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## **The Wood Within**

*The Fantastic in Robert Holdstock's Mythago Novels  
and the Renegotiation of Human–Plant Relations*

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## Summary of the Dissertation

### Research Objectives and Methodology

Making up more than 80% of Earth's biomass (Bar-On et al. 2018), plants still mean no more than part of the scenery for the average person. Whilst the destruction of rainforests raises a few eyebrows, our casual plant blindness renders most plants in our immediate surroundings practically invisible. In literature, however, vegetation is more frequently made visible, and even when trees and flowers only appear as metaphors for human feelings and thought processes, the interconnectedness of beings becomes more prominent. As argued above, fantasy literature has an even greater potential to combat our anthropocentric limitations and portray plants as essential and agential parts of the narrative. This is especially true for the kind of fantasy fiction that relies on myths, folklore and legends – a fluid and flexible subcategory, sometimes referred to as *mythic fantasy*. In this sense, mythic fantasy has the potential to reverse the disenchantment of nature within the storyworld. Disenchantment gained ground in the Enlightenment period, and it rapidly turned nature into commodity. “This ‘disenchantment’ of the wilderness has been widely blamed for our current ecological crisis and firmly linked to increasing anthropocentrism.” (Parker 2020, 40). Mythic fantasy can play a role in making nature alive and visible through a process of re-enchantment.

The dissertation focuses on this pool of texts and intends to create a set of methodological strategies for a more plant-conscious analysis of mythic fantasy through the combination of the theories of fantasy and critical plant studies.

For this purpose, I formulated two hypotheses:

1. Mythic fantasy has the potential of creating more ecocentric texts and worlds by exposing and then subverting the most common, anthropocentric attitudes towards the woodland to reveal that human and nonhuman identities are in fact inseparable.
2. As an outstanding example of mythic fantasy, Robert Holdstock's concept of the Mythago Wood is a unique, eco-philosophical construct that casts new light on human–nature relationships by giving agency to the vegetal Other.

Plants are definitely at a disadvantage in everyday discourse, however, in academia there has been a lasting focus on the nonhuman in the past decade. This aids us in modifying the otherwise very anthropocentric narratives of the climate crisis. We are slowly realizing that “the need to find new ways of encountering, discussing, and thinking of entities and environments where human and nonhuman entangle in increasingly intricate patterns has never been more urgent.” (Karkulehto et al. 2020, 1). The recent flourish in plant studies could be traced in at least three fields of research.

Firstly, in the natural sciences, there has been a breakthrough in the research of plant senses:

“The reflections on the vegetal world that have thrived on the margins of Western science seem to have gained new momentum in recent decades, attempting to understand plants in their own terms and offering a more integrated, ecological approach to plant life. Following decades of single-minded focus on molecular biology to understand mechanisms of plant growth under controlled laboratory conditions, combined with intense efforts toward plant genetic engineering, research in plant science has

recently enjoyed a renaissance that has involved a real celebration of ‘plantness.’” (Gagliano et al. 2017, xiii).

This “plantness” of plants comes to the forefront in recent scientific volumes. Notable examples include Anthony Trewavas’s book, *Plant Behaviour and Intelligence* (2014), Richard Karban’s *Plant Sensing and Communication* (2015), and the edited volume of František Baluška, Stefano Mancuso, and Dieter Volkmann: *Communication in Plants: Neuronal Aspects of Plant Life* (2006). Plants used to be marginalized on the basis of lacking certain senses and intelligence compared to the animal kingdom but contemporary research is going strong on plant neurobiology, gradually busting the myths that kept the vegetal in this disadvantaged state.

