

# Sea Changes: The fairytale Gothic of mermaids, selkies, and enchanted hybrids of ocean and river



06 September 2025 to 08 September 2025

**Note: All times are BST (GMT + 1)**

## Conference Schedule

### 06 September 2025

**1 09:15 09:30 Welcome**

Teams Conference Room 1

Assoc. Prof. Sam George (OGOM Project; University of Hertfordshire)

**2 09:30 10:30 Parallel Session: Panels 1 and 2**

**1 Hybridity, monstrosity and taxonomy**

Chair: Ivan Phillips

Teams Conference Room 1

**8 The mercreature as metonym - Suspension and onto-epistemological resistance in the Blue Weird**

Fredrik Blanc (Manchester Metropolitan University)

**17 Wittgenstein's family resemblances and the hybridity of ancient sea monsters**

Dr Ryan Denson (University of Silesia in Katowice)

**63 The machine in the monster and the monster in the machine: Towards a teratology of technology through the techno-monstrosity of Nemo's Nautilus**

Dr Kwasu Tembo (Lancaster University)

## 2 Aquatic romance 1

Chair: Andrin Albrecht

Teams Conference Room 2

54 Love, Atlantean style: Portrayals of merfolk sex, love and marriage in adult cartoon series

Raymond Rugg (Bridgewater State University)

55 Making waves: The fluidity of gender in merfolk mythology

Madelaine Sacco (University of Newcastle, NSW)

75 Forging the literati self: The merbeing in 'Bai Qiulian'

Dr Jie Zhuang (University of California, Irvine)

## 3 10:30 11:30 Plenary 1: Forging the mermaid in Romantic Scotland

Teams Conference Room 1

Dr Katie Garner (University of St Andrews)

Introduced by: Bill Hughes

## 4 11:30 11:45 Tea/Coffee Break

## 5 11:45 12:45 Session: Panel 3

#### 4 Romanticism and sirens

Chair: Antonio Alcalá  
González

Teams Conference Room 1

##### 48 Dangerous waters: Demonic motifs and folklore in Polish Romantic literature

Dr Malgorzota Nowak (Adam Mickiewicz University)

##### 65 Let 'brooks and echoing falls repeat': John Thelwall's Fairy of the Lake

Prof. Judith Thompson (Dalhousie University)

**6 12:45 13:45 Lunch**

**7 13:45 14:45 Parallel Session: Panels 5 and 6**

#### 5 Myth and storytelling

Chair: Ryan Denson

Teams Conference Room 1

##### 4 Tlaloc and Chac Mool over Mexico City: The haunting of Aztec water deities on Mexico City

Dr Antonio Alcalá González (Tecnológico de Monterrey, Santa Fe  
Mexico City)

##### 69 'Farewel, ye Fair Illusions': The Distorted siren's song in Dryden's King Arthur and Shadwell's Psyche

Amanda Trainham (SUNY)

##### 71 The tale of the Mermaid of Thermaikos

Agelika Velissariou (AUPh, School of Primary Education,  
Thessaloniki)

6 Traumas, threats, and transformations: Traditional and contemporary selkie stories from Scotland to the Arctic      Chair: Silvia Storti      Teams Conference Room 2

1 Selkie transformations: Trauma, memory, and environmental exploitation in C. J. Cooke's *A Haunting in the Arctic*

Dr Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir (University of Iceland)

28 Preternatural phocids: seals, selkies and the imagined sea

Dr Lizanne Henderson (University of Glasgow)

61 Mermaid love and seal hunting: The complexities of the Irish seal skin

Colleen Taylor (Boston College)

**8 14:45 15:30 Mermaid Flash Fiction**

Teams Conference Room 1

Dr Daisy Butcher (University of Hertfordshire)

**9 15:30 16:30 Parallel Session: Panels 7 and 8 (3 papers and 2 papers)**

7 Light and shade in 'The Little Mermaid' and selkie fiction      Chair: Rebecca Greef      Teams Conference Room 1

36 Slipping off the sealskin: Examining the nuances of intimate partner violence in selkie mythology

Alexa Keough (University of Hampshire.)

