how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other” (1992: 6); relations which might be of co-presence, interdependence, or interaction. However, Haraway proposes to broaden the concept of a contact zone on a global scale: within the current climate of environmental and social precariousness, Haraway states, the concept of contact zone concerns life at all scales, both temporal and spatial, individual and collective. The contact zone therefore becomes an area where “the nature/culture divide collapses and the possibilities of life and death for everyone are at stake” (Rose et al. 2012: 2). As a result of this collapse, contact zones enable exchanges between all kinds of subjectivities, whether of contamination, assemblage, entanglement, kinship, knotting, or of oppression, violence, and exploitation, always resulting in changes in “surprising ways” (Haraway 2008: 219). The cultural and aesthetic expression of such interactions

constitutes the core of the Conference, which aims to explore the richness of human and non-human relations in methodological and theoretical terms, as well as through specific case studies.

Prospective papers may explore topics included in the following non-exhaustive list.

**ENVIRONMENT AS A CONTACT ZONE.** Beyond the human/non-human divide: cultural interspecies reaction to environmental issues e.g. proto-ecological perspectives (as in Goethe's works); collective response to infected, contaminated or toxic areas, analysis of intra-action praxis and strategies; material, energetic, and non-organic agencies (Dürbeck et al. 2017; Bosco and Latini 2020; Barad 2007; Hennig et al. 2018; Armiero 2021; Luisetti 2023).

**REVISITING CONTACT ZONES:** Critical and historical analysis of post/trans-humanist theories of the past (e.g. in the Soviet context: cosmism, biocosmism, biomechanics, etc.) and their impact on literary/cultural works.

**CONTACT ZONES/CONFLICT ZONES.** Reshaping of relations between human and non-human subjectivities through conflict and inhuman violence (Cohen 2015); de-humanization of the Other; expressions and depictions of inhuman violence, such as environmental phenomena (eruptions, earthquakes, extreme atmospheric events, pandemics).

**TRANS/CORPOREALITY AS CONTACT ZONE.** Representations of the entanglements between bodies and the environment; as well as of the interplay between trans\* bodies and technology; cyberpunk techno-bodies as an expression of the crisis of masculinity (Ross 1991); transcorporeal subject/landscape (Alaimo 2010); other-than-human within the human (Wolfe 2003); descriptions of nature as a habitat for the feminist subject in contrast to descriptions of nature as the basis of essentialism (Alaimo 2008).

**GENRE AS A CONTACT ZONE.** Theoretical research, or case studies, on specific literary genres that may act as literary contact zones in which human and non-human subjectivities and their relationship are imagined (e.g. science fiction, fantasy, utopia and dystopia, speculative fiction, pastoral literature).

**TEXTUALITY AS A CONTACT ZONE.** Research on written and oral text as manifestation of human mental processes; the application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Cognitive Discourse Analysis, etc.

**PHILOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC RESEARCH AS A CONTACT ZONE.** Application of digital tools for linguistic analysis; methods in Digital Ecdotics, Paleography and Codicology; research in Computational Linguistics, etc.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

The organising committee welcomes contributions from PhD students currently enrolled in a doctoral programme, as well as research doctors who obtained their degree no more than three years ago. Addressable research areas are the following: literary studies, linguistics, philology, ethno-anthropological studies, visual arts, education, cultural studies and history. Proposals must be rooted in Germanic and/or Slavic Studies.

The Conference working language will be English, and speakers will have 15 to 20 minutes to present their papers. The organising committee is considering the possibility of publishing the Conference proceedings, further details will be provided during the upcoming phases.

Each candidate should provide an abstract, written in English and not longer than 300 words, along with an essential bibliography and a short biographical note (up to 150 words). The proposals should be submitted through a specific Google Form, accessible by clicking [here](#).

**Abstract submission deadline:** 28th March 2025

**Notice of proposals acceptance:** 10th April 2025

The event will be held in-person **on the 10th and 11th of June 2025, at [Marco Polo Building of 'Sapienza' University of Rome \(Viale dello Scalo San Lorenzo, 82\)](#)**. Travel and accommodation expenses are to be covered by participants.

For any further inquiry, you may contact the organising committee by email: [contactzones.roma2025@gmail.com](mailto:contactzones.roma2025@gmail.com).

We look forward to receiving your proposals!

**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE:** Petra Košťálová, Camilla Miglio, Barbara Ronchetti.

**ORGANISING COMMITTEE:** Serena Buti, Rukya Mandrile, Vladimír Marazjuk, Alberto Pontiroli, Serena Sapienza, Veronika Sidó, Josef Šikola, Luca Veronesi.

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