Secondly, this renewed scientific interest in plant life gradually filtered down to books intended for the general public. An obvious example is Peter Wohlleben’s international bestseller, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2015), followed by other successful volumes such as *The Secret Wisdom of Nature* (2017) and *The Heartbeat of Trees* (2019). Even though Wohlleben shares a great deal of scientific knowledge with his readers, he largely relies on anthropomorphism in his version of re-enchanting European forests. Other woodland-related works aimed at a general audience include Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013) and Suzanne Simard’s *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* (2021). Kimmerer is a professor of environmental and forest biology, Simard is a differentiated forest ecologist (known for her discoveries in mapping the mycelial networks of primeval forests, called the wood wide web), yet in addition to their scientific publication, they both felt an urge to share their scientific and personal experience with a wider audience. Another recent popular book closely related to forest ecosystems is Merlin Sheldrake’s *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* (2020). Sheldrake’s main focus are fungi; however, he highlights how fungi live in an intermingled and inseparable relationship with all beings – including humans. These authors typically have a conscious online activity, interviews, podcasts, and TED talks, calling attention with their work to the responsibility (plant) science bears in raising awareness about human–nonhuman relationships in the general public.

Thirdly, in parallel with the above two phenomena, a new, prolific subfield of ecocriticism emerged that focuses on the vegetal: critical plant studies. Critical plant studies are not only interdisciplinary in the way that they form a convergence of cultural studies and plant science but they also manage to incorporate the general public oriented attitude of the above mentioned authors. This field focuses on the role of plants within the ecosystem, their individual life both as physically embodied and personified beings, and our relationships to them on various levels. Recent works of plant philosophy are particularly eager at including vegetal life in the ethical discourse and highlighting humans’ inter-relatedness with plant persons (Matthew Hall: *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (2011), Michael Marder: *Plant Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (2013), Emanuele Coccia’s *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture* (the English translation was published in 2018)). Timothy Morton’s eco-philosophy (especially *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), *Hyperobjects* (2013) and *Humankind* (2017)) also devotes attention to plants and their role within the ecosystem and their interaction with human beings.

Critical plant studies, however, also set these theories to practical use, analysing a wide scope of cultural products. With regard to fantasy literature, the analysis of works through an environmentalist approach even precedes the emergence of critical plant studies. Unsurprisingly, *The Lord of the Rings* is among the first to receive lasting attention in this

respect. As trees have a special significance in Tolkien's oeuvre, a still growing number of articles reflect on that (Claudia Riiff Finseth: "Tolkien's Trees" (1997), Cynthia M. Cohen "The Unique Representation of Trees in *The Lord of the Rings*" (2009)). In 2006, an essay collection, edited by Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans and titled *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien*, was also devoted to the environmentalist analysis of Tolkien's work. Walter S. Judd and Graham A. Judd pay specific attention to plants in Tolkien's work in their 2017 book, *Flora of Middle-Earth: Plants of J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium*.

As theoretical works in critical plant studies flourished, the 2010s brought a boom in books centred on the plant-conscious analysis of fantastic media. Dawn Keetley and Angela Tenga's 2006 essay collection *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous Vegetal in Fiction and Film* relies on monster theory to describe human relationships with the monstrous vegetal Other. Starting out from Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's views on teratology (see Cohen 1996), this volume makes essential statements for the understanding of vegetal Otherness. Elizabeth Parker in her *The Forest and the Eco-Gothic: The Deep Dark Woods in the Popular Imagination* (2020) follows in similar lines and admits early on that her main concern is the dark side of nature: "The landscape is commonly read as a *binary* space – as either 'good' or 'bad'. When it is 'good', it is remedial setting of wonder and enchantment; when it is 'bad', it is a dangerous and terrifying wilderness. It is with the forest's fearsome associations that this book is concerned." (Parker 2020, 1). Another recent publication, *Radical Botany: Plants and Speculative Fiction* (2019) by Natania Meeker and Antonia Szabari, adopts a fairly wide scope of texts starting from the works of Guy de La Brosse and Cyrano de Bergerac and reaching to contemporary speculative fiction and film. Keeping in with the trends, this book also devotes a chapter to plant horror, focused on the two versions of the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (directed by Don Siegel in 1956 and Philip Kaufman in 1978), two movies that, up to this date, have received more than their fair share of attention within critical plant studies. Similar to the previous two books, Meeker and Szabari's volume does not include mythic fantasy among its analyses. Even though two works by Ursula K. Le Guin are discussed ("Vaster than Empires and More Slow" [1971], *The Word for World is Forest* [1972]), both texts would qualify as science fiction with regard to their methods and rhetoric.