38 Breaking the shell: How modern mermaid fiction rewrites the Disney Princess

Jubby Kumar (Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya)

43 'Part of Your world': The reinterpretations and retellings of 'The Little Mermaid' (1837) based on the history and society of the human world,

Protyasha Mazumdar (University of Hertfordshire)

8 Mermaids, hybridity and the aquatic environment

Chair: Daisy Butcher

Teams Conference Room 2

6 Water, desire, and crisis in the Southern Bayou: Alice Dunbar-Nelson's 'Natalie' as a modern mermaid tale

Dr Barbara Barrow (Lund University)

45 The Haitian Voodoo river gods: The shamanic call in Wilson Harris's The Secret Ladder

Shareed Mohammed (University of the West Indies)

80 Dark and watery metamorphoses: Mermaids, dystopian fiction, posthumanism

Dr Francesca Arnavas (University of Tartu)

**10 16:30 16:45 Tea/Coffee Break**

**11 16:45 17:45 Plenary 2: A reading from the memoir Ring of Salt, drawing on the Selkie myth** Teams Conference Room 1

Betsy Cornwell (Writer)

Introduced by: Sam George

**12 17:45 18:00 Closing remarks and instructions for Days 2-3 at the British Library**

Teams Conference Room 1

Assoc. Prof. Sam George (OGOM Project; University of Hertfordshire)

## 07 September 2025

13 11:00 11:15 Registration - tea and coffee Eliot Room

14 11:15 12:15 Introduction and Plenary 3: The luck of the Ningyō: Hybridity and the rise of the fake museum mermaid Eliot Room

Assoc. Prof. Sam George (OGOM Project; University of Hertfordshire)

Introduced by: Bill Hughes

15 12:15 13:15 Parallel Session: Panels 9 and 10

9 Aqueous creatures and gender identity

Chair: Marion Troxler

Eliot Room

12 From sea horror to queer grief: Representations of the sperm whale and the colossal squid, 1851–2021

Dr Monika Class (Lund University)

53 Feminism and spiritualism in Evelyn De Morgan's Little Mermaid triptych (1886–1914)

Cecilia Rose (University of Exeter)

59 The maiden in the mountain lake: Becoming-woman in Sigrid Undset's Kristin Lavransdatter

Dr Per Elben Svelstad (NTNU in Trondheim)

## 10 Hybridity and metamorphosis

Chair: Maria Szafrńska-  
Chmielarz

Dickens Room

3 Sirens in the city: On river spirits, politics, and the collapse of spatial limitations in Ben Aaronovitch's Rivers of London series

Andrin Albrecht (Friedrich Schiller University Jena,)

11 Habitat-fluid and water-bound: metamorphic characters in Mercè Rodoreda's 'The Salamander' and 'The River and the Boat' (1967)

Dr Anna Casablanças-Cervantes (Universitat Autònoma de  
Barcelona)

## 16 13:15 14:00 Lunch and Exhibition

## 17 14:00 14:45 Parallel Session: Panels 11 and 12 (2 papers each)

## 11 Re-enchanting nature

Chair: Bill Hughes

Eliot Room

40 'Touch with chaste palms moist and cold, / Now the spell hath lost his hold': Sabrina, Nymph of the River Severn in Milton's A Maske  
Presented at Ludlow Castle (1634)

Beth Lettington (University of Hull)

73 'This modern world is a world where the wonderful is utterly commonplace': Dangerous disenchantment in H. G. Wells's The Sea Lady (1902)

Dr Amy Waterson (Royal Holloway, University of London)

## 12 Reimagining the merfolk of fairy tale

Chair: Shabnam Ahsan

Dickens Room

57 Venture where you will: the aquatic Other in fairy-tale retellings

Dr Silvia Storti (Early Career Researcher)

79 Cola Pesce and the Gothic Mediterranean: Hybrid bodies and haunting waters in contemporary reimaginings

Dr Elena Emma Sottilotta (University of Cambridge)

**18 14:45 14:55 Tea/Coffee Break**

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**19 14:55 15:55 Parallel Session: Panels 13 and 14**

**13 The Gothic Little Mermaid**

Chair: Sam George

Eliot Room

10 Tentacular Defiance: An exploration of Hans Christian Andersen's Sea Witch and female sexuality in 'The Little Mermaid' (1837)

