

## Call for Papers

# Wandering beyond the Boundaries: Defining the Natural in Jewish and Modern Hebrew Literature

November 13-14, 2023, Paris

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**Date:** November 13-14, 2023

**Venue:** Inalco, Auditorium Georges Dumézil, 2 Rue de Lille 75007, Paris

**Conference Organizers:** Anna Lissa (Cermom, Inalco), Naama Harel (Columbia University), Yael Bruchim (Ben Gurion University of the Negev)

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“My expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced.” So wrote Henry David Thoreau when he narrated his experience of life in the woods in *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854). Nature, he argued, can support more than one order of understandings, which demands that in trying to express them one should strive to go beyond the boundaries of the beaten and acknowledged paths. Engaging the inquiries “what is nature” and “what do we mean (or imply) when we say that something is natural” in our days and age with an ecocritical approach implies necessarily the act of wandering beyond the boundaries, be they the boundaries of language and/or the boundaries defining the fields of humanities and positive sciences, thus demanding a cross-disciplinary approach.

We live in the human-dominated age of Anthropocene, which, according to Paul Crutzen, started in the late eighteenth century, “when analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane,” i. e. the results of the industrial revolution that started at the end of the eighteenth century. In this age, perhaps more than in any

other, interrelatedness becomes a key-concept, initially formulated by ecology – the primary discipline that shows the “connectedness of life and environment” – but nowadays to be extended even beyond the sphere of positive sciences. Interrelatedness is possibly another way to wander beyond the boundaries, since this very concept defies the very idea of fixed, stable and definable boundaries of what is natural. From this point of view, ecocriticism and Animal Studies become interrelated allies especially when an in-depth reflection about human approach to animals is involved, since, as Derrida stated, it is not true that there is no difference between humans and animals, but one can hardly deny that the demarcation lines that define this difference become more and more problematic to posit. Finally, the idea of interrelatedness also implies an ethical call to humans in their engagement both to the preservation of the planet also for the other species and to their relationship with these other species especially when their suffering is involved.

Ecocriticism and Animal Studies have made their entrance in the context of Jewish and modern Hebrew literature studies during the first decade of the 2000’s. While they have kept on gaining their foothold since, they also keep on allowing Hebrew and Jewish literary criticism to wander beyond the boundaries launching a fresh approach on the interpretation of the literary corpus.

**We therefore invite proposals that deal with Jewish and Hebrew literature in the light of the following topics:**

1. The influence of Enlightenment, Romantic, modernist ideas of nature on Jewish and Modern Hebrew Literature;
2. Language issues:
  - 2.1. focusing on the refusal to consider language only as a self-centered system of cultural projections and an effort to conceive it as an instrument to express the natural world;
  2. 2. As a prerogative that does not belong exclusively to humans but also to animals;
3. Space issues, with a special focus on human and animal spaces;
4. Climate change;
5. Utopia, dystopia, alternate history.

## Submission

1. The **deadline** for the submission of the abstract is **12 April**;
2. Please include: full title, abstract (150 words), and 3 keywords;
3. A cover letter should be also sent in the same email, with: full title of the article and full name of the Author(s), with current affiliation and full address/phone/fax/email details, plus a short biographical note;
4. Each text submitted should be a doc. or pdf document, written in American English, double-space in 12-point Times New Roman; fully justified.
5. Successful Author(s) will be notified by **7 May**.
6. Please send your abstract to: Anna Lissa [anna.lissa@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr](mailto:anna.lissa@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr) Naama Harel [nh2508@columbia.edu](mailto:nh2508@columbia.edu) and Yael Bruchim [yaelbru@post.bgu.ac.il](mailto:yaelbru@post.bgu.ac.il)