Considering the current popularity of dystopic climate fiction, it is no wonder that narratives picturing the fearful side of nature remain in the limelight of critical attention. This dissertation, however, adopts a different attitude and focuses on texts that reveal our interdependence with the ecosystem and portrays worlds that are in line with the original meaning of the Greek word *eco-* (*oikos*) and show us that nature is first and foremost our *home*. By this, however, I do not intend to say that I omit the *unheimlich* qualities of nature as these are a key feature in almost all texts that focus on woodlands. Instead, I am interested in the ways how things that appear to be uncanny or even threatening at first glance for the human eye might become strangely familiar and at times even homely at a closer look and in a deeper understanding.

*The Lord of the Rings* could be seen as a common example of fantasy that (mostly) presents the natural world in homely terms. In fact, it is quite an obvious example of environmentalism, as Tolkien maintains the dichotomy of pro-nature elves facing the industrialization and deforestation led by evil lords. Discussion of environmental issues has been present in mythic fantasy ever since, yet recent, non-dystopic fiction generally adopts much subtler ways and frequently manages to blur the binary opposition of nature and culture. Some recent examples that make use of the magic wood topos include Naomi Novik's *Uprooted* (2015), Emily Tesh's *The Greenhollow Duology* (*Silver in the Wood* [2019], *Drowned Country*

[2020]). Patrick Ness' *The Monster Calls* [2011] also portrays a tree-monster. Further interesting manipulations of tree imagery are found in Kaaron Warren's *Walking the Tree* (2010) in which protagonists make a coming-of-age journey around a giant world tree, and Thoraiya Dyer's *The Titan's Forest* trilogy (*Crossroads of Canopy* [2017], *Echoes of Understorey* [2018], *Tides of Titans* [2019]) that pictures a world whose human inhabitants live in the canopy of an enormous woodland. There is also a World Fantasy Award winner anthology centred around the magic wood topos, entitled *The Green Man: Tales of the Mythic Forest* (2002) edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling. It includes short stories by such established mythic fantasy authors as Charles de Lint, Patricia A. McKillip, Delia Sherman and Jane Yolen. Plant conscious analysis of such fiction has been sporadic and occasional. For instance, the 2022 essay collection, *Plants in Children's and Young Adult Literature* edited by Melanie Duckworth and Lykke Guanio-Uluru features some analyses of mythic fantasy texts, but the book's scope is limited to literature for young readers.

This renewed interest in plant life that filtered down from the natural sciences to the humanities and to the general public has the ability to connect these areas in ways never seen before. The process, however, has only just begun, and it naturally has its own blind spots. One of these is the hidden potential of mythic fantasy to speak for a more eco- and plant-conscious understanding of our world and do so in a way that does not threaten us with the pending doom lurking in dystopic literature. In order to unveil this gloomy territory, the dissertation aims to combine the theories of fantasy with critical plant studies to create a set of strategies for the analysis of mythic fantasy. To demonstrate the application of these strategies, the dissertation relies on Robert Holdstock's Mythago novels, a notable example of modern mythic fantasy.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. Part I is entitled "The Plant-Visibility Strategies," and its major objective is to provide a set of strategies through the combination of fantasy theory and critical plant studies for a more eco- and plant-conscious analysis of mythic fantasy texts. This part is composed of two chapters. Chapter 2, "Ways of Understanding Fantasy" consists of two larger sections. The first one provides an overview of what attempts have been made to define the rather elusive group of texts we call modern fantasy. The dissertation pays special attention to how the application of a certain term may modify our perception of these narratives, and this way I intend to identify the optimal terminology for readings that enhance plant visibility. The second half of Chapter 2 focuses on fantasy literature's potential in changing the reader's perspective of the real world. It reveals how fantasy fiction's devotion to story, its consistent internal rules, its imaginative ways of depicting the impossible and its inherently subversive nature contribute to more eco- and plant-conscious readings. The next chapter in Part I, Chapter 3, "The Invisible Plant Kingdom," provides a summary of the most recent achievements in critical plant studies, and then it moves on to the combination of this knowledge and methodology with the major assumptions of the previous chapter. Chapter 3 adopts a hope-oriented approach, and even as it provides a number of subchapters focusing on the various aspects plants might be at a disadvantage, it simultaneously offers a way out through a more thorough and thought-provoking way of reading mythic fantasy texts. The topics include: the roots of our disconnection from the plant kingdom, the nature-culture divide and its consequences for the vegetal, and finally, the anthropocentric prejudice against plants. The conclusion of the chapter summarises the plant-visibility strategies, that is set to use in Part II of the dissertation.