Dr Daisy Butcher (University of Hertfordshire)

25 Poor unfortunate souls: The Faustian bargain of 'The Little Mermaid'

Rebecca Greef (University of Hertfordshire)

67 Mysterious fathoms below: Exploring the depths of Disney's Gothic mermaids

Sinead Tobin (Lancaster University)

**14 Sirens, selkies and the feminine**

Chair: Maria-Silvia Cohut

Dickens Room

27 Femme fatale, occult waters, and siren Silencing in Louise Erdrich's 'Fleur'

Marci Heatherly (Pittsburg State University, KA)

78 A littoral rubicon betwixt and between

Ann Conmy (Technological University of the Shannon)

81 From birdwomen to mermaids: The divergent evolution of Sirens and Harpies'

Dr Amanda Potter (Open University)

**20 15:55 16:55 Parallel Session: Panels 15 and 16**



## 15 Mariners and merfolk

Chair: Francesca Sawaya

Eliot Room

7 Remaking the mermaid: Comparing nineteenth-century depictions at sea and ashore

Dr Karl Bell (University of Portsmouth)

16 Mignonette: The last voyage of The Mermaid and the cannibal erotic

Dr Emma Dee (Early Career Researcher)

29 When enchantment is made flesh: An exploration of the Steller's Sea-ape

Dr Charles Hoge (Metropolitan State University of Denver)

## 16 Folklore, fairies, and fish-people

Chair: Maria Beville

Dickens Room

35 Dis/enchantment and Enlightenment: Fish-men, folklore and fact in eighteenth-century Spain

Alex Judkins (University of Sheffield)

39 Changelings in the water: Folktales, folk beliefs and a literary afterlife

Scarlette-Electra LeBlanc (University of Hull)

42 Into the depths: Reading queerness in the water-horse tradition

Rachel Martin (Harvard University)

**21 19:00 21:00 Conference Dinner**

## 08 September 2025

22 08:30 08:50 Registration - tea and coffee

Eliot Room

23 08:50 09:50 Parallel Session: Panels 17 and 18

### 17 Nation and nature

Chair: Karl Bell

Eliot Room

20 The Nykur: An Icelandic water spirit in folklore and cultural memory

Mariateresa Esposito (University of Iceland)

21 A Mari Usque Ad Mare: Phyllis Brett Young's Undine and the female grotesque in the popular Canadian imaginary

Dr Kathryn Franklin (University of Toronto)

76 The transgression of boundaries: Urban's Hastman between folklore and eco-Gothic

Valentýna Žiškova (Charles University/Sapienza Università di Roma)

### 18 Aquatic romance 2

Chair: Bill Hughes

Dickens Room

44 Submersive subversives: Encoded sexual fluidity in Hans Christian Andersen's other mermaid story

Helena McBurney (King's College, London)

46 Exploring female sexual expression through merfolk encounters in The Cruel Prince and A Court of Silver Flames

Deborah Moumane (University of Hertfordshire)

68 '[O]h, love, at last!': Dangerous nereids and deadly encounters in George Horton's Aphróessa: A Legend of Argolis, and Other Poems (1897)

Georgia Toumara (Independent Scholar)

**24 09:50 10:50 Plenary 4: Mermaid glitter: Fish scales, queer plastic and vibrant femininities** Eliot Room  
Prof. Catherine Spooner (Lancaster University) Introduced by: Sam George

**25 10:50 11:00 Break**

**26 11:00 12:00 Parallel Session: Panels 19 and 20**

**19 The divine and monstrous feminine**

Chair: Emma Dee

Eliot Room

**5 The metaphysics of Melusine: A tale of alchemy and initiation, reclaiming the Goddess**

Allison Allen-Byrd (Independent scholar)

**13 The Sirens' silence: Uneasy matriarchy in Lucile Hadžihalilović's Evolution**

Dr Maria-Silvia Cohut (Brunel University London)

**41 Water nymphs in Polish Romanticism: Pagan justice and feminine power**

Agnieszka Łowczanin (University of Łódź)

## 20 Mermaids of poetry

Chair: Daisy Butcher

Dickens Room

24 The Romantic Lamia and Anne Bannerman's 'The Mermaid' (1800)

Jane Gill (University of Hertfordshire)

33 Undulant shapes of murderous femininity: Tennyson's aquatic creatures

Dominique Ionnone (University of Salerno)

50 'We heard the sweet bells over the bay': What links Matthew Arnold's 'The Forsaken Merman', Robert Rampling's landscape art and the legend of Jinny Greenteeth?