This second part mainly relies on the four novels of the original *Mythago Cycle* as primary sources: *Mythago Wood* (1984), *Lavondyss* (1988), *The Hollowing* (1993) and *Gates of Ivory, Gates of Horn* (1997). Occasionally, examples are drawn from Holdstock's other three volumes that are related to the cycle: *The Bone Forest* (1991), *Merlin's Wood* (1994) and *Avilion* (2009). Part II starts with the brief summaries of these primary texts. The subsequent chapters from 4 to 9 are devoted to the textual analyses. In each of these chapters, a single keyword is selected that highlights one special aspect of plant–human relationships, and that aspect is scrutinized through examples from the novels. The first cluster of the analyses is entitled “Encounters of the Vegetal Kind” and it includes chapters “Identity,” “Body,” and “Coming of Age,” respectively. The second cluster is called “Dimensions,” and it consists of the following chapters: “Time,” “Space,” and “Myth.”

Chapter 4 focuses on plant identity and how it differs from and yet interferes and merges with human identity in Holdstock's mythic fantasy. This chapter observes how the human and the nonhuman are depicted in the Mythago novels, and in what ways the Otherness of the vegetal is made obvious. The chapter discusses in detail how Holdstock handles the question of vegetal agency, starting out from the hypothesis that the wood is given an agential role without the application of anthropomorphism, and the trees remain “treelike” except for their supernatural ability to reach into the human mind.

Chapter 5 deals with the questions of the body. The Mythago novels uncover the ultimate inter-relatedness of the human and the nonhuman – this, however, does not only refer to the general interaction with the natural world, but also to a continuous, physical compenetration and bodily hybridity. This chapter intends to identify the tools mythic fantasy uses to make convincing statements about our very real interconnectedness with the vegetal. To do so, the analysis relies on the analytic toolkit of plant horror and teratology, and interrogates how the apparent deathlessness of the vegetal other influences our relationship with plants.

Chapter 6, entitled “Coming of Age” sets the human external and internal growth process in parallel with the growth of the vegetal, highlighting the fact that nature is not a static entity but an event to which all beings belong. The chapter focuses on two teenage protagonists: Tallis (*Lavondyss*) and Alex (*The Hollowing*). One section deals with how young people interact with Ryhope Wood differently and how communication transforms them as a consequence. Another section is centred on Tallis and the female experience of the woodland. Focusing on the characteristics of the female coming of age, this part casts light on women's role within fantasy and within the biosphere, showing how their unique perspective might contribute to a more ecocentric future.

Chapter 7 opens the second cluster or textual analyses, entitled “Dimensions”. It focuses on the first of these dimensions, “Time”. The argumentation revolves around the differences of human time and plant time, and how this matter of scales causes problems in the mutual understanding of beings. Time is also a crucial concept in the climate crisis, and this chapter intends to reveal that if mythic fantasy is used as a platform for understanding the different timescales of different beings we can benefit from this knowledge in our everyday challenges.

Chapter 8 focuses on the intricate spatial structure of Ryhope Wood. In place of classic fantasy's tradition of notoriously mapping secondary worlds, Holdstock presents a world of unmappable vegetation that is literally intertwined with the jetsam of the human mind. This chapter dwells on how the ‘mythagoscapes’ are created, and how the interaction between the woodland and the human mind results in the maintenance of this supernatural ecosystem – and what conclusions we may draw from this for our own environment. It argues that mythic fantasy

tosses us towards the recognition that mapping/colonizing/anthropomorphizing the nonhuman world is not the road to mutuality.

Chapter 9 is devoted to myth, and it observes what consequences the classic hero myth brings for our relationship with the natural world – and how Holdstock gives a twist to it in his *Mythago* novels. This chapter starts out from the hypothesis that the hero myth itself is inherently ecocidal, as it persists on binary oppositions and on the eventual triumph of the human hero instead of the mutual cooperation that keeps the ecosystem in its dynamic vitality. The chapter demonstrates that relying on the toolkit of modern fantasy, Holdstock manages to subvert the hero narrative in a unique way.

Through these textual analyses, the dissertation intends to prove that despite their obvious focus on human characters and their internal worlds, the *Mythago Cycle* manages to include the vegetal with an agential role.

## RESULTS

### The Plant-Visibility Strategies

The creation of this set of strategies starts out from a flexible and amendable definition of fantasy. As an ever-evolving genre, fantasy is a fuzzy set without clear boundaries, a spectrum that includes works ranging from formula fiction to more innovative texts that question and subvert those formulas (see Attebery 1992). It sees mythic fantasy as a mode (cf. Attebery 1992, 1) that can take on and observe current issues even while it revokes and re-invents ancient narratives. From the critical plant studies side, the plant-visibility strategies heavily rely on the recent results of plant science and plant philosophy, and it sees plants as conscious and intelligent beings, “plant persons” (see Hall 2011) that possess a wide array of unique senses and are worthy of being included in the ethical discourse.

The plant-visibility strategies could be summarized in the following eight aspects that a literary scholar (or general reader) is supposed to observe if she wishes to unravel plant secrets in any fantasy text:

#### *1. speculative reading*

The plant-conscious analysis of fantasy requires an open mindset to literary analysis and a readiness to depart from the common cultural and political frameworks.

#### *2. storied identity*

Nature itself is a story of the incessant interactions of beings, and if we wish to read fantasy in a more ecocentric way, we should recognize plants as characters in this overarching narrative.

#### *3. beyond anthropocentrism*

A plant-conscious analysis of mythic fantasy should pay attention to the ways plants surprise us by escaping our comfort zone of anthropocentric thinking.

#### *4. subversion of anthropocentrism*

The recognition that meaning is ultimately a human construct is the great liberation fantasy offers – and it has significant ecological consequences. A plant-conscious analysis of fantasy should pay special attention to the roles plants play in the deconstruction of anthropocentrism.

#### *5. the skillset of plants*

The plant-conscious researcher should pay meticulous attention to how the skillset of plant is described or expanded in fantasy and to what consequences it entails to plant–human relationships.



### 6. *the otherness of plants*

The plant-conscious analysis of mythic fantasy should dive into the ways how vegetal otherness is described, what confrontations with the human may occur and whether these encounters lead towards a reconciliation between human and nonhuman.

### 7. *blurring the nature–culture divide*

To unravel the multiple roles plants play in fantasy narratives, the plant-conscious analyst should identify the methods fantasy authors apply to blur the nature–culture divide via plant characters.

### 8. *empowering plants*

A plant-conscious analysis of texts should look into the ways mythic fantasy can subvert the marginalisation of plants with a special attention to the various manifestations of plant agency.