Dr Ivan Phillips (University of Hertfordshire)

**27 12:00 12:45 Session: Panel 21 (2 papers)**

## 21 Water-women of Japan

Chair: Sam George

Eliot Room

14 'The girl whose eyes were like the ocean': yuri manga and queer monstrosity in *This Monster Wants to Eat Me*

Dr Joseph Crawford (University of Exeter)

47 'A girl who came from the bottom of the sea': Gothic and feminist aspects in Hiroko Katayama's Tanka poetry

Dr Izumi Nagai (Osaka Metropolitan University)

**28 12:45 13:30 Lunch**

**29 13:30 14:30 Parallel Session: Panels 22 and 23**

## 22 Oceanic postcolonialism

Chair: Daisy Butcher

Eliot Room

### 2 Transgression And transformation: Mer-human relationships in the tales of Ruth Manning-Sanders

Shabnam Ahsan (University of Hertfordshire)

### 37 Indian ocean studies: Transoceanic memory in postcolonial Gothic sea fiction

Shahrukh Khan (The English and Foreign Languages University,  
Hyderabad)

### 60 An impossible outsider: Singaporean mermaid in Amanda Lee Koe's Siren

Dr Maria Szafrńska-Chmielarz (University of Warsaw)

## 23 Selkies and ecocriticism

Chair: Imke Lichterfeld

Dickens Room

### 9 The constant selkie and the changing sea: Fluid queer identities, interspecies kinship and ambivalent seascapes in Molly Knox Ostertag's The Girl from the Sea

Dr Tina Burger (Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf)

### 66 Selkies and adolescence: An eco-Gothic reading of anxieties in Tides

Harley Tillotson (University of Hertfordshire)

### 70 Merfolk and the beach: Resisting dualisms with tooth and scales

Marion Troxler (University of Bern)

## 30 14:30 15:30 Parallel Session: Panels 24 and 25

## 24 Ambivalent selkies

Chair: Sam George

Eliot Room

### 23 'Becoming with Seal': Mourning, separation, and kinship in contemporary selkie soundscapes

Dr Monica Germanà (University of Westminster)

### 31 Genre and gender in contemporary selkie fiction: Patriarchy, utopia, instrumentalism, enchantment

Dr Bill Hughes (Open Graves, Open Minds Project)

### 72 Selkie without seal skin: Mythmaking and storytelling in Fiona Macleod's rewriting of selkie tales

Heru Wang (Lingnan University)

## 25 Traumatic water-folk

Chair: Harley Tillotson

Dickens Room

30 The struggle of one thing twisting into another and back again': The re-enchantment of the sea lung in Julia Armfield's *Our Wives Under the Sea*

Fred Hook (Queen's University, Kingston)

62 Dead in the water: Narrating trauma through Tolkien's dead in the marshes and Rowling's *Inferi*

Stefanie Tegeler (University of Münster)

77 Wet brown graves: Irish Gothic bog bodies in Seamus Heaney and Miranda Carr

Claire Cunningham (Lancaster University)

**31 15:30 15:40 Tea/Coffee Break**

**32 15:40 16:40 Session: Panel 26**

## 26 Mermaids, Undines and the Arts

Chair: Ivan Phillips

Eliot Room

19 Burne-Jones's *A Sea-Nymph* and the displaced mermaid

Dr Andrew Elfenbein (University of Minnesota)

32 The fantastical narratives of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and Richard Wagner, featuring undines, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Are those realms of enchantment under threat?

Victoria Hurtado (Independent scholar)

56 Mermaid ballets in the twentieth century

Dr Francesca Sawaya (College of William & Mary)

**33 16:40 16:55 Closing Remarks**

Dr Bill Hughes (Open Graves, Open Minds Project)

Eliot Room