## **Results of the textual analyses**

### **Identity**

Relying on the plant-visibility strategies, the dissertation dived deeper into the complexity of plant identity, and described Ryhope Wood through four categories: superorganism, metaphor, hyperobject, and character. Firstly, Ryhope as a superorganism defies the anthropocentric logic that any large system should be hierarchically ordered. In this woodland, animate and inanimate beings form a collective identity driven by the common urge to keep the ecosystem reproducing itself. Secondly, Ryhope might also be considered as a complex or master metaphor that is composed of the multiple level metaphors set to use in Holdstock's storyworld. The materialisation of metaphors is a unique tool of fantasy to make the unseen, suppressed or marginalised components of the primary world visible. Thirdly, Ryhope also provides the reader with an opportunity to investigate the hyperobject – a concept that is at the core of the climate crisis and is very hard to decipher in real life. And lastly, Ryhope might also be described as a character on its own right – and if seen through such lenses, the reader can raise interesting questions about vegetal agency.

### **Body**

The *Mythago Cycle* confronts the reader with the physical reality of vegetal deathlessness, making her realize that this uncanny quality of the plant body is also an inherent part of the human body. Throughout the *Cycle*, Holdstock's mythago characters such as Guiwenneth and human characters such as Tallis can partake in vegetal deathlessness through their journeys to Ryhope Wood. Their stories surprise us with the revelation that was supposed to separate us from the vegetal actually connects us with it, links us back to it. Thus, in the *Mythago Cycle*, Holdstock offers a revised definition of the human through the corporeal re-integration of the vegetal.

### **Coming of Age**

All throughout the *Mythago Cycle* the changes in the protagonists' lives are consciously and constantly paralleled with the changes of the natural world. Tallis' (*Lavondyss*) and Alex's (*The Hollowing*) stories reveal Holdstock's genuine interest in the teenage mind and his urge to show how and why a young person's unconscious interacts differently with Ryhope. In the Western world, coming of age hinges on the unseeing of the nonhuman. We are trained to be plant blind. Within Ryhope Wood this process is reversed: to survive, the teenage protagonists have to embrace their intuitive side so that they can reconnect with the nonhuman. Inside the

wood, all agency is shared agency and all responsibility is shared responsibility – and it is through this sharing that the nature–culture divide is blurred. The teenage protagonists’ maturing process centres around the realisation of their own agency *and* the responsibility that comes with it.

### **Time**

Holdstock’s depiction of time in the *Mythago Cycle* points towards an escape from the human construct of time. The individual life of mythagos, their related storytime, the cyclical time of the woodland ecosystem, the plant time of the trees all form different, but inseparable, intermingled timelines that ceaselessly interact in the creation and re-creation of Ryhope Wood. In this complex system, even the tiniest modification can have far-reaching spatiotemporal consequences. Entering Ryhope, the reader may escape most of the constraints of human time and discovers other, nonhuman and nonlinear timelines that may refreshen both fiction and reality.

### **Space**

In the *Mythago Cycle*, there is a kind of world-building within world-building done by the trees of Ryhope. In the wood, trees literally gain metaphysical agency – as they recreate the mythic landscapes (mythagoscapes) that they find in human minds. Thus, in Ryhope, space can be seen as vegetal space created through vegetal agency. In consequence, world-building might be described as a multi-layered process in the *Mythago Cycle* to which both human and nonhuman creatures contribute: author, vegetal beings of an imaginary forest, fictional characters and the reader.

### **Myth**

Our fascination with the hero monomyth actively contributed to our age-long abuse of nature that brought the Anthropocene into being. Only when we have identified in what ways the hero narrative may initiate environmental destruction, can we devise different stories that lead us into a biocentric future. Innovative fantasy holds a potential to subvert the hero narrative through a re-introduction of what Le Guin calls the “life story” (Le Guin 1996, 152). In the *Mythago Cycle* Holdstock creates a *vegetal life story* that replaces competition with cooperation, possession with interaction, and death with cyclical rebirth. Calling the wood an *arboreal trickster* that replaces the hero of the monomyth can summarize the wood’s intriguing complexity from a mythological viewpoint.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **The Six Theses of Plant Life in Fantasy**

Dawn Keetley formulated six theses to demonstrate the key features of plant horror (Keetley 2016), similarly, based on the above described results, I created six theses that I intend to present as the general conclusion of this dissertation and that might also serve as a starting point for future plant-conscious analyses of mythic fantasy:

Thesis 1: *Fantasy literature and plants are both marginalised creatures from an anthropocentric perspective.*

Thesis 2: *By bringing the vegetal Other into focus, fantasy makes the facing of the more-than-human inescapable.*

Thesis 3: *Vegetal life lays bare the absurdity of man’s artificial separation from nature.*

Thesis 4: *The vegetal Other is already, and has always been within the Self.*

Thesis 5: *Vegetal agency is a shared agency that entails a shared responsibility.*

Thesis 6: *Stories provide a shared space for interspecies communication.*

What connects all these observations is the realisation that the separation between human and nonhuman is artificial, and we, the animate creatures of the biosphere, live in a constant state of compenetration, interacting with each other in body and in mind. Emanuele Coccia calls this form of being in the world “transcendental immersion” in which all creatures participate: “If living is breathing, it is because our relation to the world is not one of being thrown or being in the world, and not even one of mastery – that of a subject over an object that lies before it: no, being in the world means experiencing transcendental immersion.” (Coccia 2018).

## List of Publications

- Rusvai, Mónika. "Vegetal Magic: Agnieszka's Journey to the Understanding of the Vegetal Other in Naomi Novik's Uprooted" In: Duckworth, Melanie; Guanio-Uluru, Lykke (eds.) *Plants in Children's and Young Adult Literature*. New York City, United States of America : Routledge Publishing (2022) pp. 88-97.
- Rusvai, Mónika. "Mikor hálnak meg a fák?: A fantasy-irodalom ökokritikai olvasatairól." MŰÚT (ONLINE) Paper: <https://muut.hu/archivum/44473> (2022)
- Rusvai, Mónika. "SYMPOSIUM: MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND THE FANTASTIC: A Glimpse into the Lived Experience of Disability." *SFRA Review* 52 : 3 pp. 219-221. (2022)
- Rusvai, Mónika. "Copper, Silver and Gold: Metal Woods Set to a New Purpose in Hungarian Folk Fantasy." *SFRA Review* 52:1 pp. 96-104 (2022)
- Rusvai, Mónika. "Felhasználói kézikönyv elképzelt világokhoz: Rusvai Mónika kritikája Keserű József: Lehetnek sárkányaid is című könyvéről (Prae, 2021) a Műút portál Holtsáv rovatában." MŰÚT (ONLINE), <https://muut.hu/archivum/37612?fbclid=IwAR1RSN4Y1Tt5UHwXXxIMH0Ssknph6tPc63EBgoEnGuFS2hIt9ghm-QSesIM> (2021)
- Rusvai, Mónika. *Rettentő növények: Ember-növény hibridek Robert Holdstock Lavondyss című regényében*. In: Limpár, Ildikó (eds.) *Rémesen népszerű : Szörnyek a populáris kultúrában* Bp, Hungary : Athenaeum Kiadó (2021) 312 p. pp. 260-277.
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- Rusvai, Mónika. "Vissza a rengetegbe. Ember-növény kapcsolatok a kortárs ifjúsági fantasy irodalomban p. <https://igyic.hu/esszektanulmanyok/vissza-a-rengetegbe.html> Paper: <https://igyic.hu/esszektanulmanyok/vissza-a-rengetegbe.html> (2020)
- Rusvai, Mónika. "Szörnyeteg apaszerepben (Neil Gaiman: A temető könyve)." *SZKHOLION* 2017 : 2 pp. 95-102. , 8 p. (2017)

## List of Conference Presentations

HAAS – 25-26. 05. 2018, Budapest, ELTE

title: The Monstrous Father in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*

HUSSE – 31. 01. – 02. 02 2019, Veszprém, Pannon Egyetem

title: Journey without Destination: Cyclicity of Space and Time in Robert Holdstock's *Lavondyss*

Végtelen határok – 17. 05. 2019, Szeged, organized by Próza Nostra

title: Rézerdőben jártam, rézibolyát láttam: A növényvilág térstrukturáló szerepe Gaura Ágnes *Túlontúl*jában és Kleinheincz Csilla Ólomerdő-regényeiben

Performativity in Contemporary Culture Conference – 24. 05. 2019, Budapest, ELTE

title: From Creating the Story to Becoming the Story: Tallis' Creative Journey in Robert Holdstock's *Lavondyss*

First Debrecen Postgraduate Symposium and Workshop – 31. 01. 2020, Debrecen, DE

title: Trees Uprooting Myth: Role of the Vegetal Other in Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*

EASPOP CON - Encounters of the Popular Kind: Traditions and Mythologies in Dialogue – 27-28. 10. 2020, online, ELTE

title: Family Ties Rewritten: The Domestic Life of the Hungarian Man-Dragon

15<sup>th</sup> Biennial HUSSE Conference – 27-29. 01. 2022, online, KRE

title: Intruding into the Intruder's Mind: The Influence of Vegetation on Human Behaviour in Robert Holdstock's Mythago Novels

“Fantasy in Central Europe – Central European Fantasy: Context, Directions, and the Legacy of J.R.R. Tolkien” – 29 April 2022, Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovakia

title: A Central European Counterpoint to the Western Dragon Narrative: The Dragon Lords in Csilla Kleinheincz's Ólomerdő

Fantastic Geographies – 13th Annual Conference of the Association for Research in the Fantastic (GfF) – 22-24 September 2022, TU Dortmund University, Germany

title: Unmappable Vegetation: Re-Imagining Woodlands in Robert Holdstock's Mythago Novels

16<sup>th</sup> Biennial HUSSE Conference – 26-28 January 2023 – Miskolci Egyetem

title: The Wood Within: The Deathless Vegetal as a Component of Posthuman Corporeality in Robert Holdstock's Fiction

Disruptive Imaginations – Joint Annual Conference of the Science Fiction Research Association and the Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung – August 15-19, 2023, TU Dresden

title: Disrupting the Anthropocene: More-Than-Human Mythology in Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*

## Extracurricular Activities

### FICTION

#### Novels

 *Kígyók országa* [The Country of Serpents]. GABO Könyvkiadó, 2023.

 *Tündöklő* [Aglow]. GABO Könyvkiadó, 2019.

#### Short Fiction

- ♦ “Csontról csontra” [Bone by Bone] (2023) In: *Az év magyar science fiction és fantasy novellái 2023*. Eds. Csilla Kleinheincz, Gábor Roboz. Budapest: GABO, 2023.
- ♦ “Nem ereszt gyökeret belé” [Roots of Linden] (2021) In: *Az év magyar science fiction és fantasy novellái 2021*. Eds. Csilla Kleinheincz, Gábor Roboz. Budapest: GABO, 2021.
- ♦ “Embermadár” [The Birdwoman] (2020) In: *Az év magyar science fiction és fantasy novellái 2020*. Eds. Csilla Kleinheincz, Gábor Roboz. Budapest: GABO, 2020.
- ♦ “Divide” (2020) American Corner Szeged.  
<https://www.facebook.com/notes/783133259130172>
- ♦ “Égigérő” [The Tree That Reached up to the Sky] (2018) In: *Az év magyar science fiction és fantasy novellái 2018*. Eds. Csilla Kleinheincz, Gábor Roboz. Budapest: GABO, 2018.

### TRANSLATION

Martin, Gail Z. *Árnyék és láng*. Trans. Rusvai, Mónika. Budapest: Delta Vision, 2020.

Watson, Angus. *A vas kora*. Trans. Rusvai, Mónika. Budapest: Delta Vision, 2020.

Watson, Angus. *Zengő vas*. Trans. Rusvai, Mónika. Budapest: Delta Vision, 2020.

Keyes, Greg. *Született királynő* (A tövis és a csont országai 4). Trans. Rusvai, Mónika. Budapest: Delta Vision, 2018.

Keyes, Greg. *Vérlovag* (A tövis és a csont országai 3). Trans. Rusvai, Mónika. Budapest: Delta Vision, 2018.